



*Read our CEO, Jonny Wilkinson's regular column in
The Northern Advocate
"A different Light"*

11th November 2017

It's in the eye of the beholder mate!

When we talked about stink attitudes towards disabled people at Tiaho Trust in 2008, we - as have many other disabled people - recognised there was an underlying fear of them.

But why are people so scared? Where does that come from?

It's not like we can bounce up and dislocate people's jaws with our toes.

It is widely believed that humankind's ancestors were hard-wired biologically to seek out "healthy" partners to have babies with, in keeping with Darwin's Theory of Evolution.

This may have been true thousands or even hundreds of years ago, but in this fabulous age of information is it really necessary for us to behave like Neanderthals when it comes to our perception of beauty?

It's a concept that has never really impacted on me. I have always been incredibly vain in a vaguely narcissistic way, which probably reflects a certain lack of self-awareness.

Contrary to Darwin's theory, I managed to snag a gorgeous partner and we have produced two very beautiful daughters, one of whom has produced the most beautiful mokopuna in the world. (I would say that of course.)

Sexual being is defined by spirit, not body. This was the principle behind *Intimate Encounters: Disability and Sexuality*, an international photographic exhibition by Belinda Mason.

We used this exhibition in 2008 at the Old Library to challenge the myth that only the most glamorous, able bodied and successful among us can lead active, healthy and imaginative sex lives.

The exhibition was generously sponsored by Henderson Reeves Lawyers.

But that was in 2008 and for nine years this fabulous exhibition has been in a sarcophagus, entombed in storage, not seeing the light of day.

Creative Northland recently approached me to see if I was interested in showing Intimate Encounters: Disability and Sexuality in the Quest walkway to Farmers. This space has been provided by the owners of Quest Apartments for free, as a vehicle to showcase art to the Whangarei community.

We will therefore be resurrecting the exhibition in the first week of December, to coincide with the International Day of People with Disabilities and our Getting Out There EXPO extravaganza.

However, Houston we have a problem. Some of the photos are more risqué than others, including full frontal nudity - in the best of taste of course. We are looking for a space to show this part of the exhibition concurrently to allow appropriate public viewing, but also warn people there is some flesh involved.

So, what forward thinking restaurateur or bar owner, community group, CBD landlord or gallery manager would like to fill an empty wall or two with some stunning photographic work that celebrates sexuality and disability?

If it is you or someone you know, please contact me and let's get this show on the road.

HOT STUFF

Caroline Bowditch jokes that she's not your average horny little devil.

"I am keen to instil a belief in the wider community that disability is sexy! When the idea for the image was suggested to me I wasn't so sure.

Belinda managed to come up with an image that shows off all my 'assets', makes the bits of myself that I don't always like pale into insignificance and really shows me up to be what I truly am".

Caroline is a consultant for Monte - Moving on to Empower, the secretary of the Genetic Support Network of Victoria, a training co-ordinator at Arts Access (Victoria), co-convenor of the Victorian Women With Disabilities Network and a member of the City of Melbourne's Disability Advisory Committee.

Caroline has osteogenesis imperfecta (fragile bones).



Jonny Wilkinson is the CEO of Tiaho Trust – Disability: A Matter of Perception, a Whangarei-based disability advocacy organisation.