

## Press release

Hannover, November 2022

# From Haapsalu to Bullerbü: The imagery of Ilon Wikland

(12. November 2022 up to 19. Februar 2023)

**Karlsson on the Roof and Lillebror, Mio, Lotta on Troublemaker Street, The Brothers Lionheart, Ronia, the Robber's Daughter: Astrid Lindgren's characters are icons of children's literature. The pictures with which Astrid Lindgren's novels were illustrated have also contributed to the fact that these children are seen as autonomous, strong personalities. They are the work of Ilon Wikland, who has been illustrating Astrid Lindgren's children's books since 1954. Ilon Wikland was awarded the Elsa Beskov Prize for her complete works and has been nominated several times for the internationally renowned Astrid Lindgren Memorial Prize.**

Ilon Wikland was born in Tallinn in 1930 and spent her childhood in Haapsalu on the west coast of Estonia in her grandparents' house after her parents separated. In 1944, fearing deportation by the Red Army, her grandparents sent the 14-year-old granddaughter into exile in Sweden, where she was taken in by an aunt. The young homeless woman found refuge and salvation in drawing.

After school, Ilon Wikland studied at the Academy of Art in Stockholm and in London and has worked as a graphic artist for various publishers since the 1950s. Astrid Lindgren, editor at the publishing house Rabén & Sjögren since 1945, commissioned the young Wikland in 1954 with test illustrations for her children's book »Mio, mein Mio«. This marked the beginning of many years of close and friendly collaboration: »Only you give my characters the right face,« Lindgren always emphasized. With the exception of »Emil of Lönneberga « and »Pippi Longstocking«, Ilon Wikland illustrated all of Astrid Lindgren's children's books, some even several times.

She also collaborated with many other authors and later wrote her own texts, focusing on her childhood in Estonia and her dramatic escape to Sweden. »Long, Long Journey« is the name of the autobiographical work - the only book illustrated by her in

which there were first the pictures and then the text. It tells of her childhood in Haapsalu, Estonia. Wikland's childhood is marked by disruptions. In the book, which was published in 1996, she deals with the war, her flight to Sweden and her subsequent serious illness.

The exhibition at the Wilhelm Busch Museum features around 250 original illustrations by Ilon Wikland from the 1950s to the present day, showing the artistic development but also constants in Ilon Wikland's visual language. These include the characteristic depictions of children, such as the recurring motif of the lonely child at the window or door, romping children, or table scenes, which run like a thread through Wikland's work. At the same time, the fine, often colored pen-and-ink drawings show how the image of the child changed in the second half of the 20th century. In the early illustrations, with a consistently simple central-perspective composition, the children appear well-behaved, neatly dressed and neatly coiffed. Since the 1970s, the illustrator has increasingly used the cinematic means of changing perspectives and draws the children's figures much more freely. This development can be seen particularly well in Ilon Wikland's illustrations of Astrid Lindgren's children's books. One focus of the exhibition is devoted to them.

A second focus is on the autobiographical picture books that show Ilon Wikland's childhood in Estonia against the backdrop of the looming threat of Stalinism and World War II. The exhibition is rounded off by a selection of historical photographs, which clearly show the deep roots of Ilon Wikland's imagery in the memories of her childhood in Haapsalu. Also on display are books, including the German and Swedish first editions of Astrid Lindgren's and Ilon Wikland's children's books.

The exhibition is sponsored:



Niedersächsisches Ministerium  
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Stiftung  
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**Media portal**

[www.karikatur-museum.de/presse](http://www.karikatur-museum.de/presse)  
Password: Karikatur+Zeichenkunst

**Opening hours**

Di. up to So. and on public holidays  
11 till 17 o'clock, 24. and 31.12.2022  
closed

**Entrance fee**

Single Ticket 7,00 €  
Family Ticket 14,00 €  
Reduced 4,00 €

**Address**

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Karikatur und Zeichenkunst

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**Web**

Homepage: [www.karikatur-museum.de](http://www.karikatur-museum.de)

Das Museum Wilhelm Busch – Deutsches Museum für Karikatur und Zeichenkunst wird institutionell gefördert durch das Kulturbüro der Landeshauptstadt Hannover.