

Curriculum Level 4 - Visual Art

Colin McCahon – ‘Journeys and Landscapes’

Activity Description

This activity involves researching the work of Colin McCahon, in particular his methods and ideas in relation to landscape painting, the use of different formats in his work, and his use of text in painting.

McCahon's use of the series format as seen in works such as, *The Northland Panels*, 1958, *The Wake*, 1958, *Landscape Theme and Variations*, 1963 and *The Fourteen Stations of the Cross*, 1966 inform the idea of students developing their own landscape series in the form of a *fold out book presentation*, which conveys ideas about narrative and journeys.

Students will explore McCahon's methods and ideas in relation to both landscape painting and his use of text, through drawing and painting. They present their explorations in a fold out book.

The size of the book is optional, this assignment is based on using A4 sized paper, however a smaller A5 size book would be more intimate, an A3 size would provide more opportunity for students to experiment with texture, movement, scale etc.

*The idea of a journey, represented through the book or series format, landscape imagery and writing could be interpreted in a number of ways. This project can be modified to suit the students and teachers involved.

Achievement/Learning Objectives

- Students will research artists' work and life to make connections between art and society **(UC)**
- Students will describe and discuss how different media and subject matter convey ideas in art works **(CI)**
- Students will analyse artists' work to develop and apply ideas to extend their own work **(CI)** **(DI)**
- Students will use drawing to develop ideas in a series **(DI)**
- Students will develop knowledge of different media, techniques and processes **(PK)**

Curriculum Strands Assessed

- **Developing Practical Knowledge in the Visual Arts (PK)**
Students will apply knowledge of elements and principles to make objects and images, using art making conventions and a variety of techniques, tools, materials, processes, and procedures.
- **Developing Ideas in the Visual Arts (DI)**
Students will generate and develop visual ideas in response to a variety of motivations, using imagination, observation, and study of artists' works.
- **Communicating and Interpreting in the Visual Arts (CI)**
Students will explore and describe how different media influence the communication and interpretation of ideas in their own and others' work.
- **Understanding the Visual Arts in Context (UC)**
Students will investigate the purposes of objects and images in past and present cultures and identify contexts in which they were or are made, viewed, and valued.

Recommended Resources for Teachers:

Texts:

Auckland City Art Gallery, *Colin McCahon, Gates and Journeys*, Auckland City Art Gallery, Auckland, 1988

Bloem, Marja and Browne, Martin, *Colin McCahon, A Question of Faith*, Craig Potton Publishing/Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, 2002

Brown, Gordon H. *Colin McCahon, artist*, Reed, Wellington, 1984

Simpson, Peter, *Answering Hark*, Craig Potton Publishing, Nelson, 2001

Websites:

www.mccahon.co.nz

www.mccahonhouse.org.nz

Resources required for students:

- Reproductions of the key works for research – colour copies, photocopies, etc.
- Images of New Zealand landscapes (e.g. colour copies, photographs) - include a range of landscapes informed by McCahon's work. For example: Beaches, hills, mountains, bush, trees. Landscapes that the students can relate to from their nearby environment would be useful.
- Students should be encouraged to use their own photographs or images of landscapes that they are personally connected to.
- A poem or poems about the landscape, either a poem used by McCahon or a poem chosen by the teacher or the student.
- An A4 art journal (visual diary, work book)

Dry media

- Pencils, crayons, pastels
- Paper, card
- Diaries/scrapbooks for recording ideas/drawings
- Scissors, craft knives, rulers
- Double sided tape

Wet media

- Dye, paint, ink, brushes
- Glue

Part One: Research Tasks

The Teacher will need to facilitate class discussion and individual discussions around the key works and research questions. New terms (e.g. Format) will need to be defined and discussed as they arise. Understanding of new terms could be addressed further through students creating a glossary of art terms in their journal.

a) Landscape painting analysis: (*write responses around the research drawings*)

Key landscape works to research:

Six Days and Nights in Nelson, 1950

The Northland Panels, 1958

- On 2 separate journal pages students are to copy a section from *Six Days and Nights in Nelson*, 1950 and a section from *The Northland Panels*, 1958, using pencil. Focus students on the mark making, shading and composition of the section they have chosen.
- For each key landscape work, describe the shapes, tonal modelling, composition and mark making.
- Describe the format in each work
- What is the subject matter of each work?
- What aspects of these works make you think of a journey? Why? (E.g. format, viewpoint, composition, subject matter symbols)
- Compare and describe the differences between the subject matter, format and style of the two works in some written sentences.

b) Research connections between McCahon's life and his art:

Find out 2 things that happened in McCahon's life in the year 1958 that made him change his style in *The Northland Panels*. Use the Internet, or handouts from your teacher, or books

c) **Class Discussion:** What kinds of journeys have you been on in your life? What kind of journeys' might you go in the future? Discuss ideas about physical and metaphorical journeys that students can think of in their own lives, in response to McCahon's work.

d) Text painting analysis: (write responses around the research drawings)

Key text works to research (could be substituted with other works):

I Am, 1954

I and Thou, 1954-55

Will He Save Him? (Elias Series), 1959

Teaching Aids 2 (June), 1975

- Students are to use a range of media including, pencil, pastel, ink, white and black paint to copy 4 examples (students can pick out details) of text from McCahon's paintings, onto one page in their journal.
- Describe 2 different text styles from the key text works.
- For each work describe how McCahon combines the text with images. E.g. is it over the top of an image? Around it? Inside it? Or is there only text in the painting? etc.

e) Research connections between McCahon's art and the everyday environment

- Where do you think McCahon saw text like this in everyday life?
- List 3 – 5 places in your physical environment that you can see text being used (E.g. Road signs)
- Why do you think he liked to use text in his artworks – discuss as a class – students to write their ideas down.

f) Journal research drawings from selected landscapes:

- Students to draw one landscape image of their choice (preferably with hill or mountain forms in it) in a similar style to *Six Days and Nights in Nelson*, 1950. One A4 journal page, using pencil.
- Students to draw one landscape image of their choice in a similar style to one of the panels from *The Northland Panels*, 1958. One A4 journal page, using pastel.

Part Two: Designing and developing their book:

a) **Class Brainstorm:** How can they use composition and subject matter (i.e. particular landscape images) to create the idea or feeling of a journey in their landscape panels? How can they convey the idea of a journey through the design and layout of their text panels?

b) **Generate ideas – thumbnail sketches:** Using the poem text, their research into McCahon's works the landscape photographs and ideas from the class discussion; students are to draw 2-3 thumbnail sketches of ideas for *the layout of each side* of the book panels in their journal.

c) 'Inside - Landscape Panels'

- Make a plan of the 5 landscape 'panels' that will make up one side of their fold out book.
- Rule up a grid of 5 rectangles in their journals – proportional to 5 A4 pages sitting side by side. Choose 5 landscape images from provided resources or their own images and arrange them to convey the idea of a journey through the landscape. This will need to be done with individual consultation from the teacher.

- Sketch the basic outlines from the different landscapes into the grid plan using pencil. Students may crop the landscape images to isolate particular compositional arrangements from their chosen landscape images.

d) 'Outside - Text Panels'

- Make a plan of the 5 text 'panels' that will make up one side of their fold out book.
- Rule up a grid of 5 rectangles in their journals – proportional to 5 A4 pages sitting side by side
- Design the book cover/title page using text styles copied from McCahon's work. Students and teacher need to decide on a title for the book – this could be related to the poem that has been selected.
- The remaining 4 back pages will depict all or some of the words of the poem selected by the teacher or students. Students need to design the layout of the words on the 4 pages using the text styles of McCahon from their research. Colours can be indicated using coloured pencil. Students can decide what colours, textures and/or images to use alongside their text with guidance from the teacher.
- Discuss the elements of composition with students as they design the text layout, i.e. Balance, Contrast, Movement, Repetition, and Rhythm.

'Inside - Landscape Panels'

Landscape 1: Pencil only - using simplification and tonal shading	Landscape 2: Brown (or similar) paper - pencil, white pastel and ink	Landscape 3: Mixed media - including 2 colours, paint, ink, pastel and pencil layered	Landscape 4: Painting - experiment with layering and tonal shading techniques – use colour	Landscape 5: Painting - experiment with abstraction and mark- making - maintain a link to a recognisable landscape – use colour
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'Outside - Text Panels'

Poem layout using McCahon's text styles. Use any appropriate media e.g. Paint, Ink, Pastel	Poem layout	Poem layout	Poem layout	BOOK COVER/ TITLE PAGE
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Part Three: Final book presentation

The students will use a range of approaches to drawing and painting with different media. They will be working from their design plans while also using: the poetry resources, their own landscape images or landscape resources provided by the teacher. This process should be informed by the different approaches to landscape and text in McCahon's work

a) Landscape panels:

Each panel is based on a different landscape image as chosen by the students. **Based on A4 sizes.*

Landscape 1: Pencil only - using simplification and tonal shading

Landscape 2: Brown (or similar) paper - pencil, white pastel and ink

Landscape 3: Mixed media - including 2 colours, paint, ink, pastel and pencil layered

Landscape 4: Painting – experiment with layering and tonal shading techniques - colour

Landscape 5: Painting – experiment with abstraction and mark-making – maintain a link to recognisable landscape – colour

b) Text panels:

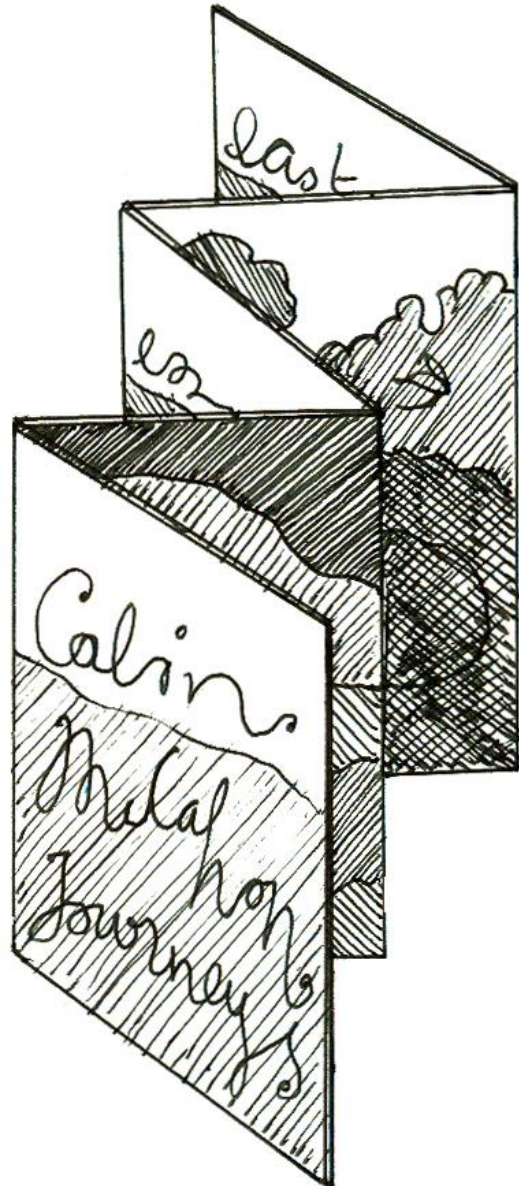
Panel 1: Book Cover designed and painted

Panel 2-4: Poem layout, designed and painted using ideas and styles from works by McCahon's, which incorporate text

c) Making the book structure:

The teacher and/or students will need to create a stiff fold out book structure that they can attach their drawings and research to. This is the equivalent of 5 A4 pieces of paper placed side by side. Different methods may be used to join the pieces of card together to create the structure. E.g. cloth tape on both sides, glued card flaps.

When the structure is completed, drawings and paintings need to be glued or attached with double sided tape to the folded card structure to complete the book.



Assessment

The following assessment sheets may be used for the summative assessment of the book project. Ongoing discussion should be occurring with individual students and the class as they work through the tasks in the assignment, in order to help students reflect upon and evaluate their own work.

Criteria and assessment methods could also be constructed between the students and the teacher at the beginning of each task.

For example:

- Students could evaluate their own understanding of McCahon after completing the research tasks through a self evaluation sheet or a structured discussion responding to questions with peers.
- Students could give their peers formative feed ‘forward’ with a discussion and critique of each others work during the design stage of the assignment.
- Students could present their final book work with a short spoken seminar, which explains what they have learnt through the process of researching McCahon’s ideas and methods and what they have learnt through the process of making their book.

1. PK. Developing Practical Knowledge in the Visual Arts-

Students will apply knowledge of elements and principles to make objects and images, using art-making conventions and a variety of techniques, tools, materials, processes and procedures.

EVIDENCE	<input type="checkbox"/> NOT ACHIEVED	<input type="checkbox"/> ACHIEVED	<input type="checkbox"/> ACHIEVED WITH MERIT	<input type="checkbox"/> ACHIEVED WITH EXCELLENCE
<p>Part One: f) Research Drawings of landscapes</p> <p>Part Three: a) 5 landscape drawings/paintings for finished book</p> <p>b) 5 Text drawings/paintings for finished book</p> <p>c) Book presentation constructed and completed.</p>	<p>The student is able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply some knowledge of elements (e.g. colour, tone, form, line, space, proportion) to a particular activity. • Use the conventions and processes taught from the selected field. • Begin to use techniques, tools and materials with control. 	<p>The student is able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply knowledge of the elements with understanding. • Demonstrate an understanding of conventions and processes taught from the selected field. • Use techniques, tools and materials with control. 	<p>The student is able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Select, apply, and arrange elements with understanding and control. • Demonstrate an in-depth understanding of the taught conventions and processes. • Use techniques, tools and materials have been used with understanding and control. 	
COMMENTS:				

2. DI. Developing Ideas in the Visual Arts

Students will generate and develop ideas in response to a variety of motivations, using imagination, observation and a study of artists' works.

EVIDENCE	<input type="checkbox"/> NOT ACHIEVED	<input type="checkbox"/> ACHIEVED	<input type="checkbox"/> ACHIEVED WITH MERIT	<input type="checkbox"/> ACHIEVED WITH EXCELLENCE
Part Two: a) Responses and notes related to class discussion b) Generating ideas thumbnail sketches c) Design plans for book	The student is able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generate some ideas using observation and/ or imagination. • Begin to describe ideas in relation to the topic/ motivation and the artists studied. 		The student is able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generate ideas using observation and/ or imagination. • Develop ideas appropriately in relation to the topic/ motivation and the artist studied. 	The student is able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a range of ideas using observation and/ or imagination. • Develop appropriate ideas and reflect an understanding of the topic/ motivation and the artist(s).
COMMENTS:				

3. CI. Communicating and Interpreting in the Visual Arts

Students will explore and describe how different media influence the communication and interpretation of ideas in their own and others artwork.

EVIDENCE	<input type="checkbox"/> NOT ACHIEVED	<input type="checkbox"/> ACHIEVED	<input type="checkbox"/> ACHIEVED WITH MERIT	<input type="checkbox"/> ACHIEVED WITH EXCELLENCE
Part One: Verbal and written response to research questions	The student is able to: Begin to describe how the choice of media influences the communication of ideas in the selected artwork(s).		The student is able to: Explore and describe how the use of media influences the communication of ideas in the selected artworks.	The student is able to: Consistently explore and interpret the influence of selected media on the communication and interpretation of ideas in the selected artworks.
COMMENTS:				

4. UC. Understanding the Visual Arts in Context

Students will investigate the purposes of objects and images in past and present cultures and identify contexts in which they were or are made, viewed and valued.

EVIDENCE	<input type="checkbox"/> NOT ACHIEVED	<input type="checkbox"/> ACHIEVED	<input type="checkbox"/> ACHIEVED WITH MERIT	<input type="checkbox"/> ACHIEVED WITH EXCELLENCE
Part One: Verbal and written response to tasks b) and e) from Part One.	The student is able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Name some of the purposes of the artwork(s) presented and identify some of the contexts or influences on how it was made. 		The student is able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate the purposes of the artwork(s) presented and identify some contexts or influences on how it was made and is viewed and valued. 	The student is able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate the purposes of the artwork(s) presented and clearly understand the contexts or influences on how it was made, is viewed and valued.
COMMENTS:				

