



Mother Goose 1988

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Elaine Moss, herself newly recruited to the panel of judges, gives an account of this year's award for the best newcomer to British children's book illustration'.

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The general feeling of the Panel was that 1987 had been a good year, offering us not only a splendid winner - Emma Chichester Clark - but also four runners-up whose progress in their new field we shall watch with interest: Martin Handford, Jean Christian Knaff, Corinne Pearlman and Carol Thompson.

The five short-listed artists whose books stayed on the floor when all the others had been scooped up into piles seemed pretty representative of the trends in picture book publishing as the eighties draw to a close. Emma Chichester Clark's work is in the tradition of fantasy illustrators of the past - whilst she brings to her book her own glorious sense of colour and page design. Martin Handford represents the Herge, Dupasquier school of busy and engaging cartoons. Jean Christian Knaff is off-beat and sophisticated, with an appeal to those who revere St Exupery's **Little Prince**. Corinne Pearlman's work lends enchantment to a non-fiction subject - in the manner of Aiki, for instance. Carol Thompson joins the army of baby book illustrators - but is unusual in that she *can* draw babies!

Emma Chichester Clark was commissioned to illustrate a book of well-known and less known tales selected by Laura Cecil to be published under the title **Listen to This**. In days gone by, such a compilation would have had perhaps one line drawing or half-tone illustration to each story - but such has been the influence of television that nowadays colour is called for; so what we have here is, in effect, a 96-page picture book with colour on one side of the sheet and half tone on the other, a rich book to share with a child on one's knee. This young artist paints her doll-like characters in glowing, vivid colours, using the extremes of the spectrum, rather than the faces of animals or children, to denote an atmosphere of peace or terror, joy or dismay. The backgrounds to the stories are world-wide, the more exotic settings attracting the deeper hues from Emma Chichester Clark's paintbox. Though there were initial murmurings from some members of the panel about the traditional feel of this book (should we be looking for something more revolutionary?) and some of us, Lisa Kopper in particular, were very uneasy about her portrayal of non-white children, there seemed to be no doubt in our minds that here was an artist who had a bright future in children's book illustration. Since the brief of the Mother Goose Award Panel is to find just that, we were delighted to recommend that Emma Chichester Clark be the winner.

No-one present doubted for a moment the hours of amusement and pleasure that Martin Handford's **Where's Wally?** would give to children. And we all applauded the way he, like Anno before him, has ensured that children really look long and hard at each opening (searching for Wally) instead of flicking through the book with the impatience characteristic of our age. We goggled at Martin Handford's sheer industry and inventiveness - but some of us were not too sure that all this added up to children's book illustration in our terms.

The work of Jean Christian Knaff raised the temperature of the argument and the pitch of the voices of the panel to a new level. Some members were prepared to dismiss **Manhattan** out of hand, others felt the strong pull of an *avant garde* (or is he already *passee* in the circles where such reputations are made?) artist with something to say about loneliness and companionship. It happens to be the only multicultural story on the shortlist (though **Listen to This** has stories from different ethnic backgrounds) but this had absolutely nothing to do with Jean Christian Knaff being retained among the chosen. The artists among us, in particular, admired his work enormously.

Corinne Pearlman seemed to all of us to have made a witty and entertaining book out of a rather mundane text (by Sally Craddock) designed to welcome children to the British Museum. **Ottoline at the British Museum** is the story of a white cat who strays into the BM, whizzes round the Egyptian section, skitters down a totem pole, skates over the glass cases in the King's Library - and is fed at closing time. Pearlman's dizzy perspectives, fluent drawing and flowing colour make her an ideal artist for this kind of work. We were very glad to find her but in general were disappointed that so little non-fiction (**Ottoline** is fiction) was submitted.

Carol Thompson's board books, in the Macdonald series **Busy Baby's Day**, seemed to us to be lively, colourful and unpretentious, with a baby who really looked like a baby and behaved like one too. One of the panel pointed out that artists are often asked to make baby books, whether or not they have the necessary skill. Here was an exception, and one we were glad to find.

In all, over 50 books by new artists were submitted, the largest number by Macdonald and by Walker Books both of whom, of course, publish many series. It was generally felt that the cover design had improved, but we had bad words to say about Dent who omitted the name of the artist, Patricia MacCarthy, from the cover of Margaret Mahy's **17 Kings and 42 Elephants**. We wished that more of the new artists had thought about the multicultural aspect of publishing, and we were sure that somewhere, unsubmitted, were many information books illustrated by new artists that we would have been happy to consider.

Listen to This, selected by Laura Cecil, ill. Emma Chichester Clark, Bodley Head, 0 370 31100 0, £7.95

Where's Wally?, Martin Handford, Walker Books, 0 7445 0413 9, £7.95

Manhattan, Jean Christian Knaff, Faber, 0 571 14653 8, £6.95

Ottoline at the British Museum, Sally Craddock, ill. Corinne Pearlman, Macdonald, 0 356 11783 9, £4.95

Wake Up Time, 0 356 13106 8 **Morning**, 0 356 13107 6 **Afternoon**, 0 356 13108 4 **Bedtime**, 0 356 13109 2 Carol Thompson, Macdonald 'Busy Baby's Day' series, £1.75 each

The Mother Goose Award is sponsored by **Books for Children Ltd.**

The judges this year were Anthony Browne, Sally Grindley, Pat Hutchins, Lisa Kopper, Colin McNaughton, Anne Marley, Beverley Mathias, Elaine Moss and Chris Powling.

Elaine Moss's career in children's books as a librarian, critic and writer was summarised with characteristic modesty in her own **A Part of the Pattern** (Bodley Head). No one has done more to promote the book habit and to break new ground for readers, notably with her **Picture Books for Young People 9-13** which has just been updated (0 903355 25 6, £2.95, from Thimble Press, Station Road, South Woodchester, Stroud, Gloucestershire GL5 5EQ).

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