

## PRESS RELEASE



### **IBBY Australia Honour Books include a first for Translation**

IBBY Australia proudly announces its biennial Honour Books for 2016. One book is selected for excellence in Writing, one for Illustration, and one for Translation. This is the first time Australia has selected a book in the Translation category.

Every two years an Advisory Panel of three children's literature experts makes the selection from all books published in the period. These outstanding books become Australia's representative books in a travelling exhibition of about 150 international titles. The exhibition will be shown at the IBBY Congress in Auckland in 2016, and at the Bologna Children's Book Fair, and in many other countries.

For Writing: *The Incredible Here and Now* by **Felicity Castagna, Giramondo 2013**

Dom dies in a car accident. Fifteen-year-old Michael has to learn how to live without his older brother, whose easy charm could open any doors. In this life-changing year, while his mother withdraws from the family, Michael, despite his strong sense of self, becomes somehow disconnected from his world. This gives the story an edgy feel as we experience with him his neighbourhood, his girlfriend and the cars which zoom up and down the street. The novel has a powerful sense of place, exploring the setting and cultures of the western suburbs of Sydney that many readers can identify with. Castagna's sharp, observant writing shows compassion and insight and explores the themes of grief, loss, romance, culture and family life through a series of vignettes. Many light touches of humour contribute to making this compelling and accessible book a story about hope and finding one's place in the community.

**Felicity Castagna** travelled widely before moving to Parramatta, where she has worked as a teacher, arts worker and editor. Her collection of short stories *Small Indiscretions* (Transit Lounge, 2011) was highly praised. *The Incredible Here and Now* was shortlisted for the NSW Premier's Literary Award and the CBCA Award for Older Readers, and won the Prime

Minister's Literary Award for Young Adult Fiction. She had previously won the Josephine Ulrick Literature Award and the Qantas Spirit of Youth Award. She is completing a Doctorate in Creative Arts in the Writing and Society Research Centre at the University of Western Sydney.

For Illustration: ***Banjo and Ruby Red* by Freya Blackwood (text by Libby Gleeson) Little Hare 2013**

Banjo, a good 'chook dog,' rounds up the chickens each night; but when Ruby Red fails to respond, he cares for her and saves her life. The story, irresistible to a reader of any age, is told in Gleeson's elegant and deceptively simple text, and Blackwood's illustrations with their restrained palette accurately depicting the Australian countryside. They are full of life, movement and detail, and the expressions of the animal characters show individuality and the depth of their relationship. We see the concern on Banjo's face when he finds Ruby Red and his gentleness as he lifts her up, and hold our breath to see what will happen next. The composition of the book is restrained, balancing the illustration perfectly; the scratchy type which accentuates the onomatopoeia ('Bark. Bark. Bark') is particularly effective, as are the endpapers, contrasting the waking and the sleeping farmyard. A masterly picture book using a combination of laser print on watercolour paper with oil paints and charcoal.

**Freya Blackwood** has been illustrating picture books since 2002. Her books include *Two Summers* (John Heffernan); *Amy & Louis*, and *Clancy and Millie and the Very Fine House* (both Libby Gleeson). In 2010 Freya was the recipient of the prestigious Kate Greenaway medal for *Harry and Hopper* (Margaret Wild). Recent books include *Maudie and Bear* (Jan Ormerod); *The Terrible Suitcase* (Emma Allen); and *The Treasure Box* (Margaret Wild). In 2015 she has had the unprecedented success of being winner in three categories of the CBCA awards: Picture Book for *My Two Blankets* (Irena Kobald); Early Childhood for *Go to Sleep, Jessie!* (Libby Gleeson); and Younger Readers category for *The Cleo Stories: The Necklace and the Present* (also Libby Gleeson).

For Translation: ***Nine Open Arms* by Benny Lindelauf, translated by John Nieuwenhuizen, Allen & Unwin 2014**

Limburg in the south-east of the Netherlands, with its gritty wind in the cornfields, and important cigar trade, is the setting for this bittersweet tale

of a family that is always trying to make ends meet. Oma Mei's grandchildren beg her to tell the story for each photograph in the Crocodile, her battered suitcase; but she holds back some vital secrets of the past, later unlocked by the mysterious man living in the hedge. The translator has retained a strong local flavour in the story, using colloquial expressions and names such as Fing (short for Josephine), the narrator. The book is, however, universal in its themes: family, love and hatred, parenting, sibling loyalties and jealousies, betrayal, and the importance of stories.

A bewitching read with fresh and memorable language.

**John Nieuwenhuizen** is an Australian translator of Dutch and Flemish literature. From the early 1990s John has translated a number of books of high literary quality. These include *Falling* by Anne Provoost; *The Baboon King* by Anton Quintana (Mildred Batchelder Award, USA, for the best children's book in translation); and *The Book of Everything* by Guus Kuijer (shortlisted for the Marsh Award, UK, for Children's Literature in Translation). In 2007 he was awarded the New South Wales Premier's Translation Prize and PEN Medallion. IBBY Australia especially congratulates John, and Allen & Unwin, on *Nine Open Arms* as our first Honour Book in Translation. John has been described as a 'deft and tactful' translator; with *Nine Open Arms* he has brought an important book to readers of English worldwide.

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