ALAIN HUBERT TO RECEIVE PRESTIGIOUS 2023 BELGICA MEDAL



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The Royal Academy of Science, Letters and Fine Arts of Belgium (Classe des Sciences) has announced that it has selected Alain Hubert, Founder and President of the International Polar Foundation to receive one of the two Belgica Medals the body plans to award for the prize. The Belgica Medal is awarded every 5 years. This will be the twelfth time that it will be awarded since it was set up.

Alain Hubert will receive the prestigious medal alongside Dr Jérôme Chappellaz French glaciologist teaching at the EPFL (Ecole polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne), at a ceremony to be held at the Royal Academy in Brussels, in March 2024.

The Belgica Medal is awarded to Alain Hubert in recognition of his exceptional contribution to research in the polar regions, in particular his record-breaking polar expeditions, the establishment of important scientific research programmes and the construction of the world's first Zero Emissions polar research station, the Princess Elisabeth Antarctica.

The construction of the station has breathed new life into Belgian polar research, and the Station regularly attracts large number of scientists from around the World, who work in collaboration with the Belgian research community.

Dr Chappellaz is awarded the medal for his analysis of ice cores from Greenland and Antarctica, which have made it possible for scientists to reconstruct atmospheric methane concentrations over the last 800,000 years.

On being asked to comment, Mr Hubert said “It has been an honour and a privilege to have been able to contribute to the tradition of Belgian polar exploration and international polar research begun by Adrien de Gerlache, and to have helped Belgian polar researchers to benefit from a platform that fully exhibits their very considerable scientific prowess.”

The medal award which was established in 1904 by royal Statute, has since 1963, been awarded every five years in recognition of the work of polar scientists active on the Antarctic Continent.

The Belgica Medal was initially created to commemorate the first overwintering expedition to Antarctica aboard The Belgica research vessel, led by Belgian Navy Lieutenant Adrien de Gerlache de Gomery in 1897-99. This was also the first international research expedition to Antarctica. The first recipients were members of the expedition crew and the diverse team of scientists who contributed to the quantity of scientific information collected during that voyage and during the year spent in the ice.

In the years since, the Belgica Medal has been awarded to a variety of researchers from Belgium and other countries. Notable winners include the Belgian Antarctic research expedition of 1957-58 (which began construction of Belgium’s King Baudouin research station), Edgard Picciotto (Geologist from the Université libre de Bruxelles who took part in several Belgian and American Antarctic research expeditions in the 1950s and 60s), Claude Lorius (Glaciologist and former President of the Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research), David John Drewry (former Director of the British Antarctic Survey), Dominique Raynaud (Glaciologist at the Centre national de recherche scientifique in France and 2007 Nobel Peace Prize winner), and Thomas Stocker (climatologist at the University of Bern).