

Media Release

Chiefs of Staff, News Directors

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Tasmanian scientists are the everyday heroes in illuminating art exhibition

For 15 minutes each scientist sat with their eyes closed while their portrait was painted by Tasmanian artist Andrew Baird.

For some, it was the first time in years they had stopped and thought about anything other than their work, and for others, whose minds couldn't switch off from their current research, they managed to solve problems that had been bugging them for ages.

For the artist it allowed him to put the focus onto the inward nature of the scientists' work, while presenting a "meditative and thoughtful visage".

"With their eyes closed the portrait becomes less about the subject's personality than about their work," Andrew explained.

The self-confessed "frustrated scientist", who excelled at mathematics but has always been pulled more strongly towards creative fields, decided to give rein to both his scientific and artistic sides after meeting many scientists through his children (one is a neuroscientist, the other a marine biologist).

He started researching the background work of people who worked for places such as the Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies (IMAS), Australian Antarctic Division (AAD) and the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO), and held enviable titles such as paleoclimatic ice core chemist, ichthyologist and genetic population ecologist.

Andrew approached them offering to paint their portraits and the reaction was overwhelmingly positive to both the process and the resulting images – which were created first in watercolour, before being scanned and digitally enhanced with intense colour and abstract objects relating to their field of work.

While the majority of Andrew's artworks have been on display in The National Centre for Synchrotron Science in Melbourne for close to two years, a selection of portraits of mainly Tasmanian scientists will go on display at the Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies exhibition space, 20 Castray Esplanade, Battery Point, from **Saturday 18 July 2015**.

"Scientists do not hold the public recognition their work deserves and I'm hoping this exhibition, called *Illuminations*, will help rectify that," Andrew said.

Tasmanian scientists featured include:

Dr Pattie Virtue, IMAS researcher in the field of Antarctic and sub-Antarctic flora, fauna and biodiversity. Much of her work involves studying krill and their feeding habits under the sea ice.

Dr Jonny Stark, AAD benthic ecologist, who is holding a creature called a crinoid (*Promachocrinus keurguelensis*), a relative of the sea star which 'dances' in a mesmerising way. Dr Stark headed up the Antarctic Free Ocean Carbon Enrichment (AntFOCE) project, which was implemented at Casey Station, Antarctica, during the 2015-16 summer season.

Dr Cath King, AAD marine toxicologist. Dr King studies the effects of alterations in levels of various pollutants on Antarctic marine biota. Often these creatures react to the tiniest changes.

Dr Glen Johnstone, AAD Benthic Ecologist. Dr Johnstone studies how communities of flora and fauna live on the Antarctic sea floor.

Dr Helena Baird, University of Tasmania and AAD genetic population ecologist. Works on the AntFOCE project with Jonny Stark, looking into future effects of ocean acidification in Antarctica.

Dr Johnny Keane, IMAS ichthyologist. Dr Keane studies fisheries around Tasmanian waters. He is currently looking at the potential for a periwinkle industry in the State.

Dr Karen Westwood, AAD marine biologist. Studies phytoplankton, tiny organisms at the base of the food chain, and particularly how they will fare with predicted climate change.

Dr Mark Curran, AAD and ACE CRC paleoclimatic ice core chemist. Dr Curran drills ice cores in some of the remotest parts of the globe to examine the make-up of ancient atmospheres and calculate historical temperature records.

Illuminations: An art project celebrating science

What: Series of portraits of scientists by Tasmanian artist Andrew Baird.

Where: IMAS exhibition space, 20 Castray Esplanade, Battery Point.

Official opening: Friday, July 17, 6pm by Robert Morris-Nunn.

Viewing times: The exhibition will be open Monday-Friday, 9am-5pm and Saturday 10am to 1pm through to August 15.

Information: www.artscience.net.au

Media queries: For more information or to organise an interview contact Andrew Baird on 0414 263 555 or contact University of Tasmania Media Officer Cherie Cooper on (03) 6226 2691.

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