



Read our CEO **Jonny Wilkinson's** regular column in The Northern Advocate

"A Different Light"

A Different Light –16th September 2023 – “Art is a great way to express yourself”

I've always been around Art thank goodness. My late Mother was the Art Teacher at Whangarei Boys' High School for years. She had a raw technical talent that could produce photographic like paintings in realism style and an academic knowledge that enabled her to crank out cubist and abstract pieces which she did right up into her last days. Her Art infused DNA skipped a generation to land on her grandchildren Hannah (Football Ferns street art whizz) and my daughter Chyna who completed a Bachelor of Fine Arts at Elam Arts School.

George Bernard Shaw encapsulated the value of Art as best as anyone could , -
“Without art, the crudeness of reality would make the world unbearable.”

‘The crudeness of reality ‘sure rings a bell in the current epoch of disaster and disenfranchisement. In these tough times art gives solace, inspiration, hope and a sense of community. From the beginnings of cave drawings to Bankys’ revered street Art to the vibrant Impressionist brush strokes of Van Gogh, Art has always been pivotal in human existence.

Creative New Zealand’s 2021 triennial research into New Zealanders’ attitudes towards and engagement with the arts show the arts make a powerful contribution to our wellbeing as a nation and enhanced our ability to get through the COVID-1 nightmare.

On TV One’s Sunday renowned actor Robyn Malcolm articulated her fears that the [Te Herenga Waka Victoria University of Wellington’s Theatre programme](#) would be unrecognisable if cuts proposed by Victoria University are confirmed later this month. Half the department's staff would be lost and the theatre programme would be merged with English Department.

"It's so shortsighted, and it's insulting to the arts community of Aotearoa," she said. Robyn said.

Victoria theatre graduates have won Emmies and Oscars. Taika Waititi, Brett McKenzie, Jermaine Clement are just a few of the programme's famous names. The demise of such an institution would be grim indeed. This is the very time that our Arts need to be supported and cherished and in reach of all members of society.

After completing her Bachelor of Fine Arts Chyna(my daughter) did a Masters in Art Therapy and then a Post Graduate Diploma in Creative Arts Therapy. She is now a bone fide registered Clinical Creative Arts Therapist, who is using her expertise to work with disabled youth using Art Therapy. When I asked Chyna what a typical Art Therapy session with the pupils she worked with would be like, she explained that "This would differ depending on whether it is a group or a one on one session. You don't need to be "good" at art to do arts therapy at all. It is about the unique expression of creative processes that can allow us to imagine new possibilities, process emotions or experiences. It is about the process, not necessarily about having a finished art piece to hang on the wall. Art and play offer unique possibilities for non-verbal expression and meaning making, it is a way to articulate the unspeakable. Experiences with art, music, movement and play works on a sensory level and young people who are struggling with self-regulation find these activities regulating and calming."

She says it so much better than me!

There is an opportunity coming up for those interested to experience a taste of arts therapy, music therapy and dance movement therapy. This is open to all people (all ages), whānau, and professionals in the disability community in Northland. It will be held on Saturday 30th September at the Te Ora Hou Community Centre,

104 Corks Road, Tikipunga, at 10am. For further information email info@maurituia.com

As Pam Holland said "Art speaks where words are unable to explain". So give it go- we all have something powerful to say.

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