

Watch out, Damien Hirst – there's nothing that the kids from Caol primary school in Fort William can't paint or sculpt better than their cattle-slicing, adult rivals.

The final documentary in Channel 4's series *The Art Show* this week tells the story of the pioneering kids' art project that is Room 13. Spokeskids Ami, aged 11, and Rosie, 11, filled us in:

What is Room 13?

Ami: Room 13 is a studio in Caol Primary School run completely by the students who use it. We do everything, from keeping the place clean (though you never really see clean studios, do you?) to ordering and paying for materials. We only use real materials – oil and acrylic on canvas etc. The studio is run as a business with a management team of seven children aged eight to 11. No adult can sign our chequebook.

What do you get out of being involved with Room 13?

Rosie: In Room 13 you get to paint what you want and not just what the teacher tells you, and it's also more serious as there's a meaning behind every piece of work. You can also use any of the materials that are appropriate to your study. You can experiment much more than in class, and if you have an idea then there's an expert artist hanging around to help you technically. It's more exciting and fun than usual classrooms and allows us to find completely new ways of learning.

What do you think of art coverage on TV?

Ami: Art coverage on TV isn't too great. I mean, Rolf Harris! There isn't really a lot and I don't know why. Art shows for young people are all "how to do it" programmes, which is just like being in class. A lot of it is very dumbed down and the stuff adults make for young people is usually so patronising. **Rosie:** It's also upsetting that a lot of art is hidden from us because adults think it's disturbing. When some of us visited the Turner Prize exhibition this year we had to get permission, even though there was nothing in it to worry about. That's a shame, because art is *meant* to be worrying! **Ruth Margolis**

Links www.room13scotland.com

YOUNG AT ART

An innovative art studio lets eight- to 11-year-olds give their imaginations free rein, with striking results ...



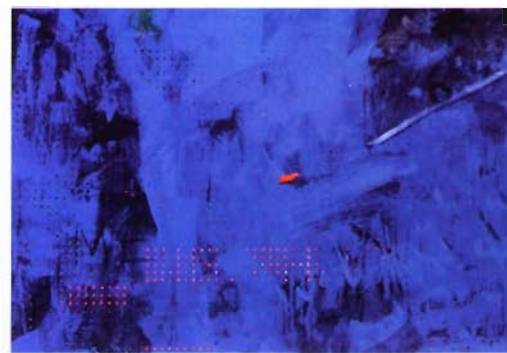
▲ PORTRAIT OF MISHI
BY JO BIRRELL

Jo painted *Portrait of Mishi* in oils on a small canvas when she was ten. All her works are portraits and she can get a likeness in just a few light pencil strokes.



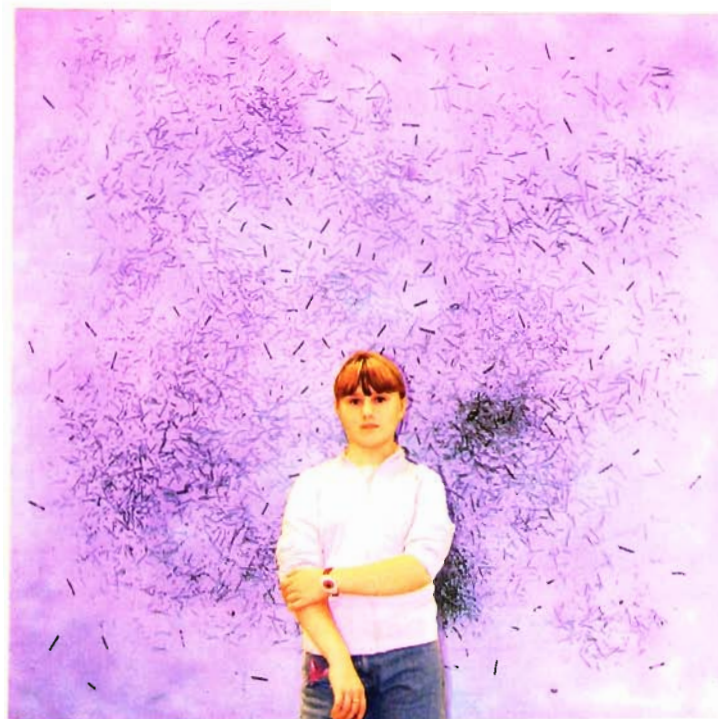
◀ THE LAVA ZEBRA AND THE MOONLIGHT ZEBRA
BY NIKKI DONNELLY

Nikki painted *The Lava Zebra and the Moonlight Zebra* when she was seven. (Her recent work involves painting in margarine!) Her class had been studying the Hindu creation myths, and after painting *The Elephant That Danced at the End of the World Had Chickenpox*, she wanted to try a happier subject. So Nikki painted a made-up story about two zebras, one of which could fly. Below them are all sorts of jumbled words.



▲ THE SHARK IN MY FUTURE
BY FERONIQUE COUTTS

Feronique painted *The Shark in My Future* when she was 11 because she was trying to paint what it felt like to be growing up. Everybody who sees the painting thinks that the "me" in the painting is the wee plastic gold fish, but if you look even lower to the right you will see the word "me". (So Feronique thought she was nearly invisible.) She started the painting by filling the canvas with the words "wet, wet, wet, wet" and then built it up from there.



◀ 9/11 BY JODIE FRASER

Jodie painted *9/11* at 11 because she wanted "to make a painting which would always make people cry". She burnt a match for every victim of the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Center and glued them to a canvas. She then sprayed them with smoke-coloured paint and added a few more matches. It certainly worked because everybody who has seen it feels sad. Art critic Waldemar Januszczak called it "an elegant, eerie artwork". It has been exhibited all over the place, and although some of the matches have now fallen off, the ghostly spaces ensure it still works.