

# A child could do that

## YOUNG MASTERS

At a recent art exhibition at the West Highland Museum in Scotland, a picture called *The Future is Gone* by Jodie Fraser, depicting three ghostly planes over the New York skyline, attracted a lot of

attention. *911*, another work by Jodie on the same subject, won an individual Barbie Prize for modern art in 2002. *911* consists of a grey ■ canvas covered with 3,000 burnt matches, one for each person who died in the terrorist

attacks on the World Trade Center. The main £20,000 Barbie Prize was won by the collected work of Jodie and her schoolfriends at Caol Primary School near Fort William – because Jodie is only 10 years old.



Children in Room 13.



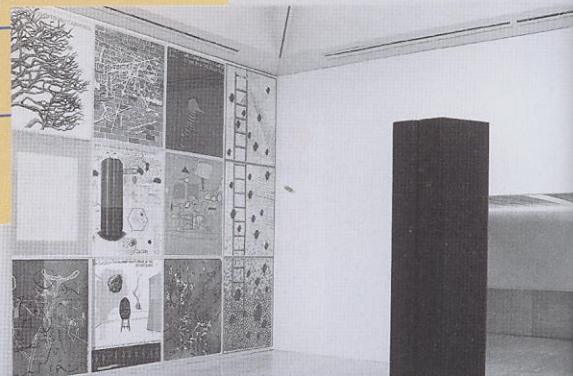
911.

## The Turner Prize

The Turner Prize, the adult version of the Barbie Prize, is awarded every year to an artist in Britain aged under 50, for outstanding work in the last 12 months. These are the winners of recent years.

year	artist	typical work
2002	Keith Tyson	<i>The Thinker</i> (computer equipment placed inside a ■ pillar makes a ■ humming sound)
2001	Martin Creed	<i>The Lights Going On and Off</i> (lights turn themselves on and off in an empty room)
2000	Wolfgang Tillmans	57 everyday events photographed from unusual angles and positioned ■ randomly across a wall
1999	Steve McQueen	<i>Drumroll</i> (a film made by rolling a videocamera in an ■ oil drum through the streets of New York)

*The Thinker* by Keith Tyson.



## WORD BANK

**canvas** ▣ the fabric that you use oil paints on  
**committee** ▣ a group of people who control an organisation  
**employee** ▣ someone who works for another person  
**to flood out** ▣ to come out in great quantities  
**grant** ▣ money given free

**to hum** ▣ to make a buzzing noise, like a bee  
**oil drum** ▣ an empty cylinder that contained oil  
**to patronise** ▣ to treat someone too simply, as if they were a child  
**pillar** ▣ a tall column, usually used to support the roof of a building  
**randomly** ▣ not in a fixed order

### One of Rob Fairley's rules is "Never teach them art!"

The art that has flooded out of Caol Primary School's art club, Room 13, has amazed the modern art world. Room 13 is open to any child at playtime, lunchtime or after school. On Fridays, if the children have completed all their schoolwork, they can spend all day there, and some children stay there from 9am to 6pm. The only adults involved are artist Rob Fairley and his assistant Claire Gibb, but they aren't the children's teachers. They are their employees.

Room 13 is an independent business, separate from the school, and has a committee (all under the age of 11) who manage their own finances, apply for grants, order art materials and give lectures. They have even lectured at the Tate Modern gallery in London. But some banks and arts organisations are not prepared to deal with a committee who are not yet teenagers, so Room 13 often has financial problems, and their orders for art materials are sometimes ignored.

Ivan Massow, head of the judges of the Barbie Prize (a junior version of the annual Turner Prize for Modern Art), says "It was obvious that the children had been asked to think about things and express themselves through art. And the quality of the work was exceptional. If I had

bought 911 and put it in my London flat, no one would have thought that it was the work of a 10-year-old".

The children are not looking forward to studying art at secondary school, where they will have to use cheaper materials and follow a strict exam syllabus. They know that they have a unique freedom in Room 13. One of Rob Fairley's rules is "Never teach them art!",

and their headteacher doesn't interfere with their work. As their managing director, Danielle Souness, said at a recent conference: "Room 13 proves that if you give us the chance we can organise our education and we are tired of being patronised with your idea of what we can understand".

You can visit Room 13 at [www.room13scotland.com](http://www.room13scotland.com)



The Magic Yellow Elephant.

### Before you read

1 Look at the works of art in the photos. What do you think of them? What do you think they 'mean'? Do you prefer more traditional styles of art?

### Reading

2 Read the text quickly. What is unusual about:

1. Jodie Fraser's success as an artist?
2. the committee of Room 13?
3. the children's relationship with Rob Fairley and their headteacher?

3 EP Match these headings with the paragraphs of the text.

- a. Day-to-day activity in Room 13
- b. The children's opinion of art teaching
- c. The committee's work
- d. One pupil's work
- e. An art expert's opinion of the children's work

4 EP Are these statements true or false?

1. The Barbie Prize is a special art prize for young people.
2. 911 is a work that represents dead people.

3. Rob Fairley decides what happens in Room 13.
4. There are some teachers on the committee of Room 13.
5. Some adults don't treat the committee of Room 13 seriously.
6. The children think that they will get a better education at secondary school.

5 EP Read the list of recent Turner Prize winners. Whose work:

1. involves film-making?
2. involves photography?
3. involves electronics?

### Speaking

6 What do you think of the descriptions of the Turner Prize winners' work?

7 Discuss the following questions.

1. Why have the children of Room 13 produced such interesting art?
2. Can you teach subjects like art and music, or are they talents that people are born with?
3. Should children be allowed to 'organise their education' in any way?