

## Literary Salon: Children's Illustrators at the Hughenden

Children's illustrators and authors came from all over Australia to attend the International Society of Children's Writers & Book Illustrators (SCBWI) Conference at *The Hughenden*, the home of the Sydney Writers & Illustrators Network. Publishers, authors, illustrators gathered for a literary salon event, as illustrators and authors shared canapés and conversation.

Susan Sherman, Art Director of the respected US publisher of quality picture books Charlesbridge Boston, was very impressed with 'the diversity and energy of Australian illustrators'. Charlesbridge has already licensed 'The World That We Want' by NSW silk screen artist Kim Michelle Toft, and the illustrations of Victorian zoologist Andrew Plant's 'A Platypus Probably'.

*The Hughenden* was a buzz with Australian children's writing and illustrating literati: Hazel Edwards, Wendy Orr, Deborah Abela, Jeni Mawter, Moya Simons, Vashti Farrer, Susanne Gervay, Jen McVeity, Jan Latta, Christopher Cheng, Mark Greenwood, Felicity Pulman, Prue Mason, Frane Lessac, Mark Greenwood, Patricia Bernard, Dianne Wolfer, Krista Bell, Meredith Costain, Ann Bell, Tina Burke and many others. Wendy Orr's award-winning book 'Nim's' Island' was a key topic of conversation. The film is to be released internationally by Walden Media, producers of *Holes* in 2008. Hazel Edwards' Antarctica adventures was also avidly discussed as she explored translating the experience into the picture book form, 'Antarctic Dad' (Lothian).

The distinguished essayist, author, arts patron Barbara Blackman, who helped establish the Contemporary Arts Society in Melbourne and was a central force in bringing the work of artists like Arthur Boyd and Sidney Nolan to the public, joined the salon, addressing the illustrators and authors.

The illustrators at the conference reflected the depth and range of talent of Australian artists who work in the field of children's illustrations. Artists ranged from the internationally recognised illustrator Frane Lessac to the newly discovered Disney animator Tina Burke. Styles ranged from Peter Taylor's calligraphy to Ilana Kresner's naïve art; from Sarah Davis' complexity to Jan Latta's stunning photography of endangered species.

Works of the illustrators hang in the Reading Room of *The Hughenden* on a rotating exhibition. The exhibition includes works by the following illustrators:-

**Frané Lessac** is an award-winning author and illustrator of children's books, publishing over 30 picture books to date. Travel is a major source of inspiration for her work as she renders her impressions of a country and the way of life in her oil and gouache paintings. Her folk-art paintings have been exhibited in numerous galleries around the world. She lives in Fremantle, Australia, with her family. Her recent book *The Day of the Elephant* is set in Thailand and is based on reports of amazing incidents involving animals and birds that occurred during the tsunami that hit the coastlines of Indonesia, Thailand, Sri Lanka, India and the Maldives on Boxing Day 2004. The story is centred on one special elephant, Mae Jabu who senses the coming tsunami and saves the children of a village by carrying

them on her back to high land and safety. One of the illustrations from *The Day of the Elephant* was gifted to *The Hughenden* hangs in the Reading Room.

**Marjory Gardner** studied graphic design before becoming a freelance children's book illustrator. Since 1980 she has illustrated a wide range of educational and trade books and magazines, published in Australia and internationally. Her work is easily recognised by its humour, rainbow colours and appealing characters. She has travelled throughout Australia workshops and presentations. Marjory's picture books include, 'Playschool: the Blue Book' (ABC Books), 'One Little Bunny' and 'Three Little Ducks' (Brolly Books). Marjory Gardner painted a special piece for *The Hughenden* gallery.

**Ilana M Kresner** is an author and illustrator of children's picture books. Ilana worked with the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the Australian Museum in Sydney, and the Art Gallery of New South Wales. Her first picture book *Alphabet Wings* was published by Lothian/Hachette in 2005. *Alphabet Wings* takes the reader on a world journey flying through 26 cities, beginning with 'A'msterdam and ending with 'Z'urich. Each visit introduces the reader to a unique aspect of that city by exploring festivals, foods, legends, sounds, smells and architecture. The reader travels with magical alphabet wings across all continents. They visit the ancient pyramids of Cairo, the honking cabs of New York and the Samba dancers of Rio de Janeiro. An illustration from *Alphabet Wings* is on loan to *The Hughenden*.

**Peter Taylor** an ecologist, printmaker, papermaker and book-binder, studied art, calligraphy and illumination with the world's finest practitioners though the Society of Scribes and Illuminators in London - including Donald Jackson, 'The Queen's Scribe'.

Having taught Queensland's first calligraphy class in 1979, Peter Taylor exhibited widely, completed many prestigious commissions and wrote 'The Australian Manual of Calligraphy' published by Allen and Unwin in 1987. Peter Taylor illustrates and writes stories for children, the latest being 'Kangaroo's Visitor gets a Surprise', illustrated by Gail Breese, published by Trafford, 2005. His illustrations use a modernised version of 8th century Celtic script. In addition, he works with lino-cuts, scraperboard and etching. His gift of a mythical piece which combines Celtic script and illustration hangs in *The Hughenden* gallery.

**Sarah Davis** is a new illustrator with an Honours degree in literature, who taught literature, creative writing, art and art history. Sarah wanted to explore artistic interpretation of story and imagination. Her illustrations focus on communicating strong personalities, relationships and emotional complexity. She works in oils and alkyds. However she is also exploring different media and techniques. Sarah Davis embarked on a fulltime illustration career late in 2005, and is currently working on her first book, due out in the USA in July 2006. Sarah Davis's work was gifted to the exhibition at *The Hughenden*

**Shirley Peters** is a Sydney based illustrator, graphic designer, former President of the Society of Book Illustrators, managed production at Hodder and Stoughton where she was inspired under Margaret Hamilton to start illustrating children's books. Shirley Peters illustrated Mervyn's Revenge by Leone Peguero (Hamilton Books) which was awarded Honour Book in the prestigious CBCA Children's Book of the Year. Three

sequels to Mervyn followed, among other books. Oil painting has figured strongly in Shirley's artistic development. She combines oil paint technique with her personal "montage style". Currently Shirley Peters is moving into the complex illustrations and themes of the graphic novel.

Anne Bell lived most of her life in western NSW on a sheep property where she raised her boys, worked, while she pursued her poetry, writing and art. Published extensively in newspapers and journals, Anne Bell is an award winning poet. A selection of poetry illustrated by lino-cuts, 'Muster me a Song' was awarded a notable book by the CBC and shortlisted for the NSW Premier's Award 2003. Anne also works as a printmaker and in other mediums. She has won many art awards, exhibited extensively and her work is held in private collections in Australia, Indonesia, UK and USA. Her donation of the delightful 'Bewitched, Bothered & Bewildered' is a print of children at play in the landscape.

Works on display also include illustrations by Shaun Tan, Kim Gamble, Penny Azar, Carolyn Magerl, Cathy Wilcox, Ritva Voula, Tricia Oktober, Wayne Harris and others. Visitors are welcome to wander through *The Hughenden* to enjoy the exhibition.

The Hughenden [www.hughendenhotel.com.au](http://www.hughendenhotel.com.au)  
Charlesbridge Publishers [www.charlesbridge.com](http://www.charlesbridge.com)  
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