



## CLOTHES MAKETH THE (WO)MAN: COSTUMING, REPRESENTATION, AND IDENTITY



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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

This pathway explores representation and difference, who we are, and what others see when they see us.

Lisa Reihana has portrayed multiple cultures, narratives, and histories throughout her career and is interested in the ways in which clothing can affect perception. Students use Reihana's work to inform a personal response.



Lisa Reihana, *Bride of Mangaia*, detail, 2015, photograph, 1520 x 1080 mm, pigment print on Hahnemühle paper.

Cover image: Lisa Reihana, *Sydney Parkinson*, detail, 2015, photograph, 1520 x 1080 mm, pigment print on Hahnemühle paper.

## CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

We've purposefully left achievement objectives within specific learning areas open-ended. This means that **teachers are free to adapt these learning pathways to suit their context** and their students.

That said, this section connects easily to the following subjects:

### VISUAL ARTS

- Developing ideas: Generate, develop, and refine ideas in response to a variety of motivations, including the study of established practice

### ART HISTORY

- Activities in this pathway can be adapted for use with the following internal and external assessment standards:
  - **Level 1**  
AS91016 Demonstrate understanding of the subject matter of art works
  - **Level 2**  
AS91181 Examine the meanings conveyed by art works  
  
AS91184 Communicate understanding of an art history topic
  - **Level 3**  
AS91483 Examine how meanings are communicated through art works  
  
AS91486 Construct an argument based on interpretation of research



## A. SIDE BY SIDE

### COMPARE AND CONTRAST

### INTRODUCTION

Joseph Dufour (1744-1829) and Lisa Reihana (b. 1964) had completely different motivations when creating their art. The wallpaper created by Dufour in 1804-05 represented an idyll – an imagined world on the other side of the planet.

Reihana, by comparison, responded to Dufour's wallpaper – working collaboratively with people of many

nationalities to provide a more realistic representation of the people and cultures depicted.

By the end of these activities, students will have analysed the differing motivations and purpose of Dufour's and Reihana's works.



Joseph Dufour et Cie, after a design by Jean-Gabriel Charvet, *Les Sauvages de la Mer Pacifique* (*The Native Peoples of the Pacific Ocean*) (detail of drops IV, V, VI), circa 1804-5, woodblock and gouache on paper. Purchased 2015 with Charles Disney Art Trust funds. Te Papa (2015-0048-1)

## SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

Students compare and contrast the use of costume in [this close-up of Dufour's wallpaper](#) and [Reihana's art work](#).



Joseph Dufour et Cie, after a design by Jean-Gabriel Charvet, *Les Sauvages de la Mer Pacifique (The Native Peoples of the Pacific Ocean)* (detail of drops XIII, XIV), circa 1804-5, woodblock and gouache on paper. Purchased 2015 with Charles Disney Art Trust funds. Te Papa (2015-0048-1)



Lisa Reihana, *in Pursuit of Venus [infected]* (detail), 2015–17, Ultra HD video, colour, sound, 64 min. Image courtesy of the artist and New Zealand at Venice

### 1 COMPARE AND CONTRAST

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

- Read about the [significance of Dufour's wallpaper](#).
- Watch this video of [Lisa Reihana talking about how she felt when she saw the Dufour wallpaper](#).
- Hear art curator, [Dr Rebecca Rice, speak about the Dufour Wallpaper on ONE News](#).



Lisa Reihana, 2017 Venice Biennale artist.

Activity continues on p 7

## 1 COMPARE AND CONTRAST (CONTINUED):

Students place the copies of the costumed figures alongside each other. Ask students to draw circles, arrows, and notes between the two to discuss the similarities and differences in the representation of costume.



How does Reihana use costume and adornment to communicate identity?

What were the main motivations behind Dufour's wallpaper?

How can you see this expressed in the figures that are represented?

What does the costume of each of the figures you have chosen say about that character?

What is the same across both of the works and what has changed?

What primary and/or secondary sources informed Dufour's wallpaper and what informed Reihana's work?

Which do you think tells a more accurate story of identity and why?



## B. IDENTITY IN COSTUME

### INTRODUCTION

In *in Pursuit of Venus [infected]* (2015 - 17), Reihana uses costume carefully to construct the encounters between Captain James Cook's fellow explorers and Pacific cultures. The characters tell stories of power, tradition, representation, and identity.

Reihana has said that costume creates character. It's something that she has been exploring throughout her artistic career.

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

By the end of these activities, students will have:

- developed an understanding of the importance of costume, character, and representation within Reihana's larger body of work
- re-imagined their own portrait image by adding, adapting, or amending costume
- analysed the politics of portraiture – and the power that is in the hand of the artist.



Lisa Reihana. Biennale Arte 2017. Photo: Michael Hall. Image courtesy of New Zealand at Venice.



## SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

### 1 MY FEATURES AND YOUR FEATURES

*Students analyse Reihana's playful approach to her own identity.*

Watch the video [Wog Features](#), which Reihana made in 1990. Look too at some of her other work, especially the *Digital Marae* series. The following examples can be found online:

- Te Papa Collections Online – [Maui](#)
- Te Papa Collections Online – [Army](#)
- [Tales from Te Papa – Te ara ā Hine](#)



Lisa Reihana, *Wog Features*, 1990, single channel video, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki (2005/13/1)

***Please note: this animation is deliberately provocative, uses black face purposefully, and is suitable for senior students, or younger students at teachers' discretion.***

#### DISCUSS:



What are some of the key ideas Reihana communicates about race, ethnicity, and culture?

What similarities and differences do you see between *Wog Features*, her *Digital Marae* series, and *in Pursuit of Venus [infected]*?

In what ways is a self-portrait different from a portrait of someone else?

What can a self-portrait show about someone or the person's sense of group identity?

How might self-portraits play a role in making diversity more visible?

In what way can a self-portrait artist be an activist/community leader?

## 2 ME, MY SELFIE, AND I

*Students examine their own portrait image and manipulate aspects of costume to reflect on how identity is communicated.*

Ask students to brainstorm: who they are, where they are from, and what is important to them. Encourage students to think not just about the primary qualities of who they are, but also the small and specific things that make them ‘them’.

Discuss and then create a visual brainstorm.

### DISCUSS



What is the most important part of your identity?

Is it your gender? Your ethnicity? Your family, sexual orientation, or religion? Is it your age? Your hobbies? Your beliefs, attitudes, and values?

When you think of yourself, is there one thing that stands out to you?

Do we change depending on who we are around? Why is that?

Where does our own identity come from? Is it fixed?

How do you think your identity might change over the next five years?

## 2 ME, MY SELFIE, AND I (CONTINUED):

Students then take a selfie and look at their visual brainstorm.

What can they add to an image of themselves to tell their story of identity?

Encourage students to focus on costume and adornment, so that like Reihana, they are re-imagining their representation and identity through what they wear.

Ask students to do the following.

- Take a selfie.
- Manipulate it digitally. Upload it into photo-editing software and add layers ovetop and in the background. Have a look through Te Papa's [Collections Online](#) for taonga or textiles that say something new about who you are.
- Manipulate it manually. Print the selfies out and overlay media (paint, collage, transparency, photocopy) to communicate an aspect of who you are in a different way.
- Switch the original selfie with trusted friend, and don't tell them anything about the contents of the brainstorm. Let them manipulate your image for you.

## DISCUSS



What are the politics of this 'handing over' of your image to someone else?

What did they add to your image to help tell your story? Is it true to you?

What would happen if a total stranger decided to portray you?

Can someone else tell the world the true story about who we really are?

What are the strengths and weaknesses of using pictorial sources for information?



## LINKS FOR THE EXTRA CURIOUS

- Shigeyuki Kihara is a fa'afafine Samoan artist who also explores identity, representation, and the politics of captured image:  
<http://www.metmuseum.org/exhibitions/listings/2008/shigeyuki-kihara>
- Check out JD's self-portrait – an internal monologue set to video. It's compelling, and that's because he talks about the big and the small and the specific about who he really is:  
<https://vimeo.com/149537>
- *You Look Disgusting* is a powerful video of the hypocrisy and contradictions of wearing, or not wearing, makeup:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WWTRwj9t-vU>
- Watch this *LA Times* video of American women talking of their experience wearing a hijab:  
<http://www.latimes.com/visuals/video/87075711-132.html>
- Alon Chitayat and Rosalie Yu created 3D maps of their bodies on which people could draw – a truly collaborative self-portrait:  
<https://vimeo.com/117559663>  
<https://vimeo.com/119525835>
- Read this fascinating article about a transgender teen struggling with their identity in self-portraiture – who we draw isn't always who we want to see:  
[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/casey-hoke/transgender-teen\\_b\\_5769146.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/casey-hoke/transgender-teen_b_5769146.html)

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