

PRESS RELEASE  
19 September 2024

MARIT  
TÖRNQVIST

JOHANNES  
VERMEER  
PRIJS 2024





## Johannes Vermeer Award 2024 goes to illustrator and children's book writer Marit Törnqvist

The Johannes Vermeer Award 2024 goes to illustrator and children's book writer Marit Törnqvist. The jury, chaired by Marise Voskens, unanimously nominated her. Törnqvist receives the award for her exceptional artistic ability to depict universal emotions in language and drawings, and to bring them close to the reader's world of experience. The dedication with which Törnqvist creates a safe space in her oeuvre for a variety of major themes, and welcomes and embraces everyone's perspective with pen and brush, is of great in-depth value for people of all ages. The Dutch State Award for the Arts, established by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, will be awarded on Monday 4 November 2024 at the Nieuwe Kerk in The Hague by Eppo Bruins, Minister of Education, Culture and Science.

### Universal

As an illustrator and writer, Marit Törnqvist is a master at evoking universal emotions in words and images. Her empathetic texts are often unambiguously about major themes such as identity, happiness, love, loneliness, farewell and migration. Her sentences are clear and touching. Her illustrations make a perfect match and outline situations and feelings, not only in colour and in the play with light and dark, but also in layering and atmosphere. "Marit's work breathes a free and open way of thinking, social compassion and a love for people of all ages. Seemingly simple, always recognisable and striking, sometimes longing, sometimes surreal, always beautiful," the members of the jury commented.

### Imagination

The internationally acclaimed oeuvre of winner Törnqvist is characterised by the persuasiveness of atmosphere and imagination. Drawings and language interact. That which is not described, is drawn. And vice versa. Her work feels close, perhaps precisely because of the often everyday scenes and deeply personal questions and feelings that are addressed. Timeless, and yet also quite 'contemporary'. In a modest way, it is generous and shows courage. "Time and again, Törnqvist creates a safe space that comforts and moves, and she depicts the power of self-reliance. She lovingly shows children life in all its facets and offers them small anchors for everyday life in sometimes turbulent times," the members of the jury added. The books she has written and illustrated have received prestigious awards and have appeared in many languages around the world. Her illustrations for books by Astrid Lindgren and Toon Tellegen, among others, and her design for Junibacken in Stockholm, the children's museum about the work of Astrid Lindgren, have also received numerous international awards.



### Engagement

Törnqvist's artistry and multidisciplinary oeuvre testify to empathy and an eye for everyone's vulnerability, both in yourself and the immediate environment as well as in the world. The engagement of her oeuvre translates into connection: it invites dialogue and offers access to other perspectives. The jury is impressed by the social voice with which Törnqvist touches her readers and by her commitment to projects around reading promotion, often for and with children in difficulty. For example, she compiled an anthology of Dutch children's literature translated into Arabic, Farsi, Turkish, Somali, Tigrinya and Kurdish. Of which ten thousand copies were distributed in asylum seeker centres as a welcome gift to children who could read in their own language. In Iran, she is coaching young illustrators and is closely involved in the book project called Read with Me.

### Children's and young adult literature

The Johannes Vermeer Award is awarded for the first time to an artist who primarily focuses on children and young adults. Dutch children's and young adult literature has a great reputation both nationally and internationally. The work of Marit Törnqvist represents the strength for which Dutch children's literature is known: a full-fledged and innovative art form in which challenging and sometimes controversial themes for children are not shunned, such as gender identity, climate crisis, racism and war. The jury's choice shows recognition for this position in the Dutch arts field and for the social significance of cultural education.

### On view

On the occasion of the presentation of the Johannes Vermeer Award, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science presents a selection of the award winner's work in the MEC window display. The exhibition space is located directly next to the entrance of the Ministry on Rijnstraat 50 in The Hague and is freely accessible. The presentation on the work of Marit Törnqvist can be seen from 4 November 2024 to late April 2025.

### About the Award

The Johannes Vermeer Award is the Dutch state award for the arts, representing EUR 100,000. The winner may spend the amount on a special project within their own field of work. The Dutch government introduced the prestigious award in 2008 to honour and encourage exceptional artistic talent. The organisation of the award ceremony is in the hands of the six national culture funds, with the Mondriaan Fund as secretary. The award can be presented to artists from all artistic disciplines working and/or living in the Kingdom of the Netherlands. The award was previously presented to Tania Kross, Arnon Grunberg, Natasja Kensmil, Rineke Dijkstra, Ivo van Hove, Janine Jansen, Iris van Herpen, Steve McQueen, Michel van der Aa, Irma Boom, Rem Koolhaas, Marlene Dumas, Erwin Olaf (†), Alex van Warmerdam and Pierre Audi. This year's jury consists of Marise Voskens (chairman), Ted Brandsen, Margot Dijkgraaf, Afaina de Jong and Bas Kosters.

### Note for the editors, not to be published:

The jury supervision and overall coordination of the Johannes Vermeer Award is in the hands of the six national cultural funds, with the Mondriaan Fund acting as secretary. The production of the award ceremony is provided by LUSTR. For media requests, please contact The Publicity Company, Trix van Alphen: [trix@publicity.nl](mailto:trix@publicity.nl) or 020 612 7000. For more information about the Johannes Vermeer Award, please go to [www.johannesvermeerprijs.nl](http://www.johannesvermeerprijs.nl)