

## **Big 'A' Community Partnership Award 2011**

**Winner: Mairangi Arts Centre and Department of Corrections for the presentation and promotion of art by prisoners in community settings.**

**Judges' comment:** "This is a fine example of a well-established partnership with a clear vision, strong involvement from both parties and mutual benefits. Both partners evolved to meet the opportunities and challenges offered by the collaboration. This has resulted in very visible and valuable outcomes such as exhibitions and carving installations that have benefitted both the prisoners and the North Shore community."

**Some background:** The partnership between Mairangi Arts Centre and the Department of Corrections has played a significant role in brokering community art projects such as carving installations at two North Shore schools, Massey University, the Marine Education Research Centre and Albany Courthouse.

Goals of the partnership include promoting positive change through art, providing a gallery space and promoting the sale of prisoner art to benefit charities, and encouraging community tolerance, appreciation and understanding of artistic skills developed in the prison environment.

Ellie Drummond, General Manager at Mairangi Arts Centre, tutors prisoners twice a week in the arts programme at Auckland Prison, and critiques and advises artists at the Northland Regional Corrections Facility (near Kaikohe in the Bay of Islands), when required.

Three former prisoners who were involved in the partnership have been working as artists in the community since their release. It has changed the lives of these men and their families.

Both partners have benefitted from the arrangement.

It has given the Department of Corrections' northern region the opportunity to showcase prisoner art, gain positive support from the community and become leaders in implementing the Department's national prison arts strategy.

Prisoners have gained firsthand knowledge about mounting exhibitions, negotiating commission work, project management, and meeting client expectations and tight production timeframes.

The initiative has given Mairangi Arts Centre the opportunity to develop an important community partnership that encourages artistic involvement and provides an impetus for further artistic endeavour and education.

It has also enabled the broader community to engage with artworks that are diverse, and include experimental and traditional practices.

Auckland Council's Hibiscus and Bays Local Board chair, Julia Parfitt, says the partnership has been mutually beneficial.

"Mairangi Arts Centre promotes prisoner art and engagement with the community and the prisoners gain insight into the business of art, giving back to the community via gifts and charity, installations of artworks in the community and receiving recognition for their efforts."

Mary Borok of Auckland Council describes the partnership as "a transformative journey for both the community and the prisoners".

She says the exhibitions have opened the eyes of people in Auckland's north-east bays to embrace diverse artistic expression, giving them the chance to "hear other voices".

"This enriches both the local and prison communities, developing understanding and engagement across communities."

**Finalist:**

The other finalist was the partnership between **Artstation and Giant Leap Foundation** of Auckland for their joint presentation of the *Echo of Silence* exhibition and seminar for Deaf artists in August 2010. Artstation is a community arts facility provided by Auckland Council while the Giant Leap Foundation develops access to the arts for Deaf and disabled people.

The judges described the exhibition and seminar as "exciting and awareness-raising, with great outcomes for Deaf artists and the Deaf community".