



Teachers' Resource Card

Ronnie van Hout: Quasi

Ronnie van Hout: Quasi, City Gallery Wellington, 2019.

**City
Gallery
Wellington**
Te Whare Toi

Part of
experience
Wellington
Wellington Museums Trust

Principal Funder
**Absolutely Positively
Wellington City Council**
He tūkeke ki Pōwhiri


wellington sculpture trust
Te Kōwhiri o Te Whare

**Wellington
Community Trust**
experiencecommunity.org.nz

Te Ngākau Civic Square, 101 Wakefield Street
Wellington 6140, New Zealand
T: +64 4 913 9029
E: citygalleryeducation@experiencewellington.org.nz

citygallery.org.nz

City Gallery Wellington's
Education Service is
supported by the Ministry
of Education's LEOTC fund.


MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
Te Dhulako #1: Mātauranga

Teachers' Resource Card

Ronnie van Hout: *Quasi*

About the Sculpture

Ronnie van Hout was born in Christchurch, but now lives in Melbourne. His work explores the freak, the outsider, the reject. His public sculpture *Quasi* is a partial self portrait. The giant hybrid face-hand is based on scans of the artist's own body parts. It's as if 'the hand of the artist' has developed a monstrous life of its own.

Quasi was created in 2016 to grace the roof of Christchurch Art Gallery following the 2011 earthquake. It now lives on City Gallery's roof, presiding over a Civic Square largely abandoned in the wake of our own 2016 quake.

'Quasi' means 'apparently, but not really', 'pseudo', 'fake'. It's also a nod to Quasimodo, the deformed bellringer in Victor Hugo's 1831 novel *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame*. Misshapen and misunderstood, he turned out to be a great tragic-romantic hero—a beautiful soul.

The sculpture certainly lived up to its name. Christchurch art critic Warren Feeney hated it and petitioned to banish it from his good city, penning his newspaper article 'Ten Reasons Why Christchurch Art Gallery's *Quasi* Must Go'. But perhaps the monster just wants to be loved (suggested by its shortened petname).

Vocabulary

Public Art—artworks made for public space, usually outside.

Sculpture—an artwork created in three dimensions.

Self Portrait—a depiction of the artist who created it.

Surrealism—styles of art developed in the 20th century that emphasise the unconscious, often using automatism, chance and unexpected juxtapositions.

Te Reo Māori

Kanohi—face

Ringaringa—hand

Tāraitanga—sculpture

Whakaahua kiriaro—self portrait

Pre-Visit Discussion

Have a class discussion about public art. Describe some public artworks in your area and share what you

like or dislike about them. How much do you know about the artists who created them, and how or why they were made? Should public art be something that people consider to be beautiful? What are the arguments for or against this? Should public art relate to its surroundings? Explain why or why not. What factors can be used to decide if a public artwork is successful?

Post-Visit Activities

Reflect on your visit. What did you see and do at the Gallery? What did you learn about *Quasi*? Why might people like or dislike *Quasi*? How do you feel about the sculpture? What questions about public art could you carry on discussing with your class?

Write a character description for the sculpture you made at the Gallery. What type of personality does your character have? Think about: strengths and weaknesses, values and beliefs, likes and dislikes, habits, temperament, how they might sound, how they might behave, etc. Is your character misunderstood like Quasimodo? If so, describe how.

Transform the sculpture you made at the gallery into a gigantic public artwork. Take some photos of your sculpture from different angles against a plain background. Print out the photos in different sizes. Cut and paste your sculpture photos onto pictures of different local public places or buildings. Where would your sculpture look good? By a road? On a building? In a tree? Under a bridge? How does your sculpture relate to its potential new surroundings?

Experiment with collage to create a series of altered self portraits using the surrealist technique of unexpected juxtapositions – different things juxtaposed. Cut up photocopies of photos of your face, remove some features and replace them with something unexpected – e.g. features from other people's faces, or features from your own face but taken from a different angle, or parts of a creature, or bits of an everyday object. What do you think of your surrealist self portraits? Are they comical? Ugly? Spooky?

Learn about gargoyles, the sculpted grotesque creatures that adorn buildings. Their two main purposes are to divert rainwater via spouts in their mouths and to scare off evil.