

# Christine Gates

Artist in Residence at  
The Baldessin Press

by **Christine Gates**

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digital artist, photographer and  
arts educator

**A residency at Baldessin Press, St Andrews, is not just an art experience, it's a life experience. This morning, after working in the studio, I strolled through spring-flowering gardens to harvest lunch: organically grown butter lettuce with fresh parsley and a dash of mustard cress.**



**Christine Gates** with photopolymer gravure prints, made at the Baldessin Press for *The Desert and the Inland Sea* series, to be exhibited at The South Australian Museum this year.

**The atmosphere is due largely** to the compassion and dedication of Tess Edwards and Lloyd Godman, the hosts for my stay. Both are long-term practising artists with a philosophy of care for the environment. My home for three weeks was the garret above the hand-built studio, looking out past a flowering acacia and bushland to distant hills.

There is a great wealth and diversity of talent at Baldessin Press to tap into. Tess Edwards makes richly layered monoprints. After living and exhibiting in France for seventeen years, she returned to St. Andrews in 2001, to restore and reopen the studio built by her late husband, George Baldessin, with fellow artists, the Hails brothers, in the 1970s.

I talked, over coffee and meals, with Tess, Lloyd, and tutors Silvi Glattauer and Rob Hails, about projects, ideas and techniques. Lloyd Godman, multi-skilled, multi-media artist, discussed his extensive website ([www.lloydgodman.net.au](http://www.lloydgodman.net.au)) and gave me advice on improving my more basic site ([www.christinegates.com](http://www.christinegates.com)).

One of the conditions of the residency was that I work on a major project. I continued with *The Desert and the Inland Sea*, begun

for an exhibition at the Museo del Pueblo de Guanajuato in Mexico in 2008 and subsequently pursued at the South Australian Museum through two artist residencies. (The resulting series of prints will be exhibited at the Museum in 2010.)

I've been photographing material from the museum's collections that relates to Australia's central deserts and the search for water. The search for a great Inland Sea dominated 19th century exploration in Australia and echoed the Romantic Movement's concerns with endless quests for the sublime.

The South Australian Museum holds a world-famous collection of opalised marine fossils, found in central Australia and originating from the Inland Sea of the Cretaceous Period. From the Aboriginal Collections, I photographed unique artefacts relating to the cultural and practical significance of water.

During my residency at the Baldessin Press I wanted to develop prints using photopolymer plates and explore some classic printing techniques that I was usually too rushed to try. Rob Hails spent a day with me, in a one-to-one

workshop, demonstrating viscosity printing. His area of expertise is traditional acid etching and printing. I had been making large, A2 size, photopolymer plates and wanted to add colour using this technique. It involves a relief roll, using ink of a lighter viscosity, over the intaglio-inked plate. It also requires the use of a roller big enough in diameter to cover the plate in one roll — a good technique to use in winter!

I've been working with photopolymer plates for some years. Silvi Glattauer ([www.silvi.com.au](http://www.silvi.com.au)) is my photopolymer guru. The plates are expensive and unlike zinc or copper, which can be reworked, you get one go at them. Exposure is critical. The plates are also very high in contrast and I generally spend a lot of time fiddling around in Photoshop to get my image ready to print a positive transparency. I spent a day learning 'Silvi's magic curves' and all problems were solved.

I'm planning on spending more time at the Baldessin Press. Only forty-five minutes from the city, it's part of Melbourne's art history, but it has a feeling of remoteness that lets me focus completely on my work.

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