

PAINTERS FOR PEN

Following the Keating-Kessel conversation at City Recital Hall is an important event hosted by **John Ralston Saul**, the Canadian author and newly elected president of International PEN. The writers **Colm Toibin, Yiyun Li, Larissa Behrendt, Thomas Keneally, Eric Lax, Frank Moorhouse** and **Peter Carey** will read from the work of imprisoned writers. You'll hear work you would never otherwise encounter.

Also on this theme, I am excited about an exhibition that was my idea and was brilliantly developed by the Sydney PEN committee to raise awareness and funds for their work in campaigning for freedom of speech. PEN uses an empty chair at all its events to represent writers who have been imprisoned, oppressed and even murdered for their work. So artists including **Cressida Campbell** (pictured), **Elisabeth Cummings, Ken Done, Michael Fitzjames, Nicholas Harding, Matthew Martin, Reg Mombassa, Bruce Petty** and **John Shakespeare** have each chosen a chair and embellished it in their style. The painted chairs will be on display at the festival's main venue at Walsh Bay with a soundscape by **Greg Ferris** about some of the writers they symbolise. After the festival, the chairs will move to the Ken Done Gallery in The Rocks, where they will be auctioned and the money donated to Sydney PEN. My thanks to the artists for their creativity and generosity.

