



Dreamlike qualities: Katoomba author and illustrator Toby Riddle with his latest book, *Unforgotten*.

Katoomba influence in author's new book

By Shane Desiatnik

Detailed and imaginative collages give a dreamlike quality to the everyday world in Katoomba children's author and illustrator Toby Riddle's new book, *Unforgotten*.

And if you look through its 128 pages of multi-layered images and beautiful, sparing prose carefully enough you will notice subtle signs of Katoomba within the mystical cityscapes that dominate the book's setting.

Unlike his previous career as a cartoonist for Good Weekend where speed and ideas were required in equal parts, Riddle is now enjoying the luxury of time and using it to full advantage.

He said *Unforgotten* — which will appeal to children from late primary school and their parents — began as a single idea that grew and evolved over an 18-month period.

"It started off as a collage project using more than 2000 photographs that were a mix of places and things around the world from both past and present," said Mr Riddle.

"I wanted to create a texture of layers by adding little details to build up a world. They were mostly made up of familiar, everyday things but in dreams the logic of the world is a bit different and I wanted to create that kind of place."

Images included photos he took in 2010 on a speaking tour of Edinburgh and London, holiday snaps from New York and Tokyo, old black and white photos and snaps his dad had taken in the 1950s in the Sahara.

"Photos of Katoomba provided further detail to the collages, but it will be hard to recognise because they were not landmarks but mostly things like signs, a roundabout, a train and

railway bridge, autumn leaves and even a tree in my backyard.

"There were also lots of photos of clouds, mist and the sky because Katoomba is a great place for that and I used some rolling fog images to add a dreamy feel to the street scenes."

Angel-like figures appear in many scenes in *Unforgotten* as they were part of Mr Riddle's original idea and a story developed around them.

"I thought what would happen if an angel was just sitting on a park bench and why would it be there and from there a storyline developed.

"At first I thought about the book being wordless, but in the end I included words but each one really had to earn its spot — its a book where the pictures really take over."

Unforgotten was released on August 27.