



Teachers' Resource Card

Split Level View Finder: Theo Schoon and New Zealand Art

Theo Schoon *Incised gourd* 1955-1965 Chartwell Collection, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki.

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MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

Te Tāhaka o te Mātauranga

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About the Exhibition

Theo Schoon (1915-85) was a painter and printmaker, photographer, ceramicist, and carver of gourds and pounamu. He was born in Java to Dutch parents, living in Indonesia and Europe before emigrating to New Zealand in 1939. Schoon spent time in Canterbury where he encountered the Māori rock drawings of Te Wai Pounamu; travelled to Rotorua where he made photographic studies of mudpools and silica formations; lived in Auckland growing and carving his own gourds. His travels brought him into contact with many key figures in New Zealand art and he became a catalyst for European modernism in New Zealand. Schoon's overarching project was to find a way of fusing Māori art traditions and European modernism.

Schoon is a controversial figure and his interaction with Māori art is problematic. What he saw as exchange and collaboration now looks like appropriation and cultural presumption. This exhibition takes a critical look at Schoon's work and presents it as a series of encounters with other cultural forms and artists with whom he exchanged ideas, forms, and motifs—including Gordon Walters, Rita Angus, Paratene Matchitt, Selwyn Muru, Arnold Wilson, and Ans Westra.

Vocabulary

Shape the external form, contours, or outline of something.

Pattern a repeated decorative design.

Symbol a thing that represents or stands for something else.

Kōwhaiwhai painted scroll ornamentation - commonly used on Māori meeting house rafters.

Modernism late 19th – early 20th Century style, featuring an interest in expressing feelings and ideas through abstraction rather than realistic representation.

Appropriation the use of elements of another's artwork or culture outside of its original context.

Inspiration a feeling of enthusiasm you get from someone or something, which gives you new and creative ideas.

Pre-visit Activity

Have a class discussion about New Zealand art and Māori art. Share what you know about different styles

of New Zealand art and traditional and contemporary Toi Māori. Can you describe the shape or meaning of any traditional Toi Māori symbols featured in kōwhaiwhai?

Post-Visit Activities

Reflect What did you see and do at the Gallery? Which artworks did you find interesting? Why? What did you learn about the difference between a shape and a symbol? Or between inspiration and appropriation? What big ideas or questions could you carry on discussing with your class?

Write a label for the artwork you made at the gallery. Explain the techniques and processes you used to make it. Describe its meaning and significance.

Learn more about the importance of hue/gourds in te ao Māori <http://www.temarareo.org/TMR-Hue.html> and try growing some in your school garden.

Find out more about Māori rock art. Look at the work of artist Ross Hemera which is inspired by rock drawings in Te Waipounamu made by his tīpuna. www.ngaitahu.iwi.nz/culture/ngai-tahu-toi

Discover the meanings behind some traditional Toi Māori symbols found in kōwhaiwhai, whakairo, raranga and tukutuku in the book *Māori Art and Design* by Julie Paama-Pengelly 2010.

Collaborate with classmates to devise your own system of visual symbols to represent a range of ideas, emotions or values. Use some of the symbols in combination with each other to create an artwork with symbolic meaning.

Take inspiration from the work of some contemporary Māori artists on Instagram.

@tawhairickard Artist—painter

@rewetiarapere Reweti Arapere—mixed media

@ngaarahuink Sian Montgomery-Neutze—tāmoko

@brocated Kauri Hawkins—mixed media

@miriamagracesmith Miriama Grace-Smith—painter

@izzyjoyart Artist—illustration/paint

@toni_herangi Artist—kōwhaiwhai

Understand more about the cultural appropriation debate in New Zealand art by reading about Gordon Walters and Michael Parekōwhai.

https://www.academia.edu/7249014/Kiss_the_Baby_Goodbye_Appropriation_in_Contemporary_New_Zealand_Art