



SATURDAY, AUGUST 11, 2012

# YOUR WEEKEND

## Spark of genius

Doco on Hamilton  
artist & highlight  
of festival

**Plus**

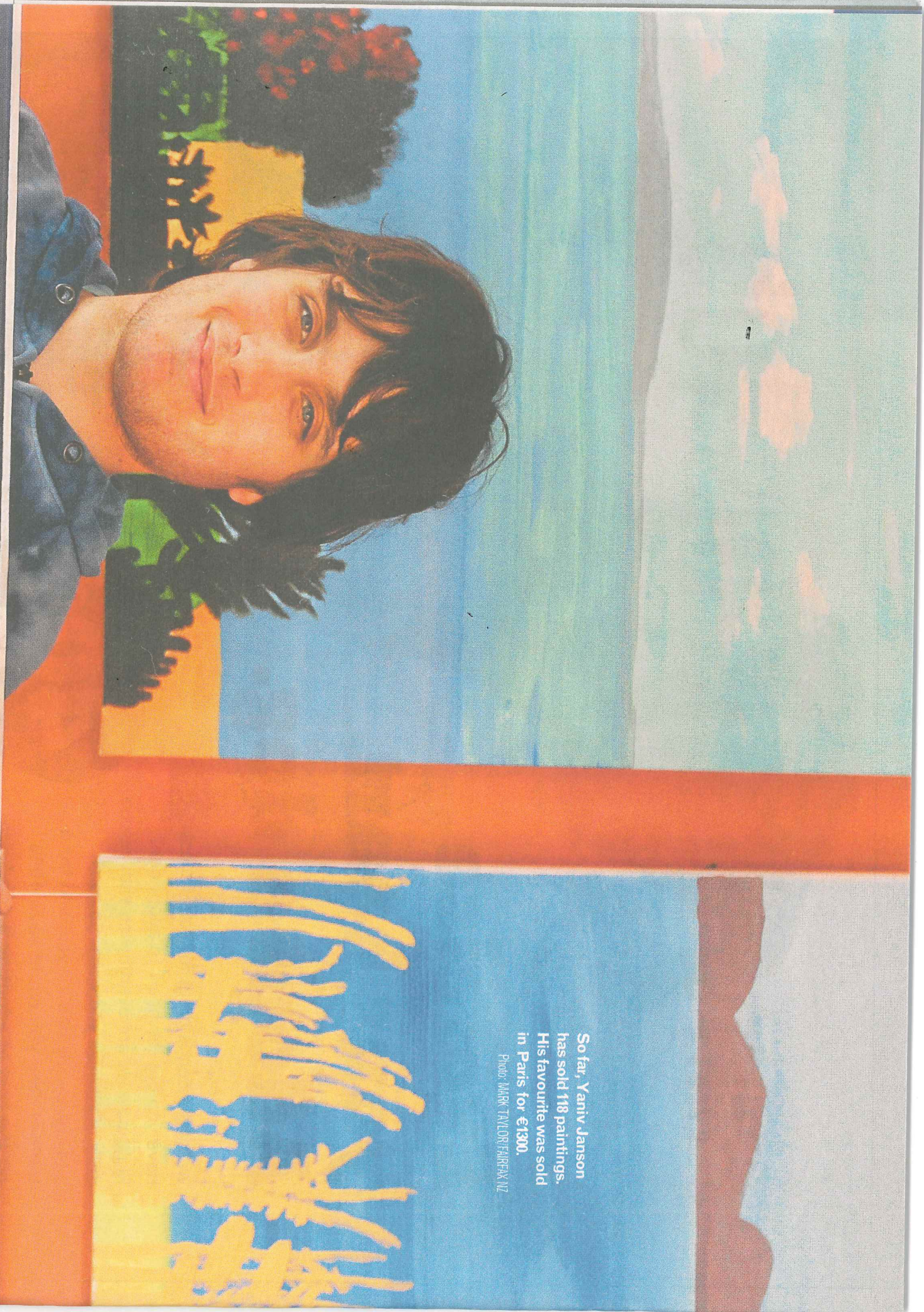
**Collections**

Pigs, pigs  
and more pigs

**Jason Gunn**

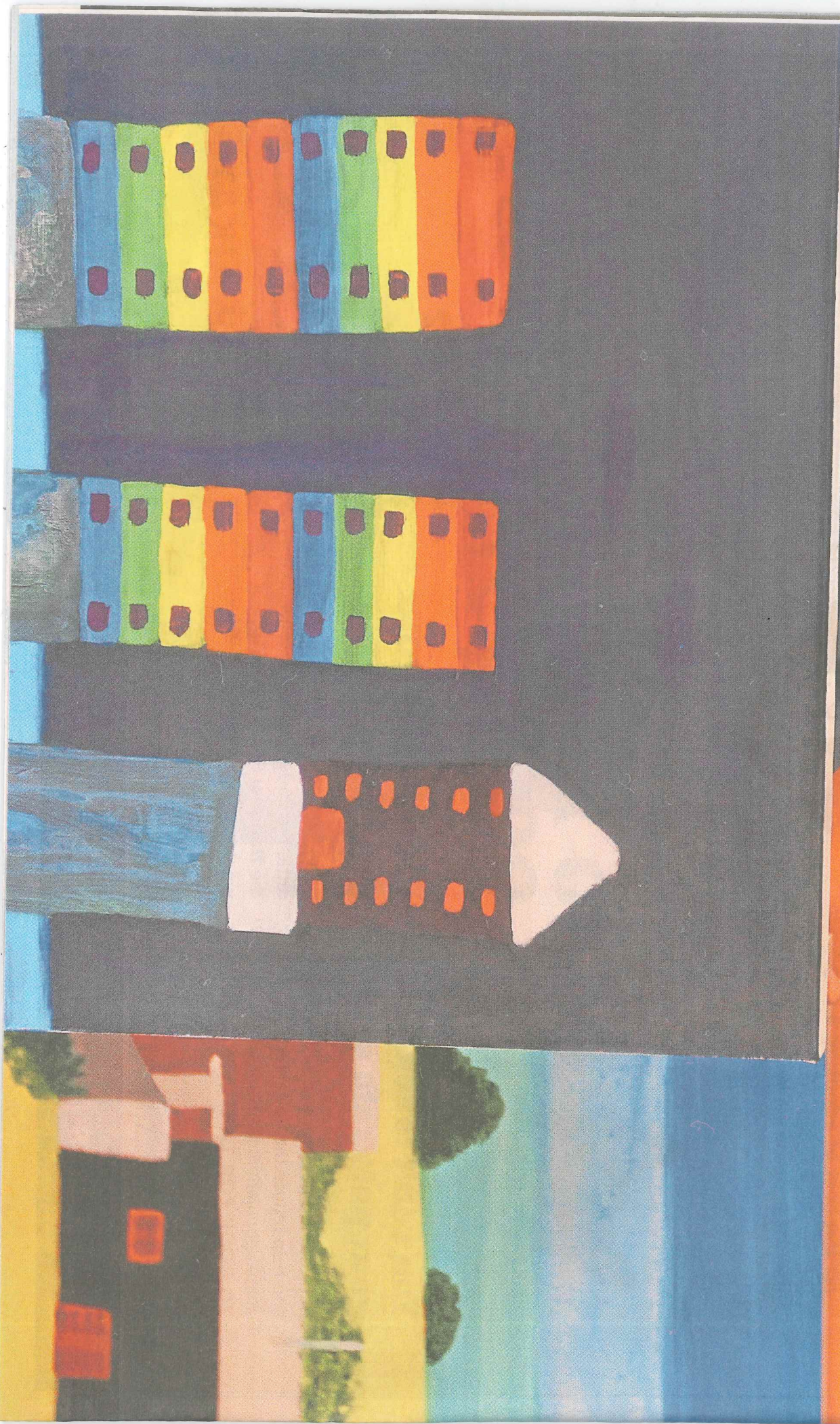
Answers twenty  
questions

 **Waikato Times**



So far, Yaniv Janson has sold 118 paintings. His favourite was sold in Paris for €1300.

Photo: MARK TAYLOR/FAREKX.NZ



# Now art is his job

Yaniv Janson is a Hamilton artist whose work is exhibited in five countries. Next week, a documentary will be screened as part of the Spark Festival in Hamilton about his work and family life. **Aimie Cronin** meets the 20 year old and watches him at work.

**E**very colour is one thing and nothing else. Pink is blossoms. Orange is the roofs of houses. Green is the grass.

Many people like houses in paintings. And many people are interested in the ocean and the clouds are pretty nice, too. And blue, the colour of the ocean, is most people's favourite colour.

Yaniv Janson asks all the people he meets what their favourite colour is. His is blue.

Two of Yaniv's favourite things: staying in Auckland for a minimum of two nights in a hotel that's facing the city and the sea. Flying first class in aeroplanes, even though he's never done it before.

Thirteen reasons why Yaniv wants to fly first class: There's a shorter queue to check in. A lounge where no economy class people can go. First call to get on the plane. You sit up front. Seats are bigger and more comfortable. When you're tired, you bend your seat back more and it's like a flat bed. There's less of a chance there'll be a woman with a crying baby. Or someone wanting to hurt you. You also get what's called goodles. And better food. DVDs and videos you wouldn't get in economy. You get off the plane first and when you're off, the line is shorter until you reach the end.



Yaniv's favourite colour is blue. He likes painting with blue paint.

So now he goes to the supermarket to buy Kit Kats with a competition in them and if he's lucky enough, he'll win one day and will be able to fly first class.

And travel to Israel to see his grandparents. Or maybe America. New York to see the tall buildings and what's been built where the Twin Towers were. He thinks it has all swapped round since Bin Laden died. First the good people were angry and the bad people were happy and now it has swapped.

He likes tall buildings and looking down on other buildings and people and the sea. Stephane, his brother, wore an

orange jacket and walked outside on a special floor of the Sky Tower. At first Yaniv was too scared, but now he wants to and knows exactly what to do. Just look at the man whenever he says to look at him, instead of looking down.

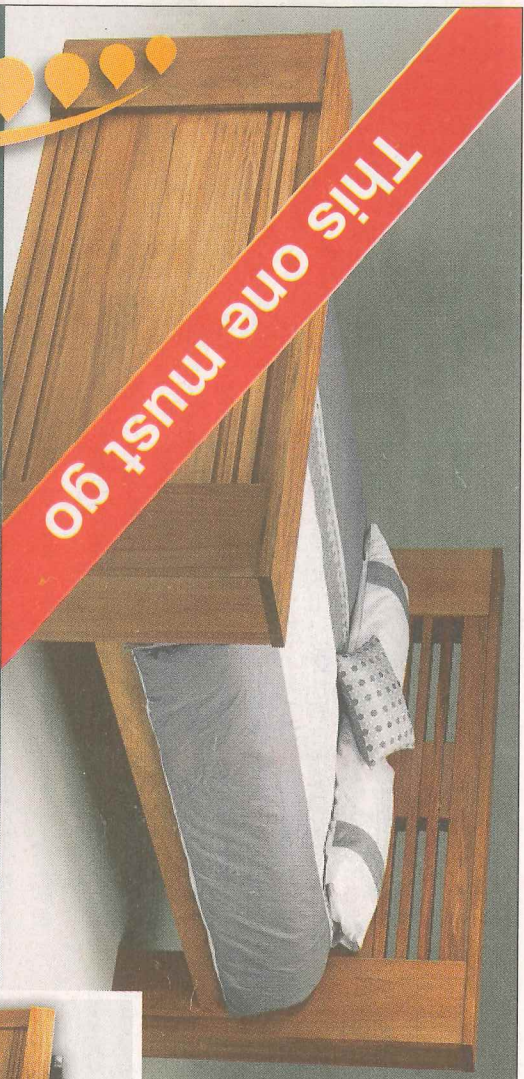
When he's picked to show his art at exhibitions or competitions, it means he can go to Auckland and stay at his favourite hotel and if he's lucky enough, he'll stay on the 22nd floor like he did last time. His favourite number.

In 2008, Yaniv was selected as a finalist in the Walkato National Contemporary Arts Award and the Wallace Trust Arts Award.

He calls it the more unbelievable year. He calls it that because he knew less about entering and if he knew less, he had a smaller chance and it was more unbelievable.

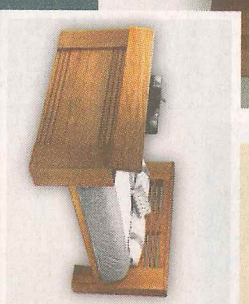
He thinks the later years are more important because he will know more about art, so he should be a winner by then.

One day he may sell his paintings for a million dollars and he desperately hopes that will happen. So far he has sold 118. His favourite was sold in Paris for €1300 (NZ\$1950). Some people have sold their paintings for millions and one



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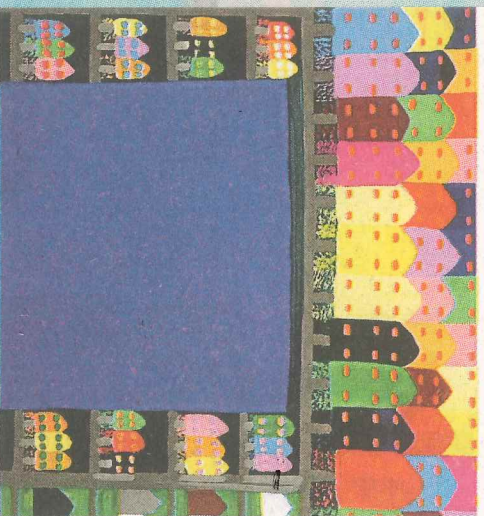
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Some of Yaniv's work. He is happy when people like his paintings.

person for two million. His art teacher told him that. He can't believe it. Just a painting for that much.

If Yaniv sold one painting for that much, he could be done for life and he wouldn't even have to get a job.

He's scared of jobs. Some people have really bad coaches and employers who are mean. He's heard of people who have really bad bosses who shout at them and he's scared it's going to happen to him one day and he's not going to take the risk. He would rather be doing art where nobody can tell him what to do.

He had some mean teachers at school. Especially the ones who yelled. He doesn't know why some teachers yell more. Some ask in a nice way for students to be quiet. Sometimes at school, he wished he wasn't there and he thought he could just do art and not need to go to school. Art would be his job. The whole time he tried to race and race and now finally he is out of school.

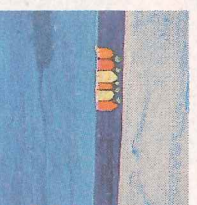
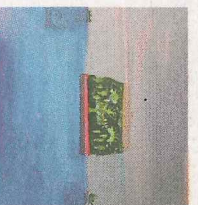
Now art is his job.

He is happy when he steps back from a painting and tells someone it's finished. And very happy if people like it. But he's most happy in Auckland, the city he never wants to leave, walking down the street with all the people. It's nothing like being alone and he'd rather not be alone. He loves big crowds of people and the noise of them as they talk. Saying all sorts of things but not swear words, because that makes him feel as though they don't care. They only think about themselves.

Maybe he'll paint the streets of the Auckland he loves sometime. At the moment, though, he paints about the blue sea and houses with orange roofs and sometimes about climate change. About the water rising and how it's almost too late. He wants people to act. Next year, he will show his paintings about the environment at The Depot Artspace in Devonport.

And in case people don't care so much about the environment, he'll paint houses by the sea because that's what people like. Maybe one of them will make him a million and he will get to go to Auckland. His favourite city. Then he

Sometimes at school, he wished he wasn't there and he thought he could just do art and not need to go to school. Art would be his job.



Yaniv works from home. Painting is less scary than getting a job.

Photo: MARK TAYLOR/FAIRFAX NZ

## ART TERM DEFINED

The term Outsider Art refers to work by artists who have little or no contact with the mainstream art world – sometimes even the world. They are frequently on the margins of society and include slaves, inmates and mentally ill. The term was coined by art critic Roger Cardinal in 1972 as an English synonym for *art brut* (French for raw art or rough art), which was in turn coined by French artist Jean Dubuffet.

might stop painting for a job, but will still draw for people if they ask him to.

He's not sure if it's called being an optimist. He's heard of that word. But he definitely thinks he's going to win that Kit Kat competition. He's glad Annick, his mum, is letting him buy a few of them every week. It helps, he thinks, to grab them from the back of the pile.

And if he doesn't win, he'll think hopefully one day they will sell more competitions and he will win and go first class.

Yaniv Saves the World will be screening as part of the Spark Festival on Friday August 17 at the Waikato Museum (free). Visit [spark.net.nz](http://spark.net.nz). For more information about Yaniv and his art, visit [y-artist.blogspot.com](http://y-artist.blogspot.com).

# An artist's life on film



Film maker and Writer moving image tutor John Mandelberg first met the Janson family in 2003. As he understood it, Yaniv was a different type of communicator.

He went to an exhibition of Yaniv's in 2008 and bought two pieces of his art. Next thing, he heard Yaniv had been selected as a finalist in the Walkate National Contemporary Arts Award. The more unbelievable year.

Yaniv's work was fast becoming known in the local art scene and he decided to approach the family about making a documentary.

*Yaniv Saves the World* was completed in 2011. Mandelberg estimates there was at least 24 hours of footage to work with and about 1200 hours of editing.

He says the film is "about a family and how that family supports, nurtures and copes with Yaniv's life."

Yaniv was diagnosed with Asperger's syndrome - a high functioning form of autism - as a child. Social situations are a puzzle to him. He doesn't always fit into the mainstream world, but as an artist, so far, he hasn't needed to. He's an Outsider Artist. Self taught.

"He has no understanding about the art theory and he can't articulate why he paints. He does it because he knows people will pay for the work and it sells. It means he can buy the things that he likes.

"I don't think you could actually teach him, because he has a really good colour sense that comes from within."

His work is different. He can't stand up and talk freely about it. He can't defend his work. Mandelberg identifies a disconnect here between the



Film-maker John Mandelberg explores the way Yaniv's family support him.

contemporary art world and what Yaniv does.

"Most artists can talk about the reasons they do the work which is about the art, not about winning competitions. The interesting thing is that artists do want to sell their work, they just don't want to say that."

Yaniv's brother Stephane sums up his brother's life post painting.

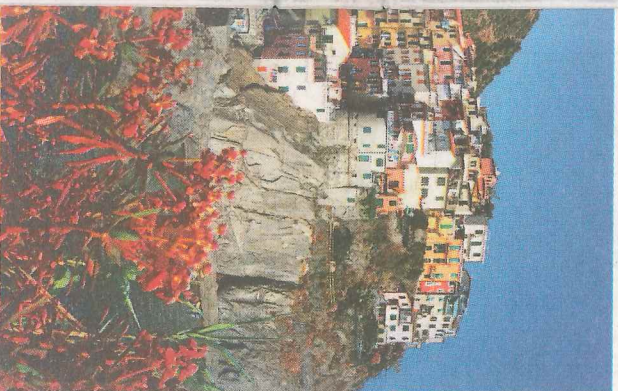
"There were two things that caught my attention when Yaniv started painting. One is that with his words, Yaniv is a very black and white person. He's very either or, yes or no, with very little shades of grey in between. With his art, he's very colourful. You can see it. It's a way for him to express something that he just can't do with language... It's a way for him to say, Hey, look at me. This is a part of me that I haven't been able to tell you about so far."

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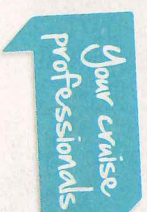
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