

PRESS RELEASE

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Children's literature in focus at the Swedish pavilion

Pippi Longstocking is a vital part of the Swedish exhibition in Shanghai, an exhibition praised for its balance between being child-friendly and at the same time interesting from a business point of view. The theme for the exhibition is "Spirit of Innovation" and this week differences and similarities between Swedish and Chinese children's literature will be discussed in the Swedish pavilion.

The seminar, which is called "In the footsteps of Astrid Lindgren: Contemporary Children's Literature in Sweden and China" is an initiative from the Swedish Art Council, the Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award and the Swedish Shanghai Committee together with the Chinese branch of an international association for children's literature, CBBY.

Ann Follin, Director of Sweden's National Museum of Science and Technology, who was part of developing the Swedish exhibition, is one of the seminar's key note speakers.

- Very early in our work process we adapted three key words that were to permeate the entire Swedish exhibition; innovation, communication and sustainability. We also wanted to communicate the importance of play and creativity in order to reach success. Also, the children's very central role was important to leverage in order to describe the Swedish society, and to get Pippi Longstocking as a guide for the exhibition was of course a significant factor, says Ann Follin.

The topics for the seminar will among other things be how it is possible for Swedish children literature to get so many new young readers in China, despite the fact that the literature most often describe a reality completely

different from the one many Chinese kids live in. Another topic will be to showcase how the stories of Astrid Lindgren are used in Chinese classrooms.

One item on the agenda expected to be specifically interesting is about the fact that in fairytales in China we rarely encounter the phenomenon of a nine year old girl with such a free spirit as Pippi Longstocking. The Pippi stories subvert two important traditions in Chinese culture; the disciplinary power of adults over children, and the disciplinary power of traditional culture over girl's bodies and spirits. The Swedish and Chinese ways of looking at children are very different, especially when it comes to their creative development, and this is also something that shows in the children literature.

- Children are innovative by nature. It is up to the adults to support them in their development of the creativity and make them believe in their abilities. In Sweden children have a central role and are generally taken seriously, and by encouraging them to think for themselves, we create an environment where it is okay to try new things. I believe this is an important factor that contributes to the Swedish success and makes us being perceived as an innovative country, says Ann Follin.

"Contemporary Children's Literature in Sweden and China" takes place August 4 at the Swedish pavilion at Expo 2010. Apart from the seminar, there will be a performance from the Pippi musical that is on show in Beijing, and the pavilion guides will read Astrid Lindgren stories to all the children.

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