

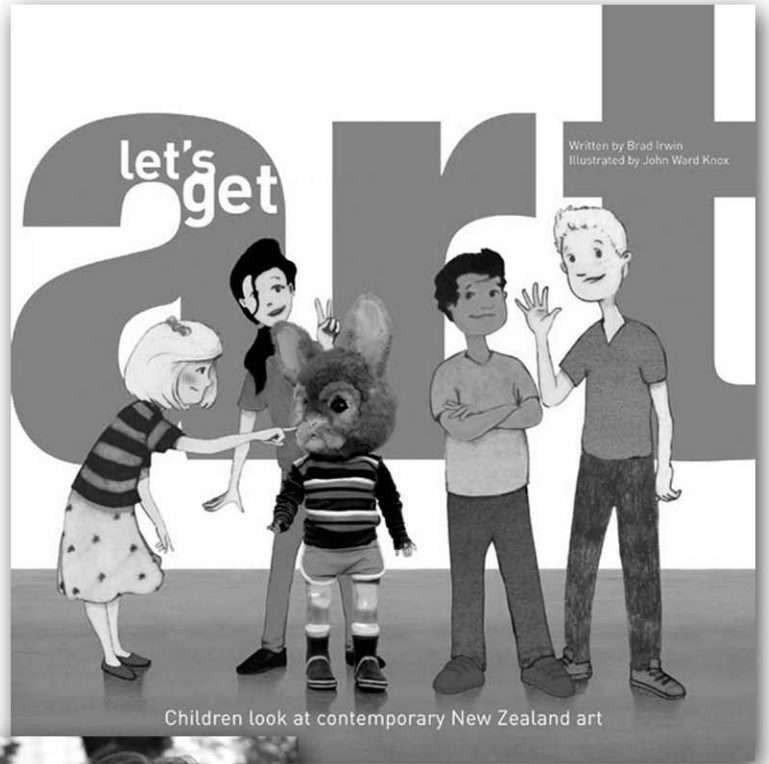
Teachers' Resource Kit

Let's Get Art

Brad Irwin and John Ward Knox

This ground-breaking picture book combines the work of the hottest of young contemporary artists with illustrations by up-and-coming artist John Ward Knox and text by impressive young lecturer and art educator Brad Irwin. Squarely aimed at children, the story follows four children as they look at different artworks in a gallery and try to work out what contemporary art is. It's simply and clearly written and focuses on actual comments Brad Irwin collected from New Zealand school children. The artworks are from a number of disciplines – painting, sculpture, installations, video work etc – and the artists include the well-known (Michael Parekowhai, Yvonne Todd and Shane Cotton) and the emerging (Todd Stratton and Sriwhana Spong). John Ward Knox is a multi-talented artist and co-director of Newcall Gallery, and his illustrations and design have great movement and energy.

BRAD IRWIN (pictured) is Senior Tutor at the School for Visual and Creative Arts in Education at the University of Auckland. JOHN WARD KNOX is an artist and co-director of Newcall Gallery, Auckland.



Notes include classroom activities for students aged 7+, in the following areas:

- Interpreting Art
- Responding to Art
- Creative Activities:
 - Cartoons
 - Writing (Poetry, Fairy Tales, Science, Reading)
 - Art (Natural Art, Maps, Useful Art, Monsters, Impressionists, Toys, Big Art)

Teacher's Notes developed by Raymond Huber and Kirsty Glengarry



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Note for Teachers: Interpreting Artwork

It is good to establish an investigative process when looking at artwork. Remind students that there are no right or wrong

answers when it comes to discussing artworks.

Before Reading

Assess student's existing knowledge:

- Title words: What does 'Let's Get Art' mean to you? Is there any art you don't 'get'?
- Cover image: What does the cover picture tell you about the book?
- What does the word 'contemporary' mean? Do you understand contemporary art?
- How many New Zealand artists can you name?
- What do artists contribute to our society?

PART ONE: Page by Page

A. Outside the gallery:

- Do you agree with Olive?
- Do you agree with Tama that art is mainly pictures?
- What other kinds of art can you name?

B. Michael Parekowhai's *Patriot: Ten Guitars*:

- Do you 'get' this artwork?
- What is 'artistic' about a guitar?
- Where is the koru on a guitar?

- What do 'patriot' and 'hard-core Maori' mean?

C. Peter Madden's *Their Tracing Shapeless Thoughts of You*:

- What does the artwork remind you of from a distance?

D. Sara Hughes' *RAM*:

- What do the letters RAM stand for in computing?
- What is Braille?

- Which child's statement do you agree with?
 - What does the artwork RAM remind you of?
- E. Yvonne Todd's *Amanda*:
- What do you think is weird about the photos?
 - What does 'intense' mean?
- F. Todd Stratton's *Rabbit*:
- What are 'stubbies'?
 - What does this artwork show about 'growing up in New Zealand'?
- G. Sriwhana Spong's *Muttnick*:
- Is video a kind of art?
 - Who are the artists involved in making films?
- H. Peter Robinson's *ACK*:
- What might the letters ACK stand for?
 - What is an 'installation' in an art gallery?
 - What does ACK look like to you?
 - Can art be any size and go anywhere?
- I. Judy Darragh's *Untitled Weeping Work*:
- What is pus?
 - What material do you think has been used in this art?
 - Do you like the artwork?
- J. Richard Maloy's *Tree Hut*:
- Do you agree with Posy? ("You can't sleep in art!")
 - Why aren't you normally allowed to touch artworks in a gallery?
 - Why can they touch this one?
- K. Yuk King Tan's *Evolutionary Revolutionary*:
- What is evolution?
 - What are some other 'big ideas'?
 - What might the long black lines mean?
- L. Simon Denny's *Fall*:
- What is the artist doing to the post?
 - What is 'art performance'?
- M. Geoffrey Heath's *Summer* and Richard Orjis' *Spleen*:
- What would these photos of dead things be saying about the environment?
- N. Eve Armstrong's *Stack*:
- What message might there be about recycling?
 - Is this 'rubbish' art?
 - Do you agree with William's opinion?
- O. Shane Cotton's *Southern Cross*:
- Where would you see the Southern Cross?
 - Why might the birds be on bullseyes?

PART TWO: Responding to Art

A. In the end of the book, the children list what contemporary art is about:

1. us
2. more questions than answers
3. looking closely, seeing different things
4. having feelings, opinions and reactions
5. telling a story, being useful
6. any size, shape, or material (including film and performance)

• Look at paintings and sculpture from centuries ago. Is it about any of the things in the list above? What is the main difference between old art and modern art?

B. Choose one of the artworks in the book that you really like – and one that you do not like. Answer these questions about them:

- How does it make you feel?
- What does it make you think about?
- What do you think it's made from?
- What question would you like to ask the artist about it?
- Do you think it tells a story or has a message?

C. Speech bubbles: Enlarge a picture of a contemporary artwork. Write your

responses to it in speech bubbles and stick them around the work.

D. **Michael Parekowhai** says that 'Art is a game'.

- What do you think he means? Is art playful and fun sometimes? Which artwork in *Let's Get Art* is most playful to you?
- Contemporary art is about 'us'. What are some special, unique things about New Zealand?
- What is so distinctly New Zealand about *Ten Guitars*?

Activities:

- Choose a recent New Zealand popular song and create an artwork based on the song.
 - Sketch some different musical instruments in pencil. Cut them out and arrange them on a dyed background (so that they overlap).
- E. **Shane Cotton's** paintings draw on New Zealand and Maori history.
- What have the birds got to do with our history?
 - What birds were important to Maori?

Activities:

- Read some Maori folktales about birds, such as *Rata and the Birds*, or *How the Kiwi Got His Wings*.
- Create a timeline on black paper showing the extinction of our native birds (e.g. eagle, moa, huia, laughing owl).
- Design a new New Zealand flag that uses one of our native birds (living or extinct) as the centrepiece. Follow-up: paint the design on a piece of white sheet using fabric ink.

PART THREE: Inspired by Art

- A. **Cartoons:** The illustrations in this book have been made by sticking cartoon characters onto photos. Create your own cartoon-style story using photos of backgrounds from old magazines — for example, landscapes, cities from *National Geographic*. Draw the outline of a cartoon character, photocopy a few, then stick them onto different scenes. Add speech bubbles so the character can tell a story or joke.
- B. **Writing:**
- **Story:** Contemporary art often suggests a ‘story behind the picture’. Look at the photo of the mud-covered man. Think of questions to ask about him (use Who, What, Why, Where, When, How). Write his history.
 - **Poetry:** Look at the dead Christmas tree photo. Write a poem that describes the life story of this tree from birth to death.
- **Fairy Tale:** Think of a name for the bunny-boy statue. Write a short picture-book fairytale using this character.
 - **Science:** Research some facts about one kind of butterfly and write them on the outline of a butterfly picture.
 - **Read:** *The Shape Game* by Anthony Browne is a picture book about an unusual family visit to the Tate Gallery of contemporary art.
- C. **Art:**
- **Natural Art:** create a pattern or design with bananas (or other fruit). Photograph the designs and present them as a computer slideshow.
 - **Monsters:** imagine there is a monster emerging from the chest (by Judy Darragh). Draw the whole monster when it’s out. Colour it.
 - **Impressionists:** Find out who the Impressionist artists were. Look at some paintings done using dots (e.g. by Seurat). Look at *RAM*, then paint your

own pattern or picture using dots — the wooden end of a paint brush works well.

- **Maps:** Look at the *ACK* sculpture. Draw a map of your own CRAZYLAND. Include crazy houses, roads, playgrounds, waterways and land-forms.
- **Useful Art:** Choose a useful household object that has an interesting or attractive shape (e.g. a teapot). Shine a desk lamp on one side of the object — sketch it with a dark pencil, showing the shadows.

- **Toys:** Find an old (or broken) toy that is going to be thrown away. Make an artwork with the toy by gluing it to other rubbish objects.
- **Big Art:** Research the work of artists Christo and Jeanne-Claude, famous for wrapping huge buildings. Select a large piece of furniture or household object. Wrap it carefully in newspaper. Is this contemporary art? Why or why not?

PART FOUR: Extra for the Experts — Background Information

Michael Parekowhai, *Patriot: Ten Guitars*, 1999

Michael Parekowhai made this artwork using ten custom-made guitars that can be played with the artist's permission. The title comes from a well-known party song called *Ten Guitars* by Engelbert Humperdinck (1967). Many adult New Zealanders know this song and it is sometimes played during breaks in cricket and rugby games, along with other popular New Zealand songs.

Eve Armstrong, *Stack*, 2005

Reducing, reusing and recycling are very important ideas for Eve Armstrong. When Eve was a student at Elam School of Fine Arts, she began a trading table. On this table, she placed all her leftover and unused art

material and encouraged her classmates to do the same. Soon they were trading their materials without exchanging money.

Shane Cotton, *Southern Cross*, 2002

Shane Cotton is a leading New Zealand painter who thinks about Maori and Pakeha history and myths when making his work. In *Southern Cross*, Cotton has painted two native birds, the piwakawaka (fantail), the miromiro (tomtit) and a third introduced species, the goldfinch. There is also a mokomokai (preserved head) in front of a target.

Peter Madden ... *Their Tracing*
Shapeless Thoughts of You, 2003

Peter Madden is interested in nature and makes many of his artworks using *National*

Geographic magazines that he cuts up to create interesting worlds. He has also painted tiny pictures on real flies! (Dead, of course!)

Note for Teachers: Extra Activities

Arrange a visit to your local art gallery; many galleries have an educator who can advise teachers about learning programmes. Educators are often able to provide pre- and post-visit activities to assist teacher planning. They will also have a strong knowledge of the work on display and can guide your students using questioning and gallery-based activities.

N.B. Artworks are a taonga (treasure) and there are some special ways to behave in an art gallery setting. With the odd exception, artworks should not be touched because it may cause damage. Ask students to rub a finger and thumb together; they should be able to feel some oil in their skin. This oil keeps our skin soft, but it can damage an artwork and spoil it for future generations.

Notes