

Elements of Art

Colour

Look and discuss
Godwit/Kuaka
by Ralph Hotere

Today you will

Look closely at an artwork.

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Notice how the artist has used colour.

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Develop personal interpretations and vivid descriptions.

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Connect to ideas about journeys, migration, arrivals and welcomes.

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Discover ideas for future inquiry.



Godwit/Kuaka

In 1977 Ralph Hotere painted an eighteen-metre long mural for Auckland International Airport.

Originally titled *The Flight of the Godwit* it honoured the bar-tailed godwit (or kūaka), a migratory bird admired by Māori for its long-haul flights.

Displayed in the Arrivals Hall, it welcomed returning New Zealanders and visitors alike.

It was displayed at City Gallery in 2014.





Look and Discuss

Look at pictures of
Godwit/Kuaka at
City Gallery.

How would it feel to
walk the length of this 18
metre long painting?

How do the colours
change across the
painting?



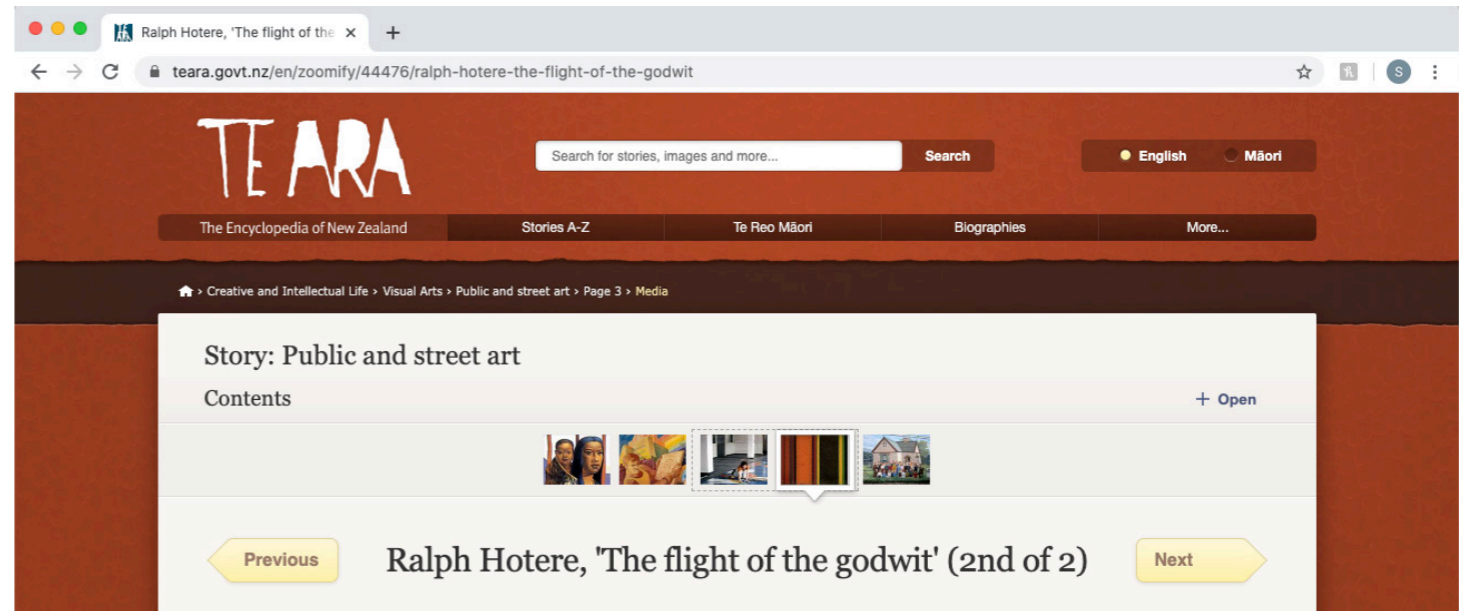
Get Closer

Take a closer look at the Te Ara website.

You can look at the whole painting and then zoom in and look across the painting from left to right.

What do you notice about lines, texture and words?
Brainstorm some words to describe them.

What does it make you think of or imagine?



**This painting inspires
different interpretations...**

**Some people see
a journey across a
rainbow.**

**Some people see a
flight over a landscape
from a bird's eye view.**

**Some people see a
tunnel travelling into
the distance.**

**What
did you
see?**



**This painting inspires
vivid descriptions...**

**‘like a fragment from
a monumental loom in
which carefully drawn
stripes are never-ending
warps that bind the
darkness of night to the
colour of the day.’**

From ‘Ralph Hotere’s *Godwit/Kuaka* mural’,
Ron Bronson

**What vivid
description
can you
devise?
‘like a...’**



About the work

Colour

Godwit/Kuaka is covered in bands of colour spanning the spectrum from red to violet, moving into deep black in the central panels and back out into colour.

Surface

The surface is a delicate pattern of fine lines and layers of mottled textures which the artist created by flicking paint with his fingertips from an upturned housepainter's brush.

Text

Lines of text are arranged over the surface of the painting. Along the bottom of the first three panels are the words

**Hau Mai, tau mai,
nau mai**

('Enter here, rest here, you are welcome here').

In the dark central panels the arrival of the godwits is celebrated with words from an ancient Te Aupōuri chant taught to Hotere by his father.



Themes and Ideas

Bird Migration

The painting honours the bar-tailed godwit or kūaka. Every year these birds leave their breeding grounds in Alaska and fly south, without stopping for food or rest, to arrive in New Zealand each September.

Human Travels

The work was originally commissioned for the Arrivals Hall at Auckland International Airport, the reference to the arrival of the migratory godwit a metaphor for the incoming planes and passengers.

Spirit Journeys

Godwit/Kuaka is often connected with the notion of travelling – the flight path of the kūaka, the arrival of passengers, the journey of the spirit, or the physical journey the viewer takes walking along the many panels.



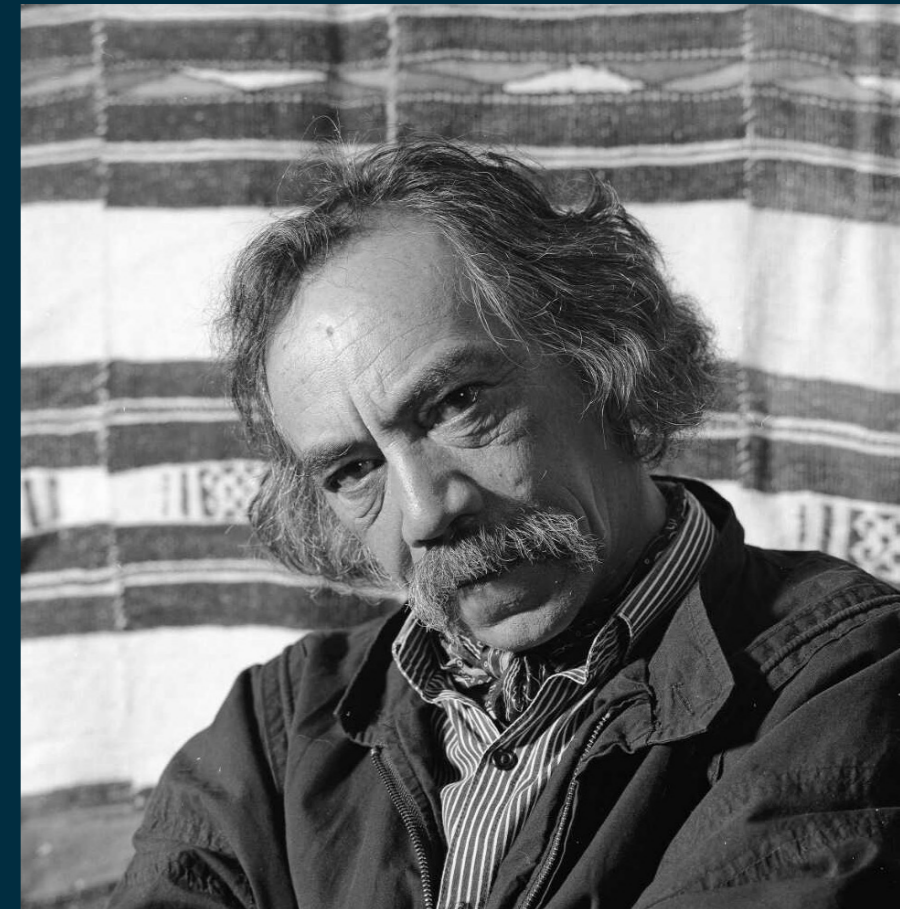
About the Artist

Ralph Hotere (1931-2013, Te Aupōuri and Te Rarawa) is one of New Zealand's most significant painters.

He was born in Mitimiti, Northland and raised in a devout roman catholic family. Hotere worked as a secondary school arts advisor in Northland and Auckland before traveling to Europe in 1961, returning to live around Dunedin from 1969.

Hotere was a key figure in the emergence of Māori modernism.

In the 1970s, he became known for his hard-edged lacquer paintings. These highly symbolic, op-art abstractions feature vertical lines, crosses, and circles drawn on black backgrounds.



Portrait of artist, Ralph Hotere, photographed by Kenneth Quinn on the 7th of April 1988.



About the Artist

His work often features language and text.

He collaborated with New Zealand poets such as Bill Manhire and Hone Tuwhare, and incorporated traditional Māori poems into his paintings. These words are often stencilled or hand painted over a variety of surfaces such as canvas and corrugated iron.

Hotere made a number of political works reacting to social and environmental issues.

The Sangro series is a memorial to his brother who fought in the Māori Battalion in World War II. The Aromoana series arose from Hotere's concerns about the environmental impact of an aluminium smelter at Aromoana in Otago, while Black Union Jack protested against a controversial rugby tour made by New Zealand during the apartheid era.



Find out more

Look at some other past exhibitions at **City Gallery featuring Ralph Hotere.**

Ralph Hotere:
Out the Black Window

Ralph Hotere:
Black Phoenix

You can read more about Godwit/Kuaka, including a translation of the Muriwhenua chant Ruia ruia, opea opea, tahia tahia into English. at Auckland Art Gallery.



Inquiry – Godwits and Migration

What do you know about bar-tailed godwits or kūaka? What would you like to find out more about?

Try researching their preferred habitats, diet, and migration routes.

What environmental pressures do they face.

How are kūaka significant in Māori culture?

Make this

Imagine the flight path you took to get from home to school.

Or an important journey made by you or your family.

Draw the journey from a bird's-eye view.



**Draw a journey from a
bird's-eye view**



Inquiry – Arrivals and Welcomes

Godwit/Kuaka once welcomed overseas travellers arriving at Auckland Airport.

How do you welcome people arriving at your home or school?

How are visitors welcomed onto a marae?

Find out about ways people from different cultures welcome their guests.

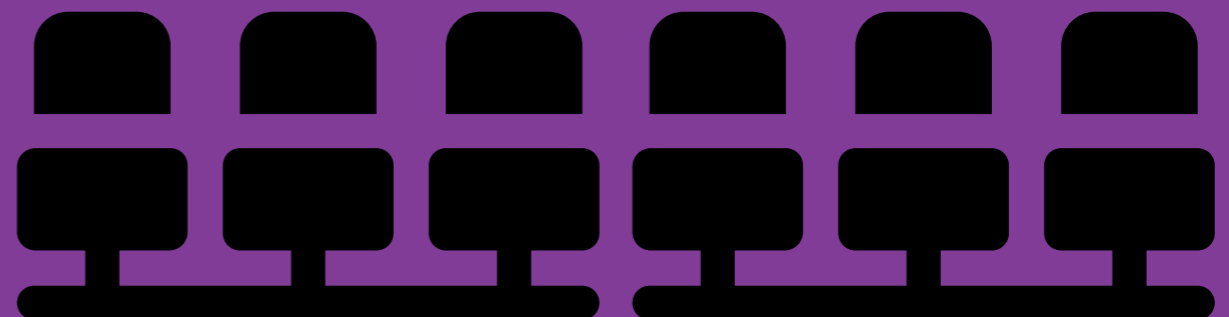
Make this

Imagine an artwork for an airport arrivals lounge.

What form would your artwork take?

Perhaps a painting, film performance, or gift.

Could any ideas be adapted to create an artwork for the place where people arrive at your school?



Imagine an artwork for an
airport arrivals lounge

City
Gallery
Wellington
Te Whare Toi