

**NIKOLAUS HEIDELBACH**

Nomination for the 2024  
Hans Christian Andersen Award

# Nikolaus Heidelbach



## Nomination for the 2024 IBBY Hans Christian Andersen Award

by Arbeitskreis für Jugendliteratur e.V.,  
German IBBY Section  
Category: Illustrator

Cover illustration from *Ein Buch für Bruno*  
Self-portrait by Nikolaus Heidelbach from  
*Werkstattheft* (c.f. appendix)  
All initials from *Was machen die Jungs?*



## Table of Contents

Reasons for Nomination .....	5
Presentation of Candidate	
Not “child-friendly” in the classical sense by Maria Linsmann .....	5
Where are the Boys? An Interview with Nikolaus Heidelberg by Heike Schwering .....	10
Biography .....	14
Awards .....	15
Bibliography .....	16
Translated Editions .....	19
Press Reviews .....	20
Contact Addresses .....	26
Appendix	
Selected Articles and Press Reviews (mainly in German) .....	27



## **R**easons for Nomination

With his very first picture book, *Das Elefantentreffen* (1982; engl.: *The Meeting of the Elephants*) Nikolaus Heidelbach headed off on a course which he has remained faithful to in all his later works. Like almost no one else, he has devoted himself to depicting children's feelings and sensitivities. He succeeds in capturing the behaviour and wants or needs of children in words and images. With seemingly childlike innocence and without the slightest pedagogical impetus, he tackles topics which have commonly been tabooed in children's and youth literature, such as sexuality, death, jealousy and aggression. In all his picture book stories one senses a great respect for a child's individuality and autonomy.

Short essence of the jury statement for the German Children's Literature Special Award 2000  
Translated by Martha Baker



Self-portrait by Nikolaus Heidelbach  
from *Karl Heidelbach – Nikolaus Heidelbach*, catalogue to the exhibition "Fathers and Sons"





## resentation of Candidate

Essay about Heidelberg's contribution to children's literature and interview with the illustrator

### Not “child-friendly” in the classical sense

by Maria Linsmann

The jury decision to recognize the oeuvre of a living German illustrator, Nikolaus Heidelberg, with the German Children's Literature Award, Special Price 2000 was met with some surprise not only among children's literature experts but also in the general public. Known as a provocateur in the realm of German picture books, he is, moreover, a relatively young recipient of a prize honoring lifetime achievements. He is an artist who does not offer easy reading matter to the readers of his books. His work evades being fit into classical categories and he has a clear preference for addressing themes that are considered taboo for children's and youth literature. In following these principles for the past twenty years, regardless of the trends and preferences of the respective book market, he has been steadily developing a substantial oeuvre of high quality work.

The second of five children, Nikolaus Heidelberg was born 1955 in Lahnstein and spent his early childhood in Braubach am Rhein. The nearby town of Philippsburg was the setting for his picture book *Königin Gisela [Queen Gisela]*, which was published in 2006 and received the German Children's Literature Award in 2007.

Nikolaus Heidelberg came into contact with art at an early age. His father, Karl Heidelberg, an unconventional artist in Cologne, was a realist painter, whose works are held today in various museums and

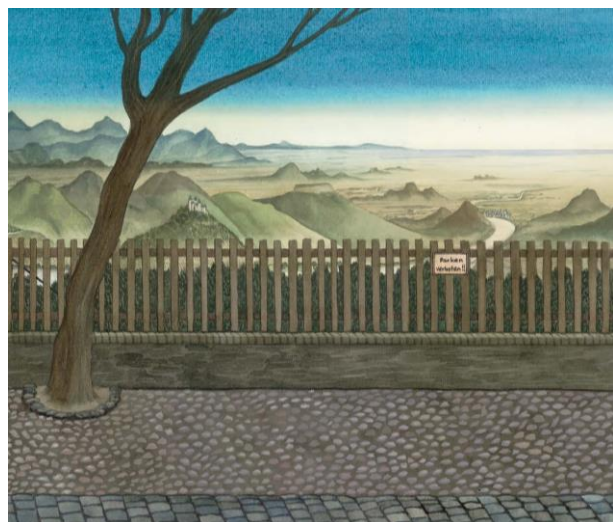


Illustration from *Königin Gisela*

private collections in the Rhineland region. When Nikolaus was eleven years old, his family moved to Höhenhaus, a suburb of Cologne, so that father Karl could become a member of the art scene in the city, which was then Germany's leading art center. By the age of 14 the

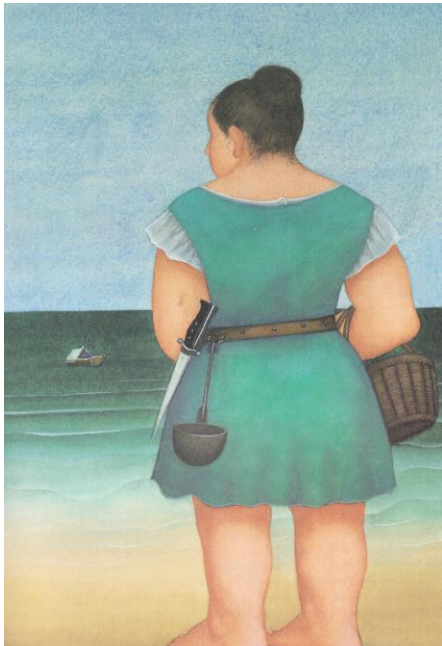


Illustration from *Grimm's Märchen*

son also began to paint, but worked exclusively with water colors and aquarelle on paper – a technique to which he has remained true up to this day – rather than with oil and canvas, like his father. At first his father, who had once been an art teacher in St. Goarshausen, was critical of this choice of medium, but he became more interested once his son began to create funny, quirky stories in his pictures. Nikolaus' talent for narrative painting and precise observation was inherited from his father. Even today it is important to him that objects are shown accurately. A figure, for example, must actually occupy its visual space with substance, as seen in the case of the voluminous wife of the cannibal in *Der Okerlo* [*The Okerlo*], a tale from Grimm's Fairy Tales; similarly, the texture of leather must be clearly different than that of skin. This precision and exact reproduction of materiality is an essential hallmark in all of Heidelberg's work.

Nikolaus Heidelberg never attended an art school; strictly speaking, as a painter he is an autodidact. In 1976 he began university studies with majors in German philology, art history, and theater, which he continued to pursue in Berlin, where he moved in 1977. To support himself, he translated skits for television and worked in advertising. Since then he has never lost his passion for reading. His favorite authors include Stendhal, Nabokov and Arno Schmidt, the latter of whom is memorialized in Heidelberg's latest book titled *Arno und die Festgesellschaft mit beschränkter Haftung* [*Arno and the Festive Society with Limited Liability*]. "I'd like to acquire an overview of the world's greatest literature, so I have been reading non-stop for the last 40 years", he told Stefan Hauck, who wrote the essay *Das Leben eines Autodidakten* [*The Life of an Autodidact*] (Julit 4/2006, p. 10ff). Rather by accident he published his first book for adults in 1980, *Bilderbogen* [*Pictorial Broadsheet*] with the Dumont Verlag of Cologne, whose publisher at that time, Ernst Brücher, became the first to encourage and promote Heidelberg's artwork. When the book *Ungeheuer* [*Monsters*] appeared in 1981 it caught the attention of Joachim Gelberg, the head of Beltz & Gelberg Verlag, who had no doubt that "anyone can paint monsters this well, can surely also paint for children."

Hence, in 1982, Gelberg published Heidelberg's first picture book, *Das Elefantentreffen* [*The Meeting of the Elephants*].

Its oversized format of 40x30 cm was chosen to correlate to the boastful fantasies of its childlike protagonists. The book won the Oldenburg Youth Literature Prize and launched a series of over 20 picture books and a number of illustrated adult books in

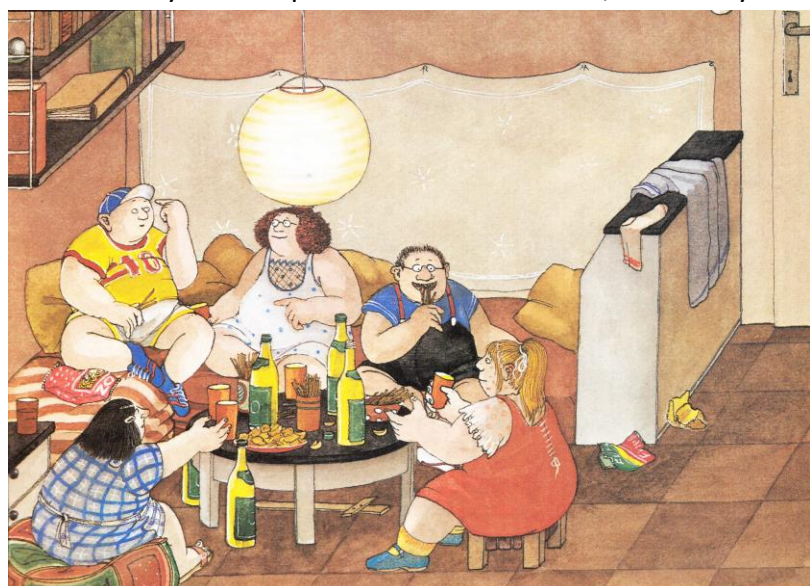


Illustration from *Das Elefantentreffen*



which Heidelberg has been able to develop his own visual language and inimitable style. And he has continued to select the format of each book so as to correspond to the subject: *Der Aufzug* [*The Elevator*], for example, is presented in an extra tall book, while *Was machen die Mädchen?* (which was translated into English as *Where the Girls Are*) and *Was machen die Jungs?* [*Where the Boys are*] have the identical expansive landscape format.

Heidelberg has produced books with his own texts and also illustrated the works of other writers, such as Josef Guggenmos, Franz Hohler or the Fairy Tales of the Grimm Brothers. Naturally he much prefers to do his own stories, but, as he complains, "they take me so much longer." Thus it can happen that he will be at work on several projects at the same time, and have six or seven half-finished books sitting on his shelves, of which, he freely admits, "some will never get finished." He has also been quoted as saying that "I am not child-friendly in the classical sense, in the curious tradition of the friendly uncle who finds everything about children sweet or grand. I would prefer to say that I take a great interest in children." So much for Heidelberg on Heidelberg. Beyond a doubt he is interested in children and takes them seriously, their sensibility and feelings – even the negative ones, of which adults are so afraid and which they would prefer to repress. Heidelberg tackles them and shows how to deal with them.



Illustration from *Prinz Alfred*

For him it is simply a matter of childlike imagination that lets the chubby latchkey boy Alfred become the *Prince Alfred* who saves Princess Elfie (in *Prinz Alfred*); or lets the anger-filled Dagmar experience exciting adventures with her brother (without the reader ever being certain whether it all happened in fact or only in her mind) in *Der Ball oder ein Nachmittag mit Berti* [*The Ball or an Afternoon with Berti*]; and allows Albrecht and his girlfriend playfully to transform the house into an imaginary Land of Cockaigne in *Albrecht Fafner fast allein* [*Albrecht Fafner almost alone*]. The same is true for his treatment of fear, a subject that crops up in his books again and again. Fearfulness is one of the feelings all children have, and for Heidelberg, the artist, this is not a taboo; instead, he takes it up and works with it in his books, such as when he depicts the fear of a little girl who wakes up and finds herself alone in *Der Aufzug*, or the nightmare of a little boy in *Eine Nacht mit Wilhelm* [*A Night With William*]. In and through Heidelberg's books children are able to regard those feelings that are perceived as something negative – such as fear, anger, loneliness, or aggression, as well as their own sexuality, physicality, and sensuality – as being a part of their lives, and

embrace them without the least sense of guilt. Going even further, Heidelberg is not afraid of taking up taboos such as death and child abuse as topics in his books. One prime example is his book titled *Rosel von Melaten* [*Rosel of Melaten*] which was published not in the children's book publishing house of Beltz & Gelberg, but as a gift book edition with Atlantik Verlag, an imprint of the prestigious Hoffmann und Campe Verlag. Especially because he takes children so seriously they do not need to fit the clichéd image of the darling, rosy-cheeked picture-book child. Instead they are allowed to be plump, saucy or even nasty, just as real children can sometimes be. "I don't oblige anyone to see children the way I see them", Heidelberg says, "and no one has to find my drawings pretty. But just sit down once at a playground for three hours and watch what goes on there. I am sure you will have to agree with me." Such is the artist's explanation for his perspective on children.

Taking his child readers seriously is not only a question of empathizing with childlike feelings and circumstances. Heidelberg also takes children as viewers of pictures seriously. For him there is no such thing as allegedly "easy" or "suitable" pictures. He doesn't simplify or downplay anything, nor does he modify the artistic force of his work when he paints for children. To the contrary, he is thoroughly convinced that one needs to draw for children and for adults without any qualitative differentiation. He offers children complex, subtle imagery – pictures that continue the narrative where the text ends, interpreting it, and expanding on it by adding new perspectives; often, in fact, one does well to take a second look at a picture. "That would be something new to me: a picture that a child gives up on", said Heidelberg. He enjoys toying with the stylistic devices of comicality and multilayer meaning. He exaggerates, he supplements, he expands the portrayals even into the surreal. He lets objects speak and the unspeakable become reality. His images are full of allusions and references: to the old masters ("If I had lived back then, I would probably only, at best, have been allowed to stir their paint", he claims humbly), to the surrealists, to George Grosz or Fernando Botero, the latter of whom impressed him, above all, by his drawings. Indeed, he knows them all, the great illustrators, by having studied their works, particularly Sempé, Ungerer, Loriot, and, most of all, Edward Gorey.

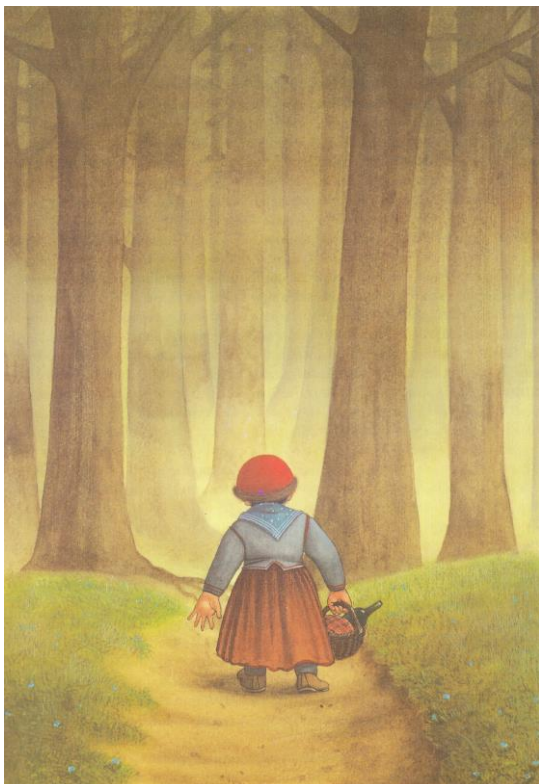


Illustration from *Grimm's Märchen*

Heidelberg's spatial imagery is often bald and angular, the contours sharp, the colors muted. The subject of his books, the often somber realm of children, is reflected in form, while the surreal and surrealistic imagery allude to the imaginative and dreamlike-traumatic sensibility of Heidelberg's protagonists. Indeed, the traumatic undoubtedly plays an important role in his work; his interest in Freud, in psychoanalysis, often shines through. In this connection let me point out the importance of hands of Heidelberg's characters. In nearly every portrayal they play a special role; usually they are given particular emphasis and preeminence. The hands are what the viewer fixes his gaze on. Hence they function as signifiers, as the means of expressing the inner state of mind of the character being portrayed. This is evidence of an aspect which Heidelberg termed "physical adaptation." He has said that



while he is painting he senses a physical empathy with his characters and with their state of mind. This adaptation is developed further in his works thanks to an unerring power of observation. Heidelberg collects his observations and carries them around with him, in order, later, to draw upon them, re-shape, intensify and convey them in his imagery. In this way he succeeds at something seemingly paradoxical: pictures that appear simultaneously real and surreal. Pictures that hold a striking nearness to the child's world, but in which, at the same time, a further essential element is added: the power of the imagination!

This text is based on the jury's explanation and the laudatory speech of the German Children's Literature Special Award 2000 for the complete work of Nikolaus Heidelberg.  
Translated by Martha Baker

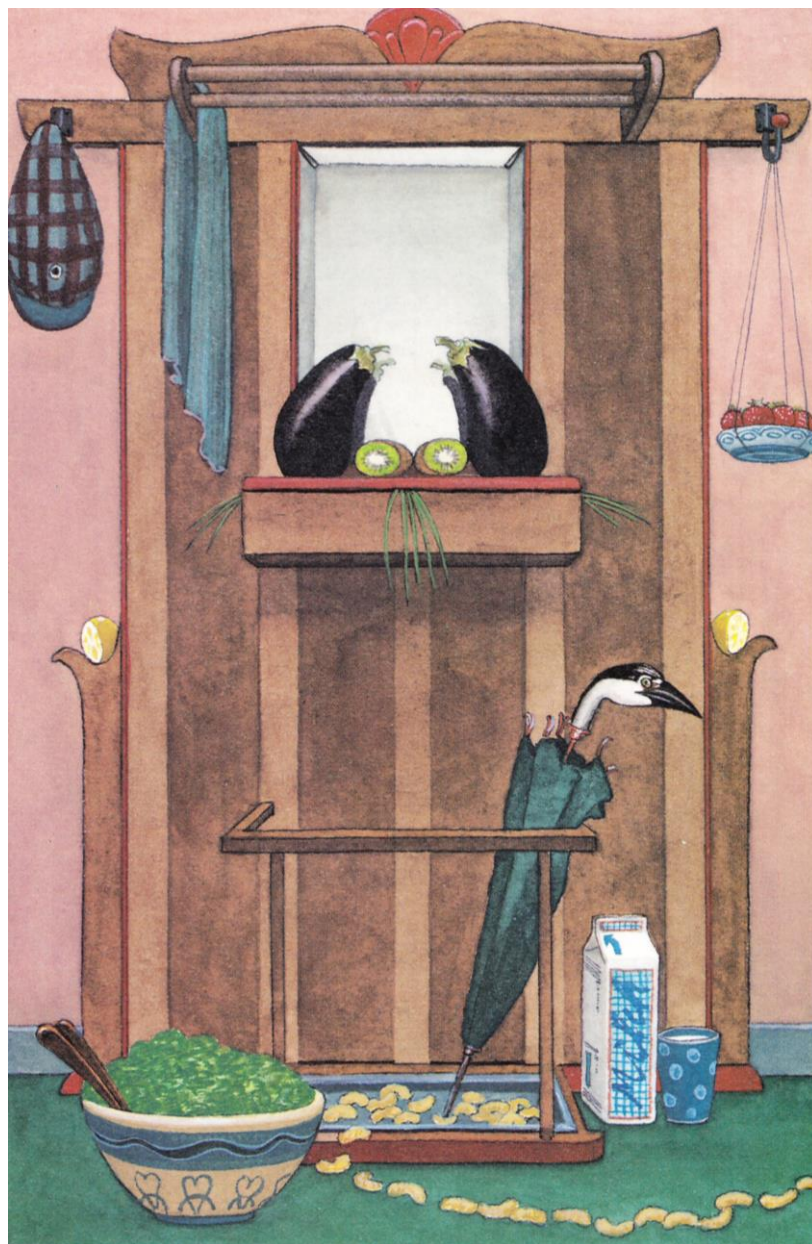


Illustration from *Albrecht Fafner fast allein*



Illustration from *Was machen die Jungs?*

## Where are the Boys?

An Interview with Nikolaus Heidelberg, by Heike Schwering

Nikolaus Heidelberg is a free-lance artist who earned a degree in German philology, now living in Cologne, and has received numerous awards for his picture books and illustrations. In 2000 he received the German Children's Literature Award, Special Price for his oeuvre. The jury noted then that "he has devoted himself – especially in the books he has also written – to depicting like no other feelings and sensitivities of children." In *Was machen die Jungs?* [*Where the Boys are*] he turns his attention to those who currently cause reading promoters the greatest worries and comes to the conclusion that boys can't be pressed into a mould. From A to Z they are always good for a surprise. And he advocates that children be offered good, individual stories.

**Mr. Heidelberg, today I would like to have a chat with you about boys and literature. Is this a tedious topic for someone like yourself, who has taken an intensive interest in the species of boys since as long back as 1999?**

NIKOLAUS HEIDELBACH: Basically I find thematic restrictions disturbing. Recently I heard my fellow colleague [Wolf] Erlbruch on the radio and agree completely with him when he said that he feels annoyed by the connection drawn between children's books and "topics". I too see it as something ludicrous and disturbing. Even knowing that this is a standing tradition in children's and youth literature. But please don't get me wrong. What I am referring to is the means being used. I have no problem dealing with boys or girls or teddy bears if this is what fits with the material I am working on. So, in short, I find it repugnant to describe a picture book with the words "This is a book for...". Ideally, it is simply a good story. Quite irrespective of whether it has boys in it or an issue that concerns boys. If there is even such a thing.

**If we think of "Sam" – were he to take a look under the bedcovers, now, in 2007, he would make the same discovery as in 1999 when you wrote "*Where the Boys are*". But hasn't something changed in the meantime?**

NIKOLAUS HEIDELBACH: Well, I'm not so sure. I've looked through the book again and I don't think that in these few years things have changed. I have to say that the ideas I have about boys in 2007 are qualitatively the same as I had in 1999. So I don't believe that the story of those boys needs to be re-written. But what has certainly changed for me over the period of the last 30 years is my own way of approaching things. For example, I am surprised when I look at the older pieces today that I did for *Der Bunte Hund* [a children's magazine] and they

still please me, although they were pretty crudely done. So here I want to send out a compliment to Hans-Joachim Gelberg for publishing even the crude pieces! Maybe my ability to see things from a different perspective has grown over time.



“Sam makes a discovery” – illustration from *Was machen die Jungs?*

**In this connection is there anything you could tell us about the art of observation? That is to say, about observation as an intentional process or rather as a natural part of living and working?**

NIKOLAUS HEIDELBACH: In principle it's the latter, but it is not as clean cut as that. Certain things become false by being said aloud. It is a complete mystery to me how anyone could create something without taking a good look. It's quite impossible for me to cross the street without taking notice of things – it's just fundamental. The phenomenon is the same for writers and illustrators: You constantly run into those things that you are currently working on, they jump into the framework existing in your mind. No matter whether the topic is still a riddle and the ideas not yet ripe. To give an example: If I try all afternoon to draw a boy's pants and notice that my memory is too imprecise, I get up and go out. I don't have to do much at all because as soon as I see a little boy, he will be looked at exactly. I'll notice a rivet here, and there a little chain – and that'll be my pants.

**So the ways of looking cannot be separated, they blend with one another.**

NIKOLAUS HEIDELBACH: Yes, that's the way it is for me. I depend on the things I see, which create the conditions for what goes on in my mind. Yes, that's the way it has to be. Ultimately it's all about the simple banality of going about in the world with your eyes open. And this creates a conglomerate of memories, observations, and utilization.

**When you create a hero with this sharpened eye for the banal, one who is supposed to represent an identification figure for boys, what would he look like?**

NIKOLAUS HEIDELBACH: (Laughing) Oh, that is a double-trap, because I have never done anything that way. I've never created a figure that would then be found printed on bed linen,



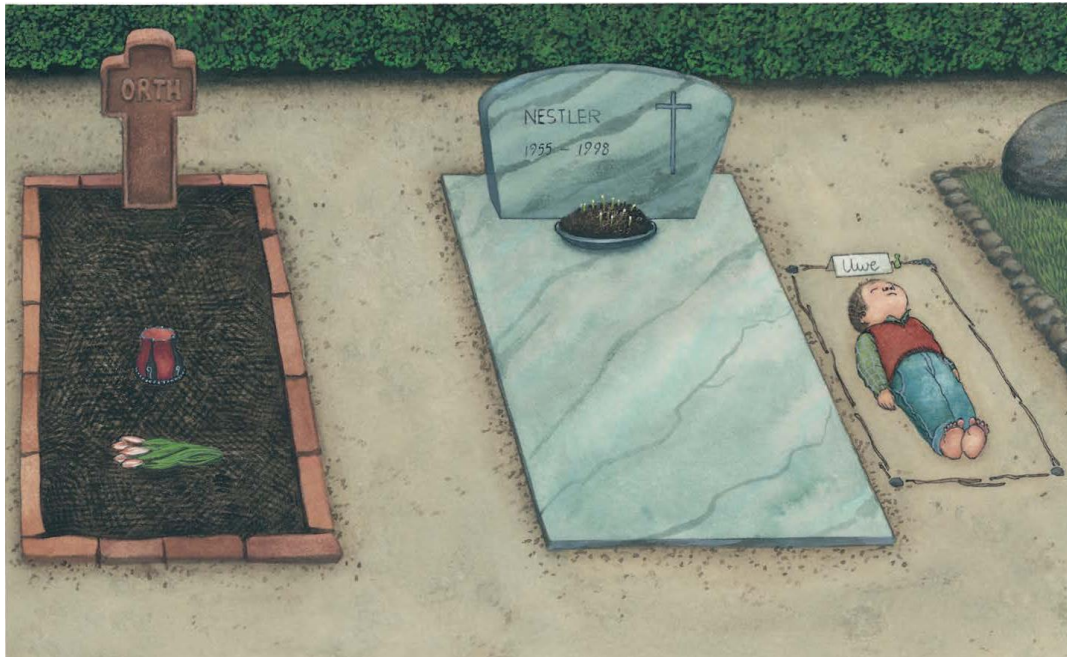
etc. No, I draw from my environment, from within myself, and from the confidence that what I enjoy will be enjoyed by children, too. For example: I'm painting a boy at the moment who is called Gottfried or Gisbert – with a pretty awful haircut. I don't waste a second wondering whether any other boy will identify with him, I just need a believable figure. And when I believe him, the way he sits, stands, and lays about, then I send him off into the world a year or so later with a book – and then it's just wait and see! I am not trying to address any topic. That would make me feel obtrusive, if I had to worry about "how does he think?" or "what does he feel?" No, on the bottom line I find that quite alien. Perhaps it is arrogant of me. But as I see it, I build him up and then let him sail. Like my heroine Gisela. Even if she is not a boy, she makes for a good example. In her case, I wasn't thinking of how to make her mouth prettier or whatever, but instead about what she needed to do to keep the reader's attention, despite her ambivalence. In the end it's always the question of how it comes across.

**That brings us to the question of feedback. We don't need to talk about how your drawings and books polarize readers, but I would be interested in hearing about the range of feedback.**

NIKOLAUS HEIDELBACH: When I hold a reading somewhere, sometimes there are 100 people in the audience, and sometimes only ten. That can happen, so then I do a reading for only ten people. But what has never happened to me is that I give a reading with children and they drift away because they get bored. Whenever I read to children I show the pictures with a projector – they like that idea. Having someone sitting there and reading while there are large pictures to watch on the screen. And for me it was always clear that a story with no suspense wouldn't interest me. Well, children react very quickly to a sagging or a long-winded storyline. I am satisfied to be able to say – and this is the only time I would apply the word "proud" – that I am able to grab children's attention – regardless whether boys or girls – within four or five minutes in such a way that they want to know how the story goes on. Yes, Gisela and the others make good stories and that is the only thing that I have consciously worked hard at.

**That was the feedback about children. But there are also responses from adults – press, parents, educators. How do you deal with a case where a father, for example, calls you perverse on the Internet in connection with "Uwe übt" [Uwe practices]?**

NIKOLAUS HEIDELBACH: Well, meanwhile I have become pretty easygoing about that. By "meanwhile" I mean that I used to be very disappointed about such reactions. I would have to say that it isn't possible without some differentiation. Anyone who has a connection to children and doesn't understand the picture of Uwe is an idiot, or at least simply refuses to accept reality. In this respect I have no choice but to view it with a certain helpless equanimity. Such cases never even come close to offering arguments, on the likes of "Oh, but you really should think that over again." What bothers me is the knee-jerk style of such reactions. And in no way does it have an influence on what I do. Though in the past I was admittedly pretty naive. Sometimes I even gave those people a call. But they were pretty hopeless cases, and I stopped doing that many years ago. I can't change it, though I sometimes have regrets, but I wouldn't dream of changing anything. No, I know myself well enough by now!



“Uwe practices” – illustration from *Was machen die Jungs?*

**So I can obviously assume that Uwe would certainly also practice in *Where the boys are 2007*?**

NIKOLAUS HEIDELBACH: Yes, of course. I am still pleased today about the notion. And, likewise, Heike would still make the acquaintance of a rhinoceros. It is exactly the same. But now I would like to go back to where we started and mention that I have in fact seen a few children simulating copulation. Either one can say "Oh, my god!" or "Well, look at that." The worst thing would be to take this one-to-one. And to believe that good old Uwe really dies is just unbelievable. So all I can do is toss the ball back to such people and say, "You have to think a little."

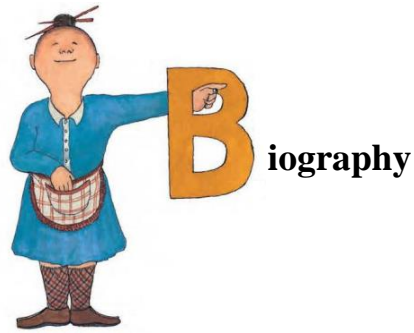
**Well done, because we can still hope to get lots of more terribly wonderful things from you in the future. In closing, could you let us in on what you are working on at the moment?**

NIKOLAUS HEIDELBACH: I am working on illustrations of the *Heinzelmännchen* [*House Gnomes*] of Cologne. It's quite fitting for me, since they are all boys! What I immediately noticed about the poem [written in 1826 by Ernst Weyden] was that it begins by showing how well-off people were because of the Heinzelmännchen. But as soon as a woman comes into play, everything falls apart (he laughs).

**In order to let the boys of today have it better than the Heinzelmännchen, is there any topic that you would specifically like to see in children's literature?**

NIKOLAUS HEIDELBACH: No! I insist on thinking in terms of stories, not themes. And at the highest level, please.

Interview published in *JuLit* 1/2007  
Translated by Martha Baker



Nikolaus Heidelbach, born 1955 in Lahnstein/Germany, lives as free-lance author and illustrator in Cologne. He is considered one of the most recognized, yet unconventional artists in Germany.

As his father, Karl Heidelbach, was a realist painter, Nikolaus Heidelbach came into contact with art at an early age. He, however, never attended an art school, but studied German philology, art history, and theatre in Cologne and Berlin from 1976 to 1983. In 1980 he published his first book for adults, *Bilderbogen [Pictorial Broadsheet]*. His first picture book *Das Elefantentreffen oder 5 dicke Angeber [The Meeting of the Elephants or 5 fat Braggarts]* appeared in 1982. Since then he has published over 50 illustrated books for children and adults. In addition to picture books with his own texts, he has illustrated children's books (e. g. *Der neue Pinocchio [The new Pinocchio]* by Nöstlinger), poems (e. g. by Josef Guggenmos), stories and fairy tales by the Grimm Brothers and Hans Christian Andersen and has drawn about 300 cover illustrations. He has also worked for the children's magazine *Der Bunte Hund* and the literary journal *Der Rabe*.

His books have been awarded numerous prizes, and in 2000 he received the German Children's Literature Award, Special Prize for his complete work.



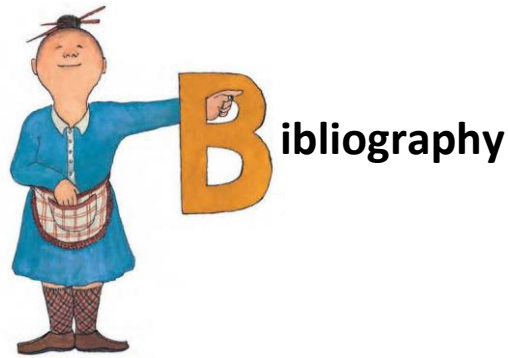
© Max Groenert / Beltz & Gelberg

**„I insist on thinking in terms of stories, not topics.  
And at the highest level, please.“**  
Nikolaus Heidelbach in *JuLit* 1/2007





- 1982 **Oldenburg Youth Literature Prize** (Oldenburger Jugendbuchpreis, *Das Elefantentreffen*)
- 1983 German Children's Literature Award, nominee (Deutscher Jugendliteraturpreis, *Das Elefantentreffen*)
- 1984 **Troisdorf Picture Book Award** (Troisdorfer Bilderbuchpreis, *Eine Nacht mit Wilhelm*)
- 1986 **Troisdorf Picture Book Award** (Troisdorfer Bilderbuchpreis, *Der Ball*)
- 1987 German Children's Literature Award, nominee (Deutscher Jugendliteraturpreis, *Der Ball*)
- 1988 **Troisdorf Picture Book Award** (Troisdorfer Bilderbuchpreis, *Vorsicht Kinder*)
- 1993 Children's Book Award of North Rhine-Westphalia (Kinderbuchpreis des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen, *Alfred Fafner fast allein*)
- 1995 **Bologna Ragazzi Award** (*Was machen die Mädchen*)
- 1998 Eulenspiegel Picture Book Prize (Eulenspiegelpreis, *Ein Buch für Bruno*)
- 2000 **German Children's Literature Special Award** for his complete work as an illustrator (Sonderpreis Illustration des Deutschen Jugendliteraturpreises)  
Children's Book Award of North Rhine-Westphalia (Kinderbuchpreis des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen, *Mit Katz und Hund auf Du und Du*)
- 2007 **Grand Prize of the German Academy for Children's and Youth Literature** for his complete work (Großer Preis der Deutschen Akademie für Kinder- und Jugendliteratur e.V. Volkach)  
**German Children's Literature Award** (Deutscher Jugendliteraturpreis, *Königin Gisela*)
- 2012 German Children's Literature Award, nominee (Deutscher Jugendliteraturpreis, *Wenn ich groß bin, werde ich Seehund*)  
Rattenfänger Literary Award (Rattenfänger-Literaturpreis, *Wenn ich groß bin, werde ich Seehund*)
- 2014 Danish **Hans Christian Andersen Award** (*Märchen* by Hans Christian Andersen)  
IBBY Honour List (*Wenn ich groß bin, werde ich Seehund*)
- 2018 **Joachim Ringelnatz Award**, category „art“ (Joachim-Ringelnatz-Preis)  
„The Exceptional Book“, international literature festival Berlin (Außergewöhnliches Buch, internationales literaturfestival berlin, *Albrecht Fafner fast allein* and *Wenn ich groß bin, werde ich Seehund*)



- 1982 *Das Elefantentreffen oder 5 dicke Angeber [The Meeting of the Elephants or 5 fat Braggarts]*. Weinheim: Beltz & Gelberg.
- 1983 *Prinz Alfred [Prince Alfred]*. Weinheim: Beltz & Gelberg.
- 1984 *Eine Nacht mit Wilhelm [A Night with William]*. Weinheim: Beltz & Gelberg.
- 1986 *Der Ball oder Ein Nachmittag mit Berti [The Ball or an Afternoon with Berti]*. Weinheim: Beltz & Gelberg.
- 1987 *Vorsicht Kinder [Look out Kids]*. Weinheim: Beltz & Gelberg.
- Die Insel der sprechenden Tiere [The Island of talking Animals]* Text by Gerhard Mensching. Zürich: Hoffmanns.
- 1988 *Der neue Pinocchio [The new Pinocchio]*. Told by Christine Nöstlinger. Weinheim: Beltz & Gelberg.
- 1990 *Oh, Verzeihung, sagte die Ameise [Oh, Pardon, said the Ant]*. Text by Josef Guggenmos. Weinheim: Beltz & Gelberg.
- 1992 *Albrecht Fafner fast allein [Albrecht Fafner almost alone]*. Weinheim: Beltz & Gelberg.
- 1993 *Was machen die Mädchen? [English version: Where the girls are]*. Weinheim: Beltz & Gelberg.
- Der Aufzug [The Elevator]*. Text by Paul Maar. Weinheim: Beltz & Gelberg.
- Der Riese und die Erdbeerkonfitüre [The Giant and the Strawberry Jam]*. Text by Franz Hohler. Ravensburg: Maier. Ravensburger Buchverlag/ dtv/Hanser.
- 1994 *Kinderparadies [Children's Paradise]*. Weinheim: Beltz & Gelberg.
- 1995 *Märchen der Brüder Grimm [Grimm's Fairy Tales]*. Weinheim: Beltz & Gelberg.
- 1996 *Mein Gegenteil. Gedichte für Kinder [My opposite. Poems for Children]*. Text by Christine Nöstlinger. Weinheim: Beltz & Gelberg.
- 1997 *Ein Buch für Bruno [A Book for Bruno]*. Weinheim: Beltz & Gelberg.
- 1998 *Die Spaghettifrau und andere Geschichten [The Spaghetti Woman and other Stories]*. Text by Franz Hohler. Ravensburg: Ravensburger Buchverlag.
- Unterwegs zur Welt. Lehrbuch für den Sachunterricht 1/2 [Bound for the World. Schoolbook of Science 1/2]*. Edited by Gundel Mattenklott. Berlin: Volk und Wissen.
- 1999 *Was machen die Jungs? [Where are the Boys?]* Weinheim: Beltz & Gelberg.

- 2000 *Mit Katz und Hund auf du und du [Buddy-Buddy with Cat and Dog]*. Reinbek: Rowohlt.  
*Schloss Draussendrin* [original title: *The Castle of Inside out*]. Text by David Henry Wilson, translated by Helmut Winter. Weinheim: Beltz & Gelberg.  
*Unterwegs zur Welt. Lehrbuch für den Sachunterricht 1/2 [Bound for the World. Schoolbook of Science 3]*. Edited by Gundel Mattenklott. Berlin: Volk und Wissen.
- 2002 *Die dreizehnte Fee [The thirteenth Fairy]*. Weinheim: Beltz & Gelberg.
- 2003 *Der große Zwerg und andere Geschichten [The big Dwarf and other Stories]*. Text by Franz Hohler. München: dtv.
- 2004 *Märchen [Fairy Tales]*. Text by Hans Christian Andersen. Translated from Danish by Albrecht Leonhardt. Weinheim: Beltz & Gelberg. [out of print]
- 2006 *Königin Gisela [Queen Gisela]*. Weinheim: Beltz und Gelberg.
- 2007 *Die Heinzelmännchen von Köln [The House Gnomes of Cologne]*. Text by August Kopisch. Köln: Emons.  
*Artemis Fowl*. Text by Eoin Colfer, translated from English by Claudia Feldmann. Berlin: List.
- 2009 *Das große Buch. Geschichten für Kinder [The Big Book of Children's Stories]*. Text by Franz Hohler. München: Hanser.
- 2010 *Märchen aus aller Welt. [Fairy Tales of the World]*. Edited by Hans-Joachim Gelberg. Weinheim: Beltz & Gelberg.
- 2011 *Wenn ich groß bin, werde ich Seehund [When I grow up, I'll be a Seal]*. Weinheim: Beltz & Gelberg.  
*Wirklich fantastisch! Ein Kunstführer für Kinder durch die Bilderbuchwelten von Nikolaus Heidelbach. [Really fantastic! An Art Guide for Children to Nikolaus Heidelbach's Picture Book Worlds]*. Edited by Sandra Langenhahn and Regina Peters. Weinheim: Beltz & Gelberg.
- 2013 *Dreizehn Geschichten von Bösen und Wichten für Neffen und Nichten [Thirteen Stories for Nieces and Nephews]*. Weinheim: Beltz & Gelberg.
- 2014 *Was machen die Jungs heute? [What are the Boys doing today?]* Weinheim: Beltz & Gelberg.  
*Was machen die Mädchen heute? [What are the Girls doing today?]* Weinheim: Beltz & Gelberg.
- 2015 *Rosel von Melaten [Rosel of Melaten]*. Hamburg: Atlantik.
- 2016 *Arno und die Festgesellschaft mit beschränkter Haftung [Arno and the Festive Society with Limited Liability]*. Weinheim: Beltz & Gelberg.
- 2017 *Die schönsten Märchen [The Greatest Tales]*. Weinheim: Beltz & Gelberg.  
*Schornsteiner [Chimnicker]*. Weinheim: Beltz & Gelberg.
- 2018 *Oh, Verzeihung, sagte die Ameise [Oh, I'm sorry, said the ant]*. Weinheim: Beltz & Gelberg



- 2019 *Die Märchen [The Fairytales]*. München: Carl Hanser Verlag  
*Alma und Oma im Museum [Alma and Grandma in the museum]*. Weinheim: Beltz & Gelberg.
- 2020 *Weg war das Ihmchen [Ihmchen was gone]*. Text by Jan Philipp Reemtsma. Zürich: Kampa.
- 2020 *Alles gut? [Are you okay?]*. Zürich: Kampa.
- 2021 *Wo ist Vincent? [Where is Vincent?]*. Zürich: Kampa.
- 2022 *Trauernde Tiere [Mourning Animals]*. Zürich: Kampa.  
*Rosalie träumt ... [Rosalie dreams]*. Zürich: minedition.  
*Marina*. Weinheim: Beltz & Gelberg.



## ranslated Editions

(selection, includes expired licences)

### *Albrecht Fafner fast allein*

- France

### *Arno und die Festgesellschaft*

- China

### *Das große Buch*

- China
- France
- Spain
- Spain (Catalan)

### *Der Aufzug*

- Japan

### *Der große Zwerg und andere Geschichten*

- France

### *Der neue Pinocchio*

- France
- Italy
- Netherlands
- Portugal
- Spain (Catalan)

### *Die dreizehnte Fee*

- France

### *Dreizehn Geschichten von Bösen und Wichten für Neffen und Nichten*

- China

### *Ein Buch für Bruno*

- China
- Denmark
- France
- Korea
- Spain

### *Kinderparadies*

- France

### *Königin Gisela*

- China
- France

- Spain
- Spain (Catalan)
- Korea

### *Märchen aus aller Welt*

- China

### *Märchen der Brüder Grimm*

- China
- France
- Korea
- Spain
- Spain (Catalan)

### *Märchen (Hans Christian Andersen)*

- China
- France
- Hungary
- Korea
- Portugal
- Spain (Catalan)

### *Mit Katz und Hund auf du und du*

- Netherlands
- Sweden
- Korea

### *Schornsteiner*

- South Korea

### *Was machen die Jungs?*

- Brazil
- France
- Italy

### *Was machen die Jungs heute?*

- France

### *Was machen die Mädchen?*

- Brazil
- France
- Italy
- Netherlands
- Norway
- Spain
- United States

### *Was machen die Mädchen heute?*

- France

### *Wenn ich groß bin, werde ich Seehund*

- China
- France
- Korea



## ress Reviews

"This man deserves a special position among the German illustrators. With almost painful accuracy Nikolaus Heidelberg depicts humans as well as animals."

**Berliner Zeitung**

"Heidelberg takes children's imagination seriously and translates it into texts and especially into pictures with a suggestive force that one can hardly resist."

**Der Tagesspiegel**

"[His books] are works of art, with an inimitable style, far beyond pink and baby blue; they can be wicked, crazy, fantastic, and are thereby all the closer to reality, its beauty and its horror."

**Eva-Maria Magel, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung**

"Heidelberg's visual language is idiosyncratic. As an artist, he uses elements from different movements, such as Surrealism, and blends them into his own visual language. Here, too, he consciously chooses not to draw the world of children in pink and baby blue."

**Romy König, Goethe Institut**

"The freedom to be fascinated without reservations unsettles adults, while it comes naturally to children."

**Marie Schmidt, Süddeutsche Zeitung**

"And that is perhaps the decisive Heidelberg secret: that the freedom to be fascinated without reservations unsettles adults, while it comes naturally to children. And you can see this freedom in his pictures more and more clearly over the years."

**Marie Schmidt, Der Bund**

### **Arno und die Festgesellschaft mit beschränkter Haftung [Arno and the Festive Society with Limited Liability]**



“...one of the cleverest, wittiest, and artistically convincing children's books of the fall production. ... He [Nikolaus Heidelbach] employs his double talents for imagery and text magnificently, and even the book design sets new standards.”

**Tilman Spreckelsen, Frankfurter Allgemeine Woche**

“Superbly illustrated and with lots of suspense and situational comic, Nikolaus Heidelbach's book tells a story here set somewhere between imagination and reality, spookiness and absurdity. An enigmatic, madcap, and mischievous book with lots of zig-zag turns, whose extra-large format works as an opulent circus ring, and while also being as awkward and enchanting as any crazy dream could be.”

**Marion Klötzer, Badische Zeitung, 25.10.2016**

### **Ein Buch für Bruno [A Book for Bruno]**



"One of Nikolaus Heidelbach's most beautiful books. And a welcome reminder of why we once started reading."

**Tilman Spreckelsen, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung**

### **Die dreizehnte Fee [The Thirteenth Fairy]**

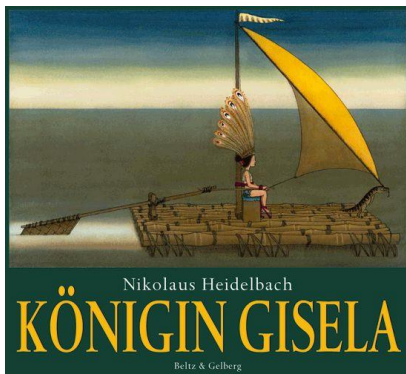


As soon as the reader has got through the introduction, Karla Schneider writes enthusiastically, the illustrator sets off with a veritable "fireworks display of costumes, a star parade of mature females, a revue of the pompous and the massive - in other words, the catalogue of fairies". This little book is about children's dreams in which these mythical creatures appear. And they appear quite commandingly, sphinx-like, as a melange between Angelica Huston and Lotti Huber. Sometimes the dream becomes a nightmare and it becomes existential. But Karla Schneider recommends the book twice. As a picture book, "but also in the column 'A book from which one can learn something'".

**Karla Schneider, Die Zeit**



### **Königin Gisela [Queen Gisela; out of print]**



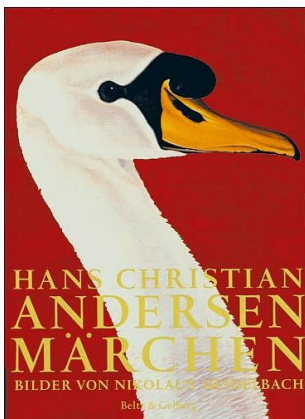
“Never before has Nikolaus Heidelbach developed such a complexly woven tale, never before has he invented a story with such dramatic depth. He directs the details, and the most atrocious things happen in our minds.”

**Die Zeit**

“His noble, poetic images in tones of green, brown, and blue cannot hide the abysmal truth. Queen Gisela is not a nice book. It is one with high aspirations: a book for children who prefer wit, wonders, and veracity rather than pink-colored harmoniousness.”

**Sächsische Zeitung**

### **Märchen. Hans Christian Andersen (Fairy tales by Hans Christian Andersen)**



“The word genius usually is used inflationary – here it's true.”

**Wiglaf Droste, taz**

“Andersen has rarely been illustrated with such enigmatic precision as in this new oeuvre by Nikolaus Heidelbach. The result is a book that sets standards.”

**Tom Daun, Marc-Christoph Wagner, Deutschlandfunk**

“Nikolaus Heidelbach created surprisingly ironic images that emphasise the artificial. His interpretation immerses an alien world, whose coldness the poet felt throughout his life, in suggestively shimmering colours.”

**Roswitha Budeus-Budde, Süddeutsche Zeitung**

“Not only with secret and well-known truths do the pictures prove to be precise interpretations of the texts. Andersen deciphered the physiognomy of things like hardly any of his contemporaries. Heidelbach translates them unerringly into pictures. With many eyes this book looks at us, brazenly, mockingly, threateningly or invitingly with almost tender melancholy.”

**Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung**

“Andersen has rarely been illustrated with such enigmatic precision as in this new oeuvre by Nikolaus Heidelbach.”

**Bayrische Rundschau**

“Albrecht Leonhardt's translation comes very close to Andersen's ductus, preserves many delicious swerves and points; but the most beautiful thing are the surreal, dreamlike illustrations by Nikolaus Heidelbach.”

**Neue Presse Hanover**

“And as cannot be otherwise with this provocative, whimsical, anything but cloying artist, he extracts facets never perceived from the supposedly so familiar fairy tales simply through his powerful, at times even disturbing illustrations.”

**Badische Zeitung**

"This man deserves a special position among German illustrators. Nikolaus Heidelberg draws people and animals with almost painful accuracy."

**Berliner Zeitung**

"Rarely has Andersen been illustrated with such subtlety and precision as in this new oeuvre by Nikolaus Heidelberg. The result is a book that sets standards."

**lesen & leute**

### **Märchen aus aller Welt [Fairy Tales from Around the World]**



"As always, German painter and illustrator Nikolaus Heidelberg's images take your breath away. He is an accurate and abysmal reader and an unsurpassed master at translating his interpretations into surreal, symbolic images that you never get enough of."

**Tages-Anzeiger**

"Nikolaus Heidelberg, as we all know, is unique as an illustrator. And here the master has surpassed himself once again. In terms of colour, he is almost even more delicate and tender, with captivating graphic ideas and poetic moods than even in his large Andersen fairy tale collection. It is the composition of wit and poetry in general in which nobody surpasses him easily; in the materiality of the surfaces, no one does anyway. And certainly not in the drastic, paired with the accuracy of detail."

**Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung**

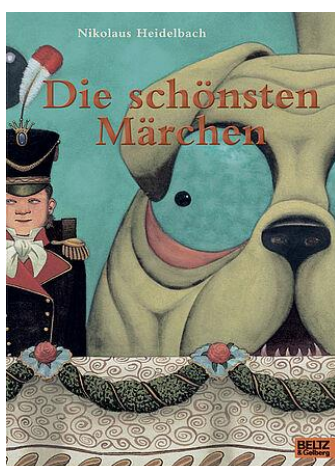
"He shifts proportions, exaggerates and diminishes, sees one figure from the perspective of another - in this way he creates surprising scenes again and again."

**Sächsische Zeitung**

"Nikolaus Heidelberg loves the bizarre and the mysterious; his fairy tale illustrations are reminiscent of the surreal inventions of Michael Sowa or René Magritte: precise and realistic in detail, but fantastic in narrative context, they reflect the eerie or magical atmosphere of the fairy tales. Which fits so well because these texts come to us from all over the world, from distant times and foreign cultures."

**Sylvia Schwab, Deutschlandfunk**

### **Die schönsten Märchen [Most Beautiful Fairy Tales]**



"Nikolaus Heidelberg's illustrations of fairy tales by the Brothers Grimm, Hans-Christian Andersen and the *Fairy Tales from Around the World* have changed the way we look at fairy tales. Rarely have they been illustrated with such enigmatic precision, so dazzling, eerie and beautiful."

**lebensart**

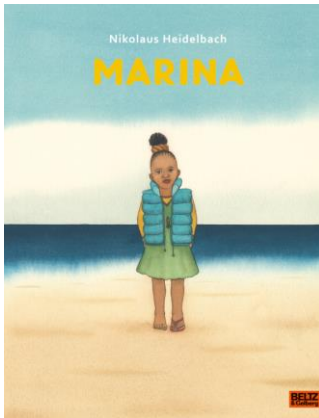
"Ultimate collection."

**Marie Schmidt, Die Zeit**

The pictures remain close to the text, but emphasise the subliminal, the scandalous, the bizarre and the obscene. The fairy tales are thus presented as a poetry of humanity that is indeed elementary - not in a superficially childlike sense, but in an anthropological sense.

**AJuM Sachsen-Anhalt**

## Marina



"A plea for imagination that takes a critical stand and at the same time shows ways for free decisions."

**Karin Gruß, Süddeutsche Zeitung**

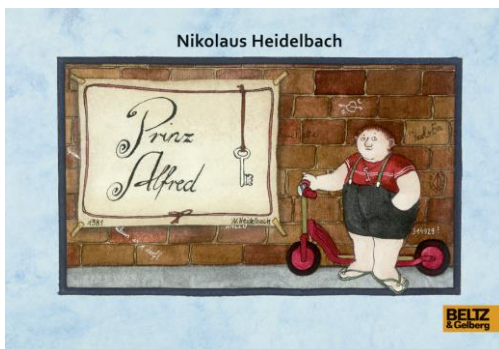
"In his usual ambiguous visual language, Heidelbach lets the viewer participate in the magic of the mysterious and conveys how important dignity is - and how wrong premature judgements are."

**Stefan Hauck, Börsenblatt**

"A picture book whose irritation and openness on the narrative and creative level leaves plenty of room for dialogue with children."

**Christine Tresch, Buch & Maus**

## Prinz Alfred [Prince Alfred]



"The barbed, but never mean parody with a conciliatory ending reflects a bit of the survival strategy of a child who has to get through each long day on his own."

**Pressedienst Eselsohr**

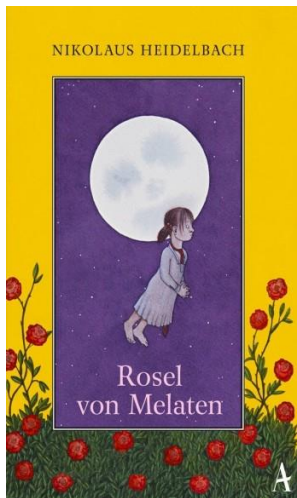
"A real-life fantasy story with a refreshing dash of malice."

**STERN**

"A beautiful picture book full of surprises."

**Der Tagesspiegel**

### **Rosel von Melaten [Rosel of Melaten]**



“This is a book that demands your attention, a poetic epitaph for all the children who were tortured and murdered by their parents.”

**Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung**

“Nikolaus Heidelbach loves all things strange and mysterious, and in "Rosel von Melaten" he tells a fairy tale that is both devastating and touching at the same time.”

**Kölner Stadt-Anzeiger**

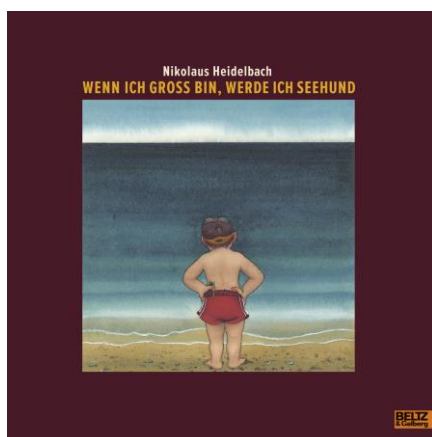
### **Was machen die Jungs? [Where are the Boys?]**



“Nobody rivals Nikolaus Heidelbach’s ability to depict weaknesses and character flaws in such a pitiless and wonderfully anarchic way. His black humor provokes bashful smiles and wholehearted laughter. His pictures inspire our fantasies and serve as return tickets into the blackest depths of our souls.”

**Kinder (Journal des Kindergartens)**

### **Wenn ich groß bin, werde ich Seehund [When I grow up, I’ll be a Seal]**



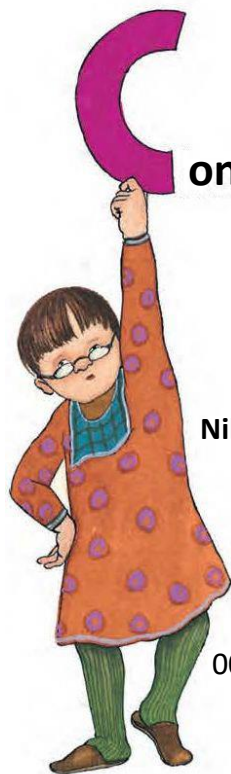
“In Nikolaus Heidelbach's picture stories the door to the realm of fantasy can open up like a trap-door. In this one, a fisher boy finds a mysterious seal skin -- the precursor to a metamorphosis like that in Ovid. Or is this wonderfully illustrated little tale a family story after all? It leaves you swimming. And that's as it should be.”

**Die WELT**

“In enthusiastically powerful colors and shapes Heidelbach unfolds a watery world. [...] In his sensitive pictures, Heidelbach knows, however, how to resolve the sadness of the final pages with a comforting ending.”

**Augsburger Allgemeine**





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# Appendix

## Selected Articles and Press Reviews (mainly in German):

- König, Romy: *Nikolaus Heidelberg – The funny and the terrible in the world of children*. Homepage of the Goethe Institut (<https://www.goethe.de/en/kul/lit/21873036.html>)
- Hordych, Barbara: Ausstellung: Abgründe im Aquarium, in: *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, May 2022 (<https://www.sueddeutsche.de/muenchen/literaturhaus-muenchen-ausstellung-nikolaus-heidelberg-kinderbuch-illustration-1.5588938>; translated by Kristina Bernd)
- Gelberg, Barbara / Gelberg, Hans-Joachim: *Werkstattheft – Hans Christian Andersen Märchen*. (School material Beltz & Gelberg 2004 – main essay in English at the end, translated by Kristina Bernd)
- Hauck, Stefan: Das Leben eines Autodidakten. Bilderbuchpreis für Nikolaus Heidelberg, in: *JuLit* 2010/4, p. 10-12.
- Gelberg, Hans-Joachim: *Der gezeichnete Augenblick. Werkstatt mit Nikolaus Heidelberg* (Press material Beltz & Gelberg, September 2005).
- Thiele, Prof. Dr. Jens: *Disziplin der Form, Freiheit der Fantasie - Zu den doppeldeutigen Bildentwürfen Nikolaus Heidelbachs* (Pressematerial Beltz & Gelberg).