

Australian Antarctic Arts fellowships awarded

Antarctica is considered by many to be the most isolated and inhospitable place on Earth. Visitors are largely restricted to the few who can afford the high cost of visiting as a tourist, or to those scientists and support personnel who participate in national Antarctic programs. As a consequence, Antarctica is experienced indirectly by most people – through the work of visiting scientists.

As well as promoting Antarctic science directly to the community, the Australian Antarctic Division looks for other ways of informing and educating Australians about Antarctica and Australia's activities there. The Australian Antarctic Arts Fellowship (formerly Australian Antarctic Humanities Program) provides an alternative, enabling those with a non-science focus to experience Antarctica first-hand so that they may convey their appreciation and understanding to other Australians.

That Antarctica be valued, protected and understood is the Australian Antarctic Program's vision. Considered uppermost during the competitive selection process is the capacity for artists to communicate this to the broader Australian community and internationally.

Since the mid 1980s, more than 70 people have travelled south with the Humanities program. Their disciplines have included the visual arts, imaginative writing, education, history, social research and music as well as print and broadcast journalism.



PETER WHYTE

Prior to leaving on Voyage 7, three recipients of the 2003–04 Australian Antarctic Arts Fellowship are presented with certificates by Dr Sharman Stone, Parliamentary Secretary responsible for Australia's Antarctic program. From left: Dr Stone, Elle Leane, Sue Lovegrove and Bernadette Hince.

From a diverse international field of applicants, the following six people were awarded Fellowships for the 1993–04 season:

Danielle Wood, a journalist and winner of the 2002 Vogel literary award plans to write her

second fiction book set on Macquarie Island. **Nin Brudermann**, an Austrian artist based in New York, is working on a worldwide project of images taken of and from weather balloons launched from remote places.

Tim Low, a widely published nature writer and photographer with an interest in introduced species, will document the ecological and geological links between Australia and Antarctic through a book about birds from the two continents.

Sue Lovegrove, a PhD-qualified visual artist with works in the National Gallery of Victoria and Parliament House, will complete a series of 15 to 20 paintings.

Elle Leane, a Rhodes scholar with a PhD from Oxford University will study the links between science and literature, particularly science fiction and utopias.

Bernadette Hince, natural history writer, science editor and compiler of the *Antarctic Dictionary*, will compare and contrast the ecological history of the subantarctic islands of France, New Zealand and Australia.

CATHY BRUCE, INFORMATION SERVICES, AAD

'Overwhelmingly astounding beauty ...'

A previous recipient of an Australian Antarctic Arts Fellowship, Stephen Eastaugh, has recently held an exhibition of his Antarctic work, 'Unmapping – Recent Antarctic paintings' at the William Mora Galleries in Melbourne. Eastaugh completed a four-month summer stay at Davis station in 2002–03, adding to the body of Antarctic work begun after his initial round-trip visit in 1999. His work has been exhibited several times over the last four years.

To some, the Antarctic is just a white wasteland but I definitely see much more,' Eastaugh says. 'Brutal, empty and monotonous it can be but in this extreme expanse you find overwhelmingly astounding beauty. After the deadly winds die down, you find a

rich silence. After furious blizzards, you find delicious views. Out of a white void comes visual clarity mixed with a reminder of how fragile we all are. Antarctica sends shivers down your spine.

It was a frigid, exotic destination where I sensed a romantic type of cerebral snogging going on between myself and the environment. My brain seems to be drawn to the poles for cold, clear order. The harsh icy abstraction of Being I see out there and I crave it. Do these white terrains mirror the sad human disquiet of my mindscape? Is it this that attracts me? Or the cool seduction that could just as easily kill you? A kind of sexy danger embellished with monstrous iceblocks that make you tipsy at each visual drink.'

Other Australians who have travelled south under the AAD's Arts Fellowship program include well known authors Nikki Gemmill, Hazel Edwards and Coral Tulloch; broadcasters Vivienne Schenker, Andrew Denton and Tim Bowden; science and environment journalists James Woodford, Bob Beale and Andrew Darby, and visual artists Jorg Schmeisser, Jenni Mitchell, Christian Clare Robertson and Sally Robinson.

▶ Antarctica Online

For more information about the program, visit the website at <http://www.aad.gov.au/default.asp?casid=3892>



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Director of the AAD, Dr Tony Press (speaking) opens the exhibition of Stephen Eastaugh (closest to Dr Press).