



Teachers' Resource Card *This Is New Zealand*

Michael Stevenson *This Is the Trekka* 2003–5

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**THIS IS
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MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
Te Tāhuhu o te Mātauranga

Teachers' Resource Card

This Is New Zealand

About the Exhibition

This Is New Zealand explores the role art has played in asserting and questioning notions of national identity. New Zealand has been exhibiting at the Venice Biennale since 2001, a highly-esteemed international art event with national pavilions, where nations choose artists to represent them. Some of our chosen representative artists have taken the opportunity to tackle themes of national identity.

The exhibition considers how our country has represented itself through art exhibited overseas both historically and in recent years. It takes a critical look at the stories we have told ourselves—and the stories we have told others—about who we are through these artworks.

This Is New Zealand re-presents works previously exhibited at the Venice Biennale by Michael Stevenson, Michael Parekowhai and Simon Denny, alongside New Zealand works created for World's Fairs, Expos, and other diplomatic contexts by Marcus King, John Drawbridge, Inia Te Wiata, Hugh Macdonald, Para Matchitt, Douglas Lilburn and Fiona Pardington. It also features films, TV ads, and early tourism campaigns as well as new projects exploring national iconography by Bronwyn Holloway-Smith, Gavin Hipkins and Emil McAvoy.

The show borrows its title from one of the key works—the spectacular three-screen film made by Hugh Macdonald at the National Film Unit for the New Zealand pavilion at Osaka's *Expo '70*.

About your Visit

Students will view and discuss a selection of artworks in the exhibition observing the materials and techniques used. They will make personal responses, interpret artworks and share ideas about them, considering how they might reflect or question aspects of our national identity.

Pre-visit Discussion

Do you think of yourself as a New Zealander? If so what does that mean to you? Have a class discussion – do any of your classmates have different ideas? Identify any similarities or differences of opinion.

Is it important for artists to exhibit overseas? Why? Look at the picture of *This Is the Trekka*, exhibited at the Venice Biennale by Michael Stevenson. Why might an artist choose to make a sculpture of a car as

the centre piece of their exhibit representing New Zealand overseas? Find out more here www.trekka.co.nz.

Post-visit Activities

Reflect on your visit. Which was your favourite artwork in the exhibit? Why? What ideas about art and national identity did you discuss at the gallery? If the visit raised any questions, discuss how you will investigate them further.

Compose a visual poem about our national identity listing words that you feel describe New Zealand life or values within a symbolically shaped outline. Use some of the kupu Māori and English words that you discussed at the gallery.

Make a photo essay book. Take thirty photographs of moments in your everyday life, which might include people, activities or surroundings. Edit and crop your favourite five pictures and arrange each one as a full page image in a sequence. Place your images together with those made by other people in your class, then print and staple together creating a photo essay book. What might someone from overseas think about life in Aotearoa by flicking through the book and seeing all of your image sequences together?

Imagine you are commissioned to make an artwork to exhibit overseas that represents Aotearoa. What ideas about who we are as a nation would you represent within it? What would you make—a painting, film, photograph or sculpture? Describe some of the features, images, words or symbols you would include. Draw and label a design for your artwork.

Research previous artists who have exhibited at the Venice Biennale by looking the website made by Creative New Zealand <http://www.nzatvenice.com/>. Which artist's work do you like best? Why? Do you feel any represents our national identity? Why? If you could select the next artist to represent the nation overseas, who would you choose? Explain your reasons.

Art Terms

Conceptual art. 'Concept' is another word for 'idea'. Conceptual art can be and look like almost anything, because the ideas behind the work are of more importance to the artist than the visual way they choose to express them.