Image: Jack Trolove: Detail, 2022

Jack Trolove: Thresholding

24 July – 30 October 2022
Education Resource

EDUCATION

PĀTAKA ART + MUSEUM | poriruacity

For education enquiries please contact:

Josie Whelan

Senior Education Officer

Āpiha Mātauranga – Whare Taonga

Pātaka Art + Museum

patakaeducation@poriruacity.govt.nz

The Pātaka educators would like to acknowledge all those who have written content which has been referenced in this resource for educational purposes.

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This Education Resource has been designed to support educators in creating exciting and engaging learning opportunities before, during and after their visit to the Jack Trolove – *Thresholding* exhibition at Pātaka, July 24 – October 30 2022.

It provides background information about his work and the context of *Thresholding* and includes activity suggestions in relation to the work. Informed by the New Zealand Curriculum, the resource is designed to be tailored to various year groups from Year 1 through to Year 13 and beyond, using different approaches as age-appropriate.

The exhibition provides an opportunity to develop the five key competencies of the New Zealand Curriculum: thinking; using language, symbols, and texts; managing self; relating to others; participating and contributing. It also provides opportunities across specific learning areas including Visual Arts, Dance, Drama, English and Social Studies.

Teachers should visit the show prior to bringing student groups in to evaluate the suitability of the exhibition.

The activity suggestions can be used to explore each artwork with a range of approaches suitable to the ākonga.

Before you visit *Thresholding*, find out about some of Jack's other artworks. Do any of your students know any of his works already? Students can:

- Research and then record which exhibitions they have heard of and what prior knowledge they have of those art works.
- Produce a collaborative mind-map which explores all things you need to consider when creating large-scale paintings, using sketches and other visual information to present the ideas.
- Investigate what some of the key themes in his work are; this could also take the form of a mind map.
- Address the key words developed in the mind-maps through discussion to develop a simple key word bank or glossary of definitions to include the following:

Threshold, liminal, crepuscular, transition, transformation, texture, impasto, embodiment, expressions, expressionist, dynamic, portrait, abstract, mark making, scale, space, choreography, storytelling, trans (prefix).

During – Use the questions suggested in the resource to help prompt enquiry and encourage ākonga to discuss with each other their impressions and feelings of being with the works. Refer to the activities listed for ways to engage more fully with each artwork.

Use the following suggestions and questions as a way to help the learners respond to the work:

- Record information in a range of ways through photography, drawings and notes in a sketchbook or on paper. Attach these in sketchbooks later.
- Discuss the artworks with each other. Ask questions! Consider why the artist has worked in this way.
- Explore some of the key words which have been generated through the mind-maps when looking at each work in the show. Use these words to and explore how those ideas or techniques are coming through in the artwork.

After your visit use these prompts as suggestions for follow-up activities:

- Review any initial mind-maps and see how the artist considered each of those elements.
- Investigate other works Jack has made. How is this work similar or different to his other pieces? Create a list of similarities and differences, thinking about content of the work, methods of working, when the artworks were made and how they were exhibited.
- Create a presentation which compares one piece within the show with another work from Jack, from a different exhibition.
- Write a journal report or blog about your visit to look at the artworks.
- Use your recordings from the visit to generate ideas towards creating an artwork in response to your experience of his works, using his work as inspiration.

Both during and after the visit refer to the 'Responding to the artworks' section, and Appendix A, 'Exploring an artwork' in this resource for further creative response suggestions.

Image: Jack Trolove: Detail, 2022

Whakaaturanga – The exhibition, *Thresholding*

Following on from Jack Trolove's successful show *Keening* at Te Manawa Museum in Palmerston North which concluded in April 2022, he has embarked on his second major solo show at a public art gallery within the same year, a very ambitious undertaking.

Jack is interested in the space between, or **threshold** that exists between people, states of being, worlds, lives and the beyond. Within that field, a threshold can take many forms; a door (passing through a physical threshold/space between), a ritual (crossing a spiritual threshold), a painting (as a physical threshold or as something that taps into the feeling aspect of a threshold), grief (when we experience the veil between this world and the beyond), 'gender' (the identities between or beyond the gender binary), time (throughout any given day, or cycle of seasons within nature); all these forms provide opportunity for exploring or feeling what a threshold is.

In the gallery at Pātaka, the threshold takes the form of **twilight**, the space between night and day; but Jack's work is about much more than the transit of light, they are importantly about **feeling**.

Jack says 'That's what this is about, it's trying to make an exhibition where the work is felt before it's seen.'

The tactile nature of the paintings invites the viewer to walk in close, to experience the purely abstract, thick strokes of colour – then to walk back to find the form and feeling. Even in doing this as viewers, we move through a threshold. This work helps us to notice transitional moments in our world.

If thresholds are what we pass through to move from one place (or state) to another, then thresh-holding is an exploration of what happens when we don't pass through – but rather, hold – in the shapeshifting space in-between.

Jack says 'I think about painting as making second-skins for us to feel through. I'm pushing paint around until it hits a nerve, until it activates feeling. The work is in the feeling.'

Jack explains, 'For *Thresholding,* I've been spending time in the dusk and dawn watching how light behaves, and how my feelings and sensations are modified by these times.' Those who view his works at Pātaka are invited to do the same. 'Under modulated lighting – passing through dusk, midnight, and dawn – my paintings will disappear and reappear, wake and sleep.' They become animated in the changing light.

He asks, 'What are the visual languages of twilight? What are the visual languages of dusk and of dawn, and also what are the energetic languages of the dusk and the dawn?'

To simply describe his work, Jack uses oil paint, in thick lumps and thin stretches, to create enormous faces that appear and recede simultaneously. As the light changes, the works change; it will take time to fully experience the works. Jack suggests that this new body of work might be a break from the speed of social media, 'It's for the slow stories,' he says. When talking about the lighting modulation in the show Jack says 'I hope it will slow us down enough to have an experiment with feeling painting.'

Jack talks about the way these works are being exhibited as 'experimental' in this interview with Radio New Zealand presenter, Jesse Mulligan.

Jack Trolove: *Thresholding* presents eleven key works produced during the first half of 2022. *Arc, Cavern, Clustering, Dune, Husk, Language, Mist, Rudder, Soluble, Tuning, Turlough, Understory*.

Together, these paintings showcase the very latest of Jack's work.

Ringa toi | The artist

Jack Trolove (Pākeha, Celtic decent) was raised on Ngai Tahu whenua, in an old-folks home run by his Nana and Great Auntie. He now lives near the beautiful muddy waters of the Kaipara, in Te Tai Tokerau. His work explores relationships between embodiment and liminal spaces; the politics and poetics of transition, and other states of in-between-ness.

Jack has been a practising artist for over twenty years, showing nationally and internationally in wild spaces, artist-run projects and over the last decade, in dealer galleries. In December he opened his first solo show in a public art gallery, at Te Manawa Museum. While experienced with performance and moving image, he now works primarily as a painter. Alongside a full time painting practice, he's undertaking a doctorate through Elam School of Fine Arts (theorising painting as trans or threshold-work, through the Celtic traditions of keening).

He's taught in fine arts, gender studies and material culture at a number of tertiary institutions, as well as teaching creative practice in community and social justice contexts.

Above: Jack Trolove

Kaupapa - Themes in the work

For over two decades, Jack has worked with the body or human form, often using the face as a starting point for his gestural work, in which he uses mark-making to create an energy within and beyond the work, to help the viewer tap into the potential that is found in liminal moments or spaces.

In the way he paints Jack has been described as 'a virtuoso manipulator of paint.' In this body of work, threshold also takes the form of how he works with oil paint, in that the way it is - between thick and thin, loose and tight, abstract and real. Raw linen shows through in many of the paintings too, because "these paintings are not whole stories. If anything, they're the holes in stories, showing themselves being made and undone."

Although they're often loosely based on images of people he knows, Jack's initial subject matter is only ever the starting point, providing 'some scaffolding' for him to begin sculpting paint onto. The image he started with is then put aside and the painting takes on its own momentum. 'It becomes about movement and what the marks are trying to say,' he explains. 'I try to suggest a form but not describe it... I don't think of my paintings as portraits, even though that's how people often talk about them. I like the idea that they're images of an energy or an experience rather than a particular person.'

Rather than being of a recognisable person, Jack says, 'the work has to live as its own energy, as its own entity... the fun part for me is following where it goes; it's a huge gift that people allow me to work with their form as starting point to have it dance off in a completely different direction.'

He says, 'I'm not trying to paint a picture of the person who is starting the painting... I'm trying to find what the painting has to say, to find the feeling or the energy or sensations that happen, live in the painting process.'

One of the reasons Jack works with faces is because it is a welcoming way to engage the viewer. 'We are constantly reading faces, so much of how we communicate is this sculptural language of watching each others expressions.' The opportunity for the viewer is to go beyond that initial familiar experience of seeing an image of a face, into the feeling that evolves as you slowly sit with the work.

In describing his painting process, Jack says, 'For me actually painting feels like choreography... it's the same kind of language, it's about space, distance, rhythm.' All of which can be explored in his work.

In his work *Thresholding,* Jack has dedicated his show to 'those who are fluent in threshold work – kaikaranga, keeners, midwives, palliative carers and therapists, to name a few'.

You can hear Jack talk directly about this exhibition in this video.

You can see more of how Jack creates his paintings in this video.

Mahi toi | The artworks

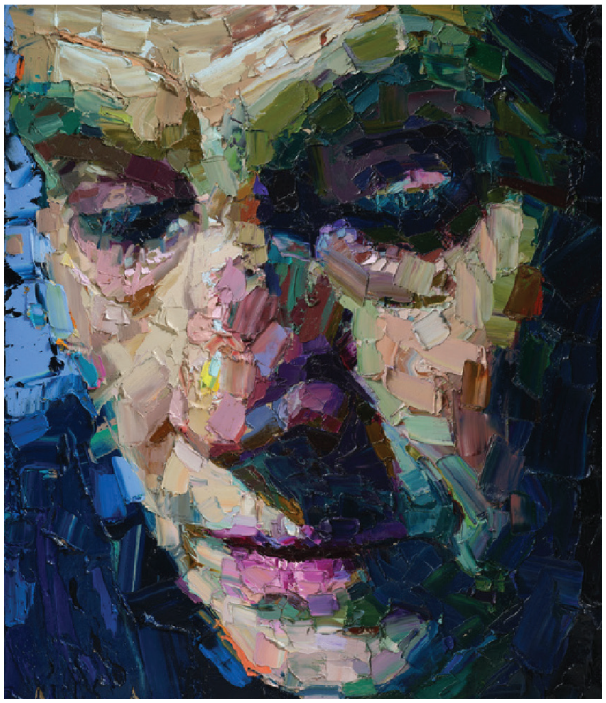
Image: Jack Trolove, *Arc, 2022*

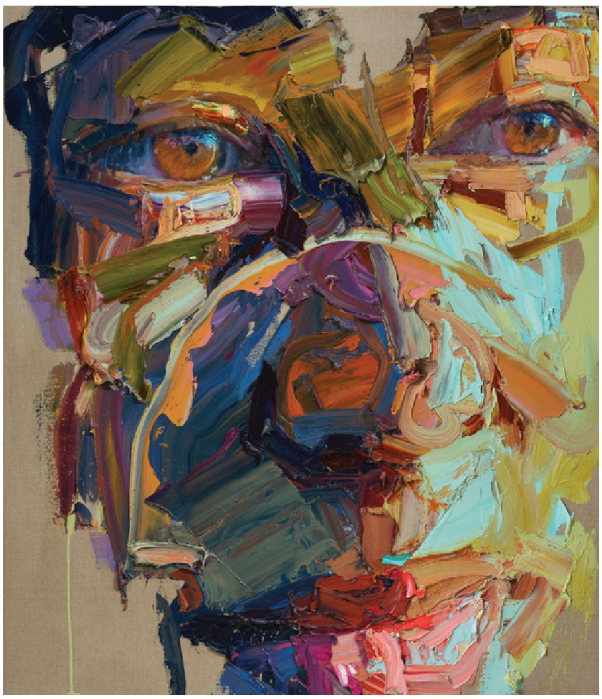
Image: Jack Trolove, *Cavern, 2022*
Image: Jack Trolove: *Clustering, 2022*

Image: Jack Trolove: *Dune, 2022*

Image: Jack Trolove: *Husk, 2022*

Image: Jack Trolove: *Language, 2022*





Images:

Jack Trolove: *Soluble, 2022*

Image: Jack Trolove: *Tuning, 2022*

Image: Jack Trolove: *Mist, 2022*

Image: Jack Trolove: *Rudder, 2022*

Image: Jack Trolove: *Turlough, 2022*

Image: Jack Trolove: *Understory, 2022*

Whakautua ki ngā mahi toi | Responding to the artworks

Once ākonga are in the gallery space, invite them to walk around the gallery space, looking at each painting. Spend 10 minutes on this. Select a painting that they would like to describe today.

- Use the 'Exploring an Artwork' page to complete observations on the artworks to explore them more fully.
- Look closely at the eyes in the painting, how does it feel to gaze into someone's eyes like this? If the eyes are closed, how does that feel, to look at someone with their eyes closed?
- Create a spoken word piece that describes your feelings/experience of being in the gallery.

Dance/movement response:

Ākonga imagine they are the artist who made the painting they are looking at; keep looking at the artwork standing up, look at the marks that have been made with paint, try to make some of the movements that the artist would have used when creating the painting. How does it feel for your body to move around like this?

- Create a dance or movement piece in response to the paintings which captures how you feel in the gallery.
- Create a dance response which connects the paintings somehow.

Writing response:

Imagine you have just overheard a conversation from the person who is in the painting. Write what the conversation was about, who it was to. What would this person say next? ... Record this through writing or spoken word.

- Does the painting remind you of anyone? If so who, and why does it make you think of them?
- Imagine these paintings are a set of characters in a play or film, what happens next? Write the next sentences or a chapter that follows or speak it out loud.

Visual response:

- Put on a pair of red glasses to view the artworks, supplied by the educators, what does this do to how you view the artworks?
- Either in the gallery or back at school, try out a blind continuous contour line drawing of a face, either your own using a mirror or someone else's looking at them in front of you. Use this video to help you understand how to do it.
- Create a mind map about yourself or someone you love that you would want to paint a portrait of:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sADUGO0e_D0

- Once the mind map is done, get your teacher or classmate to take a photo of you. You can either print this out and work on top of it, or try a portrait profile format, trace it off using a window so you just have an outline, then fill the space with colours/symbols/ images that relate to the person you are painting. See below for a visual guide.

Exploring an Artwork

Look closely at one painting, write down some of the details of the work in the spaces below:

Artist's name: _____

Title of artwork: _____

Mood/feeling: How does the artwork make you feel? Use as many different words as you need to, for each word, write why you think that feeling is coming up, What is in the artwork that might be stimulating that feeling?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Form: What do you see in the artwork? Is it a realistic painting?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Process: How do you think the painting it has been made? How does it change with the lights?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Paint: Describe how the paint looks, how do you think it has been applied to the surface.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Colour: what colours do you see? Are they warm or cool, primary or complementary, light or dark. Try to list the main colours, can you tell which colours have been used for the shadows?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Meaning: Does the title give any clue to the meaning of the work? What do you think the artist might be trying to say in their work?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Resources | Rauemi

Books & print resources

ArtZone, New Zealand Art & Design, Arthur Hawkes, Jack in the bardo, Jack Trolove at the threshold, Winter 2022, Issue 91

Online

https://jacktrolove.com/

The Big Idea, Dina Jezdic, Moving Matter: Finding Trolove, 2020. Accessed 2022
https://www.thebigidea.nz/stories/finding-trolove

The Spinoff, Tulia Thompson, Along the mangroves: The in-between space of Jack Trolove's paintings, 2020. Accessed 2022
https://thespinoff.co.nz/art/13-06-2020/along-the-mangroves-the-in-between-space-of-jack-troloves-pantings

Art New Zealand, Michael Dunn, Be Kind Jack Trolove's Tenderise, Spring 2019, Number 171. Accessed 2022
https://cdn-asset-mel-1.airsquare.com/whitespace/library/artists/jack_trolove/jack-trolove-art-nz-171.pdf?201909242011

Regional News Eyes on Wellington More than meets the eye by Harry Bartle, Issue 176- July 2022. Accessed 2022.

Manawatu Guardian, Judith Lacy, Jack Trolove's first public solo exhibition opens at Te Manawa in Palmerston North, 16 Dec, 2021. Accessed 2022

https://www.nzherald.co.nz/manawatu-guardian/news/jack-troloves-first-public-solo-exhibition-opens-at-te-manawa-in-palmerston-north/YNYHVR7PQQ6IJUUGH7LVXEPKBQ/

Artist interviews

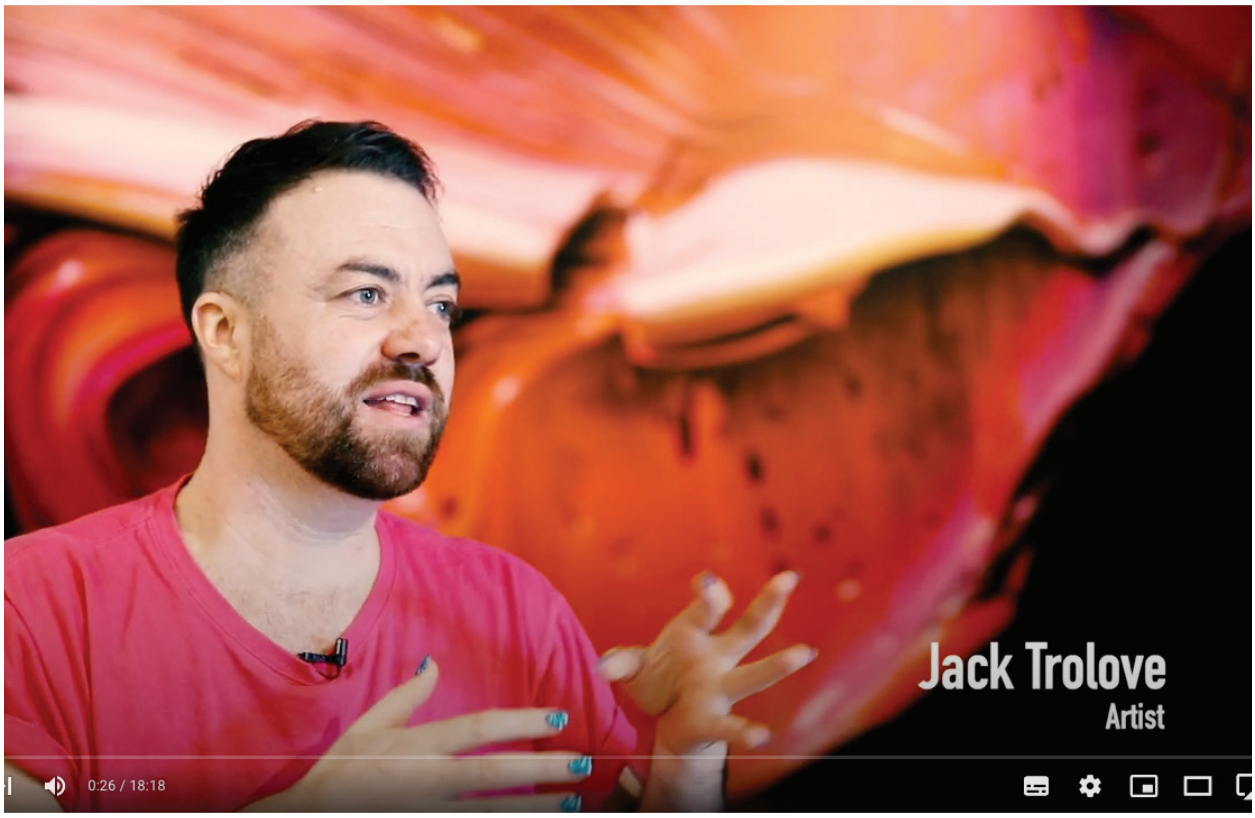
Pātaka Education interview with Jack Trolove, July 2022 https://youtu.be/npIJJulJ4gU

Radio New Zealand interview with Jessie Mulligan Art which changes with light phases, 12/07/2022. Accessed 2022
https://www.rnz.co.nz/audio/player?audio_id=2018849142

Studio interview with Jack Trolove 2020. Accessed 2022
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wL_1sZKu2UQ&t=28s

Studio interview with Jack Trolove 2022. Accessed 2022
https://pataka.org.nz/whats/exhibitions/Jack-Trolove-Thresholding/

Radio New Zealand interview with Jim Mora Jack Trolove: the moment that changed his life, September 2017. Accessed 2022
https://www.rnz.co.nz/audio/player?audio_id=201861602



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