

audience

bringing colour to life

Welcome to the magical mind of Dr Cameron Stelzer. The rising star of the world of children's books tells **Bryony Triggs** all about the latest adventures of his zany creation.

HAVING a warm heart can defrost even the iciest winter – at least that's what you'll learn in Dr Cameron Stelzer's latest book.

The Springwood author and illustrator launched his third book documenting the adventures of his Stroogle character last month at the Logan Art Gallery.

The Stroogle Warms Winter, which he describes as "a simple story about having a warm heart", follows his original book, *The Stroogle*, and *The Stroogle's New Home*.

Cameron, who has a Doctorate of Visual Arts, a Bachelor of Fine Arts and a Graduate Diploma in Education, is a world apart from the professor-style stereotype the 'Dr' title can personify.

The 29-year-old's youth, energy and true passion for his Stroogle creation are evident in his sweeping illustrations and rhythmic rhymes that make up his published works.

"I really enjoy it," he says. "I love narrative, I love story-telling.

"Anything I do now, I think 'how could I translate that to a story?'"

The Stroogle, a rainbow-coloured, chicken-like character with a human face, was born out of Cameron's creative mind during a stint working at the Natural History Museum in

London between 2002 and 2003.

Cameron says his exposure to the many "weird and wonderful" prehistoric animals combined with London's rainy days got his artistic cogs turning. He started sketches that eventually became *The Stroogle*.

"I was even working in a dark, cold and grey spot," he says. "I wanted something to contrast to it."

But for Cameron, his artistic escape turned out to be not only for fun.

With the inclusion of a read-along CD with his latest story to aid in children's comprehension, he is trying to deliver an educational element alongside his books.

This teaching term, he will travel to the far reaches of Cape York and Cairns to Blackwater and Wide Bay visiting schools and workshopping with primary and secondary students on the art of writing and illustrating.

Cameron says one of the highlights of having published work is to know children are reading and observing it.

"There's so much work involved," he says. "Once it's been published, the whole thing is being appreciated."

Cameron says the fact children read his work drives him to attain perfection.



BEDTIME READING Dr Cameron Stelzer and *The Stroogle* have returned for more fun.

"If you're not happy with it, you'll fix it," he says. "You're thinking about your audience the whole time and how they'll perceive it."

Growing up in Bundaberg, Cameron says it wasn't until his teens that he really started to enjoy art.

"I didn't even like it at primary school," he says.

But after receiving encouragement from a high school teacher, he started attending weekly watercolour workshops, techniques he

now employs in his book illustrations.

Cameron's future plans include taking *The Stroogle* to the world of outer space, as well as completing a Masters degree – testament to his aforementioned desire to constantly improve his work and himself.

"I really enjoy the whole learning thing," he says. "I'm always learning."

The Stroogle books are available at www.thestroogle.com or at the Logan Art Gallery. Phone 3412 5128. ▀