

## IVAR DA COLL

Candidate from Colombia and Venezuela  
Hans Christian Andersen Award, 2022  
Fundalectura, IBBY Colombia  
Banco del Libro, IBBY Venezuela



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# INTRODUCTION

## AN ETERNAL CREATOR: IVAR DA COLL

Is the most representative creator in the field of children's literature in Colombia, since his work has been permanent for more than 35 years, making him the pioneer and the most important exponent of this genre in Colombia.

He has presented us wonderful universes respecting the child, not only as a reader, but as an independent being, capable of inferring, imagining and reflecting. His work is surprising, with aesthetic mastery he confronts us to horror, to the most complex of human beings' pain and at the same time reveals the majesty of love, friendship and empathy, all in the midst of simplicity, clarity and beauty. Ivar brings us back to the child gaze, surprises us with each story, each image, each word, invites us to rediscover the world with those wonderful eyes that we only keep in childhood.

It can be said that new voices and new proposals have emerged from him in this field. For these and for all the reasons presented by the specialists below, words that we make ours, Fundalectura presents its candidacy for the Hans Christian Andersen Award, 2022.



FUNDALECTURA, IBBY COLOMBIA



BANCO DEL LIBRO, IBBY VENEZUELA

Pioneer of the Picture Books in Iberoamerica, is a reference in the field of children's literature. His work consolidates an imaginary world with a particular point of view, in which a series of endearing characters come to life in which readers from different parts of the world are recognized. The expressive power of his work reveals a great ability to articulate fantasy and humor with the world close to children.

His work has resized the proposal of the album book, achieving a perfect articulation between iconic and verbal discourse. This creative capacity is what makes possible the connection that he has achieved with the children's audience from different parts of the world, through a fictional universe in which history and characters go beyond the direct recreation of the world of childhood. In that sense, it is linked to the challenging air of Astrid Lindgren's literary proposal.

For all this and for the place that it occupies in the world of books for children Banco del Libro consider that it has conditions to be nominated for the Hans Christian Andersen prize and we join the nomination made by Fundalectura Colombia.

## PRESENTATION

It could be said that Ivar Da Coll is the most emblematic figure in the Colombian creation of children and young adult books. Both because he has been a pioneer and because of his creations, which have always maintained the highest standards of quality.

His work has characteristics that continue to place him in the above-mentioned level of recognition. Among these are:

**Characters:** Ivar's capacity to speak from the inner child's perspective. Not of course, the child that he was, a commonplace in the perspective which is often used to define those who have better possibilities to know and understand childhood. However, it is of course not Ivar's inner child, since as a child he did not necessarily face the same world that exists today. Additionally, I imagine Ivar as a kid who was surrounded by books, especially those that belong to emblematic Nordic literature and are now universal classics. However modern-day kids, the audience he speaks to and also from where he speaks, don't necessarily have books. Instead they might own a teddy bear like Eusebio's, but not much else.

Nothing is more difficult than "seeing the world from a child's view, but not childishly", as Jorge Larossa would say. It is something only an observant and sensible adult, like Ivar, can learn to do. He has the talent to see the world as if it were for the first time, as a child does, without violating or colonizing his view, without imposing an adult's opinion.

**Settings:** As if it were about preparing for a newcomer's reception, for a newborn, Ivar prepares the settings in which he welcomes his characters. Nothing escapes his highly observant eye, not the different possibilities of environments, weathers, spaces, or objects that greet this newcomer. This referring to any newly created character, regardless of whether it is the main character or one of its friends. This distinction is important since friends are essential in this book. In fact, friendship is perhaps the invisible thread in most of his work.

**Conversation:** If there is something masterful in Ivar's books, it is the ability to engage in serious conversations, important conversations. It would seem that Ivar, like Kant, thinks that conversation is the most important of the arts and that children are not excluded from it. The conversations in Ivar books happen in familiar and everyday settings, still, this does not take the seriousness away. His books are full of the questions and doubts that his characters ask themselves

and their friends. Questions about the world and how it works, about others, about life, and about death. Regardless of age as, in his books, the youngest engage in conversations with elders who do not assume paternalistic attitudes. There are no lectures in Ivar's work.

As stated by the North American author, Gareth Mathews, in his book *Philosophy and the Young Child*, Ivar has the ability to value children's philosophical thoughts. According to Mathews, children books authors are maybe the only adults that do not overlook youngster's philosophical worries, which can turn out to be the same ones as those of the great philosophers.

In addition to what has been mentioned above. It is necessary to mention the universal nature of his work. Very Colombian, but also profoundly universal when it portrays the worries, reflections, and emotions that any child, in any corner of the world, may experience.

All of this is accomplished with very precise language, both regarding image and words, that has been well elaborated and carefully constructed throughout many years. Every book is the result of many hours of diligent work.

Silvia Castrillón

President of the Colombian Association of Children and Youth Literature (ACLIJ). Bogotá, 15th of October 2020.

Translated by María Carreño

## IVAR DA COLL AUTHOR AND ILLUSTRATOR

To the ones who can create a book for kids, life has rewarded us by giving us the benefit of not losing our amazedness capability, and in that we remain being kids. By creating a book I have fun, I expect just that to happen to the reader.

IVAR DA COLL



Ivar Da Coll was born in Bogota (Colombia) on March 13, 1962. Son of an Italian father and a Swedish mother. He studied high school in Juan Ramón Jiménez High School in Bogota. At the age of twelve he joined the group of puppet theaters Cocoliche as a puppeteer, scenographer and dressmaker, which was directed by the dramatist and pedagogue Julia Rodríguez, who he worked with in many different plays and in a series of television programs. Thanks to the puppet work in which converge many artistic languages —such as literature, music, painting and movies—, Da Coll found the origin of his vocation as writer and illustrator of childish and juvenile literature, He began university studies in Bellas Artes, but soon after he abandoned it to move on with his autodidact and independent formation which remounts to nowadays.

In 1983 he started working whit different Colombian publishers as a text book illustrator. In 1985 he illustrated for the Publishers

Group Norma the series of picture books *Chigüiro*, starred by a South American wildlife mammal, the living rodent with the biggest size and weight of the world, which is constantly threatened by the human activities. The amazing receiving that Chigüiro had among children and adults allowed him to definitely immerse himself in the world of childish and juvenile literature as a writer and illustrator. Also, he has illustrated texts of renowned Colombian and international writers as Fanny Buitrago's *Dovecote Letters*, Daniel Pennac's *Wolf's Staring*, Ana Maria Machado's *The Barber and The Colonel*, Francisco Quevedo's *To a Man with a Big Nose*, Lygia Bojunga's *Bye* and Yolanda Reye's *Dinosaur's Maria*. His books have been published by various Hispano-American publishers in Colombia, Mexico, Spain and Venezuela, and some have been translated and publishes in Swedish, English, Chinese, Portuguese, French and Danish.

He has represented Colombia on multiple occasions as the writer in the Honor List of the International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY) with his books *I'm Afraid*, *Hamamelis*, *Miosotis* and *Mr. Surprise* and *Feet for The Princess*; in The White Ravens list, of the International Youth Library of Munich, with his books *No, It wasn't me!* and *To a man with a Big Nose*, his book *Feet for the Princess* received the special mention of the award The best books for kids of the Book Bank. In 2014 he received the tenth Spanish-American award of Childish and Juvenile Literature, contest on which he was a finalist in 2008. He has been candidate to the Memorial Astrid Lindgren and Hans Christian Andersen awards for his set of artistic works.

He has participated as a guest of honour in international book fairs such as Guadalajara where he inaugurated an exposition about his work in 2008 in the Museum El trompo mágico, and in 2014, during the fair he received the SM's Ibero-american Children's and Youth Literature Award. Also in the cities of Quito and Guayaquil in Ecuador, in the international fairs of Santiago de Chile and Panamá, in México in the FILIJ (International Children book Fair in Ciudad de México), in Oaxaca's Book Fair and the University Book Fair of Jalapa in Veracruz. In the United States of America he has participated in book fairs in Houston and Miami and in New York in the Children's and Youth Literature Week sponsored by the Cervantes Institute. In 2011 he was a special guest in the International Children's and Youth Literature Week in the National Library of Sweden.

Ivar is active member of the Colombian Association of Children and Youth Literature (ACLIJ) and has been member of his board of directors in representations of the illustrators.



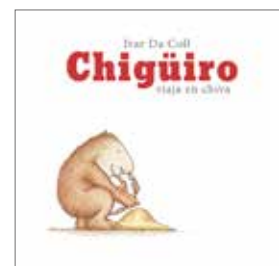
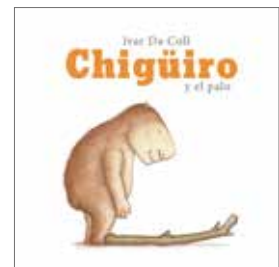
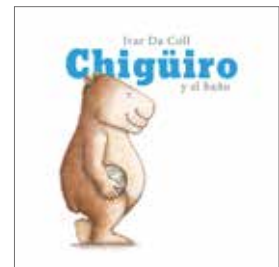
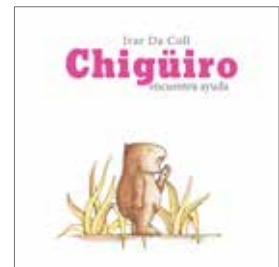
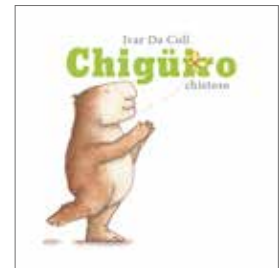
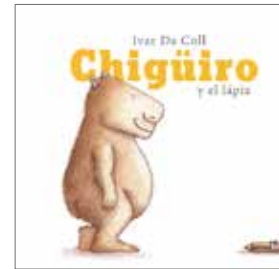


Chigüiro viaja en chiva, 1985



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## AWARDS AND DISTINCTIONS

### TO THE AUTHOR:

- 2000 - Nominee by Colombia to the Hans Christian Andersen Award.
- 2004 - Nominee by Colombia to the Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award.
- 2008 - Nominee by Colombia to the Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award.
- 2008 - Finalist SM's Ibero-american Children's and Youth Literature Award.



Torta de cumpleaños, 1990



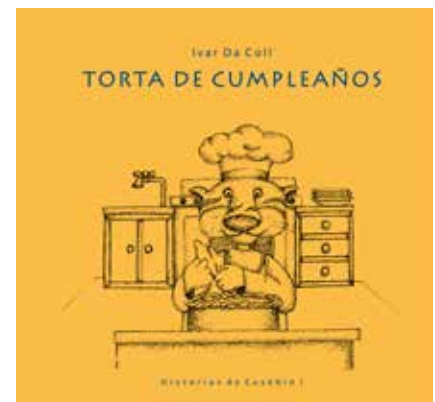
2012, 2013 y 2014 - Nominee by Colombia to the Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award.  
2014 - Winner of the SM's Ibero-american Children's and Youth Literature Award.  
2019 - Nominee by Colombia to the Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award.

## TO THE BOOKS

1990 - *Tengo miedo*. IBBY Honour List, Colombia.  
1991 - *Torta de cumpleaños*. ACLIJ Award to the Best Colombian Book.  
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2000 - *¡No, no fui yo!* Selected in The White Ravens List by the Internationale Jugendbibliothek of Munich.  
2003 - *Pies para la princesa*. Mención especial premio "Los mejores libros para niños" del Banco del Libro de Venezuela.  
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## TESTIMONIALS ABOUT HIS WORK

The books of Ivar Da Coll have been a refreshing breeze in the Colombian literature for kids. Behind the writer-illustrator lies a lucid and indomitable talent. His series of books about Chigüiro are wordless albums which describe in simple but inquisitive images the daily wanders of a little hairy mammal from the Colombian plains, one of our endangered species. This character has become endearing to the Colombian children, because it has shown them in its adventures the unrivaled value of his naivety and imagination: A tiny branch can be a toy, a ball reaches the high of a friend, and a pen acquires the power of creation.

Da Coll occupies in a direct and clear way of the fears and embarrassments of childhood, the ones that we, as adults, have partially forgotten but the children can recognize thanks to his humorous empathy. Not in vain they love the funny, intelligent, recursive, warm and imaginative work of Da Coll. His books are literature creations that transmit a plot, either illustrated or written, with an innovative story to tell. He’s not simply an illustrator; Da Coll

is an original craftsman of the double codification of graphic and written language.

Colombian Foundation for the Development of Reading, 2000  
(FUNDALECTURA COLOMBIA)

Ivar Da Coll with a prolific and renowned work, a line of carefully detailed and endearing characters with situations of daily life, has shown off as the main representative of the book album and the illustrated book in Colombia. His work has been the literature cot to many Colombian readers, and a reference and studied item of many generations. Da Coll its part of the first generation of Colombian child literature authors and to the date he remains as active as the first day.

ZULLY PARDO, 2010  
PUBLISHER AND CHILD LITERATURE SPECIALIST

Talk about Ivar Da Coll is talk about a creator. Creator of a world expressed in double key: Text and image. This creative exercise on which, from its origin, merges the colors, figures, illustration techniques with the words, story and dialogues, it requires a great talent. And that's what Ivar Da Coll has: Talent. But a talent cultivated with effort and explorer vocation. Ivar is the only representative of our country of that remarkable and delicious gender —Conquest of the books for kids— called book album. By looking his set of works, we can certainly affirm that Ivar Da Coll manages to create a world populated by a diversity of beings on which fit regular qualifiers: The innocence and simplicity befitting of a protected childhood that still hasn't faced the toughness of life. Because of that his literature welcomes, lulls, entertains and produces joy in his readers from young to old.

BEATRIZ HELENA ROBLEDO, 2007  
Writer and researcher in children's and juvenile literature (Colombia)

It is undeniable the prominent place that in the field of children's literature in Colombian and in Latin American is saved to Ivar Da Coll, since his career has been reinvented thanks to various collaborations with national and Latin American publishing houses. His prominent place in this story reflects also the importance of the type of reception that summons the book-album, following the theatrical character that links a adult showing and child gazing into reading experience.

ANA-CATALINA ALVARADO-AGUDELO, 2016  
Children and juvenile literature specialist (Canadá)

I remember that at the time on which the series “Eusebio’s Stories” (1990), I was practically beginning to work on the Book Bank. For me it was a real surprise to find out that those simple stories, told with texts and images could equally catch young and old. That’s how my relationship with the world of Ivar Da Coll started, one of the Latin-American author-illustrator with the biggest projection through



Chigüiro se va, 1992

and outside of his country. And one of the few which has presented a mayor variety of proposals throughout his evolution. Ivar remains constant at presenting very warm stories of spaces that hug those worries and emotion that move the first readers. Ivar is the author of sweetness and humor, conqueror of the littler readers and father to Chigüiro, one of the dearest and remembered characters by many readers that now enjoy of other adventures of this diverse author, illustrator and creator of child books.

FANUEL HANÁN DÍAZ, 2007

Former coordinator of the selection department of the Book Bank (Venezuela)

Ivar has a unique naturalness in communicating with children. Well, his literature. He narrates with an apparent simplicity, however nothing of the what he does is simple. The Chigüiro series is a narration in images, the first book of its kind to be made in Latin America, it is of an absolute cleanliness. The character is located in a space in white, if anything some lines make subtle reference to the floor. In the scene only what is necessary to put the character in context appears. It is a book that the little ones can read, in a double movement of the pages in which the narration occurs. Also children read and reread and this reading allows them to anticipate the story. [...] Ivar is drawing all the time. He goes out on the street with a notebook. In this he is obsessive and compulsive, it is his life. Observe permanently his environment, as if he was afraid to lose something of it. Ivar is a full-time comprehensive artist.

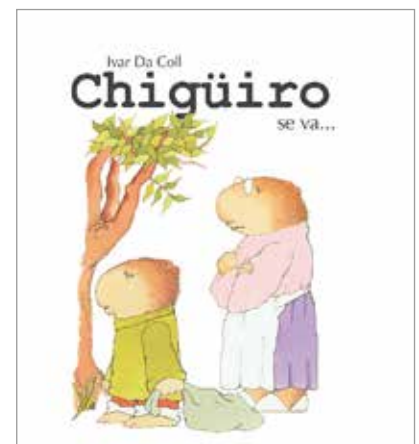
MARÍA OSORIO, 2016

Chief Editor of Babel Libros (Colombia)

From his recent creations I would like to remark two of them, kind of atypical and truly wonderful: The first is “Sugar!” a biography of Celia Cruz published by Lectorum in United States with strong and impacting colors that don’t match at all the variety of soft colors that Ivar is used to like, and a frankly kitsch look. The second one on the other hand is “To a man with a big nose” recently edited by María Osorio in Babel. Here the drawing is pencil made (I understand its María’s fault) and the accuracy of certain details (Like the scene of the bathtub) contrasts with other pages where the sketch is more than enough (Like at the horse pulling the cart). On Celia and the man with a big nose we see an Ivar that has grown up with his work, who is fearless of trying new things. I think it’s that braveness what we learned together. It’s a pleasure to know that his still alive on his books and friends.

MARGARITA VALENCIA, 2007

Coordinator of the Mastership in Publishing Studies of the Institute Caro and Cuervo (Colombia)



## IVAR DOESN'T ILLUSTRATE, HE CREATES REAL WORLDS

Colombian, writer and researcher

Beatriz Helena Robledo

in children's and juvenile literature.

Guadalajara, 2th of december 2014

Presentation at Ceremony of the

SM's Ibero-american Children's and

Youth Literature Award. Original

Spanish text, translated by Carlos

Pérez and Verónica Londoño.

Paul Auster in *Moon Palace* faces his main character deal with a border line situation, in the middle of the desert. The character is a painter, and first time he paints he does so convinced nobody is ever going to see his pictures. This situation, far for restraining himself, it's a liberating one.

I quote Auster : *Now I was working for myself, without the threat of others' opinion, and that was by itself enough to produce a substantial change in the focus he gave to his art. For the first time in his life, he stop to worry about results and in consequence, terms "failure" and "success" lost all meaning to him. He discovered that the true purpose of art was not to create beautiful objects. It was a method of knowledge, a way to penetrate into the world and find our place on it, and any esthetic quality that a given picture might have was nothing but a casual by-product from the effort of fighting those battles, of going inside the very heart of things.*

This paragraph made me think in Ivar and the path he has travelled to reach this point where, with all justice, his work is recognized and awarded. It is not the place nor moment to do literary critic, but to unveil what is it that touches us from his work and trayectory.

First thing would be his dedication and commitment to what he does, his work as a creator, just like the character from Auster. When we look and read his different books, an authentic search, without affectation, could be felt, as well as a knowledge of the children's universe, that is revealed in each of his stories. Ivar doesn't illustrate, he creates real worlds where the readers can connect, from the certainty that they can be understood.

His work is so truthful, that Ivar told us, in a recent homage payed to him in the Biblioteca Nacional de Colombia, that: "If couldn't draw, I'd really die, even phisically".

His other quality is concentration. Art is born from concentration and Ivar knows it. This appreciation hasn't come from watching him work. No. The soundness of his forceful images and the perfection of his narrative. With Ivar there's no rhetoric. Nothing is in excess. There they are his strong characters, clean, and the space that surrounds them: empty. And when there are objects or nature around, it's because they are essential to the story. Ivar is so concentrated that he has recently re-visited his previous work. Best example is *Tengo miedo*.



Ivar goes back into fears and understands that those cannot be the same thirty years after. The fears from the first edition in Spanish in 1985 were naïve, for very little readers. The fears from today are different: they lurk around and are very real. Ivar does not idealize childhood; on the contrary, he knows it's not always a happy place. That's why he doesn't concede; he treats children as intelligent readers

Ivar creates characters. Characters so defined that keep their place in the readers imaginary. You would say: —Obviously, if he makes stories he's got to create characters—. But to create a character that with just naming it could be identified, recognized, celebrated, is no small thing: Alicia, Pinochio, Pipi Longstockings, Sapo y Sepo, Max, just to name a few, share with Chigüiro the peak of literary celebrities in the world of children books.

Chigüiro achieved his immortality not only because of his image, a sweet figure, with glimpses of warm sensuality, but mostly because of the stories in which he was the main character: stories, first silent, condensed into images, then accompanied with text; stories that portray little conflicts with which children can identify, not big deeds nor intricate adventures, but simple stories from daily life, like wishing to leave home and change mom when whims are not pleased; the use of a rubber ring to repair the wheel of a bus, or a magic pencil that draws bicycles or a bed when he is tired.

When talking with Ivar, he gives much of the credit to this ability to his previous work as a puppeteer. And he is right. In his books, characters navigate in stages that are quite theatrical. At the same time, it shares with the dramatic art that present time where a conflict is solved, contained. In his books there are no digressions, as there aren't in a stage. However, I sense that besides these reasons given by trade, Ivar, by means of his clever knowledge of children's soul, knows that for children characters are very important. Characters go to bed with children, talk to them and are remembered. They can forget about the story but I'm sure that Chigüiro is unforgettable for them, as it is for us.

But Ivar doesn't leave Chigüiro alone. Around him appear new characters, part of an extended family, a net of friends that visit, take care, protect and love each other.

Hamamelis, Eusebio, Camila, Úrsula, Ananías, Eulalia, Miosiotis, Cochinita, Nano y sus amigos, Juan, Diego, Abo y Ata are part of that family and honor friendship, solidarity, fraternity. And not from a prudish point of view. The aesthetic world Ivar's work takes place is so full that it becomes ethical.

His characters don't argue or are violent to each other. They weave their bonds through small yet significant agreements: they keep a secret, make a special gift to a friend, celebrate together a birthday.



*Hamamelis, Miosotis y el señor Sorpresa, 1993*

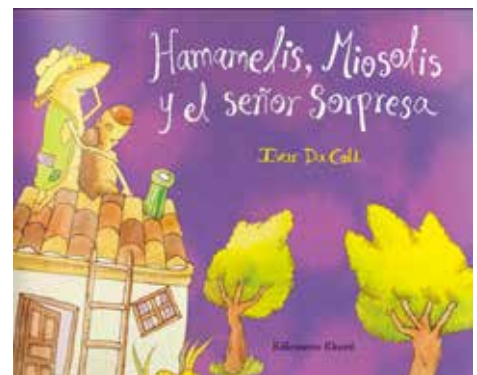
They keep each other company in dark nights, when monsters emerge. They go out for a picnic and food can make trouble in their bodies, but not in their hearts or their fantasy.

Far from narcissism or egocentrism, Ivar's characters are created in relation to each other. So the expression "ethics of care" (term created by Adela Cortina) when referred to his work, is applicable. For her, is natural to humans that caring attitude towards others, that is formed by impulse of self protection and protection of the fragile. Ethics of care includes solidarity and compassion and regards man as a being that becomes more human when being in touch with other people. That conviction, in this chaotic and torn apart world, becomes gold when it reaches children. So that's the depth of Ivar's work. But the best is that is not done by use of moralism or deep speeches. It's done with force that art confers when it's truthful, when is a living work that moves the reader and touches his emotional realm and his imagination. That's what good literature does: it doesn't teach, does not explain, doesn't show. It's just there to be contemplated time and time again, producing, generously, multiple meanings.

Short time ago a friend told me that Chigüiro travelled to Afganistan, making company to his two year old nephew. The boy laughed loudly with Chigüiro's adventures. Watch Chigüiro draw an ice cream cone to then seat and enjoy, was a big delight to this little boy. This is a proof of what art produces in us. This simple, yet powerful image it's enough to understand what aesthetic pleasure is, and how it resounds in our interior. Otherwise theory would find it difficult to explain.

Ivar's magic is subtle, delicate, as it's little children imaginary. That sensitiveness is another aspect of his style. And when there's style, there's art. Beyond mastery in technique, it's Ivar personal style.

That style constitutes his search. Because far from attaching to a successful formula, from a given recipe or the comfort of having found a line, a certain color, Ivar takes risks. That's another feature of his nature: his explorer condition. He is a curious child who dares to explore. That's why he feels fear, anguish, that is solved through a slow creative process. Ivar explores, tries out, reflexes, tests. This is so true that his work has been evolving with him, not only in terms of quality but also in terms of age. I'm curious and I'm not sure if Ivar has noticed, but his books show how children develop. His first chigüiros, are for the younger ones; those with text are for those a bit older; his Eusebio trilogy it's more complex and appeals to more experimented young readers; his later works, *¡Azúcar!*, delightful and festive biography of Celia Cruz, or the masterly interpretation to the classic *A un hombre de gran nariz*, from Quevedo, corroborate



this experimental vocation. This way, children grow and they find a book created by Ivar for each stage of their development.

Ivar knows well that the creative imagination of a child is metaphoric and gets its solution in a playful way. And there's another feature of his work: that ludic characteristic. In his books the characters play, as children play: they put on a costume, they play to keep a secret, they hide and seek, live from the pleasure of suspended time in the present, as it occurs in playing games. But this presentation of the play is quite elaborated in Ivar. Behind an aparent simplicity, there is thoughtful and complex construction. This could be observed in Eusebio trilogy. *Torta de cumpleaños* is set on the rails of a string or words from oral tradition; o *Garabato* is sustained by logic used in certain traditional games. En *Chigüiro Abo y Ata* or in *¡No, no fui yo!*, the refrain reminds that one of popular stories. Ivar creates a double game, since in fiction the characters themselves play. In that metaphoric game his stories gain depth and are freed from banality.

And not only but besides the subjects chosen and the way they are treated, the most important thing is the mastery of illustration. Ivar knows that form and matter are essential to art. His struggle is to make forms express what he wishes to transmit, what he feels and is boiling from inside. And I point this because today, more than ever, it's of great value the pursue of the artist to be faithful to himself, ignoring market pressures, and especially against the prevailing deviation happening in children's books production, where a formless content is preferred.

That tension between form and contents, between spirit and matter, is what an artist struggle is all about. It can be felt that Ivar is in search of perfection, a perfection never to be achieved because if that happened, he would die, as he previously confessed.

We could keep talking for hours about Ivar's work from all its different nuances. But this is not the time nor the place.

I only want to reaffirm the happiness this award produces. Because Ivar is celebrating an abundant and round success, and because it strengthens creation in its most authentic nature, far from utilitarian efforts in which children's literature is always about to fall into.

This award honours true creators, and Ivar Da Coll certainly is one of them.

Ivar, for the privilege of having written this text, I give you in name of all here present a big hug.

Now, to celebrate!

# IVAR DA COLL ONCE UPON A SUPERLATIVE SMILE

María Francisca Mayobre

Bogotá, 15th of October 2020

Venezuelan editor.

Words in the Tribute from the  
District Institute of the Arts  
(IDARTES) and the Colombian Book  
Chamber to Ivar Da Coll.  
Translated by María Carreño.

Let us suppose today's world was different and we could still travel, hug each other and see one another's face in all their splendor. Let us suppose our only concern is to be apprehensive about infectious smiles. Let us suppose we are together now, very close, cuddling, warming each other up in the cold of Bogota. Let us suppose that after talking about Ivar we go out dancing to maracas beat, drink sweetened milk and eat cinnamon cookies; just like Hamamelis and many other characters do in his books. Let us suppose, for a moment, we are not afraid because our leaders have been diminished and put into tiny glass jars while assisting a biology lesson. Let us suppose, that in that biology classroom, the teacher and students, amidst their experiments, discover the cure to all our illnesses. Let us suppose that upon leaving that school, Chigüiro arrives looking for us and draws a plane with his infallible pencil. And that I, as I have done every year in recent times, get on that plane and land in Bogota. And please, let us continue to suppose because what I want most right now is to be by Ivar da Coll to personally see his wonderful smile that always comforts me.

We read Ivar's stories and smile at one another. He has, without a doubt, infected us. We get excited with his simple, stripped strokes that bring Chigüiro to life, with his unparalleled spirals of vertiginous actions that provoke a particular, temporal ellipsis, and with his rhythmic texts that play ping pong with his illustrations. It seems easy. Of course it is not. It is all about the realization of an artist's gaze that attentively observes his world, the planet, Latin America, Colombia. And fearless of a blank page and empty spaces, he gifts us his stories, settings and characters from his accurate and personal perspective. Sometimes with absolute simplicity and synthesis. Others, with a carefree, asymmetrical and playful line that defies reality. And sometimes with an even meticulous and precise baroque song full of everyday or fantastic details that are always memorable. He makes us smile. Also laugh out loud, cry a little, comfort each other, and, why not, find ourselves.

In the 80's and 90's it was not common (although one must shamefully admit it still is not) to meet as Latin Americans, as Colombians and Venezuelans in particular, in many cultural aspects of our region. Above all, in those features that reflect an image of ourselves in relation to childhood. There are few, but there have always been, artists who undertake the path that allows us to look at ourselves in a profound and authentic way. So we can comprehend that our identity is peculiar, diverse and simultaneously unique and valuable.





¡No, no fui yo!, 1998

Ivar is, of course, one of them. He is a pioneer.

Back then, in the middle of a world full of bears, bunnies, cats, dogs, horses, moles, mice and other creatures of the traditional taxonomy of the animal kingdom in the world of children's books. Ivar, like "Mr. Surprise", from observing so much, knew what the people from Latin America wanted, what they needed, and what could make us smile, and our children and our children's children. He challenged the world, with his paintbrushes and gave us Chigüiro. A friendly and peculiar rodent that is also called capybara. With his sharp gaze, Ivar introduced diversity into that orthodox taxonomy: a local mammal, a giant rodent, not sugarcoated that glimpses into a bustling look and frank smile shaped by the simple, stippled-down line that creates him. Our (because he is already ours) Chigüiro broke schemes and paradigms, he rode the bus with his friends, monkey and chicken and all those who came later, and determined the rode for many in Colombia and Latin America. This friendly llanero, who Chigüiro is, introduced us to a new imaginary which is none other than our own, it has always been there. His first name is also his species' name. He is what he is. Naked and silent, or perhaps rather stripped and affable, he invites us to proudly pronounce our "ch" letters and to sweetly lengthen our "u" with unequaled umlauts. It sounds easy but it is not. There are no concessions, no doubts when pronouncing the word "Chi-güi-ro".

In silence, alone, and almost always with editors and friends, Ivar has worked since the beginning with talent, tenacity, and his own style and continuity. His work reveals his smile and encourages us to believe that life, although scary and full of complex situations, is made primarily of small, daily conflicts. Broken cups, recipes for birthday cakes, bad winds, and slippers with holes can be solved through genuine friendship and trust in others. A wink that reveals that, maybe, changing the world and its prejudices are really just that simple. As simple as exchanging a bus's flat tire with an inflatable lifejacket to then feel good, or at least better, and harmoniously continue with the travel plans with our true friends, so similar and so different from us.

In the exhaustive and dazzling catalog of the Ivar and his friends exhibition for Colombia's National Library in 2007, Ivar says: "So goes a very nice saying: 'One makes plans and God smiles.' And I have managed to smile, not only with God, but also when I have learned that there are children that have been happy, even if only for a little while, because of my stories.

That Ivar da Coll's smile belongs to a serious, good-looking gentleman, with deep eyes and elegant and simple manners which are simultaneously firm and determined. Ivar da Coll's smile is not just his, its everyone's. Those of us who know him, who have seen him dance to





the maraca's beat while drinking sweetened milk, are lucky and can confirm his smile is infectious. It can also be vouched for by those of us who have heard him tell stories to huge audiences and to the young and the old. Without any doubt, Ivar's warm and contagious smile is revealed, above all, in his wonderful stories. In his stories, texts and illustrations that have made so many here, there, everywhere discover, among many things, the happiness derived from self-identity, far from traditional models, that which contributes to shape new imaginations full of diversity and inclusion.

## IVAR DA COLL WHAT IS A CHIGÜIRO?

Spanish editor. Antonio Ventura

Words in the Tribute from the District Institute of the Arts (IDARTES) and the Colombian Book Chamber to Ivar Da Coll. Translated by María Carreño.

Bogotá, 15th of October 2020

I came to the knowledge of Ivan Da Coll's work in 1993, when a friend we have in common gifted me one of his books: *Chigüiro se va*. It was, I believe, published by Norma a year before. My first discovery though this beautiful book was that a huge rodent existed in Latin America and it was called Chigüiro or capibara. The second, the existence of an illustrator and writer that didn't have an Anglo-Saxon or Centro European background, that wrote a story- that which I had in my hands- that had analogous characteristics to those I had found in authors such as Arnold Lobel, Helme Heine and Janoch.

At the time, I had not yet travelled to Latin America. Not only did I not know of the chigüiros' existence, I did not know there were Latin-American illustrators, I didn't even think there could be any.

My gaze, which was not yet European, but eurocentric, was part of a double myopia perspective on the south of this continent. In agreement with Mario Benedetti, there was a European and a Spanish vision. I do not know which had more diopters.

Anyways, jokes aside, the years went by and with them, I learned about the chigüiros morphology and habits. I also had the privilege and honor to access Ivar Da Coll's work from two, then unimagined, perspectives: first as editor and then as writer.

While I directed the children's books collection at a Spanish publishing house whose name I do not wish to remember, I made a decision. I chose to combat the myopia of which I had been a victim by ensuring at least 20% of the published books were by Latin American writers and illustrators. This objective led me to meet a large number of authors, our creator included. I first developed a relationship with him as an editor, and published three books for him: *Pies para la princesa*, *El niño que no sabía escribir*, and a third one with illustrations made

by him and text created by Ana Maria Machado: *¡Menuda Fiesta!* This was a strictly virtual relationship, but believe me, in it I was already able to perceive the humble and tolerant attitude of the great creators.

A few years later, I travelled to Bogota where I personally met Ivar Da Coll. We did not know then, but I actually met him through María Osorio, the person who would later become the editor of a book written by me and illustrated by Ivar. The book, published by Babel is titled: *Lo que más me gusta*. To write these sentences I summoned three souls: the reader's, the editor's and the writer's. I now stay only with the first one and speak to you from there. In my opinion, the work of this illustrator and writer entails the existence of an aesthetic universe that combines two speeches: the graphic and the textual, which is sometimes even literary.

Just as with all great creators, with no need to name names, of picturebooks and illustrated books, his stories belong in a territory where text and illustration create a single, inseparable story. One which is rarely portrayed when these two elements proceed from two different people.

Whether it be in the picturebook genre, where I will quote *Tengo miedo*, or in illustrated books, where I will reference *Supongamos*, Ivar's creative speech has identity marks and recognizable traits that make it singular. The same way in which we recognize a book by Ungerer, or Burningham or Browne, we can also recognize a book written by Ivar Da Coll.

In my opinion *Supongamos* is one of the smartest books I have used among young readers. The tension in the story, along with the simultaneous alternation of text and illustration create a sequence in which images have an ambivalent character. On the one hand they recreate and illuminate what has already been told. The pause created when looking at the story feeds the tension the reader has developed. The reader is torn between pausing to take in the graphic image or push forward through the plot to satiate his curiosity and discover how the story unfolds.

*Tengo Miedo* is "major words", an expression used in Spain when referring to something that is excellent. This picturebook, published in 2012, leads to blurry chronological time and instead provides time and space that is alien but captivating, moving and fascinating. In the same way as in our relationship with canonical fiction, but with an added plastic-based perspective derived from the beauty of illustration, we are overwhelmed by a story. Even more, we are treated with an edition that turns a book into a piece of art.

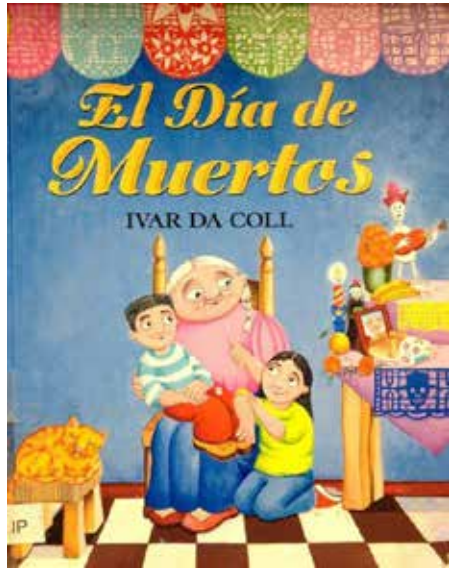
Thank you, Ivar, for gifting us dreams beyond reason.



*El día de muertos, 2003*







## 10 OF HIS MOST IMPORTANT TITLES

Organized in order of their last edition, this, we consider are the ten most important books in Ivar Da Coll's literary production.

*Day of the Death* -El día de muertos-. Lectorum, 2003

*Sugar!* -¡Azúcar!- Lectorum, 2005

In Spanish "Azúcar". This book is a written and illustrated bibliography about Celia Cruz life, the Queen of Salsa. Azúcar was a classic words she used in all of her concerts.

*Chigüiro rides in Chiva* -Chigüiro viaja en chiva-, Chigüiro series, 6 titles. Babel, 2005

*Chigüiro goes away* -Chigüiro se va- Babel, 2006

*To a Man with a Big Nose* -A un hombre de gran nariz- Babel, 2007

*Illustrated Stories* -Cuentos pintados de Rafael Pombo- Babel, 2008

*I'm Scared (Eusebio's Stories I, new edition)* -Tengo miedo- Babel, 2012

*Hamamelis and the Secret* -Hamamelis y el secreto- Ekaré, 2014

*No, it was not me!* -¡No, no fui yo!- Babel, 2014

*Mr. José Tomillo.* José Tomillo SM, 2015

The five books sent, are submitted in their original language and their translations to English. In the case of *Mr. Jose Tomillo* and *No, it was not me!* which are rhyming books the translations were carefully made but to make them rhyme completely we would have to alter the original sense.

## REVIEWS ON THE BOOKS SUBMITTED

### SERIE CHIGÜIRO

Bogotá: Babel, 2005

María Elena Maggi, "Ivar Da Coll y la poética del libro-álbum". En: *Ivar Da Coll y la crítica. Cuadernos de Literatura Infantil Colombiana* N°1, Biblioteca Nacional de Colombia, Bogotá, octubre de 2007.

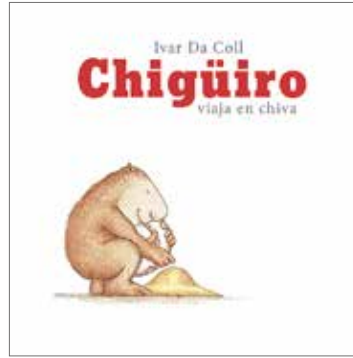
With Chigüiro's series, which appeared for the first time in 1985, Da Coll offers us, in a sequence of images without words, short stories starring little chigüiro in which reactions, emotions and imagination of children are reflected in situations —ordinary or fantastic— related with games, curiosity, discoveries and interaction with their pairs. Da Coll creates an original character through exaggeration of some features of the animal, such as the width of the nose and the length of its whiskers, as well as the reduction of others to their minimum expression, such as eyes —a small oblique streak—; he retains their nakedness but its gestures and positions are those of a child, and its grace and movements contradict the weight of the animal. A series that addresses the game of imagination, appeals to basic feelings or emotions and, incorporates, at the same time, "metaliterary" or "metafictional" games that go beyond the fiction framework or book limits when posing an interaction with the reader. Books that, due to their size, can easily be manipulated by young children who cannot yet read, but who begin to become independent, and surely will want to take it to bed or keep it between their toys.

## CHIGÜIRO VIAJA EN CHIVA -CHIGÜIRO RIDES IN CHIVA-

Bogotá: Babel, 2005

From: Canal lector

Book album without words from the most famous character of Ivar Da Coll's work, Chigüiro. This time Chigüiro evokes Colombian culture when traveling in chiva, a public bus without doors that traditionally travels through rural areas transporting peasants as well as food and merchandise and that these usually sell in the marketplace. With humor and tenderness, the book tells the adventure of Chigüiro, the monkey driver, and a country hen when the Chiva suffers a flat tyre and Chigüiro has to find a recursive solution to be able to continue the journey.



A Chiva is an artisan rustic bus used in Colombia as a public transport in the mountainous geography of the Andean region. Buses are painted colourfully, have a ladder to the rack of the roof which is also used for carrying people, livestock and merchandise.

## TENGO MIEDO -I AM SCARED-

Historias de Eusebio I, nueva edición, Babel

Libros 2012. Por Adolfo Córdoba,  
en su blog: Linternas y bosques.

<https://linternasybosques.wordpress.com/2015/05/28/tengo-miedo-y-tu-no-me-vas-a-creer/>

com/2015/05/28/tengo-miedo-y-tu-no-me-vas-a-creer/

The title has sufficient force page by page with a series of monsters, wicked and cruel, that reveal fears and collective injustices and give universality to nocturnal fear that seemed exclusive (and imaginary) to the child.



"It is time to sleep". This is the first line of the text. It could be the start of a tale full of commonplaces and good wishes, but the phrase rests on a double page that resignifies it: we see two trees without leaves or birds, purple as the sky, almost scratching with its branches the roof of a house, which are closed on it. Then Eusebio, small and sunk in a big bed, already trapped by the night. He cannot close his eyes, he covers himself with the sheet up to his nose, vigilant, expecting the worst. And of that stillness full of objects that surrounds him, six monsters emerge.

Eusebio escapes, leaves his house, runs, feels persecuted, falls, hides behind a tree ... until he finally reaches his friend Ananias' home. Then he tells him why he is afraid. Ananias listens, patiently.

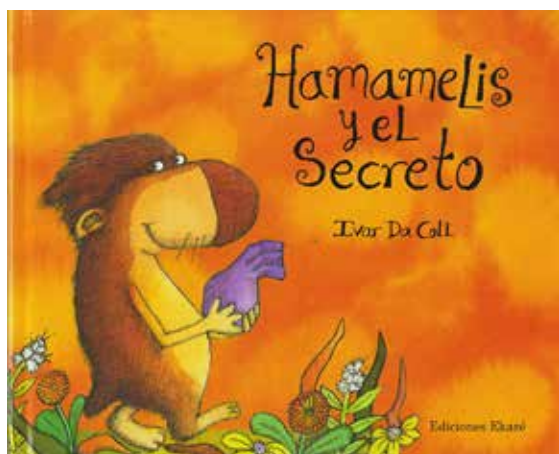
Eusebio's monsters and ghosts seem to be responsible for natural



disasters and social suffering. Displacement, migration, disappearance, and violence Come up every time Eusebio describes a monster giving the story another dimension, that of a reality that can be monstrous.

The dialogues between what is said with words and what is said with images have the strength and precision of an author like Ivar Da Coll, who writes and draws, in *I'm Scared* a clear heir of Sendak and Angela Lago's *Chiquita Bacana*. The text says nothing else, the illustrations do not solve everything nor are they patronizing. Eusebio and Ananías's eyes express concern. Monsters appear destroying houses, hunting people, burning towns, and then mistreating each other: they step on each other's faces, pull each other, tie one of them to a tree.

However, the rounded shapes of the monsters, their hands and fat paws, their bushy eyebrows and chubby faces, soften and even become gentle to generate, also, a certain empathy with them, necessary for the consolation that Ananías gives Eusebio. The eyes of the monsters change: first, they look dominating and malevolent, then unhappy and fearful. They tell the reader, and Eusebio, forcefully: "me too".



#### HAMAMELIS Y EL SECRETO

#### -HAMAMELIS AND THE SECRET-

Caracas: Ediciones Ekaré, Colección Ponte poronte, 1993 / 2014.

Tomada de: Fundalectura, Hojas de lectura N° 29, agosto de 1994.

Miosotis has given Hamamelis a secret and has asked him to keep it very well. Hamamelis does so... but his friends arrive and want to know the secret. They tempt him with cinnamon cookies and dances; Hamamelis loves sweets and dances, but... a secret is a secret. Ivar Da Coll, author and illustrator of several series of illustrious books has created here a group of friends with suggestive names: Hamamelis, Basil, Miosotis and Calendula.

Fundalectura. En: Ivar Da Coll y la crítica. Cuadernos de literatura infantil

colombiana n°.1, Biblioteca Nacional de Colombia, Bogotá, Octubre 2007.

As Hamamelis has a reputation for being very discreet, Miosotis, his best friend, brings home a little secret for him to keep. Hamamelis carefully deposits the secret in a crate, along with a sword, a prince's crown and a striped ball. But ... the secret starts to move and make strange noises. Hamamelis will have to fight against the curiosity caused by the noise, resist to the temptation to open the crate that contains the secret, and most importantly, he will have to be strong not to be convinced by his friend Calendula, who offers him some delicious cookies, in change of knowing the secret. What a mess!

María Elena Maggi, "Ivar Da Coll y la poética del libro-álbum". En: *Ivar Da Coll y la crítica. Cuadernos de Literatura Infantil Colombiana* N°1, Biblioteca Nacional de Colombia, Bogotá, octubre de 2007.

One day on an excursion, Da Coll asked the name of some seeds which turned out to be from a plant called Hamamelis. Attracted by the word, he began to think of other species he liked and to create stories starring creatures that did not look like any other. So even though these two hairy, bulging-eyed beings have some animal characteristics - tail, legs, snout – and could be associated with rodents, they belong to the realm of the fantastic and the plant world, what is perceived on the covers of the books: titles framed by branches and flowers and a surface showing the texture of the gouache, the moisture of the paper and the fading of the color, suggest a wooded area whose hue continues in some guards in which small drawings are inserted with elements which are fundamental to the stories (toy or gift boxes and others).

El señor Sorpresa es un misterioso personaje al quien nadie ve, pero que todos conocen. Cuando se acerca la época de su visita, las casas se decoran con velas de colores, cintas y guirnaldas de flores, y detrás de las puertas se colocan bolsas para que, al pasar, el señor Sorpresa deje allí los regalos que previamente se le han pedido en una carta que se coloca sobre el tejado, para que el viento la lleve a su destino. Hamamelis y Miosotis, dos amigos que gustan de visitarse para conversar mientras toman tazas de cacao caliente o de leche azucarada y comen galletas de mazapán o de canela, también hacen sus peticiones al esperado visitante. Solo que, en lugar de solicitarle obsequios para sí mismos, prefieren pedirle algo que, con certeza, hará feliz a su vecino.

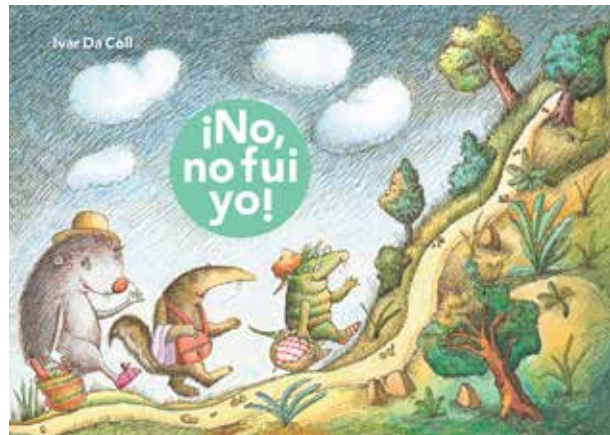
### **¡NO, NO FUI YO!**

#### **-NO, IT WAS NOT ME!-**

Bogotá: Babel, 2014. Tomado de: Jael Stella Gómez en Revista 50 libros sin cuenta, de la Red Prolectura, Colombia.

Once again Ivar Da Coll surprises us with a story full of grace and mischief full of his known characters taken from animals but without letting us recognize any in particular.

A theme that children will love because it humorously expresses the rawness of the eschatological. Situations that arouse a smile from complicity and tenderness in the adventures of three great friends who go for a walk, sleep together, and mutually believe each other's invention of strange characters, fabled to blame them for the noises that they themselves produce.





With great success, Ivar Da Coll, through a simple story, approaches us once again to the profound relationship between the beautiful and the simple, evidencing how art becomes a resource to get closer to the harshness of reality, a tactic that through the gift of verses turns crude into beautiful.

Despite the great concern of some parents and teachers for watching over certain issues for the children—a concern that arises from an immaculate conception of childhood—the author suggests the need to recognize that our body produces noises that we cannot control and that actually occur at the moment less expected, beyond the shame and the need to show a good behavior.

María Elena Maggi, "Ivar Da Coll y la poética del libro-álbum". En: *Ivar Da Coll y la crítica. Cuadernos de Literatura Infantil Colombiana* N°1, Biblioteca Nacional de Colombia, Bogotá, octubre de 2007.

*No, it was not me!:* transgression and humor at full speed and in full color. Juan, a crocodile, José, an anteater, and Simon, a guinea pig, go hiking with their baskets full of food. In the mountain, they eat and they rest. When they prepare to return, a wind blows out of Juan; when asked who it was, he says it wasn't him, that it was a giant ogre. They run away in terror, and when they sit down to rest, Simon burps; when they ask him who it was, he says he doesn't know, and invents it was a ferocious lion. They escape at full speed, and when they stop, José gets a mucus, but he says it was not him but a large bird that flapped past. They come home very tired and lie down to sleep, while strange noises produced by true monsters are heard from the ceiling.

The story, told in eight-syllable verses, in the manner of certain humorous poems like the Colombian Rafael Pombo or the Venezuelan Aquiles Nazoa, addresses an eschatological and transgressive theme, which intention is also perceived in the creation of funny characters, lively and expressive, in well worked illustrations in ink and nib with colors a little higher, a stroke of greater strength, and more gestural and disorderly line oriented to the right, which produces a favored speed and movement effect as well because of the landscape format of the publication. Images that also recreate the phases of the day, from morning to night, and increase based on the tensest moments in history: the episodes in which the characters run very scared before a landscape with haunting-looking trees.

A book that produces loud laughter in children, liberation of guilt and a lot of fun, which also establishes a creative dialogue, an intertextual relationship with the book *Where The Wild Things Are* by Maurice Sendak's, by recreating and incorporating elements and references of that book—three characters, the threatening forest and

the bedroom—, as a tribute by the Ivar Da Coll to this book creator of album books that has positively influenced him

## EL SEÑOR JOSÉ TOMILLO

### -MR. JOSE TOMILLO-

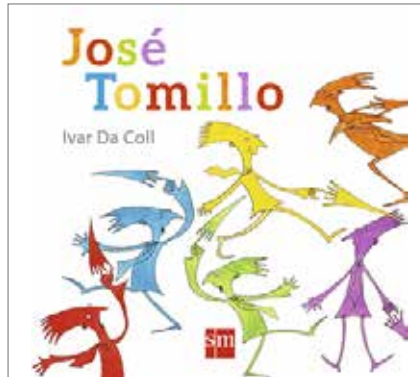
*José Tomillo*, SM, 2015. Tomado de:

Fundalectura. En: *Ivar Da Coll y la crítica. Cuadernos de Literatura Infantil Colombiana* N°1, Biblioteca Nacional de Colombia, Bogotá, octubre de 2007.

Mr. José Tomillo is giving a walk.

Suddenly something itches him. He starts to feel itchy and change colors,

going from red to black and, in between of his anguish, from green to blue and then to purple. An ambulance rescues and takes him to the hospital, where a doctor saves him. With excellent rhythm, this is a story full of humor that, incidentally, teaches colors to children. The management of perspective and gestures, abundant details, make this a fun and unforgettable story.



El Banco del libro recomienda,

los mejores libros para niños, 2000

The yellow Mr. José Tomillo is ill and decides to go for a walk. As he walks, he changes color until he is colorless. A book full of humor and originality. Postulated for the best children's books of the year 2000.

## PRESS RELEASE

Since the beginning of his career, the national and foreign press has taken care to review Ivar Da Coll's work. We present here a small sample and we have translated his first interview in the Credencial magazine, published in Colombia in 1992 and his last interview conducted by the Ministry of Culture of Colombia in 2014 in which Ivar talks about his work and his task as an author and illustrator.

**2016, October 11th.** "A Sweet Story from Ivar Da Coll", by Daniela Vernaza Vicetta. Arcadia. Recovered from <https://www.revistaarcadia.com/libros/articulo/medias-dulces-de-ivar-da-coll/56981>

**2015, March 15th.** "The Wildlife of Ivar Da Coll, Colombian Children's Literature Icon", interview by Catalina Gallo. Bocas. Recovered from <https://www.eltiempo.com/archivo/documento/CMS-16537613>

**2015, November 28th.** "The Writer and Illustrator Ivar Da Coll Receives Award in Guadalajara", by Carlos Restrepo. El Tiempo. Recovered from <https://www.eltiempo.com/archivo/documento/CMS-14902698>

**2014, June 11th.** Ivar Da Coll: much more than pretty drawings. Interview by Juan Carlos Millán Guzmán. Recovered from <http://www.mincultura.gov.co/prensa/noticias/Paginas/Ivar-Da-Coll-muchom%C3%A1s-que-dibujos-bonitos.aspx>

**2000, November 1st.** "Ivar Da Coll". Imaginaria Digital Magazine nº 7, Buenos Aires, Argentina. Recovered from <https://www.imaginaria.com.ar/03/7/dacoll5.htm>

**1992, october 1st.** "Chigüiro's dad", by Olga Viviana Guerrero. Credencial Magazine.



**EL CHIGÜIRO.** El bogotano Ivar Da Coll ha dedicado 30 de sus 52 años a dibujar animales e ilustrar con ellos sus cuentos infantiles. Miles de colombianos de varias generaciones han crecido leyendo, entre muchas otras historias, las aventuras de su Chigüiro. Por su trayectoria, el lunes la Feria Internacional del Libro de Guadalajara, la más importante de América Latina, decidió otorgarle el premio Iberoamericano de Literatura Infantil y Juvenil.



# Ivar Da Coll recibe premio en Guadalajara

El ilustrador y escritor bogotano será uno de los protagonistas de la feria del libro mexicana.

Carlos Restrepo  
Cultura y Entretenimiento

El bogotano Ivar Da Coll, ilustrador y escritor, recuerda con claridad uno de sus libros preferidos de infancia, de aquellos que le enviaban sus familiares de Suecia, de donde era su mamá. "Recuerdo en especial uno, que eran unos niños que dibujaban, y lo que dibujaban se les volvía real. Entonces, pintaron un tigre que comenzó a perseguirlos y para frenarlo, los niños pintaron una jaula y lo encerraron".

Quizás, esas primeras historias fueron la semilla fructífera en la carrera del artista bogotano, nacido en 1962, de cuya producción ya tiene el orgullo de sumar varios libros y reconocimientos. Entre ellos, el X Premio Iberoamericano SM de Literatura Infantil y Juvenil, uno de los más prestigiosos en ese campo, que el autor recibirá en el marco de la Feria Internacional del Libro de Guadalajara, que hoy abre sus puertas.

"Creo que este es un reconocimiento al trabajo de un autor y a la voz de un ilustrador, e igualmente es un reconocimiento para muchos de mis colegas colombianos que hoy trabajan en los dos campos", dice Da Coll, quien también fue

## Otros libros

Da Coll también es autor de "Marmelita y el secreto", "Marmelita y el señor Sorpresa", "Tengo miedo", "Torta de cumpleaños", "No fui yo" y "Azúcar", la biografía de Celia Cruz.

postulado en 1999 al Premio Hans Christian Andersen, considerado el Nobel en el campo de la literatura infantil y juvenil. Da Coll cuenta que su puerta de entrada a la ilustración fue por el mundo de los "Itteres", a los 11 años, cuando ingresó al grupo Titeres Callebe, para no solo manipular los muñecos, sino pintar las escenografías. Luego se inclinó en la ilustración, cuando la editorial Norma le propuso que ilustrara algunos de sus libros. Por esa época, el autor dio vida a Chigüiro, su primer personaje infantil, con el que han crecido varias generaciones de la región. "Fue un reto muy grande porque yo nunca había he-

cho un libro", anota, al destacar que el encantador personaje surgió como boceto para una pequeña historia que iba a circular con una bebida juvenil. Luego, a Norma le encantó para una colección de seis libros. "Por lo general, en literatura infantil, los personajes animales logran crear una identificación muy rápida con el lector porque son neutrales. La intención de Chigüiro era crear un personaje con el que los niños se identificarían en sus situaciones cotidianas y que fuera muy cariñoso", dice.

Da Coll anota que, hasta entonces, los libros de cuentos para los niños más pequeños no eran tan comunes. "Había muchos autores colombianos para edades mayores, como Jairo Anibal Niño, Celso Román o Fanny Buitrago, pero no había para muy chiquitos", comenta. Si bien prácticamente toda la obra de Da Coll ha sido hecha de manera manual, hace poco más de un año dio el salto al mundo digital. "Inicé en acuarela, y encima la línea la hacía con tinta china y rapidógrafo. Luego, la última etapa la trabajé con tempera".

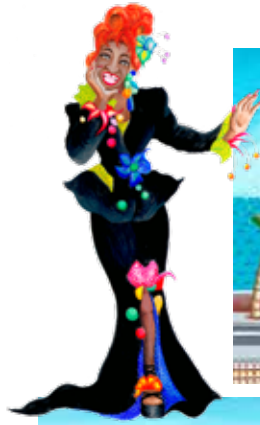
Este apasionado de la lectura, cuyos libros han sido traducidos al portugués y ha publicado en países como España, México, Venezuela y Estados Unidos, aprovecha para prender las alarmas sobre la situación de la literatura infantil actual.

"Me preocupa que la estructura narrativa se está diluyendo. Se están haciendo libros con imágenes muy bonitas, pero con historias débiles. Yo creo que hay que poner cuidado a eso, porque es muy importante saber cómo contar una historia, con un comienzo y un fin, con una coherencia donde hay unos personajes que son dialécticos, que van unos en contra de otros", concluye.



Ivar Da Coll en su estudio de Chigüiro, personaje más conocido en la literatura infantil colombiana. (Cortina)





¡Azúcar!, 2005



## PRESS RELEASE / INTERVIEWS

### CHIGÜIRO'S DAD

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*"The first memory I have of myself is of me drawing. . . When I was a boy I used to draw angels. I wanted to be a painter."*

A huge terrace opens way for the morning sun. Ivar Da Coll –tall, with glasses– organizes his day. He is now 30 years old but he keeps in touch with the children's world because he is one of the most successful authors of children's stories. Children don't know him, but many are familiar with the chigüiros and their adventures, because his books sell like oven-fresh bread. His books will soon travel beyond Colombian borders: an American publishing house —Houghton Mifflin— and a Venezuelan one —Ediciones Ekaré— have bought rights to his stories.

*"I am currently working with animals and bugs, or strange creatures. Animals have very defined characteristics: cats are animals because they have a tail, ears, clear eyes, and whiskers. On the other hand, I couldn't say if bugs are mammals, or what. They are hybrids, mammals that lay eggs, or mouses with manes, or some harebrained thing like that.*

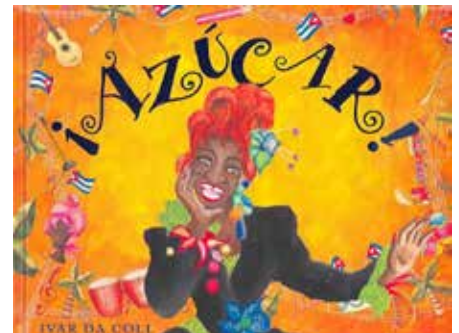
*I really like animals because they are unconditional. An animal doesn't care who you are, and they love you just because. That is what is attractive to me about a bug. And children are receptive to that."*

From one of the freshly-painted rooms comes Rosa, swaying her hips, shy but elegant. She's a sophisticated one, with beautifully soft grey fur. Disdainfully she finds her place on the carpet floor, and insolently ignores that she has stolen attention from the conversation going on in the living room. Then Ivar becomes the true Italian gentleman: he takes her by the waist, lifts her, sits her on his lap, and introduces her: *I am amazed she came out, she's very shy. She is Rosa.* This delicate blue-eyed siamese cat is his unconditional partner. She knows exactly when to approach and when to disappear. She listens and understands and does not chide.

Ivar is a shy guy, like his cat. When he speaks of his life he does so with short phrases, simple answers, elementary arguments. He is not lavish with words, as he is not lavish with images. He believes the secret to his success has been clarity. But his thoughts are more complicated. He does not share them because he feels examined, intimidated, scrutinized.

*I was born at the Clínica Palermo. My father was from northern Italy. My mother is of Swedish father and Colombian mother. His father arrived in Colombia fleeing the post-war economic depression in*

A 30-year-old draftsman is becoming a favorite author amongst children. Ivar Da Coll, creator of "El chigüiro," is a solitary man who is happy creating stories that make others happy. Olga Viviana Guerrero, magazine Credencial, October 1992.



Europe and settled down to make eyeglasses for a living. It was what he knew how to do, as he came from an ophthalmological town in Italy. His mother was a pianist and the artistic vein of the family. She taught her three children that choosing a career in the arts was the same as becoming an engineer, a doctor, or a scientist. Only a little different.

School was not his weak spot. When he could, he would stay at home drawing or doing anything else he was not obligated to do.

*I hated waking up early in the mornings, but you have to do it, especially at an age when you, precisely, need many hours of sleep. I wouldn't say I was a bad student. I absolutely hated homework and the teachers who made you work because they were experts at giving you a guilty conscience. Even though I hated numbers, I made an effort and was able to get good at math. When I started college, I did a semester of Fine Arts at the [Universidad] Nacional [de Colombia] and found it abominable."*

Before he took up writing children's stories as a serious profession, he worked with the puppet ensemble of Julia de Rodríguez. His best character was Genoveva, an intelligent and mischievous little girl who put others in a rough spot with her indiscrete comments. And as he did not stick to the script, the ones most taken by surprise with Genoveva's comments were the other puppeteers.

His involvement with children's literature was almost coincidental. He began illustrating some stories Julia de Rodríguez had written for her grand-daughter. He then illustrated other people's stories until he began writing his own plots, which he gathers from an inventory of old anecdotes, things that happen on the street, from his friends, his life. Although his creative peaks come when he is very depressed.

Few people really know this 30-year-old trouble-maker. Behind that solitary visage, though he may not admit to it, very funny things happen. And being in Ivar's presence can be risky for those who take themselves too seriously. Though he really is very shy and timid, there are hundreds of caricaturesque images that cross his mind of everything that surrounds him. His world is made up of animals and strange creatures, and it would not be farfetched to say that one of them could become a famous export-quality character.

*It's true. Sometimes I see people and imagine them as animals. I like looking at people that way. Not so long ago I drew an 'hamamelis' – a sort of mouse with a punk hairdo – and I found it very similar to someone. Most probably what has endured from my childhood pours out when I write. I think I have not lost the simple, elemental, and above all, clear optical viewpoint of a child. And that clarity must always be present in children's narration, no matter how intense the situation described is.*

A lot of people say that these stories that don't take up more than three sheets of paper are not literature. I really don't consider myself an author, or a literary figure. I am only interested in telling stories that have made me happy and that can make others happy. I like the situations, I like the characters, I like what is happening and when I feel the result is a good one, I make it my purpose to publish it. Fortunately, I have succeeded. I am satisfied with my work and I believe in what I do."

## IVAR DA COLL: MUCH MORE THAN PRETTY DRAWINGS

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"One of the very serious aspects that is going on with children's literature now a days is the negative approach given to the narrative sphere: the structure in which there is a story, a conflict and a clear solution, which avoids making the narrative a dotted line, and the author has to create characters that are somehow dialectical, so that there's a thought on the narrated conflict", emphasizes the author and illustrator of classics such as *Chigüiro*, *Tengo miedo*, o *¡No, no fui yo!*

"A good part of children's literature today has become a mere enunciative question, in which they believed that it is enough to accompany any text with a series of beautiful pictures to solve the problem and deliver a product to the child. Time will tell if this trend or has some kind of validity", points out Da Coll

### FROM PUPPETS TO PENCILS

*What came first, your interest in literature or illustration?*

This was a process as I began to work with puppets and drew a lot, in such a way the fusion of those two activities led me towards the path of picture books for children, which I have always maintained in parallel with the world of puppets. While drawings have two dimensions, puppets are in three dimensions.

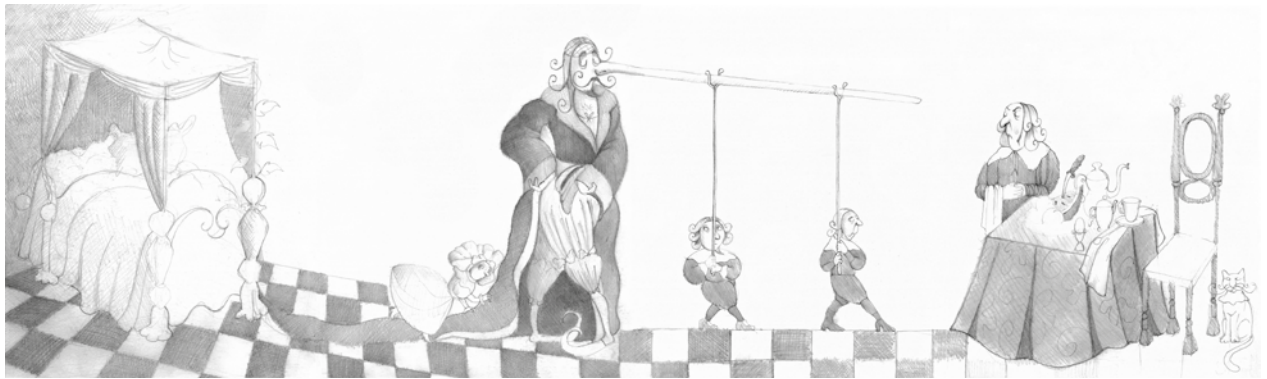
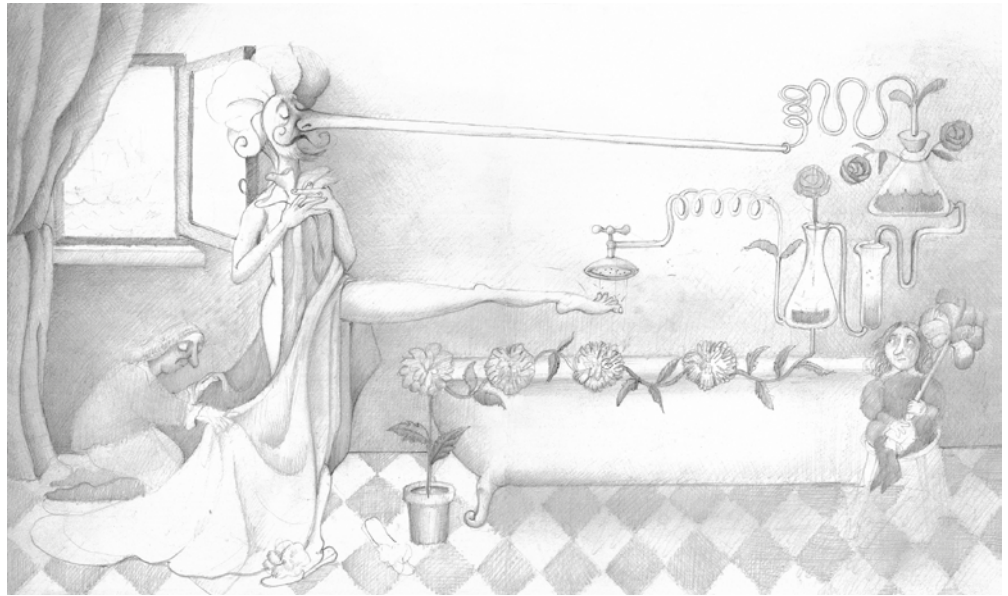
*Why did you start working with puppets?*

Julia Rodríguez was the person responsible for this; I was 11 years old and she ran the Cocoliche group; my dad had passed away, and this was a form of support as I had to analyze the characters, design them and also act with them. When I was around 15 years old, we decided to do our first serious production with blackjack puppets, with *El retablillo de Don Cristóbal*, by Federico García Lorca, in which I played Don Cristóbal.

Recently awarded the X SM Ibero-American Prize of Literature for Children and Young Adults, Ivar Da Coll is Considered one of the most outstanding illustrators and writers of children's books in the country and Latin America, in addition to the recent recognition granted by the SM Foundation, Ivar Da Coll has devoted the majority of his career to work on behalf of children throughout an extensive trajectory of infinite dedication towards a literary genre. Children's literature until relatively recently began to be recognized at the national level after decades of fighting a battle with a handful of people who had to forge themselves, using work and experience.

By Juan Carlos Millán Guzman  
Communications  
Ministry of Culture

<https://www.mincultura.gov.co/prensa/noticias/Paginas/Ivar-Da-Coll-mucho-m%C3%A1s-que-dibujos-bonitos.aspx>



A un hombre de gran nariz, 2007



*What did you learn from this experience?*

With Julia I learned to work with professionalism, mystique, and passion, and this has become the path of my life to work with great responsibility and dedication.

*What books accompanied your childhood and later stage as a puppeteer?*

My mother used to read to us what was available in Spanish at that time: practically the classics of children's literature: The Brothers Grimm, Charles Perrault, Hans Christian Andersen. Between 1982 and 1985, the contemporary literature that was being made both in Europe and North America began to be translated, which I knew, thanks to the fact that Julia based many of her stories on those texts, which she would later present on a television program of that era.

*When was the definitive transition to illustration?*

That was also the product of an accident, I was going to study Fine Arts—in fact, I managed to attend a semester— and a Mexican friend who worked in an anthology of children's literature invite me to Editorial Presencia where I did my first illustrations for a printed book. Later I met Silvia Castrillón, who started a project with Editorial Norma, to make children's literature, with the participation of Colombian authors and illustrators.

*At that time this was a non-existent activity in our country...*

The idea of an illustrated children's book did not exist in Colombia, although it cannot be ignored that already at that time there were very important authors dedicated to children's literature such as Elisa Mujica, Antonio Caballero Calderón, Fanny Buitrago, Jairo Aníbal Niño—at this point I cannot remember all the names—; some of them received awards such as the Enka Prize, and others published works aimed at children and young people with Carlos Valencia Editores. Some writers thought about books, but the conception of the illustrated book for children—and especially for young children— did not exist. This began with Silvia, around the figure of a Colombian animal that was on the way to extinction, and from there arises my character Chigüiro.

*What would be the reason for the disparity between the children's book and its illustration process?*

Even though several approaches have been made to the illustrated book for some time—among its pioneers are Beatrix Potter, Edward Lear, Arthur Rackham, Lewis Carroll, and John Tenniel—, what we know as children's literature thought of the child as a person who deserves respect, is very young.





*Why did you quit collage?*

When you want to dedicate yourself to a creative profession, you seek to do it in a responsible and committed way; in such a way that the type of education proposed by the University at that time was a bit the prolongation of some dynamics typical of the school that bothered me a lot, and that is why I decided to dedicate myself to work independently.

## CHIGÜIRO

*How did the idea for Chigüiro arise?*

Silvia Castrillón was the Director of Fine Arts at the Pedagogical University and even though I did not have any professional degree, I was a very young teacher —at that time I was 20 or 21 years old— Silvia always treated me with great respect, which was not the case even with the students. That's where the idea of Chigüiro came up, but the possibility that it was a toucan or an armadillo was also considered. Although it was conceived as a single book, then a project was proposed to deliver a total of 6 Chigüiros, of which two deliveries had to be made every six months, based on five other stories that I had to create. The appointment for the first installment was a Monday at 7:00 in the morning at Editorial Norma and by 11:00 at night I had practically finished the illustrations of the first three books. I put the pictures on the floor and started crying because they looked horrible to me.

*Does it happen frequently?*

It always does. Generally speaking, when I am in the final stage of a book I think that I could have done it differently, or that it could have been better, but since the books need a continuity in the images, what I do is to follow the work as responsible as possible, because this is also part of the learning process.

*How important was Chigüiro in the history of the picture book for children?*

Thanks to Silvia Castrillón and that ambitious project, which was also very successful, fabulous illustrators such as Alekos, Olga Cuéllar, and a series of people who continue to work in a very committed way to write children's books emerged. As my concern was the youngest children, I dedicated myself to work and research on this specific aspect of children's literature. The result of this are some books for Ediciones Ekaré in Venezuela, also I have done some illustrations for books of different authors, such as textbooks and some anthologies.

*How were the illustrators of that time formed?*

When I started doing this, no school contemplated the possibility

that illustration could be a career; you could study graphic design and at one point someone could take a risk of illustrate the cover of a magazine or a book, but that was it. As children's literature was not considered as a subject that could be studied in the Faculties of Philosophy and Letters or Literature, our only option was to train ourselves through experience and in a self-taught way.

## **WRITE, ILLUSTRATE, READ AND RESEARCH**

*How important is the text in your books?*

Text is one of the hardest things to do. I spend a long time thinking about the catching phrase to start the book, and it takes me a long time to establish how I am going to say something in a literary way. That idea that comes to my mind and I want to write about. Fortunately, I can draw, because while I do it I can think of other things. This is part of a process that takes place very slowly.

*What comes first, the text or the illustration?*

Currently, I work simultaneously on both things because sometimes, when there is an idea and the text does not flow, the drawing manages to pull the words.

*Borges used to describe his creative process as the product of a very specific idea with a beginning and an end. Does something similar happen to you?*

When a story has to come up it appears, and then you sit down to write it. But before that happens there is a lot of reflection on one or more ideas; from this point onwards, I know I have to be very patience to reach the result I'm aiming.

*Many of the characters in your works are animals. Any particular reason?*

The child creates an identification with the animal by some of its characteristics; animals usually have a friendly appearance; the texture of his coat, for example, can be very attractive and makes the character someone likable with whom a connection is quickly made in the emotional part. Additionally, you do not have the potential problem that would arise if it were another child or a person with their particular characteristics. In general, animals offer much greater variety than people, although lately, I have also worked with characters with human characteristics.

*Do you carry out any type of prior investigation? How is it documented?*

Of course, and that is one of the things on the internet that one could find favorable because the truth is that there is a large amount of



graphic material and references such as photographs of animals and texts that greatly facilitate the work. Behind each book, there is a large amount of research: to represent landscapes I observe the type of flora that we have in the country, the different houses and great diversity of landscapes that exist in the countryside, the animals that are in the different regions.

*Does it happen that while you travel you start making some sketches and working on an idea?*

Always, because when you work with images—even if you do not draw them right away—you keep them in your memory. As I also write, something similar happens with words.

*For example, did you travel to any place to see chigüiros in their natural habitat?*

No, at that time I had no possibility of doing it, but I do remember visiting the INDERENA<sup>1</sup> where there was some kind of graphic material—very little, actually— so to work in *Chigüiro* I based myself on two or three photographs.

*How does a person who is meticulous at work deal with the pressures of delivering a new book?*

In the beginning, all of us had to work under pressure and we were subject to deadlines. Today, I prefer to sacrifice income for quality, in such a way that if dedicating myself to making a book implies sustaining myself for two or three years, I prefer to pull from one side and the other, than to sacrifice work to make many books, which is an option for the one that many have chosen, to the detriment of the quality and the final result. Hopefully one day we understand that people who decide to dedicate our lives to this profession, we have done it in a dedicated way and that at least when state institutions have the possibility of making book purchases, those rights that we have earned are recognized.

*Do you listen to any kind of music while you work?*

A lot! I always listen to classical music, thanks to the fact that my mother was a teacher of music appreciation, piano, and music history, and she managed to give me an education in that genre.

*What other authors have accompanied you throughout your life?*

I have not read everything I would like about Borges, because it seems to me that it is a reading that requires a type of training, but of course, there is a type of literary structure that always accompanies me and that is the story. I recently read an anthology by Eudora Welty, I also like Dorothy Parker, but the novel also attracts my attention, and in particular the stories by Patricia Highsmith.

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1 INDERENA- National Institute of Renewable Natural Resources and the Environment





I also like the classics, in the sense of works that have withstood a respectable period of time —Chesterton, for example—, and basically, I like to read those works that I know are going to be good.

*Do you leave out contemporary authors?*

I also read them, but most of the time I tend to be rather disappointed.

## CHILDREN

*To what do you attribute this contempt for children's literature and the profession of illustrating this type of books?*

As adults, we are used to referring to children as completely alien things, but that nevertheless concerns us. So much so that adults tend to identify childhood as a happy stage of life, although a child may feel much more anguish than any adult, insofar as they not only have to face a completely unknown world, but also learn to handle it. Children's literature provides various elements so that the child can learn to think and become independent. Fortunately, in the last 30 years publishers, teachers, librarians, and people from the world of books have understood the need to deliver responsible literature to children, which is becoming more and more pervasive.

*Have you used some of those recurring childhood fears in your work?*

Yes of course, there are even some anecdotes that are part of some books and are memories of my childhood. I believe that I have never distorted them, to the point that they may seem something unimportant due to the fact that a child has that type of existential anguish does not imply that they cannot be told.

*Do children participate in the creative process?*

In many cases, yes, and when I see that there is that immediate connection, then I feel very rewarded because the first gratification I have as an author and illustrator is to get to what I wanted to do; and the second, to see that receptivity on the part of the children. When this feeling that looks like the attraction between two people does not exist, I just give up.

*What role do parents play at that time?*

Borges used to say that a good book for children is a good book for adults, in such a way that parents also connect. I also believe that in our country many children either have a father, or have a mother, or have neither of them, but retain the reference of an adult who, hopefully, is affectionate and is caring for them. In such a way that in some or other of my books there is the figure of father or mother, but I try not to identify them because there you do have to be inclusive in a respectful way.

*How difficult is it to write for children who have grown up in a country permeated by armed conflict?*

It is difficult, but the work that I do through illustrated books is to bring to mind the essential need that all human beings have for affection. That is the main pillar of the work that I have done.

*Have you considered taking some of your plays to the puppet theater?*

I would love to make puppets again, but I think it would take so long to do it, either I dedicate myself to books, or I dedicate myself to puppets. If I could bring any of my works to the puppets, I would spend a lot of time making it as I want it. Perhaps the only one with which it could be possible would be *Medias dulces*, although it is a story that for obvious reasons has European roots, because it has to do with the Italian tradition that I inherited from my father.

*Filmmaker?*

Of course I would like to do some animation attempts on my own; in such a way that I am going to see if as I work on the books I can take time out of that.

*Do you like animated films?*

I try to see almost all animated films and I have a special scientific interest in everything that Walt Disney does. I watched a lot of animated Norman McLaren movies because I like tapes that fit the image: that narrate with the image; one of the directors who cared most about that aspect was Alfred Hitchcock.

*Do you work on a computer?*

Yes, basically now I work with the computer because I feel that it is something with which I can achieve the same quality that my work had when I did it manually, with the facilities that the technology offers: return in previous phases of the work without affecting the set; or the fact that working with wet materials, such as tempera, tend to dry out very quickly. However, I must clarify that the computer has only saved me those small steps because it takes practically the same amount of time to make an illustration manually.

*Did it cost you to make the transit?*

At first, I was very afraid, because I saw the computer as too Cartesian, but so much progress has been made in terms of software that one finds programs that are too similar to what one seeks to obtain with manual work. Besides, I had the experience of making the *Dini* magazine for the *Diners Magazine*, and two years ago I started to make the first drawings on the iPad.



*Tengo miedo, 2012*

*There is currently a Boom in what many call the graphic novel. Would you like to venture into this genre?*

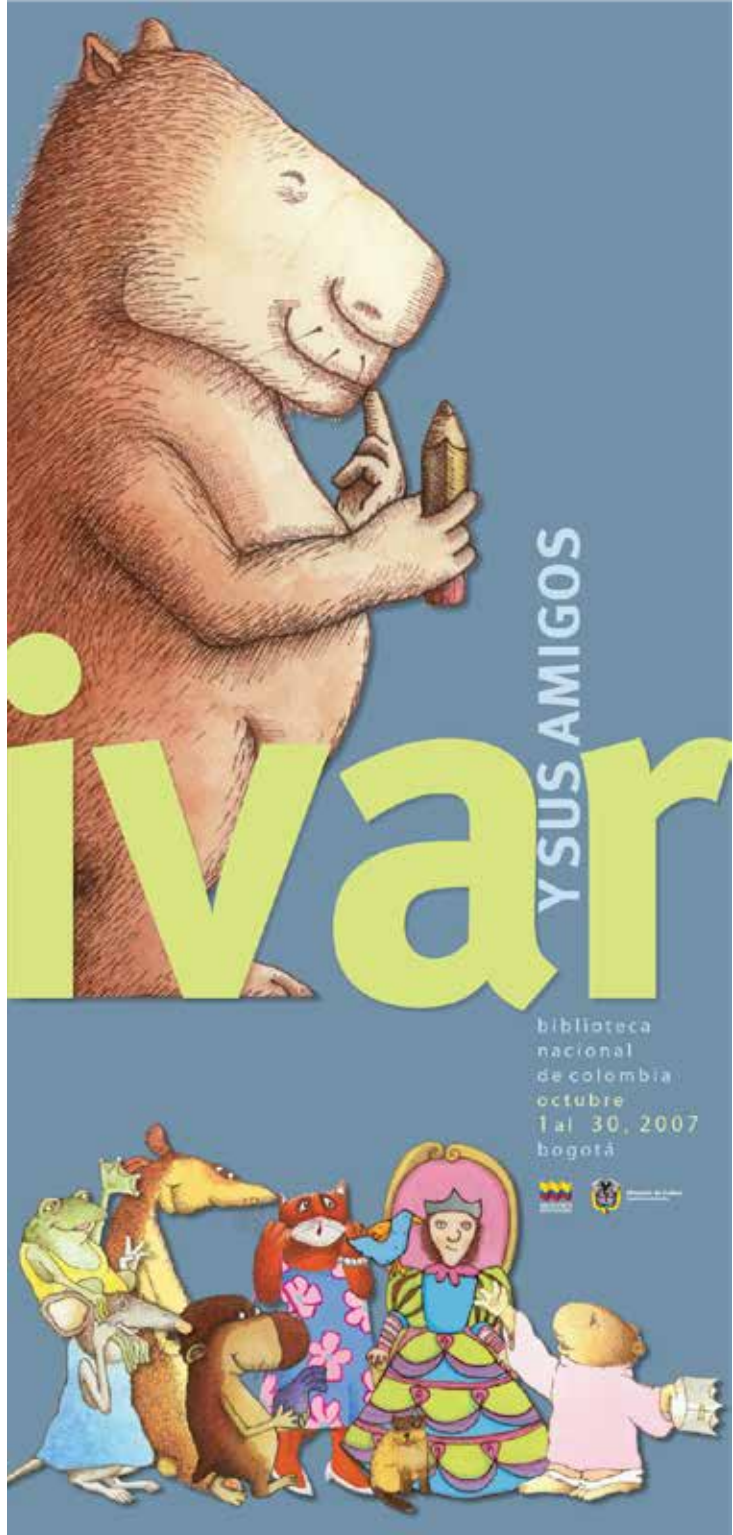
One of the terrible aspects of what they call postmodernity is that things change their name without changing their essence, although it is believed that they automatically become something else. In such a way that we no longer speak of picture books but album books. We are not talking about comics —a term that seems pejorative— or pulp fiction, but about graphic novels.

I would like someone to seriously sustain what this difference consists of, in the same way, that I dare to say that many people think they are illustrators because they draw, or who are writers because they write three lines.





## EXPOSITIONS AND TRIBUTES



# IVAR AND HIS FRIENDS

## RETROSPECTIVE, NATIONAL LIBRARY OF COLOMBIA, BOGOTÁ, 2007

The Ministry of Culture of Colombia, through the National Library, created this exhibition, that in addition to being exposed in Bogota during the month of October 2007 —When Bogota celebrated his appointment as the World Book Capital—, traveled to international fairs of Guadalajara in Mexico and Santiago de Chile during 2008. The exhibition led to the beginning of the series of publications Colombian Children's Literature Notebooks. For the first publication on Ivar Da Coll, specialists and writers were invited from different countries to reflect upon his work. Additionally, a special edition of the book Chigüiro Mouse Frog was made, to be distributed free of charge between more than five thousand children who attended the exhibition in Bogotá. The sample featured an exhibition of originals, a space for reading, signatures and drawings of the writer and a library with all his work, in addition of tours guided by reading promoters.



In this sample we appreciate the evolution of work that throughout 25 years Ivar Da Coll has developed. From the first images of Chigüiro, a character who with his stories has accompanied at least two generations of Colombians, we appreciate the great author we know now a days. A work that has consolidated step by step, which has gone growing gradually: after the first stories without text, narrated in an imaginary world and with the minimum resources, we went to the work of an author with a deep sensitivity to catch up with the gaze of the child, to symbolize his fears, his anguish, his problems, his concerns, what can be seen in all his work and especially in the new version of I'm afraid, in which he not only gives a sample of technical and interpretive mastery, but shows us a vision of our country, a critical look and an engagement that seems to date the naturalness of his brushes. The fears faced by children of today have undoubtedly changed and starkly and raw appear in these new images. We do not inaugurate just a sample, but a new way of relating to the children with the real world around us. In this exhibition the author's graphic work is highlight as well as the importance of his narrative work.

## SCRAWL AND CLEAN SLATE

### RETROSPECTIVE, CULTURAL CENTRE GARCÍA MÁRQUEZ, FONDO DE CULTURA ECONÓMICA, BOGOTÁ, OCTOBER, 2012





## TRIBUTE

During the 14th version of Children's Books Festival Book Festival, IDARTES, carried out a tribute to the writer with an interview conducted by one of his first editors, Margarita Valencia.

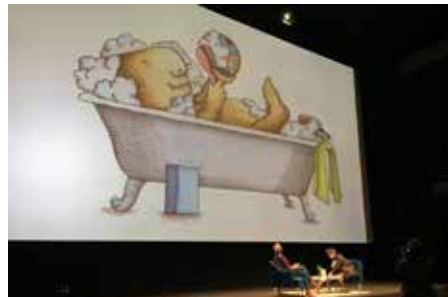
As part of the activities of the program "Book to the wind", in 2021 they will publish in the collection Eusebio's Stories: I'm scared, Birthday Cake and Scribble.

The interview was conducted at the Cinemateca Distrital of Bogota. The tribute was joined by the Colombian Book Chamber with an event in which Silvia Castrillón, first editor of the Chigüiro series; Maria Francisca Mayobre, Venezuelan editor, and Antonio Ventura, Spanish editor, participated, their partitions are included in this document.

Links to see the interview:  
<https://youtu.be/xB2bWsaTUOU>

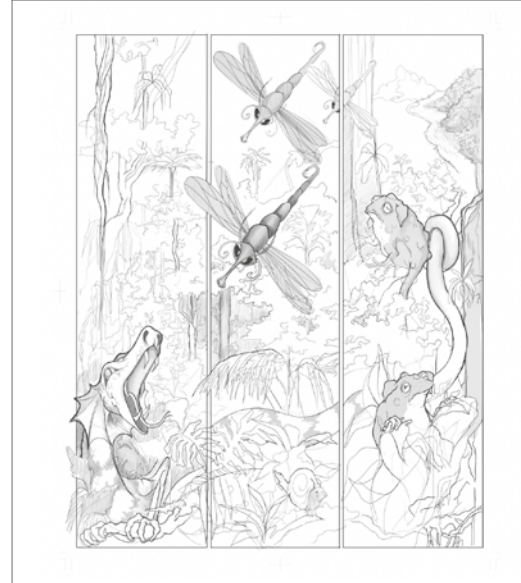
The program "Book to the wind" is a program to promote reading that seeks to transform the channels and places where books and literature circulate. It is about reaching potential readers in unconventional spaces such as parks, public transport, waiting rooms, market places, prisons, hospitals, among others, and making an alternative circulation of the book possible: copies are free of charge and once read the idea is to give them to any other reader to enjoy. The program was created in 2004; since then and to date, 116 titles of Latin American and Colombian universal literature, canonical and non-canonical, and for different age groups have been published

### TRIBUTE FROM THE DISTRICT INSTITUTE OF THE ARTS (IDARTES) AND THE COLOMBIAN BOOK CHAMBER DURING THE 14TH VERSION OF THE CHILDREN'S BOOKS FESTIVAL, BOGOTÁ, OCTOBER 2020

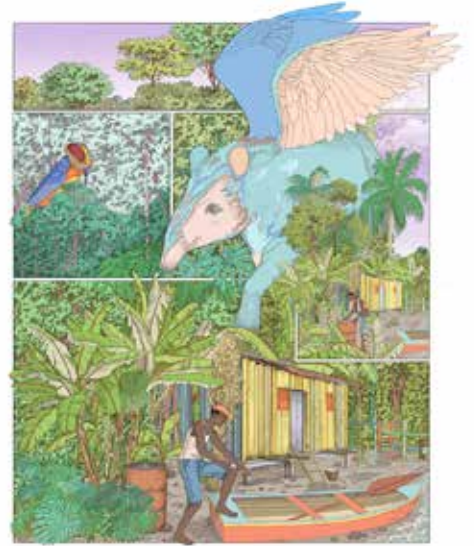




The "Wedding Romance", is the work that Ivar develops nowadays. It takes place in Chocó, in Colombia's Pacific Coast, one of the richest regions in flora and fauna, and one of the areas with the highest rainfall in the world. The author pays tribute to the black community, to their life, their environment and their culture; a work that gathers, in addition to that culture, fauna, flora and mythology by medium of images that not only go through and describe, but rather displayed in all its glory.



*Romance del casamiento*, work in progress



Fundalectura, IBBY Colombia  
Banco del Libro, IBBY Venezuela



Bogotá, 2021