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has to be some educational element that must be addressed. Some believe that today's children are overexposed to visual stimuli and that perhaps they should be allowed to do some of the work themselves, such as completing less detailed pictures with their own imagination. That is not a school of thought to which Modan subscribes. "I don't see the difference between telling stories with or without detailed pictures. Bruno Bettelheim [noted 20th-century child psychologist] was against illustrations in children's books, but I don't agree. If I draw a picture with a pink sky and the child looking at it has up to that point only thought of the sky as being blue, perhaps that can open up a new avenue of thought and imagination for him or her."

In the final analysis, though, Modan says she is just an illustrator. "I'm not trying to educate children. I draw the way I feel and based on my own understanding. I don't



A Rutu Modan illustration from Etgar Keret's 'Dad Runs Away With the Circus.'



From 'Lola's Song,' written and illustrated by Orit Bergman.

create illustrations to help a kid's imagination develop. That's not my job."

Meanwhile Merav Salomon, who runs the illustrators' stream of the Visual Communications Department and is one of the driving forces behind the conference, believes that illustrators have to take that aspect into consideration. "We in the department are very much aware that we are training the cultural leaders of tomorrow," she says. "Today's students will be illustrating the books that our grandchildren will, hopefully, enjoy. We are very aware of the heavy responsibility we have to contend with, and we have lots of courses on children's book illustration in the department."

Salomon says the illustrator has many factors to take into account when presenting the written text in a visual form. "Pace is very important. The parent reads the words while their child 'reads' the picture. I'm sure there are lots of parents who have experienced reading a page when their child starts turning to the next one. That means the child has finished with that page, and that can be a problem and can disturb the delicate balance

between words and pictures and the different sensory experiences they generate."

While Salomon believes that the quality of illustrating children's literature in Israel has improved greatly over the years, she says there is still some way to go. "There is always room for improvement. We have author-illustrators, like Rutu Modan, who have had books translated into many languages, and that is a great source of pride for us all. But it is also important for us to meet with our counterparts around the world and to feed off each other, like at the Bologna Children's Book Fair, which is the most important event in the field. We almost always have some representation there, and that gives us an opportunity to show the world what Israel has to offer."

Multichannel TV and Internet notwithstanding, Salomon retains her faith in the illustrated book as a preferred form of entertainment for young children. "As long as kids go to sleep in a bed and not in some space-age cocoon, there will always be that precious parent-child interaction with a bedtime story."