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Encouraging all to create

American artist visits C. S. Art



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By Teresa Heinz Housel

Ten years ago, American John Boylston donated wooden blocks to Spindleworks, a non-profit art studio for adults with disabilities in Brunswick, Maine. The shapes inspired his daughter, Caroline Boylston, to apply bright geometric designs in acrylic and watercolour to the blocks.

Artwork by Caroline Boylston

Caroline, 45, is an artist with Down syndrome. She creates blocks featuring vibrant colours such as red, orange and pink. She often paints trees and flowers, perhaps reflecting her earlier years in San Diego, where she lived for four years.

Caroline says she enjoys sharing her work, which is popular with the studio's visitors and can be purchased at Spindleworks (<http://www.spindleworks.org/>). "People have my paintings in their house and they hang them up," she says.

This month, Caroline is in Invercargill and will present her

work alongside other artists in the annual C. S. Art exhibition (<http://artsaccess.org.nz/whats-new/news+Index/Invercargill+exhibition+reflects+diverse+art>) at the Southland Museum and Art Gallery. This year's exhibition, "Blocks – breaking the barriers," runs from 21 February to 23 March.

The exhibition marks Caroline's fifth visit to New Zealand and her third to Invercargill.

A sense of purpose

Art has inspired multiple interests for Caroline. "One of the great things about art programmes is that Caroline considers herself an artist. It has changed her life as she has interests she never had before," John says. "It has given her a sense of purpose."

Caroline began painting 11 years ago in California after her father learned about an art instruction centre for people with disabilities.

After the Artwork by Caroline Boylston Boylstons moved to Maine ten years ago, Caroline began painting at Spindleworks – a studio set up 35 years ago for weaving and fibre artists. Weaving and fibre are still popular but Spindleworks now has more than 40 artists whose creations span painting, drawing, writing and theatre, says Alyce Ornella, a Spindleworks artist mentor.

The artists initially visit the studio with their case workers and then take part in four assessment sessions to gauge their interest in art. "They have to have their own motivation to do art," Alyce says. "We encourage the artists to explore different media and create their own art, rather than using a pre-made kit from a shop."

Caroline's art activities took an international turn in 2006 following her father's retirement as a naval architect. John had accumulated more than one million frequent flier miles during his career but was going to lose them if he did not redeem them. He saw an opportunity for Caroline.

Some outside stimulus

"I thought it would be good to get Caroline away for some outside stimulus, and so I started to search the Web and contact every agency I could find, the world over," he recalls.

Through Arts Access Aotearoa, Boylston secured a

partnership with Auckland's Spark Studio, now the Spark Centre of Creative Development. The successful arrangement resulted in Caroline's visit to Auckland in 2006 and an exchange art show between Spindleworks and the Auckland creative space.

From Auckland to Nelson

After that partnership ended, Caroline travelled to Nelson's Magenta Creative Space to paint and exhibit her work but the region's vineyards exacerbated his allergies.

Jason McCormick, a former manager and tutor at Magenta, recommended Invercargill's C. S. Art. Caroline has visited the creative space in 2010 and 2012 for a month each time. She usually travels with her father but in 2012, one of her two older sisters travelled with her and attended the art exhibition.

In addition to the block painting, Caroline constructs collages and has painted table tops for a Brunswick restaurant. She also painted the mountains around Nelson during her visit to Magenta Creative Space.

Caroline's travels around both islands include visits to locations such as lighthouses, beaches and mountains. While visiting the Bay of Islands, she asked to go on a cruise to see the porpoises, her favourite animal.

"We anchored the tour boat over an area where you can see them swim below the boat," John recalls. "She was fascinated."

As for Caroline, she says: "I like everything about New Zealand."



(<http://www.creativenz.govt.nz/>)



(<http://www.wellington.govt.nz/>)



(<http://www.corrections.govt.nz/>)



(<http://www.asbcommunitytrust.org.nz/>)