



PATAKA EDUCATION
Art • Heritage • Culture

SHEEP

NZ Icons in Art

*Pataka Museum of Arts and Cultures
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Gregor Kregar, Mathew 12:12 Souvenir, glazed earthenware ceramic, private collection.

Teacher's Notes

Education resource compiled by Fiona Wilcock Educator, Pataka Education, Pataka Museum of Arts and Cultures, 2010. Pataka Education programmes are supported by LEOTC (Learning Experiences Outside The Classroom) and funded by the Ministry of Education.

SHEEP

A BACKGROUND

New Zealand has a human population of just over 4 million, and a sheep population of around 32 million!

The back bone of the New Zealand economy for over a century, sheep were first introduced by British settlers in the 19th century.

Sheep farming in New Zealand - *Living off the sheep's back*

During the early days of New Zealand's European settlement, sheep were imported to provide meat and wool for clothing. The early pioneers lived "off the sheep's back". As farming developed, wool became one of New Zealand's first export earners. After the introduction of refrigeration in 1886 mutton and lamb were also exported.

New Zealanders are proud of their sheep. The sheep population is now down to approximately 32 million from 70 million in the 1980s. New Zealand still produces quality meat and wool for world markets.

New Zealand lamb is the world's best and is the benchmark for all our competitors. New Zealand's wool is strong (e.g. Romney) and is in demand for knitting, clothing and carpets and superfine Merino wool produces the world's highest quality suiting.

Early Settlers

Sheep have worked hard in New Zealand. They were used by early pioneers to break in land from scrub and bush. Sheep were used to tread grass and clover seed into the warm ash after burning, providing their own fertiliser along the way.



Vella Woolshed, 1910, Mana Island. Pataka Museum of Arts and Cultures.

Rural NZ today

Today sheep continue to help New Zealand prosper, although today's world markets prefer high quality lamb to wool.

Sheep are usually run along with cattle on pastoral farms where their grazing patterns complement each other. Sheep graze the finer grasses, while cattle eat the longer, coarser pasture plants and weeds.

The average farm has about 1,500 ewes and 150 beef breeding cows run as a one-person unit, with no extra labour apart from shearers. Larger farms on hill country and high-country stations in the South Island carry from 8,000 to 20,000 breeding ewes.

Sheep also graze large areas of lowland pasture in association with mixed farming. A good example of this is on the Canterbury plains.

Reference : <http://www.kiwianatown.co.nz/kiwiana-displays.html#sheep>

Calf Club

Each year, in rural schools around New Zealand, a day is held with one purpose - to encourage children to take an active interest in the welfare and presentation of an animal of their choice, for a community day at their school. Traditionally this day is called Calf Club. Young farmers across New Zealand work hard each year to select, prepare and show their pet lambs and calves at their school Calf Club days. Calf Club lambs are hand-reared (fed from a bottle), carefully groomed, taught to walk on a lead and taught to come when they are called. Many of these pet lambs become important members of the family, just like the family dog!

References : http://www.lic.co.nz/lic_Calf_Clubs.cfm

Dropping a stitch

When it comes to wool, it is claimed that in the 1960s New Zealanders were the largest users per head in the world.

There is little doubt that much of this wool was used for the craft of knitting. Knitting was once an activity of huge popularity that was usually passed on from mother to daughter; women sat on trams and buses able to simultaneously chat and knit without dropping a stitch. At home, if hands were ever idle, knitting took over and the basket with all the necessary equipment was always at hand. In addition to the knitting itself, there was also the darning to be done and the constant maintenance of the family's clothes.



Hand Knits for young moderns,
1960s knitting book.

References : <http://www.kiwianatown.co.nz/kiwiana-displays.html#sheep>

Modern Day Knitters

Though knitting is no longer such a cultural institution in New Zealand, it is taking on new forms and the craft is enjoying a renaissance.

In search of the skills that their grandmothers possessed, many New Zealanders are learning to knit.



Knitted Sushi, by Joyce,
<http://gamiori.com/blog/?p=147>



Knitted English breakfast, by Joyce,
<http://gamiori.com/blog/?p=147>

With enthusiastic knitting groups meeting each week at local cafes and community centres, knitting has become a social activity and the craft of knitting is being taken in many dynamic and contemporary directions.

Craftivism



The Lone Knitter, by Peacock tattoos
Jacksonville, USA.

Today knitting has also taken on a social conscience, with many knitters creating items like blankets and clothes for charities. The resurgent interest in knitting and other traditional craft forms has even given rise to international activist movements like Craftivism.

Activism + Craft = Craftivism

Craftivism is a contemporary art movement that advocates the use of creativity for the improvement of the world.

Craftivists fight against consumerism and mass production by promoting personalised and sustainable art practices.

They respond to materialism and environmental issues by reusing old materials. Craftivists also advocate the preservation of craft-based traditions by teaching skills to younger generations, organising community based projects and creating public art works.

Traditionally a feminine and domestic pursuit, knitting is now becoming an art form through which people can protest and strive to bring about social change.



Knitted flowers grow up an
urban sign post.



A concrete lamppost is given
a homely touch.



A London phone box gets
personalised.

SHEEP : NZ Icons in Art

THE ARTISTS

ARTIST	TYPE of WORK
Rick Alexander	Photo
Stephen Allwood	Painting
Wayne Barr	Photo
Joanna Braithwaite	Painting
Brian Brake	Photo
Brit Bunkley	2D Image, Video, Sculpture & Light
Barry Cleavin	Print
Sean Crawford	Sculpture
Paul Dibble	Sculpture
Marti Friedlander	Photo
Andrea Gardner	Photo & Ceramic assemblage
Stephen Goodenough	Photo
Kristin Hollis	Drawing
Alan Knowles	Photo
Gregor Kregar	Ceramic
Jae Hoon Lee	Photo
Fiona McGovern	Painting
Mary McIntyre	Painting
Anthony McKee	Photo
Trevor Moffitt	Painting
Anne Noble	Photo
Peter Panyoczki	Sculpture
Johanna Pegler	Painting
Peter Peryer	Photo
Aaron Smale	Photo
Angela Singer	Sculpture
Barry Ross Smith	Painting
Jeff Thomson	Sculpture
John Walsh	Painting
Ans Westra	Photo

Selected Artist Profiles

Trevor Moffitt

(1936 – 1996)



Trevor Moffitt, *Southland Series II, no. 19*, 1988, Rutherford Collection, Aratoi Museum.

Trevor Moffitt is a unique and highly acclaimed New Zealand painter whose narrative art works capture an archetypal Southern New Zealand way of life.

Moffitt was born in the late 1930s to a working class Southland family. This meant Moffitt's road to becoming an artist was full of social challenges. Hard childhood experiences and vivid images of Southland informed his art work throughout his career.

The Gold miners, Moffitt's first major series of paintings, was based on his childhood memories of prospectors in Waikaia.

Other series, *My Father's Life*, *Solo Father*, *The Freezing Works* and *Canterbury Paddocks* also explore the tough realities of a New Zealand, rural, working class way of life.

In his *Southland Series II* Moffitt allows the vast Southern landscape to tell its own story. Using his trade mark of thickly applied impasto paint and solid tonally modeled forms, he describes the country he grew up in. Moffitt's vivid green pastures and woolly flock of ewes, in essence, describe the livelihood of rural New Zealand.

Colourful events in New Zealand's history and vigilante characters from rural New Zealand have also made their way into Moffitt's paintings. As well as his series based on the infamous sheep stealer James Mackenzie, Moffitt painted a series exploring the antics of mass murdering farmer Stanley Graham and the Hokonui Moonshine trade.

Trevor Moffitt painted a version of New Zealand where the people and their stories are as important as the landscape.

Artist's Bio

Trevor Moffitt was born in 1936 in Gore.

He trained at The School of Fine Arts in Canterbury and the Auckland Teachers' Training College.

After a successful career teaching Art at various secondary schools, Moffitt moved to Timaru. In Timaru, over a period of years, he painted a series of works based on the nineteenth century's legendary sheep stealer James McKenzie. Moffitt's later painting life was spent in Canterbury.

Andrea Gardner

Artist's Bio

Andrea Gardner arrived in New Zealand from America in 1996.

In 1981 she graduated with a M.F.A, M.A in Painting, University of Iowa. In 1977 she gained a B.F.A in Painting at the University of California at Santa Cruz and a B.A in studio Art, University of California at Santa Cruz.

Gardner exhibits extensively both in New Zealand and overseas. As well as a practicing artist she is currently the Educator at the Sargeant Gallery in Wanganui.



Andrea Gardner Romantic Ecological Issue, Staged Photograph., 2010, James Wallace Art Collection.

Andrea Gardner's work explores her ongoing interest in the complex relationship between humans, animals and the landscape.

Gardner works with found objects and pre-existing images to create staged photographs and mixed media sculpture.

Her art work draws upon personal experience as well as the current discourse between culture and nature, with its accompanying ethical and ecological concerns.

'A large part of my practice involves collecting cultural detritus from second hand stores: old dusty landscape paintings, artificial flowers, broken taxidermied animals and discarded figurines. I also collect elements from my garden: soil, manure, plants and insects. In the studio I assemble these into diorama-like set-ups. Although my process is fairly intuitive, these deeply manufactured set-ups tend to revolve around exploring our complex relationship with nature.'¹

Gardner's exploration of nature, the wild, coexisting with the domestic and every day, results in the creation of fairytale-like worlds. In her art work gentle lambs and woolly sheep exist in a world between the domestic and the wild, quietly commenting on rural New Zealand and a cultural taming of the land.

¹ Gardner, 'The Trouble with Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature', by William Cronon 1995, <http://www.andreagardner.co.nz/information>
References: <http://www.andreagardner.co.nz/>

Andrea Gardner cont...



Andrea Gardner, *7 Sheep Plates Untitled (Detail)*, archival print on ceramic, 2010.

'I have also recently been interested in Dutch still life painting of the 1600 and 1700s. These "Vanitas" paintings used sumptuous arrangements of flowers and objects that were symbolic reminders of life's impermanence. In my recent photos the balloons, bees, flies and manure balls can also allude to the passage of time and the ephemeral nature of life.'²

² Gardner A, 'The Trouble with Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature', by William Cronon 1995, <http://www.andreagardner.co.nz/information>
References: <http://www.andreagardner.co.nz/>

Brit Bunkley

An American artist who has lived for the last ten years in New Zealand, Brit Bunkley offers us a unique cultural perspective through his art work.

Bunkley's art practice includes surreal moving and still images, public based art works, large scale sculpture and installations.



Brit Bunkley, *Just Before the Snow*, private collection.

Much of Bunkley's monumentally sized sculpture and imposing architecture is brought to life in his still and moving images. Bunkley designs and creates his sculpture using computer 3D modelling allowing him to create unsettlingly real yet impossible scenes. Rather than existing in 3D, Bunkley's sculptures are placed in 2D prints and animations. His sculptures reside in his own reflection of our world, his computer generated land and cityscapes.

Brit Bunkley cont...

Artist's Bio

Brit Bunkley arrived in New Zealand from America in 1996 to take up residence as a lecturer in Sculpture at The Quay School of the Arts, in Wanganui.

In 1977 he graduated with a BFA from Minneapolis College of Art and Design, Minneapolis and in 1984 he gained a MFA from Hunter College in New York.

Bunkley works as an art educator, and exhibits extensively both in New Zealand and overseas.

In his work Bunkley explores society's fears and paranoia surrounding invasion, war and environmental disasters, with a sense of whimsy and irony. In his short video animation *Fleece Blackout* a 3D model sheep stands 'statue like in a mountainous landscape while cruise missiles fly by'³. The sheep protects itself with camouflage and gradually its fleece turns into a floral pattern.

A contemporary American artist interested in global political, social and humanitarian issues, Bunkley brings a fresh and unique perspective to New Zealand's local geography, history and culture.

³ Bunkley B, *Vignettes of War and Business*, www.artaction.org, 2005. References: www.britbunkley.com, Artists Statement.



Gregor Kregar, *Matthew 12:12 Souvenir*, glazed earthenware ceramic. 2004- 2010

Gregor Kregar

Gregor Kregar is an innovative artist who works in a wide range of different media and with diverse materials. He says of his sculptural practice 'I often combine a wide variety of materials such as stainless steel, plastic, card-board, ceramic, glass, video and photography.'⁴

Gregor utilises familiar subject matter in his work such as human figures, body parts, television sets, bottles, inorganic rubbish and animals.

He says of his work 'I am interested in how the familiar subject can be represented in a way that displaces the original meaning and imbues the subject with new and unfamiliar meanings.'⁵

⁴ Kregar G, *Artists Statement*, <http://www.gregorkregar.com/statement.html>.

⁵ Kregar G, *Artists Statement*, <http://www.gregorkregar.com/statement.html>.

Gregor Kregar cont...

Matthew 12:12 is an art work that has taken on several different forms, as it has been shown throughout New Zealand. The work began as *Mathew 12:12 Live*. A living installation *Mathew 12:12 Live* consisted of 12 Romney ewes who had been shorn and were then dressed in woolen body suits made out of pure New Zealand wool. In doing this Kregar united the woolen garments with the producers, the sheep. Gregor talks of 'the role of man and sheep having important connotations for New Zealand in both historical and contemporary contexts.'⁶

As an Artist interested in New Zealand's social, economical and political environment Kregar's *Mathew 12:12* explores 'an industry that shaped not only the land but also the cultural and economic identity of New Zealand.'⁷

Artist's Bio

Gregor Kregar was born in 1972 in Ljubljana in Slovenia.

He now lives between Wanganui New Zealand and Berlin Germany.

He has a BFA at the Academy of Fine Arts in Slovenia and a MFA from Elam School of Fine Arts, University of Auckland, New Zealand.



Gregor Kregar, Detail of *Matthew 12:12 Live* installation (2003-2006),
Photograph: Max Osborne
<http://www.telecomprospect2007.org.nz/artist/GregorKregar.shtml>

Much of Gregor's work possesses a sense of humour and fun however he is always mindful of animal welfare. When using animals in his artwork Kregar always works with them in a respectful and safe way. When creating *Mathew 12:12* he was supported by the local SPCA and a Doctor of Veterinary Science.

⁶ Kregar G, *Matthew 12:12 Live*, 2003 – 2007 installation process, <http://www.gregorkregar.com>

⁷ Kregar G, *Matthew 12:12 Live*, 2003 – 2007 installation process, <http://www.gregorkregar.com>
References : www.gregorkregar.com

Jeff Thomson

As an artist Jeff Thomson could be described as a kiwi icon. Thomson is renowned for his quirky corrugated iron animals. His sculptural elephants, sheep, chickens, cows and many other animals populate unexpected parts of the New Zealand landscape. Thomson's dynamic corrugated iron sculptures have changed the face of many small towns and rural New Zealand. None more so than Thomson's giant corrugated iron

gumboot. A monument to Kiwiana, Thomson's gumboot has become a highly celebrated icon for the New Zealand town of Taihape.



Jeff Thomson, Sheep, Corrugated Iron and mixed media, Collection of the Hickson Family, 1994.

Exploring the medium of corrugated iron in every possible way Thomson has created sculptural letter boxes, corrugated iron curtains, undulating abstract iron waves, iron toys and wildly patterned corrugated iron roof tops. He has even created an artwork that once travelled the roads of New Zealand, an *HQ Holden* car. Clad in corrugated iron the *HQ Holden* now resides in the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa.



Jeff Thomson, *Gumboot* 2000
Corrugated iron, 3400 x 5500 x 1800 mm.
(Commissioned by Gumboot Country Promotions, Taihape)
(Photograph: Leigh Mitchell-Anyon)

Ingenuity is an integral part of Thomson's art making practice. As art critic John Perry has written, 'he has almost single-handedly taken corrugated iron off the roof and put it on the wall and the pedestal'⁸.

It was in 1980 that Thomson fully discovered this wonderfully archetypal New Zealand material. A year before graduating with a Bachelor of Fine Arts from Elam he travelled, largely by foot, around rural New Zealand. During this time Thomson would decorate and sculpt novelty letter boxes for farmers in

exchange for payment, which was sometimes in the form of a meal and bed for the night. To create his work he would use materials that he found on the farm properties, rural debris lying at the back of old farm sheds. The material that he came across most often was corrugated iron.

Jeff Thomson cont...

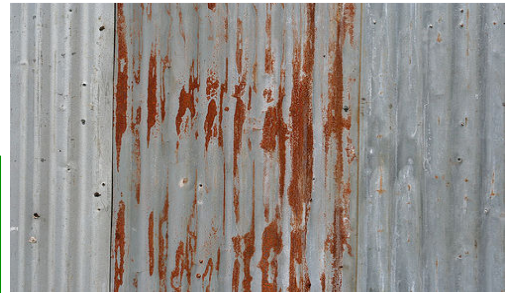
Artist's Bio

Born in Auckland in 1957, Jeff Thomson was making art from an early age. In the seventh form he built a concrete sculpture in the grounds of his school, Westlake Boys High in Auckland. The sculpture is still there to this day.

He completed his Bachelor of Fine Arts at Elam in 1981, and in 1982 gained a Post Graduate Diploma in Teaching from Auckland Teachers College. Thomson taught at secondary schools until 1986, when he became a full-time artist.

In 1985 Thomson released a herd of corrugated iron elephants into Albert Park, and later the elephants, and other corrugated iron animals and objects, were seen in Wellington's Civic Square. These events had the trademark of Thomson's popularism and sense of humour, and created a great deal of media interest.

Thomson exhibits extensively both nationally and internationally.



Old corrugated iron.

Thomson has continued to work with many different sculptural materials including wire netting, plastic and tin cans. He has also explored many different techniques including building, layering, curving, welding, casting and brazing (soldering with an alloy of brass and zinc). More recently Thomson has attempted to extend the boundaries of iron, using an industrial roller to produce rounded and 3D forms.

⁸ Perry, John F. (1992). Foreword/Four Words: the corrugated iron man in Brimer, Richard. editor. *Jeff Thomson: any old iron*. Auckland: Icon Publishing. np.

References : <http://collections.tepapa.govt.nz/theme.aspx?irn=921>

O'Brien G, *Wild and Cultivated Iron : Recent Sculpture by Jeff Thomson*, Art New Zealand, Issue 100 / Spring 2001.

References, Resources and Weblinks

- **SHEEP : Icons in NZ Art Exhibition** - <http://www.pataka.org.nz/>
- **Sheep agriculture** - <http://www.kiwianatown.co.nz/kiwiana-displays.html#sheep>, <http://www.sheepworld.co.nz/SheepFarming.htm>, www.teara.govt.nz/en/sheep-farming
- **Calf Club** - http://www.lic.co.nz/lic_Calf_Clubs.cfm
- **Knitting** - <http://www.kiwianatown.co.nz/kiwiana>
- **Craftivism** - <http://www.craftivism.com/>
- **Trevor Moffitt** - Chris Ronayne, Trevor Moffitt : A Biography, 2006. David Ling Publishing Limited. www.suite.co.nz/featured_works/trevor_moffitt
- **Andrea Gardner** - *The Trouble with Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature*, by William Cronon, 1995, <http://www.andreagardner.co.nz/>
- **Brit Bunkley** - www.britbunkley.com, Brit Bunkley Critical Illusions exhibition catalogue, *Vignettes of Fear and Illusion in conversation with Joanne Drayton*, The Wallace Trust, Auckland New Zealand 2006.
- **Gregor Kregar** - <http://www.gregorkregar.com>
- **Jeff Thomson** - <http://collections.tepapa.govt.nz/theme.aspx?irn=921>, O'Brien G, *Wild and Cultivated Iron : Recent Sculpture by Jeff Thomson*, Art New Zealand, Issue 100 / Spring 2001.



SHEEP : NZ Icons in Art

Pre Visit and Post Visit Activities, Inquiry, and Points for Discussion

- RESEARCH the history of sheep farming in New Zealand.
- DISCUSS why sheep have become an iconic image of New Zealand.
- FIND OUT about famous historical figures from rural New Zealand.
- VISIT a sheep farm, shearing shed, or invite a local farmer in to talk about what sheep farming is like.
- FIND OUT where the major sheep farming areas are in New Zealand today and locate them on a map.
- RESEARCH the works of artists featured in Sheep: Icons in NZ art.
- HOW MANY more NZ artists can you find who feature sheep in their art works? Create a wall of these art works.
- VIEW the work of Murray Ball's 'Footrot Flats' and read some favourite stories about New Zealand's most famous farmer and sheep Dog.
- WATCH *Footrot Flats: The Dog's Tale* and write about the characters.
- CREATE a new comic book strip for artist Murray Ball's character 'Dog'.
- COLLECT as many different images as you can and create a class montage.
- FIND OUT about different art making processes that use wool.
- LEARN how to felt with wool, or Knit.
- EXPLORE the works of artists who use wool as their medium.
- FIND OUT about Craftivism.