

Media Release

5 May 2009

DYSLEXIA INJUSTICE INSPIRES ART EXHIBITION

A provocative and edgy exhibition, which turns schoolbags into powerful statements of difference, opens at Wellington's Bowen Galleries this evening.

Inspired by the unfair treatment of artist Rosie White's children at school, *dislec sick?* aims to reflect the injustice and humiliation students with learning difficulties are often subject to within the New Zealand education system.

Following a number of shocking experiences in which her three dyslexic children were denied suitable help at school, Ms White was motivated to explore dyslexia from the perspective of students with the learning difficulty.

"My children had to really fight for their education; there was a definite lack of willingness to help. This exhibition explores what it is like for the dyslexic student at school and shows the awful reality of the treatment these students receive," she says.

The compellingly honest exhibition features 18 transparent school bags containing statements made by educators, parents and students. The statements used in the artwork offer valuable insights into the lives of those affected by learning difficulties.

Rosie's daughter Elizabeth was also involved in the exhibition, and is responsible for the exhibition design, as well as offering personal insight via her own statement.

Her statement – "My gift of dyslexia is my treasure. It no longer holds me back; it inspires me" – is hopeful and positive, and reflects the creative gifts that dyslexia can bring. Elizabeth struggled with dyslexia throughout her schooling years but, despite this, is currently in her third year studying Spatial Design at Massey University and is maintaining an A average.

The exhibition is proudly supported by the [Cookie Time Charitable Trust](#), principal sponsors of the Dyslexia Foundation of New Zealand. Chair of Trustees Guy Pope Mayell welcomes this initiative which raises awareness of dyslexia and champions change.

"Following official recognition of dyslexia by the New Zealand Government in 2007, and subsequent advances in understanding this difference, we are now at a point where we must take meaningful action to improve outcomes for the 70,000 schoolchildren with dyslexia," he says.

"This exhibition offers a real reality check in terms of the challenges these students face in the classroom. It is also a fitting in the countdown to next month's Dyslexia Action Week (15-21) June, which is focused on action."

'dislec sick?' opens at 5.30pm today, Tuesday 5 May, at Bowen Galleries in Wellington and will run until Saturday 23 May.

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For more information, please contact:

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See notes to editors overleaf

About the artists

Wellington artist Rosie White uses textiles and fibre as her media, working with techniques associated with “women’s work” – including knitting, quilting, hand-stitching and surface design – as a starting point. She is a graduate of both Whitireia Polytechnic and Otago University. Rosie has four children, three of whom have been diagnosed with Specific Learning Difficulties (SLD) and consequently struggle with dyslexia. Rosie has been accepted into this year’s World of Wearable Arts.

Rosie’s daughter Elizabeth is studying Spatial Design at Massey University and is in her third year of the four year degree. Her strengths are in conceptual art and design. A former Wellington Girls School student, Elizabeth won a Wearable Art Young Designer Award in 2005.

Gallery contact details

Bowen Galleries
35 Ghuznee Street
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