

FIONA CAMPBELL TAKING TO THE ROAD TO ENCOURAGE CREATIVE LIVES

There's a truck-load of goodwill currently touring New Zealand schools. In fact, there are two truck loads.

For school students interested in art, seeing the real thing is crucial. But when they live somewhere remote, that can be difficult. Even city-based students aren't necessarily in a position to visit art galleries – and sometimes, even when they can, they're not inclined to because galleries can be intimidating.

Enter The Real Art Roadshow, which consists of two big articulated trucks – one full of paintings, the other with a mix of paintings, sculptures, photographs, prints, ceramics and jewellery – visiting schools. For free. Why? Because, as director Fiona Campbell says, art matters.

"I wanted to encourage a broader appreciation of art.

"These school students are tomorrow's artists, art viewers and collectors. They are learning that art can be worthwhile and accessible.

"I realised kids in far-flung districts, miles from art facilities, were studying from books and websites and not seeing the real thing. When they do see it, they're often surprised – it's bigger than they thought it would be, or it's textured or richer in colour or it smells surprising..."

The two collections move around New Zealand's 600-odd secondary schools, so that each school is visited on average every three years. In small communities, parents are invited to see the art, too. For many, it is the only chance they have to see the works of top New Zealand artists – including Toss Woollaston, Pat Hanly, Bill Sutton, Shane Cotton, Bill Hammond, Michael Smithers, Sarah Hughes, Peter Robinson, Bill Culbert... There are 130 works across the two collections – something, surely, for everybody.

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"It's all about democratic sharing," says Fiona, who bought the art – and one of the trucks – and continues to fund the project personally. Neither the schools, nor the students, pay.

One of Fiona's inspirations for launching the Real Art Roadshow was a girlhood memory of musician Gary Brain, who visited schools for 22 years introducing students to orchestral percussion.



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"I was one of the lucky recipients of Gary Brain's visit where he demonstrated what he loved – and the effect that had has led to this. It's a nice cyclic thing to be doing something similar, but very different, as an adult." ■

➤ www.realartroadshow.co.nz

KATHRYN WEBSTER