

## Newsletter Number Five, June 2012

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Winter has set in here. We've already had a sprinkling of snow, but not enough to stay on the ground. We have had some very white mornings, with a thick covering of frost on everything. My total knee replacement has settled in very well and I'm getting around even better than I was managing with the bad knee. Although I was reluctant, as I said in the last newsletter, to set a program for the year, I've been extremely busy nevertheless, as opportunities arise to have special visitors here and to celebrate their books.

### WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING?

#### Libby Gleeson workshop

Libby Gleeson is one of the most celebrated authors of children's books in Australia. She has written for the whole range, from young adult novels, younger readers and some wonderful picture books. In fact, her newest picture book *LOOK, A BOOK*, so beautifully illustrated by Freya Blackwood, is shortlisted in the Early Childhood category for the CBCA Book of the Year. Good luck in August, Libby and Freya! It was wonderful to have Libby and her husband Euan staying here at Pinerolo. She ran a fabulous writing workshop for a group of twenty-six young people. It was a fascinating and inspiring day enjoyed by all.



*Libby Gleeson and her enthralled audience*

#### SYDNEY WRITERS FESTIVAL

Varuna, the Writers House runs a program in conjunction with the Sydney Writers Festival. As well as an excellent line-up at the Carrington Hotel in Katoomba, there was a really fun children's day in Blackheath. I had the pleasure to be 'in conversation' with writers Ursula Dubosarsky, James Roy and Stephen Measday. What fun we had!

I was then honoured to be the chair for Bob Graham's session in Sydney. I so admire Bob, as an artist and as a person. He had the audience enthralled with stories about his books and his drawings. I also chaired Aleesah Darlison's session where she was surrounded by little girls in fairy wings and sparkles.

### ILLUSTRATOR RESIDENCIES

Pinerolo was really fortunate to receive funding from the Copyright Agency Ltd (CAL) to host four residencies here for emerging and established illustrators of children's books. This is a unique program and a fabulous opportunity for illustrators to have a week in uninterrupted peaceful surroundings, working on a project — with daily mentorship on all the processes involved in publishing and development of picture books. Although there are number of authors-in-residence programs available, there seem to be none that welcomes illustrators.

So the announcement went out, with a closing date of 31 May. Twenty-one applications were received from all over Australia. Every application was accompanied by examples of the artist's work and every application was really impressive. So the selection of the four successful applicants was extremely difficult. Congratulations to the following illustrators (with the dates they will be here):

Shannon Melville, Western Australia (1-6 July)

Rosemary Mastnak, Tasmania (15-20 July)

Stephen Axelsen, New South Wales (14-19 October)

Jedda Robaard, Victoria (18-23 November)

This is so exciting and I am grateful for the support from CAL and look forward to working with these talented people. This is a trial run of four residencies. If we are successful this year there is a chance of applying for a similar program for next year. So watch this space!

### COMING UP

#### MAKE YOUR OWN PICTURE BOOK

A workshop for students on 27 July. Tohby Riddle is one of Australia's most successful, award-winning creators of picture books. His books include *Nobody Owns the Moon*, *My Uncle's Donkey* and the hugely successful *The Word Spy* and *Return of the Word Spy*. This workshop is designed for students ten and over. Tohby will lead participants through writing and illustrating their own

picture book. Participants will be supplied with paper for rough drawings and their own blank 'dummy' picture book. They should bring their own pencils and other drawing equipment. Also, an idea for their book. **For information and bookings:** [www.pinerolo.com.au/PDF/Tohbywshop.pdf](http://www.pinerolo.com.au/PDF/Tohbywshop.pdf)



## PICTURE BOOKS @ PINEROLO

A one-day course on 4 August

These one-day courses on creating children's picture books have been extremely successful and are now in their fifth year. Dee Huxley, award-winning illustrator of over thirty picture books and Margaret Hamilton, with decades of experience in publishing picture books share their knowledge and experience about all aspects of illustration, publishing and all the processes in between. **Information and bookings:** [www.pinerolo.com.au/PDF/Aug.pdf](http://www.pinerolo.com.au/PDF/Aug.pdf)

## NSW WRITERS CENTRE

A course, running over two consecutive Saturdays (13 October and 20 October), on creating children's picture books. The program on the first day includes Margaret Hamilton, with an overview on publishing and a general introduction, followed by Lisa Shanahan, presenting the author's perspective. The second day will feature Wayne Harris presenting the illustrator's and designer's story, followed by Margrete Lamond, children's publisher at Little Hare Books. **For information contact the NSW Writers Centre:** [www.nswwc.org.au/products-page/courses/page/3/](http://www.nswwc.org.au/products-page/courses/page/3/)

## PICTURE BOOKS @ PINEROLO

I'm really excited that the fabulous Wayne Harris has accepted my invitation to come to Pinerolo to participate in a one-day course on creating children's picture books on 27 October. More news and booking information in the next newsletter.

## NEW PICTURE BOOKS

It's so encouraging to see Australian publishers persevering with picture books, in the face of the ebook threat — and making them even more beautiful with special cover treatments and extra care with design. Reading a picture book is very special, especially sharing one with a child; a complete tactile experience. While there's probably a place for books on screens, nothing will replicate the experience of a book in the hand.

Thanks to publishers who continue to send their new picture books. They are all featured on display here at Pinerolo, but here are reviews of some. Firstly, I can't resist drawing your attention to the most wonderful picture book I've seen for a long time. Here is my review:

**UNFORGOTTEN** by Tohby Riddle (Allen & Unwin). This amazing book demands several readings. Although the text is a simple poem, repeated intact at the end, the pages are so densely layered that the reader is slowed, exploring the haunting illustrations as if entering another world.

Many people believe in guardian angels. This is the story of one angel who falls to earth, overwhelmed by its work. It becomes a statue, rather like the people, but is finally rescued by a group of disparate characters. They nurture it back to life and finally it rises through the sky to take its place once again among the stars.

The book is divided into three sections, depicting firstly a night landscape of urban light, then an industrialised city over which the angels fly. The second section is the angel's plunge to earth, unseen by anyone. It sits, invisible, on a park bench, its shape gradually revealed by falling autumn leaves. The third

section is its rescue, recovery and return to the stars.

The ethereal, atmospheric illustrations of the winged strangers flying from the stars to the industrial city, gloomy with smoke and bellowing steam are breathtaking. The ensuing photo-collages are inhabited by people, statues and transport from many different eras, as if captured in a moment. The people themselves have statue-like faces, as they go about their business oblivious of everything around them, especially of the angels hovering above. It is only the hand-drawn group who rescue the fallen angel who possess the humanity and compassion buried within us all. A book as impressive, mesmerising and thought-provoking as this deserves to become a classic. It touches the heart in a unique way. Highly recommended for all ages.



**GO JOJO GO!** by Tessa Bickford & Jennifer Castles (A & U) A beautiful photographic picture book about follows the story of Jojo, a gentoo penguin, reaching out to independence.

**A BEAR AND A TREE** by Stephen Michael King (Penguin/Viking). Stephen Michael King never fails to please, with his gentle humour, his touching relationships and his evocative illustrations. As Bear approaches the time for his big sleep, Ren needs just one more day with him — one more day to play and dance and wonder: Delightful!

**THE TERRIBLE SUITCASE** by Emma Allen & Freya Blackwood (Omnibus Books). Doesn't everybody want to be the same as everyone else on the first day at school? This story of one girl who had an old-fashioned suitcase, while all the other kids have groovy backpacks, highlights the humiliation of being different. All is well though, when the suitcase turns magically into something very special. Freya Blackwood has developed into a very special illustrator and her work sings with life and an intimate understanding of small children.

**THE MAGNIFICENT TREE** by Nick Bland & Stephen Michael King (Scholastic). Nick Bland's simply told story of a partnership between Bonny and her Pop, as they build a tree together, is beautifully complemented by Stephen Michael King's joyous illustrations.

**THE WATTLE TREE** by John Bell & Ben Wood (Hachette) New author John Bell has written a poignant but heartwarming story about a small girl's grief at the loss of her grandma, a grief she can't share with her mother as she is herself bereft — until one day Molly shares a secret with her mother that brings them together. Ben Wood's gentle watercolour illustrations are just right for the mood of the story.

**DINOSAURITIS** by Jeannette Rowe (A & U) This fun series of four picture books for beginning readers should appeal to all those besotted with dinosaurs. Each book includes facts, games and jokes, simple and vivid illustrations. Jeannette Rowe is a best-selling creator of books for the very young. (*Whose, YoYo, My* books). It's good to see a new series from her.

Thanks for your support. Feedback welcome!  
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