

Haunting med school in name of art

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"You sometimes don't know what you're going to find until you start looking around.

"Initially everyone was saying, 'Oh, you're interested in cut-up bodies.' But other stuff evolved around the body and the scientific and religious ethics of it, which in some ways has been more fascinating."

This has led Straka to some fairly weird places. Such as the website of a United States company called Clone Aid that will clone your pet and, apparently, yourself.

"I suppose I've now taken it more into the contemporary realm with the whole clone thing."

That's the best thing about the fellowship, Straka

admits. It offers the opportunity to pursue art without interruption for a year, and the result of that is often an increased creativity.

Scott Eady agrees. He held the fellowship in 2002 and now lectures in sculpture at the Otago Polytechnic's art school.

"That time is really important, to be able to sit in the studio day after day and develop ideas and do research and read.

"It's just the stuff that you don't have time to do when you're in full-time employment as well."

Before applying for the fellowship, Eady was doing a stressful job in Auckland as well as doing art. Moving to Dunedin was a breath of fresh air, which is why he stayed on to



► 'Donor 6': One of Heather Straka's recent works

raise his family here. But he says many who are awarded the place are from Auckland and don't enjoy the isolation and change in climate.

That was an issue for Straka, who headed for tropical climes for a few weeks after holding her Donor exhibition at

Christchurch's Jonathan Smart Gallery in May.

Donor featured works she's produced while in Dunedin. Straka hopes to develop these ideas further over the rest of her year here.

That will involve spending more time lurking around the medical school.

"I'm quite free to wander around as I like, which is great.

"It's fascinating, behind the scenes of pathology. You go in there and everything is stored in these plastic containers, like Tupperware containers with writing on it.

"I was fascinated with things like that rather than the romanticised perception we have of it."