

WAYNE YOULE
10 DOWN – A Survey Exhibition

Teacher Notes



Often Liked Occasionally Beaten, 2004

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WAYNE YOULE

ARTIST INTRODUCTION

Born in Porirua in 1974, of Ngati Whakaeke, Ngapuhi and European descent.

10 down surveys highlights from the past 10 years of Wayne Youle's practice. A versatile and prolific New Zealand artist Youle works with a diverse range of materials and explores a wide range of themes.

Like many New Zealanders Youle grew up with a dual cultural heritage. His bicultural heritage is reflected in his work.

An artist who enjoys exploring new technologies and materials Youle's body of work includes three dimensional objects, installation, drawing, sculpture, photography, painting and tattooing.



Wayne Youle, *Stay still, don't move* 2007

The exhibition is hung in a salon like style. Youle describes *10 Down* "like the photos at the back of the marae - old and the new all together showing at least, I hope, a snippet of my artistic practice and its diversity".

A POST MODERN MAORI ARTIST

Wayne Youle belongs to the group of post-modern generation Maori artists that emerged in the late 1990s.

He regularly quotes other artists in his work and acknowledges the wide range of both colonial and modern New Zealand artists that have influenced his practice. Artists whose rich visual language he taps into include New Zealanders Gordon Walters, Billy Apple, Shane Cotton, Peter Robinson, Ronnie van Hout and Michael Parekōwhai, as well as Australian artist Ricky Swallow. Youle is also influenced by past and present international artists such as Jeff Koons, Brian Jungen, Jake and Dinos Chapman, Kerry James Marshall, Andy Warhol and Jean-Michel Basquiat.

References to Ricky Swallow's skulls, Ronnie Van Hout's monkeys, Richard Killeen's cut-outs, Shane Cotton's birds and Gordon Walters's koru paintings all demonstrate Youle's ongoing interest in cultural signs and symbols.

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES



LOOK at examples of work by some of the New Zealand artists who have influenced Wayne Youle e.g. Gordon Walters, Shane Cotton and Billy Apple.

HOW have these artists influenced Youle? What is particularly New Zealand about these artists' works?



LOOK at artwork by Gordon Walters, Shane Cotton and Michael Parekowhai.

All of these artists have used koru and / or kowhaiwhai at some stage in their work.

DISCUSS the similarities and differences in their use of these traditional Maori designs.



Wayne Youle, *Twelve Shades of Bullshit*

MĀORI CULTURE

The representation of Maori culture both historically and in pop culture is a central theme in many of Wayne Youle's works.

In *Twelve Shades of Bullshit* he has traced the silhouettes of popular historic images of Māori by early European artists. Painted in different shades of brown his silhouettes explore historical representations of Māori in New Zealand art and also comment on the various skin colours of contemporary Maori after 160 years of intermarriage.

In his work Youle explores people's perceptions of Maori culture both historically and in a modern day context. Youle likes to create challenging artworks that have the viewer questioning stereotypes and cultural traditions.

In *Often Liked, Occasionally Beaten*, Youle's hei-tiki lollipops, he takes a bold look at the commercialisation of Māori taonga, mass production of Maori souvenirs and the cultural appropriation of Maori art by the advertising and tourist industry.



A Maori doll key ring souvenir



Air New Zealand swizzle sticks from the 1960's

Youle is inspired by kiwiana and kitsch. He explores the sensitive and often undefined line between objects and images being used as cultural icons and symbols of national pride, and how they are being commercially exploited.

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES



FIND OUT what 'commercialisation' and 'appropriation' mean.

LOOK at different Māori souvenirs e.g. plastic hei-tiki, Māori dolls, plastic kete and discuss issues surrounding the appropriation of Māori taonga.



RESEARCH the traditional origins of these objects and find out the cultural significance they have for Māori people.



FIND OUT what makes something 'Kiwiana'?

WHAT things do you think are 'Kiwi icons'? How should these things be represented and used?

TURANGAWAEWAE - IDENTITY and A PLACE TO STAND

CULTURAL SIGNS AND SYMBOLS

Signs and symbols are used by people to show identity. Youle has referred to tattooing, recreated his family crest in three dimensional objects and explored many diverse and familiar symbols used to represent New Zealanders. This journey of signs and symbols has taken him from Boy Scout badges, gang patches, and hei-tiki, to a contour map of Aotearoa.



Youle was inspired by his grandfather's tattoos and how they were symbols of his identity as a sailor. He has researched the historical origins and expressions of ta moko and is interested in the concept of tattoos as symbols of identification and belonging, and in contemporary culture, often a symbol of gang affiliation.

Youle is himself dripping with tattoos. Inspired by the concept of turangawaewae he came up with a 'shared tattoo' performance for TVNZ's *New Artland* series where, over the course of a day, 100 New Zealanders were tattooed with a map of Aotearoa. Youle sees turangawaewae as being a place to stand, a place of ownership, a place to feel comfortable, and a place to truly call home. Turangawaewae is a place he feels every New Zealander has and is entitled to. On each of the 100 tattoos there was tattooed a small red dot that indicated each person's turangawaewae.

Wayne Youle has developed his own vocabulary of icons from popular culture and traditional art forms. He often makes use of repetition and recurrent motifs in his practice.

A LANGUAGE OF SYMBOLS

SKULLS



Many of the skulls in Youle's work are based on tattoo designs.

The head is extremely sacred or tapu in Māori culture. In his art work *Skully Pops* Youle's skulls symbolise mokomokai which are ancient preserved heads, sacred to Maori. Youle's *Skully Pops* are inviting, bright, delicious colours, yet the concept of licking a skull, something so tapu, is unthinkable.

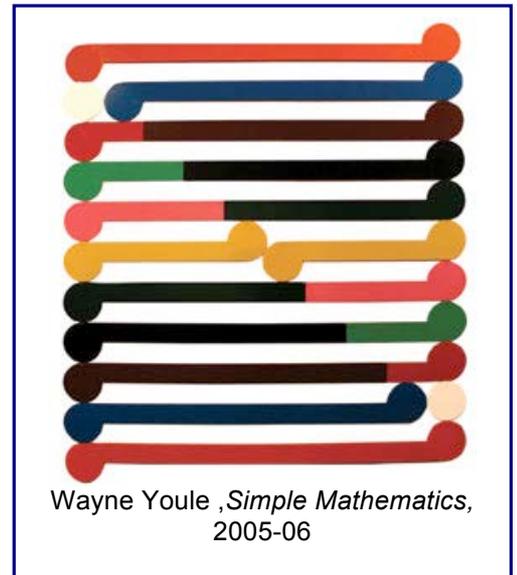
(For further information on Mokomokai visit <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mokomokai>)

Based on exhibition and catalogue text by the curator of the exhibition Helen Kedgley, Pataka Museum of Arts & Cultures

THE KORU

The koru a familiar cultural icon is present in different forms throughout Wayne Youle's work. The motif has appeared as a metal cut-out, a miniature koru toy, and as Cuisenaire rods in his *Simple Mathematics*, a large scale work that suggests 'the koru shape is simple mathematics'.

The koru is traditionally found at the heart of whakairo rakau (Maori wood carving), painted kowhaiwhai designs and ta moko. The koru originates from an unfurling fern frond and symbolises life force, growth, strength and peace.



Youle pushes the koru motif into different contexts, taking it way beyond its traditional meaning into a language of contemporary forms and culture. Youle's koru works such as *Simple Mathematics* investigate the work of New Zealand artist Gordon Walters.

GORDON WALTERS b. 1919 d. 1995

A prominent New Zealand artist Gordon Walters influence on contemporary New Zealand art has been significant. Renowned for his geometric abstraction of koru patterns, Walters was one of the first New Zealand artists to bring Maori and European ideas together in his work.

Walters explored the koru extensively in his work from the late 1950s until his death in 1995. He took the koru out of its traditional context, simplified its form and used it to explore modernist design principles. Walters's paintings investigate the relationship of positive and negative shapes, repetition, pure, bold colour, and geometric abstraction.

His lifelong response to Maori and Pacific indigenous art began in a time when most New Zealanders did not consider indigenous art to be 'art' at all¹. Throughout his career, Walter's use of the koru has caused debate and attracted a lot of controversy.

Youle's use of the koru has also been met with controversy. Youle created a swastika-koru calling it 'This is not a swastika nor is it a Walters'. Youle said "The fact that the infamous geometric form has been used for hundreds of years for good rather than evil has been forgotten,"². This provocative work challenges how people read symbols and the predetermined and sometimes negative references a viewer can bring with them when facing an art work.

¹ Sue Crockford Gallery, Auckland. <http://www.suecrockford.com>

² Philip Matthews *For Arts Sake*, The Listener Feb 2005, Vol 197, No 3378.

HEI TIKI



Wayne Youle, *Often Liked, Occasionally Beaten*, 2004

Youle's multi-coloured resin tiki on lollipop sticks *Often Liked, Occasionally Beaten* has itself become an icon. *Often Liked, Occasionally Beaten*, playfully comments on the commercialisation of the traditional Māori hei tiki and questions how much we as a nation value the hei tiki. There are always many layers of

meaning in Youle's work. The title of the work, like so many of his titles, is both humorous and provocative and also alludes to the family violence so many New Zealand children fall victim to.



The Beatles arrive in Wellington New Zealand, 1964.

Since the 1960's, plastic he tiki have become a part of New Zealand popular culture and are often proudly regarded as one of New Zealand's great Kiwiana icons.

In the 1960s and 1970s, green plastic heitiki were routinely distributed to passengers flying on Air New Zealand,

and the Beatles during their 1964 visit to New Zealand, were famously photographed wearing giant tikis as they were welcomed to Wellington.

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES



HOW has Wayne Youle used mokomokai, koru and / or hei tiki as symbols in his art work?

HOW MANY other contemporary New Zealand artists can you find who have explored mokomokai, koru and / or hei tiki in their work?



DISCUSS the way that these artists have used these images in their work. Is there treatment of this subject matter similar or different to Youle's?

FIND out the different cultures that make up your class. (You may need to find out where your great, or great great grandparents... came from).

WHAT are some of the symbols that represent these cultures? E.g. Welsh Dragon and Pacific Island hibiscus flower.

WHAT would be a great symbol to represent your class or school?

ARTISTS TO EXPLORE

MOKOMOKAI: Shane Cotton.

KORU: Gordon Walters, Shane Cotton, Michael Parekowhai, Kura Te Waru Rewiri and Rueben Paterson.

HEI TIKI: Rangi Kipa, Faith McManus, Dick Frizzell and Liam Barr.



Often Liked, Occasionally Beaten, detail, Wayne Youle, 2004.

AN EXCITING CONTEMPORARY NEW ZEALAND ARTIST

Playful, rich in humour and irony, Youle's work is direct, edgy, challenging, irreverent and occasionally unsettling. He is constantly extending and defining his own distinctive visual language and constantly exploring new ideas and new media. He says, "the day you are no longer open to new ideas is the day that you are artistically and creatively finished."³

CURRICULUM LINKS

Learning Areas:

VISUAL ARTS

Understanding the Arts in context; Developing Practical Knowledge;
Developing Ideas; Communicating and Interpreting.

³ Youle, W. 29 August, 2009 (correspondence with H. Kedgley, Senior Curator Contemporary Art, Pataka).

SOCIAL SCIENCES

Level One : Understanding how belonging to groups is important to people.

Level Two: Understanding how cultural practices reflect and express people's customs, traditions, and values.

Level Three: Understanding how people remember and record the past in different ways.

Level Four: Understanding how people pass on and sustain culture and heritage for different reasons and that this has consequences for people.

Level Five : Understanding how culture and interaction impacts on cultures and society.

KEY COMPETENCIES: Managing Self; Relating to others; Using language, Symbols and texts; Participating and contributing; Thinking.

GLOSSARY

Installation: Art that has been installed - arranged in a place- either by the artist or as specified by the artist. It might be site specific or not, and inside or outside. In an installation the space in which the art work is shown is integral to the construction and sometimes meaning of the art work.

Symbol: A form, image or subject representing a meaning different to the one it is usually associated with. E.g. A dove can represent peace, a skull can represent death and in Wayne Youles work often represent mokomokai, and a silver fern represents the New Zealand All Blacks.
Wayne Youle's symbols are often simplified delineated shapes.

Post-Modern: Post-Modernism is an art movement that reacts against earlier modernist principles, as by reintroducing traditional or classical elements of style or by carrying modernist styles or practices to extremes.

GLOSSARY

Commercialisation: When something is used for commercial gain, to promote something for a profit.

Appropriation: To take possession of another's imagery (or sounds), often without permission, reusing it in a context which differs from its original context, most often in order to examine issues concerning originality or to reveal meaning not previously seen in the original.

E.g. In one of Youle's paintings has appropriated the Air New Zealand logo. Painting it in traditional kowhaiwhai colours red and black he has given it another meaning.

Appropriation is far more aggressive than allusion or quotation, it is not the same as plagiarism however. An image reused in collage is an example of appropriation.

Taonga: A Maori treasure.

Kiwiana: Items of kiwiana are generally things that are either unique to or particularly common to New Zealand, particularly from the early and mid twentieth century. Although the term is sometimes used to describe any and all New Zealand icons, it is more commonly used to describe pop culture / every day items such as toys or branded foods.

Mokomokai: Mokomokai are ancient preserved heads decorated with ta moko (Māori tattoo), sacred to Māori.

Sources: Wikipedia and <http://www.artlex.com/>

PRACTICAL ACTIVITIES

CREATE

A THREE DIMENSIONAL COAT OF ARMS



Wayne Youle, Youle family coat of arms



New Zealand coat of arms.

Materials needed:

- Three small 3 dimensional objects that can be glued onto a piece of heavy card.
- A piece of heavy cardboard
 - Scissors
 - Glue guns
 - Paint and brushes

- 1) Find three different, small objects that you could use in a collage.

These objects need to let people know something about you, or your family. They could symbolise where you live, where your family comes from, and things you like. E.g. If you live near the sea or love going to the beach you could gather a shell or a jandal.

- 2) Research the shapes of different coats of arms. Choose a shape that you like and cut your cardboard into that shape.
- 3) Paint your cardboard shape a colour that you think best represents you or a colour that you think will best suit the objects that you have collected.
- 3) Arrange your objects on your cardboard shape. Think carefully about the composition i.e. where and how you place the objects on your cardboard shape so that they look interesting.
- 4) Give your coat of arms a title that reflects the aspect of yourself that you have shown.
 - ▶ You could spray paint your coat of arms to give it a uniform finish.
 - ▶ You could also paint the whole thing white and dribble paint over it to create a bright, interesting, textured surface similar to some of Youle's sculptural works.

CREATE

A PERSONAL SYMBOLS COLLAGE



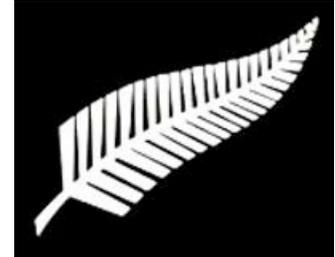
Wayne Youle, *The Boy was a vegetarian with the heart of a lion, and in touch with his cultural side; People said he would one day be a Star* 2007

► **Look** at Wayne Youle's use of symbols in his art work *The Boy was a vegetarian with the heart of a lion, and in touch with his cultural side; People said he would one day be a Star*, for inspiration.

Materials needed:

- Pencils
- Paper
- Coloured Paper
- Scissors
- Glue

- 1) Discuss what a symbol is.
- 2) Create a visual mind map - draw yourself in the middle and then draw all the things that you can think of that make you who you are, around your portrait.



Think about things that symbolise:



- Where you live e.g. the outline of New Zealand, shapes of buildings, shapes of mountains, a river or waves.
- Something that symbolises your family.
- Your favourite food.
- Your favourite activity.
- Your greatest attribute e.g. a lion for strength, a feather for being kind, a shell for being a good listener, a hare for being fast.
- An animal that you associate with.

- 3) Choose 4 symbols that you think best represent you. Create a contour line drawing of these symbols, observing the outline shape of the symbol with no details (like a silhouette).
- 4) Re-draw your symbols onto coloured paper. Choose colours that reinforce the your symbols meanings e.g. a bright blue wave, a red lion.
- 5) Using your cut out symbols create a collage similar to Youle's *The Boy Was a vegetarian...*, that makes a statement about you.

- **Look** at Wayne Youle's *Simple Mathematics* and art work by Gordon Walters. Use one of your symbols to create an abstract collage by repeating your shape over.
- **Play** around with the positive and negative shapes that your symbols create.
- **Create** cut out stencils of your symbols and experiment with printmaking.
- **Create** a huge collage that incorporates the whole classes' symbols.
- **Find** other cultural symbols that could be used in this way e.g. Samoan pe'a patterns and Cook Island Tivaevae patterns.

