

# SOANE MUSEUM PRESS RELEASE

## Writer-in-Residence at Sir John Soane's Museum

***Sir John Soane's Museum has appointed Australian novelist Bernard Cohen as its first ever writer-in-residence.***

The Museum hopes the residency will add a new dimension to its public events and educational programmes. Bernard Cohen's duties during the eight-month residency include writing monthly fictional "guidenotes" and conducting tours for the general public and a number of school groups. The award-winning novelist will also create a website where Museum visitors can contribute their own writings on the museum and its collection.

Cohen, whose fourth novel *Hardly Beach Weather* was published in Australia last month, says "The first time I saw the Museum I knew I wanted to work and write there. I wrote a letter to the Museum Director saying 'I'll organise everything. All I need is a bit of desk space.' She wrote back: 'Sorry. No desk space.' My next letter began, 'Forget the desk!'"

"This is the perfect job," says 38-year-old Cohen. "When it finishes I really don't know if I'll be able to work anywhere else again."

Cohen intends to write a book - of fiction - based around the museum collection. "The Museum is a dream space for a fiction writer - unchanged since 1837, full of tricks of light and perspective, and with a collection ranging from the unique and wonderful to the enigmatic and ugly."

Bernard Cohen's first tour will take place on the evening of 2 July. Numbers are limited and are allocated on a first-come first-serve basis. The *Fictional Guidenotes* will be available from 30 June both in the Museum and online at the Museum website <http://www.soane.org>.

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***Bernard Cohen is the author of four books, including the 1996 Australian Vogel Award Award-winner 'The Blindman's Hat'. He has received several Australia Council Fellowships and a 2001 Arts Council of England Writer's Award. His previous residencies include Peckham Library, University College Worcester and Nottingham Trent University. His first children's picture book will be published by Penguin Books Australia in March 2003. He has lived in the UK since 1999.***

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