

## LIFE, ART AND COMMUNITY:

### A Sunday with Auckland City Mission artists at Depot Artspace.

By Clare Caldwell

Clare Caldwell is a contemporary visual artist, qualified art therapist and an Art Tutor for the Auckland City Mission Arts Activities Programme. You can learn more about her role with the Auckland City Mission in this [interview](#) she did with One News 'Good Sorts' in June 2016 or check out her [website](#).

So yesterday (Sunday 1 July 2018), we had the drawing workshop in the gallery with four of the Mission artists, Rob, Richard, Tiare, Martin and Grayson, the driver.

Loads of people came in to look at the work and I was able to introduce many admiring punters to the actual artists which seemed of benefit to both sides!

At one stage, a whole lot of Kahu's<sup>1</sup> extended family arrived, including many children. When I asked them if they wanted to come and do some drawing and colouring there was a resounding YES so we added another table and a pile of chairs and watched delightedly as they all engaged with great gusto, even some of the older members!

At lunchtime the boys went off and bought a huge pile of fish and chips and fresh buns that we set up outside on the tables, and at our invitation, everyone came and shared the food and assorted drinks we had with us. It was a really wonderful sharing on many levels with conversations about art - children's creativity as well as adult creativity - and thankfully it didn't rain!



<sup>1</sup> Kahu is [Kahurangi Smith](#), visual artist exhibiting her installation MaoriGrl at the same time as the Auckland City Mission exhibition Life.



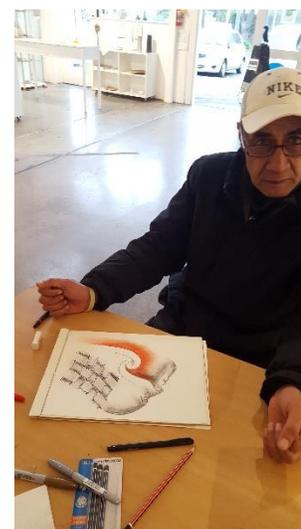
Many of the visitors who came into the gallery couldn't believe the work on the walls was by Auckland City Mission artists so I think a few prejudices were dissolved as well.



One of the most amusing moments was when a small group of elderly Chinese people arrived brandishing a copy of the Northern Star Times and wanting to know where Richard was! (There was an article about him plus a photo). Richard meanwhile was having a little snooze in the van, but when informed, leapt out and ended up moving round the gallery with an entourage of clamouring Chinese people, who all began talking loudly to him at the same time, still brandishing their collective copy of the Northern Star Times! Richard of course towered above them and had a big grin, even when they told him he was too fat! He later told me that if it had been said by any other group he might have reacted but he knows the Chinese can be very blunt about such things so he just laughed and said “Yes! I’m big like Godzilla and you are very small people!”

I seemed to end up having many conversations with people about their own life journeys after they had looked at the art and read the statements, so the work is a great catalyst and maybe even a source of healing for others to open up and share their own experiences, many of which were quite harrowing.

All in all, a great day of many learnings and interactions.



For more information about the Auckland City Mission Arts Activities Programme, visit [www.aucklandcitymission.org.nz](http://www.aucklandcitymission.org.nz) and to view photos and further information about the Life exhibition, visit [www.depotartspace.co.nz](http://www.depotartspace.co.nz)

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