



## Call for papers

International conference  
17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> november 2022

# Tomi Ungerer, border hopper (1931-2019) : Languages, images and childhood

*An international conference jointly organised by the Bibliothèque nationale de France / Centre national de la littérature pour la jeunesse, with Musée Tomi Ungerer - Centre international de l'illustration, Centre culturel irlandais, Institut International Charles Perrault, Université Caen Normandie, CY Cergy Paris Université, UMR 9022 Héritages (CY Cergy Paris Université/CNRS/ministère de la Culture), and the support of Afreloce.*

Coined by the artist himself, the term « border hopper » is undoubtedly the most apposite way of describing Tomi Ungerer, born in 1931 in Strasbourg. It also aptly qualifies one who, raised on the border between Germany and France, spoke four languages – French, English, German and of course Alsatian – and whose places of residence were Colmar, New York, and Nova Scotia before finally putting the suitcase down in Ireland, a country where he felt at home.

Until February 2019, a great many different paths marked a career that gave us works as diverse as *The Three Robbers*, *The Party*, *Zeralda's Ogre* and *Slow Agony*. His internationally acclaimed books amount to over a hundred titles, translated in more than thirty languages. As an author and illustrator, he was awarded several major distinguished prizes. In France, the « Grand Prix des arts graphiques », in Montreal, the best cartoonist of the year award, in Germany, the « e.o. Plauen » prize, to which we need to add the prestigious Hans Christian Andersen Award, awarded by IBBY in 1998.

In view of such a multifaceted and Protean body of work, both in terms of scope and range, this conference aims to reflect those qualities and live up to the legacy of an author and illustrator who has become a classic, and whose creativity has never ceased to inspire.

We wish to honor him as a border hopper across countries, languages, narratives, fictional worlds, cultures and readerships.

We invite participants to submit papers that address the author-illustrator as a multifaceted border hopper, bearing in mind how much he inspired other artists all through his lifetime as he will doubtless do in the future.

How do Tomi Ungerer's idiosyncratic style and spirit resonate with contemporary creators?

What source of inspiration is he for them?

What part of his work is most influential and to whom?

Papers that examine how Ungerer's work is revisited will emphasise the energy and the visionary quality of the original material. Presentations of projects which combine research and creativity will be welcome as they reflect border hopping between academia and artistic practice. The aim is to map out

influences, legacy patterns, rewritings and common imaginary worlds based on the undisputable modernity of Ungerer's work.

We envision the conference as some kind of a communal cauldron, in which the artist's best ingredients will be mixed to gently simmer along with elements of his biography which should nonetheless remain part of a distinct angle. Intermediality and transmediality will be key concepts for those who look at his books and films but also at the revisited versions of the latter. His very special spice, i.e. his sense of humour, should never be left in the cupboard.

Proposals may come from different academic fields, as well as from more creative disciplinary areas.

The following topics will be discussed:

### **1 : Tomi Ungerer, border hopper across languages and cultures**

This topic will explore cross-disciplinary approaches such as languages, Ungerer's own multilingualism, the role of translation and self-translation. Papers will address cross-cultural influences in the artist's work (French, German, English and Alsatian), with a focus on the different types of humour they convey.

### **2 : Tomi Ungerer, border hopper between word and image**

Contributions to this topic will engage with Ungerer's writing, both in word and image, and explore how they interact in graphic and narrative styles. Ungerer's sense of a narrative and his visual poetry may be discussed according to various perspectives. Intermediality, transmediality, formats, and material culture may be examined with respect to Ungerer's own sources and with a particular interest for a tangible legacy in the younger generation of artists. Another angle for proposals could be how he influenced illustration and children's literature.

### **3 : Tomi Ungerer, border hopper for children and adults alike**

Contributions on this topic will engage with Ungerer's imagined readerships. Participants can look at the portrait of the artist as a young boy during World War II and under the Nazi regime, to discuss how art allowed to overcome the trauma of those "dark monsters". Papers on Ungerer's reception in schools will be particularly welcome so as to shed light on how children have appropriated the author's world, then and now. It will provide an opportunity to look at his satirical side, which subverts taboos, alongside the importance of publishing contexts (original editions, translations, new editions) that prevail in reception studies in general.

### **4 : Tomi Ungerer, border hopper across countries**

Papers in this category will aim to contribute to widening the scope of Ungerer's reception worldwide, with its historical depth and focus on encounter with others. The Franco-German dimension of this topic will be specially favoured. Libraries, museums, publishers have vastly helped towards the recognition and popularity of Tomi Ungerer: a study of their active part and the different forms of mediation they opted for will be welcome so as to account for the process whereby this artist's work, for children and adults alike, has come to be part and parcel of the world's literary and artistic heritage.

## **Bibliography**

Bibliographical references to the body of work by Tomi Ungerer are available on the website of the CNLJ, Centre national de la littérature pour la jeunesse (The National Centre of Children's Literature) :

[https://cnlj.bnf.fr/sites/default/files/bibliographies/ungerer\\_tomi.pdf](https://cnlj.bnf.fr/sites/default/files/bibliographies/ungerer_tomi.pdf)

## Organising committee

- Agnès Bergonzi (BnF)
- Magali Jeannin (Université de Caen Normandie, Institut international Charles Perrault)
- Virginie Meyer (BnF)
- Marion Mossu (CCI)
- AMarie Petitjean (CY Cergy Paris Université, Institut international Charles Perrault)
- Marine Planche (BnF)
- Anne Schneider (Université de Caen Normandie, Institut international Charles Perrault)
- Jacques Vidal-Naquet (BnF)
- Thérèse Willer (Musée Tomi Ungerer-Centre international de l'illustration)

## Scientific committee

- Brigitte Andrieux, librarian, Artistic director of *La Revue des livres pour enfants*
- Agnès Bergonzi, chief curator, CNLJ
- Brigitte Friant-Kessler, senior lecturer in English studies and visual arts, Université Polytechnique Hauts de France
- Martial Guédron, professor in art history, Université de Strasbourg
- Eléonore Hamaide-Jager, senior lecturer in French literature, Université d'Artois
- Dominic Hardy, professor in art history, Université du Québec à Montréal
- Bettina Kümmerling-Meibauer, professor, Universität Tübingen
- Mathilde Lévêque, senior lecturer in literature, Université Sorbonne Paris Nord, Afreloce
- AMarie Petitjean, senior lecturer in French literature and creative writing, CY Cergy Paris Université
- Marine Planche, chief curator, deputy director of CNLJ
- Anne Schneider, senior lecturer in French literature, Université de Caen-Normandie
- Virginie Tellier, senior lecturer in French literature, CY Cergy Paris Université
- Jacques Vidal-Naquet, head curator, director of CNLJ
- Thérèse Willer, chief curator, Musée Tomi Ungerer-Centre international de l'illustration

## Practical instructions

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The conference will be held in 2 separate venues :  
Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> November 2022 (Bibliothèque nationale de France)  
Friday 18<sup>th</sup> November 2022 (Centre culturel irlandais)

Individual papers should not be more than 25 minutes in length.

Working languages: French, English

We are planning to record the presentations so as to make them later accessible from the BnF website, or any website of one of our collaborators. Prior to the event participants will be asked for an agreement.

A selection of papers will be reviewed for publication, which is part of the project.

Deadline for proposals:

Proposals (title, abstract of 1500 signs max) should be submitted by **April 15** at the latest.

They should be sent to :

[marion.caliyannis@bnf.fr](mailto:marion.caliyannis@bnf.fr) and [communication.iicp@club-internet.fr](mailto:communication.iicp@club-internet.fr)

Acceptance mail to the participants will be sent at the beginning of June.

**There is no funding for either transport or accommodation.**