

Arts  
*Ability*

Challenging Stereotypes:



A Celebration of the Arts in Community

Canadian Centre on Disability Studies  
Arts Ability Project

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*Ability*

## **A Message from the Executive Director, Canadian Centre on Disability Studies**

Welcome to *Challenging Stereotypes: A Celebration of the Arts in Community*, an event to showcase the outstanding talents of artists with and without disabilities from across Canada and around the world. This celebration was originally discussed in the context of a wind up or “farewell performance” for the Canadian Centre on Disability Studies’ Arts Ability project, which focused on arts programming for people with a variety of disabilities in various institutional and community settings in Winnipeg and northern Manitoba. However, we soon realized that this is certainly not the end of a project, but the beginning of so much more for the project participants whether they are artists, families or agency staff. This is a time of empowerment and change: at an individual, community and social level. As we look through this catalogue, words like beauty, imagination, creativity, humour and understanding come in to play in ways that recognize the value of the works of persons with disabilities.

We would like to thank Sue Proctor, the manager of the Arts Ability project from its inception. Her vision, enthusiasm and dogged determination have turned this vision into a reality. We are indebted to our many funders, including the Office of Disability Issues, Government of Canada, the J. W. McConnell Family Foundation and Manitoba Heritage, Culture, Heritage and Tourism, Province of Manitoba. You have supported this vision and recognized early on the talents of Canadian artists with disabilities.

*Cassandra Phillips*

## **A Message from the Curator**

This exhibit speaks of hands and voices: Hands that are not always adept at the mechanics of living and voices not always audible to those around them. Nevertheless, feelings and stories, all representing pieces of individuals’ lives are displayed for us to see and feel; these are threads common to us all. There is a spirit that has risen above the difficulties and barriers, allowing itself to be seen and shared.

The artwork provides many examples of how individuals have taken the risk of entering their creative process. Many of the participants were not familiar with expressing themselves this way but, during the two years of the Art Ability Project, there has been a willingness to suspend disbelief and try what was being suggested. This has taken courage and perseverance, and the results are wonderful.

I am grateful for the opportunity to have been involved with this magical process of finding our true voice and offering it to the world, as equals, as co-creators.

*Claire Stephensen*

### **Canadian Centre on Disability Studies Arts Ability Project**

The Canadian Centre on Disability Studies (CCDS) is a consumer-directed, university-affiliated centre dedicated to research, education and information dissemination on disability issues. Through our activities we promote full and equal participation of people with disabilities in all aspects of society. In partnership with local artists, CCDS has initiated pilot programs in the arts for persons with disabilities. These programs include the delivery of visual art, drama/music or dance/music programs in four sites in Manitoba. The project, which began July 1, 2002 and is two years in duration, includes evaluation and documentation of the impact of these programs on various groups, with a special focus on the empowerment of persons with disabilities. Ryerson University’s School of Disability Studies has contributed resources and personnel to the research component of the project.





Ada

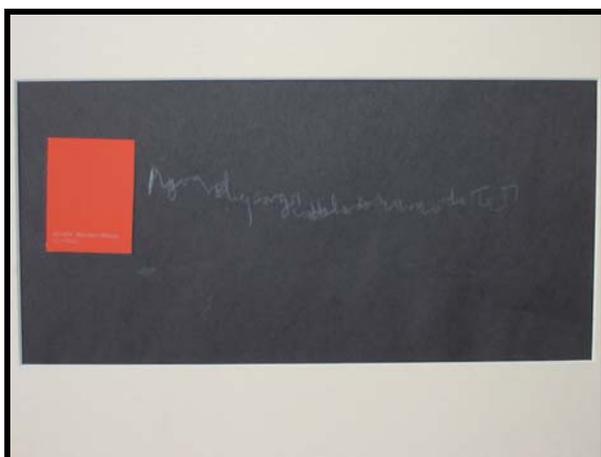
**Deer Lodge Centre** is a long-term care facility with a range of different programs. The Arts Ability Project took place in a special care unit for individuals living with cognitive impairment, such as Alzheimer's disease or multi-infarct dementia.

The visual arts program created varied opportunities for the residents to explore many media in a social, interactive setting. Residents who were unable to manipulate the materials were invited to join the group and watch and visit with other residents and staff.

Stories and memories were frequently the springboard for project ideas. For artist animator and/or apprentices this was a rich and positive way to connect with residents and family members. It was an excellent way to gain insights into residents lived experiences, both past and present.



Ada



Sam Lazar



Lil Airth



Lil Airth



Etta Donner

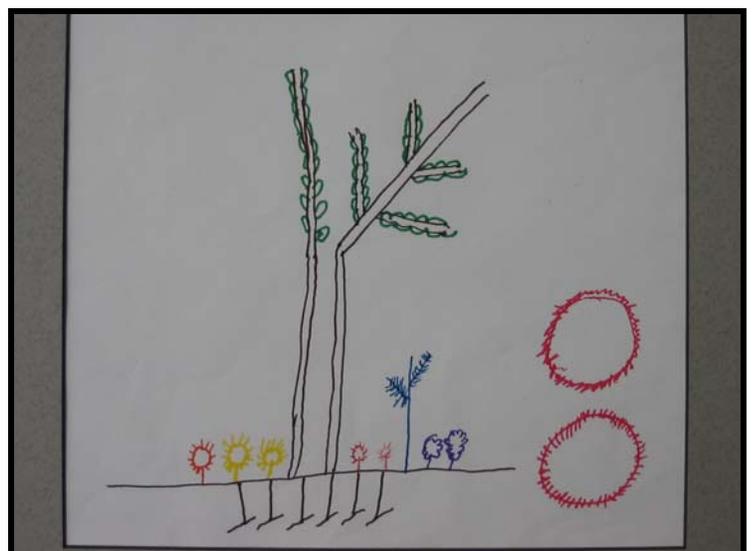
The program at **Deer Lodge** was not product-oriented as many people would quickly forget that they had made a drawing or sculpture etc. They were, however, frequently willing to come to the room to see what was being suggested. It was not unusual to have several residents entering the process of creating and working with engagement for extended periods of time. For the artist animators, this was a rich and rewarding lesson in the power and value of being in the moment.



Lil Airth



Artist Participant



Dorothy

**New Directions for Children, Youth, Adults and Families Inc.** is a large community service organization mandated to help children, youth, adults and families in the Winnipeg area gain access to opportunities to achieve their life goals. The Arts Ability Project offered a day of drama/music and a day of visual/textural art once a week, in two locations, from October to May for two years.



Gregory



Grant Yuskiw



Cindy

**The Community-Outreach Program for Adults with Developmental Disabilities and Dual-Diagnosis** was one of the sites. The focus was on challenging the participants to enter and explore their own creative process. They were encouraged to speak, both literally and artistically from a place of inner authority.

We explored many ways of creating art in two and three dimensions. As this was a new activity for many of the participants, the artist animators were challenged to introduce new ideas in an inviting and non-threatening way.



Artist Participant



Wade Boychuck



**Cindy**



**Jeremy**

The classes have nearly doubled in size and participants are more relaxed about the projects. The classes are vibrant, creative and fun. The artistic ripples have spread



**Toni**



**Martha**

beyond the confines of the classes. The participants show an increased appreciation of the value of the artistic process and the enjoyment they have derived from the work.



**Darryl**



**Jennifer**

**New Directions - Specialized Day Program for People with Developmental Disabilities** provided the second site for the visual art program. In this program, for adults with severe to profound developmental disabilities as well as behavioral issues, the focus was on engaging their interest. Projects were designed to challenge the participants to enter their creative flow and to have a good outcome of success. Within a safe framework, participants were invited to stretch themselves in many ways.



**Wesley Singer**



**Arlene**



**Carolyn**



**John F.**

Project modifications were made to allow everyone to participate to the best of their ability. The program used colour, texture, movement, seasonal themes etc. with a wide range of materials to create a rich and interesting creative experience.



**Robert**



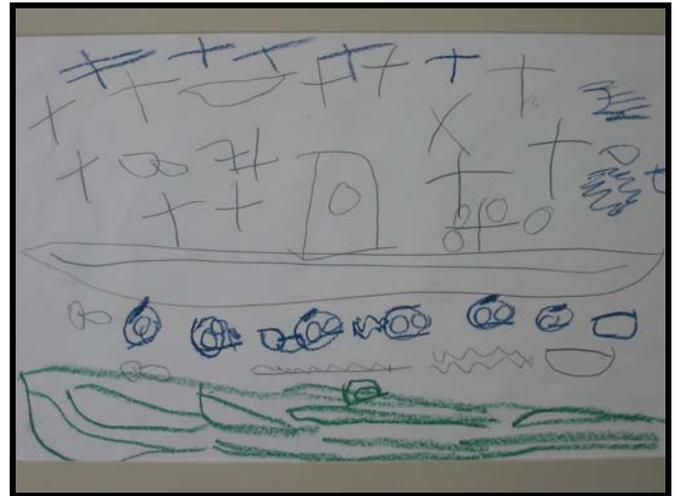
**Helen**

**New Directions - Specialized Day  
Program for People with Develop-  
mental Disabilities**



**Olive**

The participants have become more adept at using different materials and working in a group setting. They often show pleasure with their work and the positive reactions of the artist animators, staff and others.



**Don**



**Artist Participant**

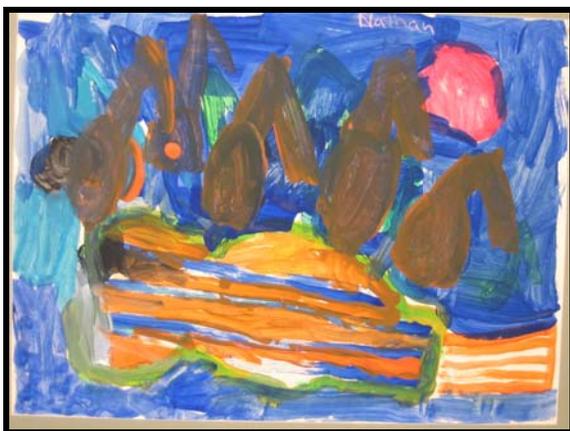


**Jimmy**

## Norway House

Arts Ability in Norway House is an integrated, small group Arts program with three main goals. The first of these is to develop and maintain social relationships between students with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders and their peers. The second is to help the students gain confidence through their participation in new, exciting, and challenging activities. The third is to encourage students to express their feelings, emotions, and ideas through a variety of art forms and through discussion and interaction with the other students and adults in the classes.

Two artists have been working with the project since it started in October 2002. Judy Cook teaches dance and movement to music, and Brigitte Urban teaches pottery and visual art. This year, we added a visiting artist component, and, once a month, a guest artist introduces the children to a different art form, ranging from handicrafts to storytelling to drama.





We have also added another staff member: Mary Jane Paupanekis, who is a talented artist and a June 2003 graduate of Norway House High School. As a former High School Arts Ability class participant, she has plenty of experience to draw upon; she has been an invaluable project helper and artists' assistant.

The Arts Ability classes consist of eight students in seven separate classes that range from grade 3 to grade 8. The artist animators facilitate three classes at Rossville School on Tuesdays, and four on Wednesdays at Jack River School. The students' teachers accompany them to Arts Ability. The teachers and students then take the skills they have learned back into the larger classroom, and the teacher uses them to work with all of the students in an integrated setting. Also, each Thursday, the artist and a few teachers team-teach their regular classes. In this way, at this particular site the goals of the project are consistent with the overall learning goals of the classroom.



# Arts Ability Artist Animators

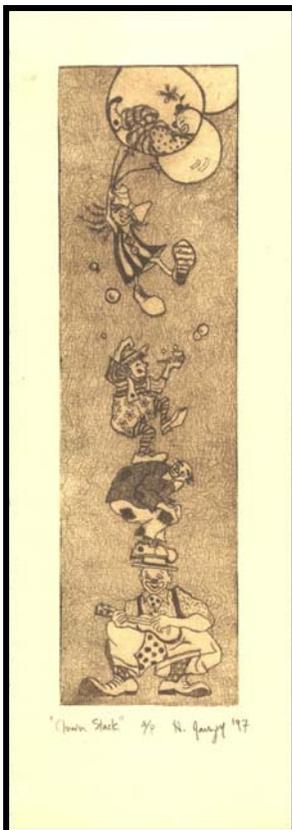
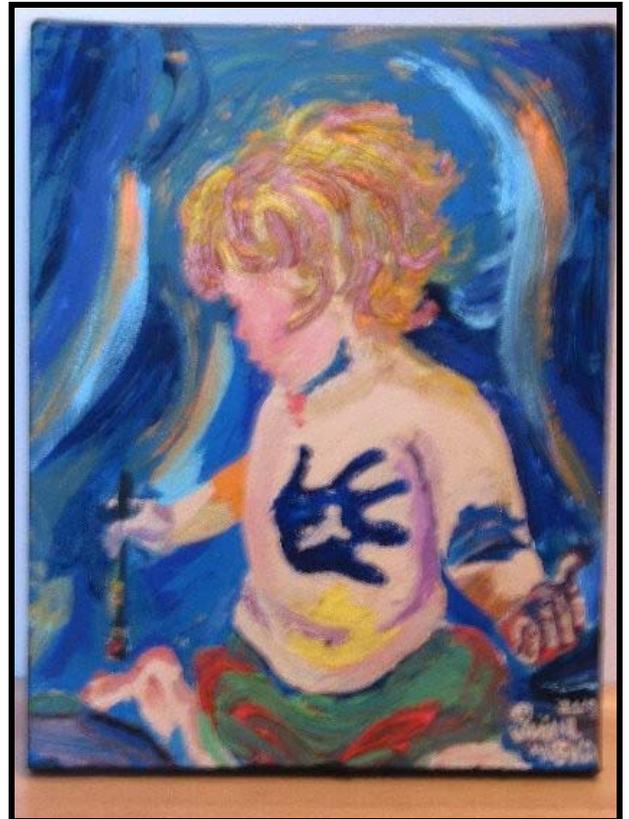


**Brigitte Urban's** journey as an art instructor has taken her to many places and communities, where she has met and worked with people, especially children, which she loves. In her work, she focuses on celebrating life and the experiences of growth and spirituality. Her preferred mediums are ceramics and painting.

Gesture Painting of "Josh Playing the Fiddle"

**Vivian M Muska:** is currently a Fine Arts Student at the University of Manitoba. She has mental health and learning disabilities. She has worked as an artist apprentice with the Arts Ability Project this year and developed a strong rapport with participants.

Painting titled "Fingerprint"

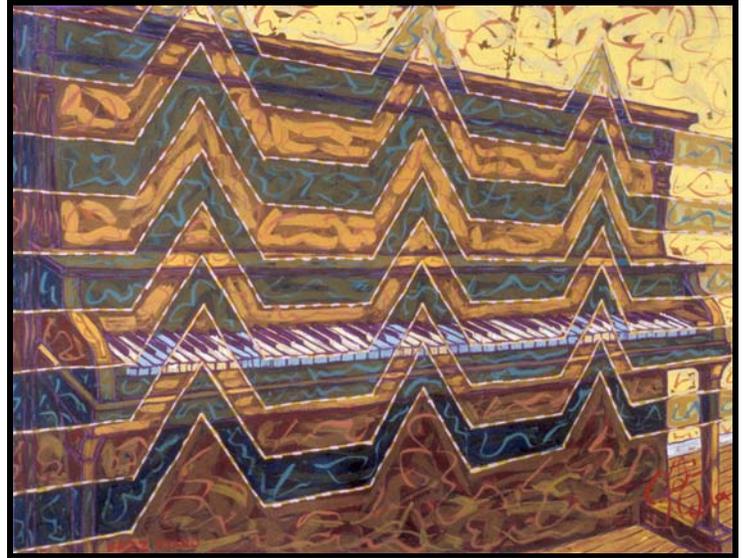


**Hildi Janzen:** is a graduate of the University of Manitoba, School of Arts with a major in Printmaking. She has worked as an artist-apprentice with the Arts Ability project at both Deer Lodge Centre and New Directions. She states that working with Arts Ability participants has its challenges and rewards, and she describes it as enjoyable experience.

Print "Clown Stack"

**Kelvin Adair Free** attended the School of Art. He says, "involving myself in art has allowed me to turn my disability into an ability. Recently, I gained national attention by winning Best Artist at "Mindscapes I", a show held on Parliament Hill, Ottawa, with artists from all over Canada."

Painting "Jazz Piano"



**Karen Johannsson**, B.F.A, has been working in BATIK for over thirty years. Her most recent endeavour is a place called Lipton St. Studio, which she started in June 1998. She has been approached to create a large Batik banner for the Shanghai Connection at the Asper Campus. Her art is on display in the Town of Inglis Museum, and she participated in the Spring 2003 Exhibition at the Craftspace Gallery.

**Batik:** is an art form using wax in a resist dye process. A design is placed on fabric with melted wax using a tool such as tjanting or paintbrush. The fabric is then dyed; the dye does not penetrate the wax but does dye the rest of the fabric. Thus, the design remains the original colour of the fabric.

Sunflower Batik

**Claire Stephensen**, BFA, has developed and implemented visual arts programs for people with Alzheimer's disease, mental health issues, deaf/blindness and developmental disabilities. In her programs, she helps people discover their creative side and express their inner authority.

Hand-dyed silk "Water"

