

THE SUTER ART GALLERY
TE ARATOI O WHAKATŪ
SUTER EDUCATION SERVICES

My Place in Art

Teaching Kit



Summer in Nelson, 1960
Irvine Major, Oil on Canvas

Unit Developed and Compiled by Esther McNaughton, *Suter Educator*



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Introduction: *My Place in Art*

In this lesson students will explore landscape art which shows our region. They will think about their associations with local places before looking at why and how artists show landscapes in art. The students will develop an artwork showing themselves in a landscape of their choice using techniques observed in the artworks on show.

Relevant Curriculum Areas: Visual Arts, Social Studies, English.

Duration: 75- 90 minutes depending on level.

Levels: Adaptable for Years 1-10

Associated Suter Exhibition: *Milk and Honey*

The rhetoric used to describe Aotearoa/New Zealand from a colonial perspective has always been laced with Biblical references. This is God's own country: a South Pacific Eden full of hope, bounty and peace. This exhibition examines mythmaking involved in forging the history and vision of our country and Nelson as a region.

Tracing the aesthetic influence of the top of the South Island, *Milk and Honey* displays the historical impact the region has had as a subject for art. From John Bevan Ford's adaptation of one of the first European images of Maori and Aotearoa in Golden Bay and Tall Men on Hill Tops to Joe Sheehan's contemporary approach to traditional Māori pakohe (argillite), this region has been stimulating artists for centuries.

As the geographic centre of New Zealand the Nelson region is a gateway to some of the country's most sublime vistas and is geologically rich. Raw materials and subject matter abound, but this was not the only thing that drew creative people to Nelson. During the middle of the Twentieth Century Toss Woollaston, Colin McCahon, Rita Angus, and many more artists came to the region to seek out seasonal labour. Not uncommon for artists looking to support themselves or their families, Nelson became a meeting place for artists now considered amongst the country's greatest. Each of these artists explored the geological wonders that the region has to offer and created some of their most iconic work as a response to what they saw.

Depicting the first European voyagers to Nelson, landforms unique to the top of the South Island, regional industries, and our bicultural history, *Milk and Honey* spans over two hundred years of New Zealand artworks and is just a taste of the creative endeavours this distinctive area has inspired.

Previsit Information:

Please find attached ***Suter Guidelines***. It is very helpful if students understand the requirements of working in The Suter setting before they arrive.

On arrival please seat the students outside The Suter in the courtyard areaway and the educator will join you there. If wet please wait quietly in The Suter's lobby.

It is very helpful if the students are wearing name labels.

If you are driving there is generally good long term parking by Riverside Pool which is very close to the Suter. Please take the walkway between the pool and Halifax Vet to get to Bridge St and The Suter.

Don't forget to bring your camera / video camera to record students at work in the gallery. There are usually wonderful photo opportunities during visits and this enables you to revisit aspects of the trip with the class later on back at school, as well as providing excellent images for your class blog.

We will be working in groups with parent helpers for this visit, so please make sure you have sufficient adult support for our break-out activities.

Previsit Activities:

Students could:

- brainstorm how and why they feel they belong in a place
- discuss the concept of tūrangawaewae (a place where you have the right to stand and be heard, ancestral land)
- draw a picture of their home, labelling or drawing things that help them to feel that they belong
- design a postcard of the region showing a place that is special to them

What Makes A Significant Place Or Environment? Places that have a special value for people. Discuss the concept of significant places with the whole class on the board or projector. Create a tentative mind map of reasons why places might be significant and who they might be significant for. What is significant for one group of people may not be for another.

Suter Lesson Outline: (Please note this is subject to variation according to the needs of the class)

- Welcome: Suter guidelines.

Talk about The Suter's collection and about The Suter.

- Introduction to *The Land of Milk and Honey*:

What does the expression a *Land of Milk and Honey* mean?

Why would Nelson be considered a Land of Milk and Honey?

What is a landscape artwork? Why might an artist choose to show a landscape in their art?

Brainstorming: Students talk about what makes our region a special place to live. Initially brainstorming the theme asking the students to identify all the things which make our place a special place to be.

- Exhibition Exploration:

Look around the exhibition in groups. Identify the artworks which show places. How many of these places have you been to? What did you do there? Who did you go with? Have you been to any lately? Students view the artworks and discuss how they demonstrates special aspects of our environment as discussed.

Use activity sheet as an aid for looking and talking.

- Development:

What places are important to people in our community? Why are they important? What sorts of things about our region would different people value? Kids, Older people, farmers, potters, librarians, trampers etc. Talk about why different groups would be interested in particular artworks on show.

- Responding to Art: Foreground and Background

View and talk about examples of artwork. Describe pictorial devices (e.g., foreground, background, overlapping) in the work.

Space. Look at the distance or area between shapes in an art work (e.g., in front/ behind, close/ distant, background/ foreground).

Foreground and background. The foreground is where parts of the picture appear to be closer to the viewer and the background is where they appear to be further away which creates an illusion of depth/space on a two-dimensional surface. Students may be encouraged to try the following techniques on separate occasions to further their understanding of how perspective can be achieved by:

1. drawing foreground shapes larger than background shapes (e.g., a person may be half the height of another person in the picture, showing the larger person is closer. This is called change of scale);

2. positioning foreground shapes lower in the picture (e.g., the feet of the person closer will be positioned lower in the composition than the feet of someone more distant);
3. making foreground shapes more in focus (sharper, clearer edges, stronger colours, more contrasting) than shapes in the background (e.g., we can see things that are closer in more detail. The effect of distance makes things appear less distinct);
4. overlapping foreground shapes to cover parts of background shapes.

Ask the students to look at the person next to them, then at the students sitting behind them and then at the objects behind them. Consider and discuss the element of space using art vocabulary i.e., foreground, background, overlapping, proportion, change of scale.

Each group chooses pictures to study and they have to identify at least two ways in which a feeling of depth has been achieved.

What looks closest to you in this picture?

Why do you think it looks closer?

Can you find other methods the artist has used to create the feeling of being up close or far away?

- Practical:

In groups students will choose an artwork that to them shows what makes our region special. They will reinterpret it using collage and place themselves in the image. Looking at light and dark tones in the artwork and trying to replicate its essence. They will show foreground, middle and background in their work, emphasizing the different areas by using different materials.

- Conclusion: As a class students show their artworks and talk about what they have done and why. What are they doing within the artwork and why is this significant in our region?

Post Visit Suggestions:

Significant Names: Significant Places

Maori oral traditions and place names may provide clues to the significance of places and environments for Maori. One useful resource might be available within your school: *The Voices Of The Land: Nga Reo O Te Whenua: What Place Names Tell Us About Our Past* :Teaching and Learning Ideas and Activities. (1992). Wellington, N.Z: Learning Media, Ministry of Education.

Create Diagrams comparing aspects of others' cultures with their own when experiencing leisure in a place.

Plan a Heritage Trail of their local area that identifies five significant historic sites and explains why they are significant.

A Significant Place in Our Region

Organise students into groups and allocate each group a place.

Using the Internet, each pair will conduct an inquiry focusing on the key questions below and present their findings.

Location: Where is this place located?

What are the different ways people have used the area?

People: Who might consider this place to be special or significant?

Briefly explain why they might consider this place to be significant.

Students could make a photo documentary of local places and events important to your class or make artworks from another person's viewpoint.

Pop Quiz

Have each student contribute one question (and answer) about their chosen significant place for a Trivial Pursuits type quiz.

Produce a Resource as a class that would help children new to the region know about the leisure possibilities of the region and feel welcome. They decided to create a pamphlet. The pamphlet could be emailed to email buddies in Marlborough or West Coast schools.

Promotion of Our Region

Students could conduct an inquiry: 'How can we promote our region so people want to live in or visit our region?'

Outdoor observation

Continue to look for spatial effects covered in the Suter lesson. Encourage students to look for changes in clarity between distant and close objects. Consider colour as an indicator of distance e.g., atmospheric changes causes distant mountains to appear blue and colour generally seems more dull with distance.

Visual Art

- View and discuss other artworks showing our region.

- Study at a local artist who shows our place in their artworks e.g. John Gully or Toss Woollaston.
- Children creating artworks which reflect the significance of their region to them.
- Visually record areas of interest in the local community.
- Discuss the changes to the area over time. Looking at historic artworks like those of John Gully is an interesting record of times past.
- Investigate a feature of the environment which is of interest to your class, e.g. a The Maitai River. What does it symbolise, and how is it viewed in different ways? Develop artworks which show the significance of it to the students.

Learning Intentions:

Students will be able to:

- identify and talk about ways that foreground and background can be created in an artwork (CI).
- identify and talk ways in which artworks on show aspects of our local environment (CI).
- apply some pictorial devices to achieve a feeling of depth in their own artwork or those on display, e.g. contrast, scale, overlapping, perspective, tone (PK).
- explain why they chose the particular visual elements they did and how those elements communicate a sense of place (CI).
- develop an artwork which reflects their experience of the local environment (DI).
- investigate the purpose of the landscape artworks on show in developing understandings of the importance of our local environment to the people of our region (UC).

The Following Achievement Objectives are related to The Suter visit. Please highlight the ones that are relevant to your class programme:

The Visual Arts

Level 1

Students will:

Understanding the Arts in Context

- Share ideas about how and why their own and others' works are made and their purpose, value, and context.

Developing Practical Knowledge

- Explore a variety of materials and tools and discover elements and selected principles.

Developing Ideas

- Investigate visual ideas in response to a variety of motivations, observation, and imagination.

Communicating and Interpreting

- Share the ideas, feelings, and stories communicated by their own and others' objects and images.

Level 2

Students will:

Understanding the Arts in Context

- Share ideas about how and why their own and others' works are made and their purpose, value, and context.

Developing Practical Knowledge

- Explore a variety of materials and tools and discover elements and selected principles.

Developing Ideas

- Investigate and develop visual ideas in response to a variety of motivations, observation, and imagination.

Communicating and Interpreting

- Share the ideas, feelings, and stories communicated by their own and others' objects and images.

Level 3

Students will:

Understanding the Arts in Context

- Investigate the purpose of objects and images from past and present cultures and identify the contexts in which they were or are made, viewed, and valued.

Developing Practical Knowledge

- Explore some art-making conventions, applying knowledge of elements and selected principles through the use of materials and processes.

Developing Ideas

- Develop and revisit visual ideas, in response to a variety of motivations, observation, and imagination, supported by the study of artists' works.

Communicating and Interpreting

- Describe the ideas their own and others' objects and images communicate.

Level 4

Students will:

Understanding the Arts in Context

- Investigate the purpose of objects and images from past and present cultures and identify the contexts in which they were or are made, viewed, and valued.

Developing Practical Knowledge

- Explore and use art-making conventions applying knowledge of elements and selected principles through the use of materials and processes.

Developing Ideas

- Develop and revisit visual ideas, in response to a variety of motivations, observation, and imagination, supported by the study of artists' works.

Communicating and Interpreting

- Explore and describe ways in which meanings can be communicated and interpreted in their own and others' work.

Social Studies

Students will gain knowledge, skills, and experience to:

Level 1

- Understand how the past is important to people.
- Understand how places in New Zealand are significant for individuals and groups.
- Understand how the cultures of people in New Zealand are expressed in their daily lives.

Level 2

- Understand how cultural practices reflect and express peoples' customs, traditions, and values.
- Understand how places influence people and people influence places.
- Understand how the status of Māori as tangata whenua is significant for communities in New Zealand.

Level 3

- Understand how cultural practices vary but reflect similar purposes.
- Understand how people view and use places differently.
- Understand how people make decisions about access to and use of resources.
- Understand how people remember and record the past in different ways.

Level 4

- Understand how people pass on and sustain culture and heritage for different reasons and that this has consequences for people.
- Understand how exploration and innovation create opportunities and challenges for people, places, and environments.
- Understand how producers and consumers exercise their rights and meet their responsibilities.

Key Competencies Are Relevant to This Unit of Work in the Following Ways:

Thinking

“Thinking is about using creative, critical, and metacognitive processes to make sense of information, experiences, and ideas. These processes can be applied to purposes such as developing understanding, making decisions, shaping actions, or constructing knowledge. Intellectual curiosity is at the heart of this competency.”

Students who are competent thinkers and problem-solvers actively seek, use, and create knowledge. They reflect on their own learning, draw on personal knowledge and intuitions, ask questions, and challenge the basis of assumptions and perceptions.”

New Zealand Curriculum Online: <http://nzcurriculum.tki.org.nz/>

At The Suter students use artworks as foci to piece together ideas and consider concepts of wide and varied importance. They are able to think creatively and expansively as they consider the many possibilities which emerge in the world of visual arts. They use critical thinking to test the strength of their ideas and those of others in relation to visual art and the concepts explored by the artists who created the artworks on display. To create understandings in response to visual art one must use problem solving strategies referring to one’s own experience, the information provided in the gallery in a variety of means and through the artworks themselves.

Using language, symbols, and texts

“Using language, symbols, and texts is about working with and making meaning of the codes in which knowledge is expressed. Languages and symbols are systems for representing and communicating information, experiences, and ideas. People use languages and symbols to produce texts of all kinds: written, oral/aural, and visual; informative and imaginative; informal and formal; mathematical, scientific, and technological.”

Students who are competent users of language, symbols, and texts can interpret and use words, number, images, movement, metaphor, and technologies in a range of contexts. They recognise how choices of language, symbol, or text affect people’s understanding and the ways in which they respond to communications. They confidently use ICT (including, where appropriate, assistive technologies) to access and provide information and to communicate with others.”

New Zealand Curriculum Online: <http://nzcurriculum.tki.org.nz/>

Language is a key focus during a Suter visit. Art is about communicating ideas and artworks are often referred to as texts.. As well as students decoding meanings in artworks using the conventions of art which are in themselves a language, they are constantly discussing ideas in small groups. Additionally, the stimulus of the artworks and ideas presented enable an excellent opportunity for the development of vocabulary and language use.

Managing self

“This competency is associated with self-motivation, a “can-do” attitude, and with students seeing themselves as capable learners. It is integral to self-assessment. Students who manage

themselves are enterprising, resourceful, reliable, and resilient. They establish personal goals, make plans, manage projects, and set high standards. They have strategies for meeting challenges. They know when to lead, when to follow, and when and how to act independently.”

New Zealand Curriculum Online: <http://nzcurriculum.tki.org.nz/>

At The Suter students are required to come into a novel learning situation and confidently manage to perform the necessary tasks to view and gain meaning from the artworks and to create artworks in response to the exhibitions. Additionally they need to act appropriately for the setting, understand and following particular requirements of the setting.

Relating to others

“Relating to others is about interacting effectively with a diverse range of people in a variety of contexts. This competency includes the ability to listen actively, recognise different points of view, negotiate, and share ideas.

Students who relate well to others are open to new learning and able to take different roles in different situations. They are aware of how their words and actions affect others. They know when it is appropriate to compete and when it is appropriate to co-operate. By working effectively together, they can come up with new approaches, ideas, and ways of thinking.”

New Zealand Curriculum Online: <http://nzcurriculum.tki.org.nz/>

Suter Education sessions rely in large part on small group learning. This involves students in developing ideas as part of a group, discussing, developing, querying and testing ideas. The significance of artworks is different to different viewers and so discussing varying viewpoints is integral to learning about visual art.

Participating and contributing

“This competency is about being actively involved in communities. Communities include family, whānau, and school and those based, for example, on a common interest or culture. They may be drawn together for purposes such as learning, work, celebration, or recreation. They may be local, national, or global. This competency includes a capacity to contribute appropriately as a group member, to make connections with others, and to create opportunities for others in the group.

Students who participate and contribute in communities have a sense of belonging and the confidence to participate within new contexts. They understand the importance of balancing rights, roles, and responsibilities and of contributing to the quality and sustainability of social, cultural, physical, and economic environments.”

New Zealand Curriculum Online: <http://nzcurriculum.tki.org.nz/>

Suter sessions welcome the participation of adult helpers who often, as well as supporting students in their learning, are themselves in the role of learner alongside school students in their care. As mentioned above, group learning is integral to Suter learning and the aim is to provide a positive family learning environment.

Selected Images from the Visit:

Golden Bay: The Heaphy Track



Bill HAMMOND (b.1947), All Along the Heaphy Highway 1998,
Acrylic on canvas Purchased in 2010
with the assistance of Suter Patron, Sally Hunt

A long and winding road divides the painting into two realms. The bird-headed watchers and strutters on the light side have their human bodies annotated with music scores, skyscrapers, automobiles and imperial surveyor's measures. On the dark side, in the primordial forest lurk ghouls and flying birds, amongst the ferns and trees. There are anthropomorphic figures within this realm but they don't rule this roost.

Hammond may have been inspired to paint this when it was mooted to put a road through to connect the top of the West Coast more directly with the Nelson region, a proposal which resurfaced in 2015. Instead of following the Heaphy Track this time, the suggestion has a route further south towards the Wangapeka.

Acquiring this painting was a major turning point and one only made possible by the far sightedness and generosity of the Suter's patron and determination of the Suter Trust Board's chairperson to collect works of seminal importance.

Hammond simultaneously reflects upon our past, present and future in his own idiosyncratic mash-up of cultural influences – cartoons, Japanese Ukiyo-e, Chinese painting, ancient Egyptian art, Walter Buller's bird collecting exploits, rock music and environmental concerns.

Farewell Spit: Golden Bay



John Bevan Ford (Ngāti Raukawa ki Kāpiti 1930–2005) *Golden Bay and Tall Men on Hill Tops* 1996
Watercolour and coloured inks on paper. Purchased 1996 from the exhibition 'Te Hono Ki Zeelandia Nova —Works
on paper by John Bevan Ford'

John Bevan Ford has adapted one of the first European images of Maori and Aotearoa in order to present a Maori perspective on that engagement. The lower section appropriates the drawings of 'Murders Bay, 1642' by Isaach Gilsemann, the draughtsman on Abel Tasman's discovery expedition of New Zealand (1642–1632). Also incorporated are European accounts of the engagement between the Dutch crew and tangata whenua, which led to physical conflict and the deaths of some crew.

We see two Dutch ships entering Golden Bay. Standing on the hilltops are abstracted 'tall men' (rendered in a style similar to early Maori cave drawings), which was the description given of tangata whenua by the ship's crew. Above this scene is a kaitaka, a prestigious Māori cloak form, bordered with a triangular pattern known as 'niho taniwha' (the tooth of the dragon) and symbolising the power of nature. The cloak is a recurring image in John Bevan Ford's work and may be interpreted as representing the authority of tangata whenua, and the protection offered by their ancestors, in this location.

The Abel Tasman



John Gully (England/New Zealand, 1819–1888)

Western coast of Tasman Bay 1885

Watercolour on paper on a calico backing

Collection of The Suter Art Gallery Te Aratoi o Whakatū: purchased 1885 by public subscription as the first painting for a public art collection in Nelson

If there was ever an art work intended to ‘sell’ New Zealand and celebrate the picturesque and sublime beauty of the Nelson region then this is it.¹

At the closing speech of an exhibition of John Gully’s paintings organised by Bishop Suter in 1884, Nelson’s Mayor Mr Fell read out a letter asking him to execute a painting ‘which may be the first picture (of a collection of works of art established in Nelson) to be accessible, so far as arrangements can permit, to all inhabitants of and visitors to Nelson’.¹

Gully worked up in his studio this substantial watercolour which depicts what is now the Abel Tasman National Park. Unusually for him it doesn’t seem to be topographically accurate, but rather it’s a grand compilation of landscape elements of the western side of Tasman Bay. The foreground cattle give scale to the scene, but also suggest the promise of the land.

¹ Bishop Suter said as much when he explained that Gully’s pictures would be going to England. He hoped that these would be the means of attracting many to their land of beautiful scenery *Colonist* 11 October 1884 p1 Vol. XXVII, Issue 3959

¹ ‘Exhibition of Mr Gully’s Pictures’ *Nelson Evening Mail*, 1 October 1884, p2 Vol.XIX, Issue 225

Pohara: Golden Bay



Leo Bensemann (New Zealand, 1912–1986)

Self Portrait 1975

Oil on board

Collection of The Suter Art Gallery Te Aratoi o Whakatū: purchased 2012 with the Cuthbertson Bequest

Possibly his last self-portrait, Bensemann has placed himself against a landscape which meant a great deal to him. He was born in the Takaka area, and it was to Golden Bay that he would return for summer holidays with his own family. His landscapes from the 1970s on frequently feature aspects of Golden Bay.

He has in this painting depicted himself in strict profile, returning to a mode of portraiture he had often used in the 1940s. In *Self Portrait* he is the mature artist, his forehead outlined by his distinctive thick eyebrow, deep in concentration.

The red twig in his hand is an intriguing feature of this painting; is it a divining rod, or stand-in for pencil or brush? It joins his hand, head and heart to his favourite landscape of Ligar Bay and Tata Islands.

View from the Spooners Range



Mountford Toss Will Woollaston KNZM (New Zealand, 1910–1998)

From Spooners Range, Nelson 1974, Oil on board

Collection of The Suter Art Gallery Te Aratoi o Whakatū: gifted 2012 by Peter and Hilary McLeavey and family in memory of
Jessica and Hilcote Pitts-Brown

Riverside Community: Motueka Valley



Rita Angus (New Zealand, 1908–1970)

The Apple Pickers 1944

Oil on canvas

Collection of The Suter Art Gallery Te Aratoi o Whakatū: purchased 2014 by public subscription

During WWII Angus, an avowed Pacifist, came to the Holdaway Orchard in Lower Moutere seeking both a like-minded community and seasonal employment as an apple picker. Although she found the work physically demanding, Angus found the environment conducive to ideas for paintings that she would develop once back in her Christchurch cottage. During lunch and smoko breaks she would fill sketch books with drawings of her fellow workers. In an ambitious 'conversation piece' format, *The Apple Pickers* assembles an ideal community relaxing under the apple laden trees.¹ The different skin tones suggest an ethnically diverse group, men and woman as equals under the sun. Angus is most likely the blonde haired woman in white. Seasonal workers today are still from all points of the globe, and the degree to which this image resonates with those involved in the Nelson region's pip fruit industry was amply demonstrated by their generous contributions to the painting's acquisition fund.

¹ A 'conversation piece' is an informal group portrait, popular in 18th century Britain, figures are often in outdoors settings

Delaware Bay:



John Gully (1819 – 1888). *Cable Bay from Maori Pa* 1882.
Watercolour on paper 627 x 827 mm.
The Bishop Suter Art Gallery founding donation –
gift of Mrs Amelia Suter, 1895.

This view is from Whakapuaka and depicts what came to be called Delaware Inlet (after a ship *The Delaware* foundered nearby in 1863) looking across toward Cable Bay, with Pepin Island to the right of the image, and Bishop's Peninsula running through the centre. This area is in the vicinity of Huria and Hemi Matenga's homestead known as Māori Pa.

Guidelines for Students:



Welcome to The Suter Art Gallery – Where Art Matters

During your visit please remember The Suter's collection is a treasure for our region. Our artworks are precious and often fragile. They need your respect. Please help us care for them by:

Look instead of touching.

The artworks are designed to be enjoyed through our eyes. In general it is a good idea to keep a metre away from the artworks.

Use only pencils.

In the gallery please ensure that only pencil is used as it is easier to remove from artwork than ink. When writing keep well back from the artworks as a misjudgement could lead to damage to the artwork.

Use a clipboard and keep off walls next to artworks.

Please sit or stand away from the artwork when writing or drawing.

Leave bags, backpacks, large folders at reception.

Take care if you are carrying something as damage could be caused by this object hitting an artwork.

Move sensibly around artworks.

You could injure yourself or damage an artwork

The artworks are cared for by The Suter for everyone in Nelson and Tasman. Please take care and respect the special nature of The Suter spaces as you walk around. Thank you for helping to take care of the artworks.

Please enjoy your visit!

Esther McNaughton

Suter Art Educator