



Media release

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Mahy teams with Dunedin and Auckland artists to judge IHC Art Awards

IHC has assembled a trio of top New Zealand creative talents to choose the winners in this year's IHC Art Awards.

Acclaimed children's author Margaret Mahy will team up with Auckland sculptor Brett Graham and Dunedin printmaker Olav Nielsen to judge entries that each year include a wide range of media from sculpture and fibre art, to painting and drawing.

The IHC Art Awards are open to all New Zealanders with an intellectual disability, whether or not they use IHC services. Entries open on Monday 9 May.

This year for the first time, there will be a regional exhibition and judging in Dunedin in June. The top 30 entries from three regional competitions – 10 finalists from each region – will be announced in July. The finalists' work will be exhibited at the St James Theatre Gallery, Wellington, from 2–16 August.

The winners are announced on Awards night, Tuesday 16 August.

Even though Margaret Mahy's business is words – and she has said: "everything I write is intended to be heard" – she has also been described as a very visual writer.

Talking about the illustrations in her picture books, she says: "The artist is the artist and is entitled to work with his or her own ideas. If I have done my work well the artist won't be too far wrong."

Sculptor Brett Graham first became curious about the work of IHC when a collector knocked at his door in Auckland a number of years ago asking for donations. Brett asked for more information and that was the start of his interest.

Brett has exhibited widely, locally and internationally, and has had work in the Venice Biennale and the Sydney Biennale twice. At present he is co-curating an exhibition of Tainui Taonga that will open at Te Papa in Wellington in October.

Dunedin printmaker Olav Nielsen says he was “stoked” to be asked to be a judge and will be looking for “an expression of the heart or spirit” as well technical skill in the winners.

Olav says art needs to be shared. “The most important thing is to allow your art to be part of a community – whatever your community is – not to be afraid to actually show people. That feedback from other people is a really valuable motivator.”

Art works and entry forms must be submitted between Monday 9 May and Friday 3 June 2011. All entries must be in by 4pm, 3 June. The entry form and conditions of entry can be downloaded from the IHC website www.ihcartawards.co.nz

For more information please contact: Amy Watson (amy.watson@ihc.org.nz) or Philippa Sellens (philippa.sellens@ihc.org.nz)

Regional exhibitions:

Wellington: 22 June–22 July, The Arthouse Dudley Street, Lower Hutt

Dunedin: 18–27 June, 286 Princes Street Art Space, Dunedin

Hamilton: 23 June–15 July, Sandz Gallery, Hamilton

The judges

Margaret Mahy

Internationally acclaimed children’s author Margaret Mahy wrote her first story at the age of seven and is still writing at 75, nearly two hundred publications later. Margaret lives and writes from her home in Governor’s Bay, Christchurch and the former librarian has been a fulltime writer since 1980. Her first book published was *A Lion in the Meadow* in 1969 and her work has been translated into 15 languages. She was awarded the Order of New Zealand in 1993 and has won many of the world’s major prizes for children’s writers.

Brett Graham

Brett Graham takes complex historical and cultural ideas and abstracts them into sculptural forms. His work reflects Maori and European histories and invokes Maori sculptural traditions. His sculptural pieces, mainly in wood and stone, have formal simplicity. Brett is regarded as a leading authority on contemporary Maori sculpture. His work is also featured in most major collections in the country, such as the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa and the Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tamaki.

Olav Nielsen

Olav Nielsen is a printmaker specialising in mezzotint and burnished aquatint. He says the surface textures of these evoke for him the soft darkness of sleep that surrounds the dream images that he wants to communicate. His favourite subjects are the New Zealand villa and landscape, intertwined with dream material. Olav has been working as an artist in Dunedin since 2003. His work is held in public and private collections in New Zealand and Australia, and internationally.