

# young at art

A national movement and one woman's passion bring art to our children.

**Shona Hammond Boys** is responsible for a quiet revolution in the way many adults view children and teenagers.

The positive change is the result of Shona's passion for providing young people with a nurturing space to freely explore and develop their artistic selves and abilities.

The founder and national director of the New Zealand Art House Foundation Trust opened the first dedicated Children's Art House on Auckland's North Shore in 1996, and in 1999, the trust was established to develop the concept around the country.

Today there are 22 Children's Art Houses in local communities, each self funding and presenting its own character, but they all provide a safe, friendly, child-dedicated, free

expression place, where artistic souls can be nourished and developed. In today's often depersonalised world of digital technology, art houses provide a personalising place where children can find their own identity.

An artist, qualified teacher and art educator, Shona recently returned from the International Child Art Foundation's World Children's Festival in Washington, where 62 countries were represented, including two young artists aged 12 and 14 from Paeroa. Art from this festival will be on display at the Olympic Games in London next year.

In recognition of Shona's life long passion for, and involvement in, children's art she received a Queen's Service Medal in 2003, and in June this year while in Washington, was presented with the President's Volunteer Service Award.

"I believe it's a crime against humanity if we don't invest in children's creativity," says Shona. "Creative children ensure creative communities and we need all the bright sparks we can get." When being creative, children use 10% more of their brain and the frontal cortex is properly developed, so empathy and creativity go together, she says.

If you've visited Paeroa or Opotiki recently, you won't have missed seeing the stunning murals painted throughout the towns by local young artists. The colours and creativity are a testimony to a long standing partnership between the art house movement and Resene, which provides testpots and paint.

"Resene is our only sponsor and over the past 15 plus years, it's been a privilege... and we value their involvement very much."

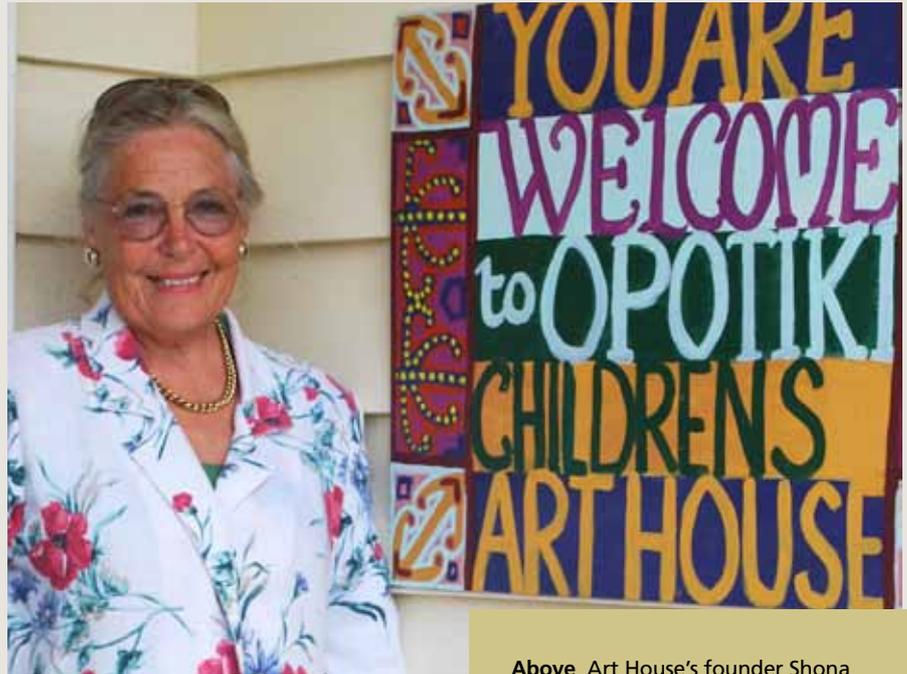


In Opotiki more than 15 murals have been created and painted, bringing alive a new sense of community pride and artistic awareness.

Some local businesses, which were previously concerned about youth crime rates, are now proud of the work of the young local artists and, Shona says, crime rates have dropped and youth self-esteem has risen significantly. "Art houses stabilise wobbly, at-risk children very well, because the at-risk young people are often among the most sensitive and creative."

In Paeroa, the positive results from the local children's art house has encouraged the Hauraki District Council to develop its own youth policy and to nurture young people in art and leadership programmes.

Another initiative is involvement with a young American art student from the prestigious Rhode Island School of Art and Design. Max Levi Frieder cycled around the 22 Children's Art Houses here, working with young artists to create new murals.



As Shona aptly says: "To belong to a community you have to come to the wall and write your name". With her passion and wisdom she's changing young people's lives for the better and ensuring that "art isn't a luxury but a human necessity". **H**

words Kathy Sumner

**Above** Art House's founder Shona Hammond Boys: "I believe it's a crime against humanity if we don't invest in children's creativity."

**Opposite** One of the Opotiki murals, painted by the town's young people with paint from Resene.

Resene Barely There

Resene Nirvana