



# NEW ZEALAND AT THE INTERNATIONAL ART EXHIBITION – LA BIENNALE DI VENEZIA

TE PAPA  
OUR PLACE



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## OVERVIEW OF RESOURCE

The Venice Biennale Learning Resource is made up of five learning pathways exploring three interrelated and overarching themes.

### THEMES

#### 1. New Zealand Art on a Global Stage

This theme highlights the significance of La Biennale di Venezia (the Biennale) and a contemporary artist's participation within it. Students examine artist selection, past artist contributions, and Venice itself.

Students will consider the logistical elements of installation and exhibiting in Venice, why Lisa Reihana was selected for the Biennale, and how her work might 'read' in a European context.

#### 2. Representation and Difference

*Who we are and who others see when they see us.*

This theme focuses students on the subjective nature of representation – how values, attitudes, and beliefs impact on how identity is communicated to others.

There is a specific focus in this theme on the motivations and purpose of Lisa Reihana's work as a reaction to Joseph Dufour's wallpaper (1804-05). Students use comparison and contrast to explore the way Reihana has portrayed multiple cultures, narratives, histories, and peoples.

Students will also look at other examples of contemporary artists responding to, redressing, and retelling history – especially Māori, Pacific and women artists.

#### 3. Time and Change

*How things were and how things are.*

This theme requires students to examine time, continuity and change – not only through the differences in artist motivation, but also in the differences in art-making practice.

Dufour's wallpaper used techniques on paint and paper to create a panoramic experience. Similarly, Reihana's work creates a panoramic, immersive experience – but through completely different technologies.

Students will examine the impact of static vs. moving image as well as begin to understand some of the challenges and opportunities of creating art using time-based media.

Students will look at the collaborative art-making process and seek similarities and differences in the artists' motivations.

The pathways are linked to Art History, Visual Arts, and Social Sciences. That said, we've intentionally left achievement objectives within specific learning areas open-ended so that you can adapt these learning pathways to suit your context and your students.

Each pathway focuses students on critically engaging with Lisa Reihana's artwork and creating student response. As *Lisa Reihana: Emissaries* speaks of the importance of claiming identity, there is an emphasis in the activities on capturing authentic student experience and voice.

Prepare for using these inquiry-based learning pathways by reviewing the suggested activities and the discussion starters. Within each pathway, there are links for the extra-curious, should you or your students want to delve further into any one area.

The pathways are available to print off as PDF guides. Please be aware, however, that the guides are designed to be used in conjunction with the content on our website.

[Learning Pathway One – New Zealand at La Biennale di Venezia](#)

[Learning Pathway Two – Clothes maketh the \(wo\)man: Costuming, representation and identity](#)

[Learning Pathway Three – Back to a future: Reimagining Pacific encounters](#)

[Learning Pathway Four – Reimagining history through art: The power to retell stories](#)

[Learning Pathway Five – Wallpaper vs screen: Technologies in art-making practice](#)



# INTRODUCTION

In this pathway, students explore Venice as a city and consider the history and importance of the international art exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia (the Biennale).

New Zealand’s past participation in the Biennale is explored and students can develop personal responses to art.

Students may also consider the logistical elements of installation and exhibiting in Venice, why Lisa Reihana was selected to represent New Zealand at the Biennale, and how her work might be understood in Europe.



Venice gondolas, photo courtesy of <https://pixabay.com/en/venice-gondolas-italy-venezia-194835/>

## CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

We've purposefully left achievement objectives within specific learning areas open-ended. This means that **you are free to adapt these learning pathways to suit your context** and students. That said, this section connects easily to the following subjects:

### VISUAL ARTS

- Understanding the arts in context: Investigate and consider the relationship between the production of art works and their contexts and influences

### ART HISTORY

- Activities in this pathway can be adapted for use with the following internal and external assessment standards:

- **Level 1**

AS91017 Demonstrate understanding of links between context(s) and art works

- **Level 2**

AS91182 Examine the influence of context(s) on art works

AS91184 Communicate understanding of an art history topic

AS91186 Demonstrate understanding of art works in relation to their physical environments

(It should be noted that the Moderator's Clarification does suggest that students have a physical experience of the site.)

- **Level 3**

AS91484 Examine the relationship(s) between art and context

### SOCIAL STUDIES

- Understand how cultural interaction impacts on cultures and societies

# A. BULLS, BOXES, AND LIGHTS

## NEW ZEALAND'S HISTORY AT THE BIENNALE

### INTRODUCTION

New Zealand has a relatively short, but strong history of participation in the Biennale. The [New Zealand at the Venice Biennale timeline](#) provides an image and an overview of each of the past Biennale artists' work. In these activities, students explore New Zealand art on a global stage and develop a personal response to a selected artist.

By the end of these activities, students will have:

- reviewed past New Zealand at Venice artists
- compared and contrasted different artists' work
- developed a personal response to an artist's work.



Bill Culbert, *HUT, Made in Christchurch*, installation view, 2013. Photo: Jennifer French.



## SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

*In both of these activities, students build art analysis skills. The first activity is pitched at younger secondary students, the second at senior secondary students. Feel free to adapt either activity or content to suit the needs of your students.*

### 1 CLOTHESLINE TIMELINE

*This activity builds junior secondary students' art analysis skills. It relies on collaborative discussion and group work to encourage personal responses to art.*

- 1 Print out A3 high-resolution colour images from [the timeline](#). We recommend [Simon Denny](#), [Francis Upritchard](#), [Judy Millar](#), [Michael Parekowhai](#) and [Bill Culbert](#).

Students work in groups around one of the five images and respond to the image by discussing the questions below. The questions are discussion starters – reassure students that there is no ‘right’ answer in their response to these questions:

? What does this art make you think of?

What questions do you have for the artist who made it?

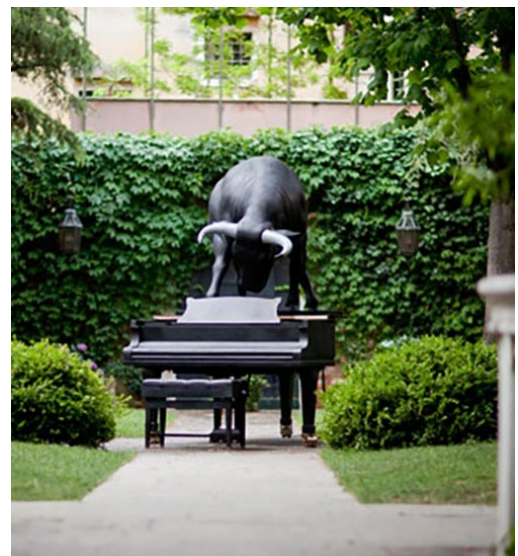
If this work of art was alive, what noises and smells would surround it?

How does it make you feel? Do you know why it makes you feel that way?

If you had made this art, what would you say it was about to others?



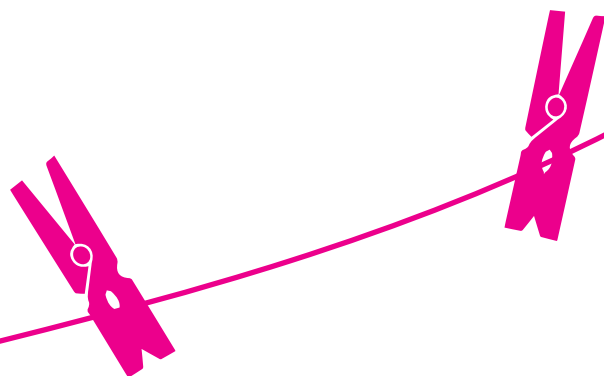
Judy Millar, *Giraffe – Bottle – Gun*, installation view, 2009. Photo: Judy Millar.



Michael Parekowhai, *Chapman's Homer*, installation view, 2011. Photo: Michael Hall.

## 1 CLOTHESLINE TIMELINE (CONTINUED):

- 2 Once the group have fully discussed the questions, each student chooses a question to summarise on an A4 response sheet. The group then presents the art work they studied and what they thought about it back to the rest of the class.
- 3 Create the clothesline timeline by running a string across the classroom and pegging the A3 colour image up, followed each time by the five A4 response sheets.



## 2 EXPLORING PAST NEW ZEALAND ART AT THE BIENNALE

*This activity builds art history students' subject-specific language skills. The activity will assist students to effectively communicate emotional and critical responses to art.*

Ask students to:

- explore the [timeline](#)
- watch the [videos of past artists](#) speak about their work linked from the timeline
- investigate the themes in previous New Zealand at Venice exhibitions

Students should also check out the [New Zealand at Venice website](#), produced by Creative New Zealand, for full biographies and further links to their work.

Activity continues on p 8

## 2 EXPLORING PAST NEW ZEALAND ART AT THE BIENNALE (CONTINUED):

Students choose just one past Biennale artist's work that they really connect with, and respond to it by being:

### **A CONTEMPORARY ART CRITIC:**

Imagine you write a regular column in a magazine in New Zealand. Write a column for your readers interpreting the significant features of your chosen artist's work in Venice. Perhaps comment on where it fits within our art history, and critique the contribution it makes to the New Zealand contemporary art scene.

### **A CONTEMPORARY ART VLOGGER:**

Imagine you have a channel on YouTube that people subscribe to. Write and then record a short vlog that reviews your chosen artist's work at the Biennale. You could consider adding images of their work into the vlog, and voicing over top.

### **A PERSONAL JOURNAL WRITER:**

Imagine you are travelling the world and keeping rich journal entries. You've been visiting Venice, and just this morning saw your chosen artist's exhibition. Print out a colour copy of one part of your chosen artist's work and diary your critical and personal response all around it.

Activity continues on p 9



Bill Culbert, *Daylight Flotsam Venice*, installation view, 2013, Photo: Jennifer French.



**STUDENTS MIGHT LIKE TO COMMENT ON:****CONTENT – THE ‘WHY’**

What’s it called?

What’s it about?

Does the title help you understand the work and if so, how?

Why did the artist create it?

**FORM – THE ‘WHAT’**

What do you see when you look at it?

What kinds of shapes, colours, textures, forms, lines, surface, pattern, and scale are used in this work?

What is the effect of this choice of form on the viewer?

What is the main point of focus in the work?

**PROCESS – THE ‘HOW’**

How has it been created?

What evidence of the art-making process can you see?

**MOOD – THE ‘WHEN’**

What is the impact of this work on the audience?

When people see it, how do they interact with it?

How does it make you feel?

What might be some of the differences between European and New Zealand audience reactions?

## B. POSTCARDS AND TREASURE HUNTS

### THE CITY OF VENICE

### INTRODUCTION

Venice is a captivating city, brim full of history, culture, and charm. Its images of canals and gondolas are iconic worldwide. The international art exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia, which takes place every second year, is arguably the most important contemporary art event in the world.

In these activities, students explore the city and the history of the Biennale itself.

By the end of these activities, students will have:

- explored Venice as the host city of the Biennale
- investigated the history of the Biennale.



Grand Canal Venice, photo courtesy of <http://gallery.world/wallpaper/536556.html>

## SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

### 1 POSTCARDS

*In this activity, students are introduced to Venice as a city.*

Use Google Earth to zoom in on Venice – where it is and what we notice about it when viewing it from above.

Students watch *'Venice in a Day'* and pretend that they made this time-lapse video of the canals of Venice when they travelled there late last year. Students draw on postcards (A6 paper) a small sketch of their imagined major memory from being in Venice on that day.

Some students may want to also write a message home on the back of their postcards from Venice. Create a class display of all their imagined postcards from their trip to Venice.



*Venice in a day*  
<http://vimeo.com/40977797>



## 2 LISTENING TREASURE HUNT

Read the [summary of the Biennale on the website](#) and then watch [Behind the Biennale: A Short History of the World's Most Important Art Exhibition](#).

This video covers a lot of material in a short space of time. Watch it through once and then discuss: What is the Biennale? Write the ideas up on a chart on the wall to refer to later as understanding of the event develops.



Behind the Biennale: A Short History of the World's Most Important Art Exhibition  
<http://vimeo.com/126659029>

In pairs, on shared devices, students watch the clip again, and do a listening treasure hunt to find:

? When did the Biennale start?  
(1895)

What are some of the ways that the Biennale is described?

*(an Olympics for art, a yard sale, protest hotspot, a saviour for Venice, represents a moment in time, an opportunity for countries to find a new identity or reshape their past)*

After what world event did the Biennale expand?

*(World War II)*

What happened to the marble floor that Adolf Hitler had built in the German pavilion?

*(It got smashed to pieces as part of a Biennale work)*

What image of contemporary art caught your attention in this video?

Students could walk around and share their answers with each other until everyone has a full listening treasure hunt sheet. Answers could be used to fuel a discussion as a class about the Biennale.

## C. LIVE FROM VENICE

NEW ZEALAND AT VENICE, 2017

### INTRODUCTION

Joseph Dufour's wallpaper *Les Sauvages de la Mer Pacifique* (1804–05), from which Lisa Reihana riffs, was intended for a European audience. Now, hundreds of years later, Reihana reworks the wallpaper bringing a new representation of that imagined life in the South Pacific.

In this activity, students consider why Reihana was selected to represent New Zealand at the Biennale, the logistical elements of installation and exhibiting in Venice, how her work might 'read' in Europe, and what the experience of the 2017 New Zealand pavilion may be like.

By the end of these activities, students will have:

- considered the context for New Zealand's current representation at the Biennale
- recorded a podcast or sound file promoting Venice and highlighting the Biennale event.



Carl Guderian, 8444 Venice Biennale, professor Olu Oguibe discussing Yinka Shonibare's work, 2007, digital photograph, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/bjacques/561855088> CC BY SA 2.0

## SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

### 1 REPORTING LIVE FROM VENICE

Use the following resources to give you a sense of what New Zealand's participation in the Biennale is like:

- [the summary "What is the Venice Biennale?"](#)
- [the video clip of Lisa Reihana speaking about selection for the 2017 Venice Biennale](#)
- [the video clips of Jude Chambers from Creative New Zealand speaking about selection and installation](#)
- [the New Zealand at Venice website](#) (for further information, such as background on this year's pavilion).

Ask students to use all these sources to help imagine they have a press pass for the vernissage and are a roving reporter, reporting live from the New Zealand pavilion at Venice.

Students could write a script for a podcast. Those students with access to audio software could then record it.



Lisa Reihana, 2017 Venice Biennale artist.



Lisa Reihana, Project Director for New Zealand at Venice.



## 1 REPORTING LIVE FROM VENICE (CONTINUED):

### THINK ABOUT WHAT PEOPLE WHO CAN'T VISIT THE BIENNALE WOULD LIKE TO KNOW WHEN LISTENING TO YOUR REPORT:



Who are you?

Where are you?

What is it like there?

What can you see around you?

What is the international art exhibition –  
La Biennale di Venezia?

Where is the New Zealand pavilion this year?

What does it look like?

Who is the exhibiting artist?

What is the general reaction to their work?

What are some of the technical/logistical issues with  
exhibiting in Venice?

In what ways does the New Zealand pavilion support and/  
or contrast with the art work itself?

What are some of the key themes that will be  
communicated to the world about New Zealand  
contemporary art this year?

Why do you think this year's artist was chosen to represent  
Aotearoa New Zealand?

What does it mean for New Zealand to participate and be  
represented at the Biennale?

# LINKS FOR THE EXTRA CURIOUS

- Go on a 360-degree tour of Venice here:  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T\\_KXSWiPL-4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T_KXSWiPL-4)
- Fascinating full-length documentary about Venice – its geography, its history, and the challenges of living there:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YKUd8QbLp3U>
- Short, well-presented video on the geography of Venice and the challenges of living on a lagoon, as well as some comment on its architectural history: <https://vimeo.com/21688538>
- Skateboarding the streets of Venice (a footwear ad, but great all the same): <https://vimeo.com/21688538>
- This series of three videos has some fascinating interviews with citizens of Venice and Biennale artists, and reflects on the impact of the event on the city as a whole:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZT-F6pArqMo>

## TIMELINE SOFTWARE

You or your students can create your own interactive timelines for free at [Tiki Toki](#) or [Timetoast](#).

## PODCASTING/VOICE RECORDING SOFTWARE

[Opinion](#) is a free app for iPhones that allows users to record, edit, and publish podcasts.

[Voicethread](#) allows students to create and store images that can be overlaid with their commentary.

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