



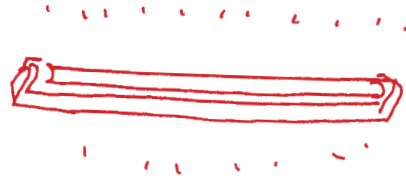
ART IN CONTEXT

**A VISUAL ARTS AND ART HISTORY EDUCATION RESOURCE
FOR SECONDARY TEACHERS, INSPIRED BY BILL CULBERT'S 2013
VENICE BIENNALE EXHIBITION, *FRONT DOOR OUT BACK***

Helen Lloyd, Senior Educator Art, Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa and Education
Programme Manager for Creative New Zealand (2013)



CONTENTS



BACKGROUND

About this resource	3
The Venice Biennale	4
Venice – the city	4
Bill Culbert	5
<i>Front Door Out Back</i>	5
Studying art in context	6
Curriculum links	7
Useful books	7
Useful websites	7

RESOURCES

Part 1: <i>Front Door Out Back</i> analysis cards	
<i>Drop</i>	8
<i>Bebop</i>	10
<i>Strait</i>	12
<i>Walk Reflection and Walk Blue</i>	14
<i>Daylight Flotsam Venice</i>	16
<i>Level</i>	18
<i>HUT, Made in Christchurch</i>	20
<i>Where are the other two?</i>	22
Part 2: Wellington waterfront sculpture trail	
Map	24
Contextual information	25–46
Part 3: Student question cards and worksheets	
Question card 1: Describe and interpret a sculpture	47
Worksheet 1: Describe and interpret a sculpture	48
Question card 2: Analyse a sculpture’s context	49
Worksheet 2: Analyse a sculpture’s context	50
Worksheet 3: Compare and contrast two sculptures	
Similarities	51
Differences	52
Part 4: Visual arts project	
Project brief: Design a public sculpture	53

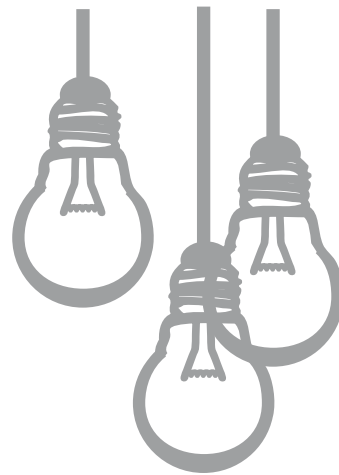
ABOUT THIS RESOURCE

This visual arts and art history education resource has been created in association with *Front Door Out Back*, Bill Culbert's exhibition for the New Zealand Pavilion at the Venice Biennale 2013. The first such resource of its kind, it is part of a wider education programme developed as a result of a partnership between the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa and Creative New Zealand.



The programme's aim is to increase New Zealand teachers and students' access to the exhibition, and to raise awareness of both Culbert's work and the Venice Biennale – arguably the world's most significant international contemporary art event. It includes this resource, *Experiments with Light* (an art and science resource for primary and intermediate teachers), and teacher professional development events.

Art in Context is inspired by the relationships between Culbert's sculptures and the contexts within which they are situated. It is designed for secondary teachers of visual arts and art history, to teach students about studying 'sculpture in context'. The activities are intended to be adapted by teachers for use with their students.



The resource has four major components:

- **Analysis cards** for each of Culbert's art works in *Front Door Out Back*. The cards are designed to introduce students to how to interpret art works and consider issues relating to context and site. **Page 8**
- **Wellington waterfront sculpture trail map** with contextual information on 11 public art works (including three by Culbert) for teachers to use as the basis of an art in context field trip (real or virtual). **Page 24**
- **A set of question cards and worksheets** for teachers to use with students as part of the Wellington waterfront trail or a field trip in their own locale, or when studying the context of any public sculpture. **Page 47**
- **Visual arts project:** A project brief for students to create their own sculpture in response to a particular context. **Page 53**



THE VENICE BIENNALE

The Venice Biennale has been described by some commentators as ‘the Olympics of the art world’, and is widely viewed as one of the contemporary art world’s pre-eminent events. Held every two years (‘Biennale’ is Italian for biennial), it runs from June to November and features exhibitions from more than 80 countries. Over 30,000 international curators, critics, collectors, and artists attend the three-day opening vernissage (preview) alone.

New Zealand has exhibited at the Venice Biennale since 2001. New Zealand artists who have exhibited as part of the New Zealand Pavilion at the Biennale are Peter Robinson and Jacqueline Fraser (2001), Michael Stevenson (2003), et al. (2005), Judy Millar and Francis Upritchard (2009), and Michael Parekowhai (2011). Exhibiting at the Biennale has led to a greater national and international profile and opportunities for all these artists.

New Zealand’s presentation at the 55th Venice Biennale is an initiative of Creative New Zealand, Arts Council of New Zealand Toi Aotearoa, with key partner Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa and supporting partners Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu, Massey University, and Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki.

VENICE – THE CITY

Venice is a unique city located in north-eastern Italy and situated on a group of small islands separated by canals and linked by bridges. It is renowned for the beauty of its setting, architecture, and art works. The entire city is listed as a World Heritage Site, but it is very susceptible to high tides and regularly experiences floods, placing it at risk from rising sea levels. Venice has been variously known as the ‘City of Water’, ‘City of Masks’, ‘City of Bridges’, ‘Floating City’, and ‘City of Canals’.

The city is well known for its part in several important artistic movements and as a centre of the Renaissance. Every year, it holds a flamboyant cultural celebration, Carnevale, in which Venetians and visitors don 18th-century masks, wigs, and costumes. Venice has also played an important role in the history of classical music, and is the birthplace of composer Antonio Vivaldi.

Murano, one of the islands situated next to Venice, is famous for its glass factory. The glass industry has been in existence on the island since the 14th century. Murano glass is an iconic product that can be seen in tourist shops across Venice, and in chandeliers decorating the many opulent Venetian palaces.



BILL CULBERT

Bill Culbert (1935–) was born in Port Chalmers, a small port town on Dunedin’s harbour, in 1935. He attended Hutt Valley High School and studied at the Canterbury University School of Art and the Royal College of Art in London. He now lives in the United Kingdom and France.

Culbert’s fascination with light has fuelled his practice for decades. He first experimented with light and movement in the 1960s and, since the 1970s, his work has encompassed photography, light, and found objects. He investigates, manipulates, observes, and experiments with light as both subject and medium.

Culbert has exhibited widely in New Zealand, England, France, the United States, and Australia, and has created public sculptures for Wellington, Christchurch, and Auckland. His work is held by Te Papa and in other major public collections throughout New Zealand.

FRONT DOOR OUT BACK

Bill Culbert’s exhibition *Front Door Out Back* was held from 1 June to 23 November 2013 at the Istituto Santa Maria della Pietà, the site of New Zealand’s national pavilion at the Venice Biennale. It was curated by Justin Paton, senior curator at Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu.

Culbert carefully selected the venue, situated by the canal on the busy pedestrian thoroughfare between Piazza San Marco and the Giardini. Following several site visits, he created works that responded to its interior and exterior spaces. These include the long entranceway once famously used by the composer Antonio Vivaldi (1678–1741) to teach his students, a small garden, and an enclosed courtyard.

Culbert has described how he felt when he visited the venue:

Walking through the Pietà complex and seeing the canal through the doors, straight to the water, was magic. There was also the sound – no cars and not many boats either. My notebook started filling fast with drawings.¹

The exhibition features nine sculptural works. All but one (*Level*) employ a combination of found objects and fluorescent light tubes.



¹ Quoted in Justin Paton, ‘There, Now! A conversation with Bill Culbert’ in *Bill Culbert Front Door Out Back Exhibition Readings*, Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu, 2013, p7.

IMAGES:

Bill Culbert at the entrance of the New Zealand Pavilion, La Pietà, for the 2013 Venice Biennale. Photograph by Jennifer French. Creative New Zealand
Bill Culbert, *Level*, 2013 (detail). Photograph by Jennifer French. Creative New Zealand



STUDYING ART IN CONTEXT

Studying the contextual factors influencing an art work's creation and reception is an important feature of learning within the fields of the visual arts and art history.

The New Zealand Curriculum guidelines for art history include a focus on studying art in context. Students need to 'connect art works to a range of contextual factors that influence their development, production, and value. Contextual influences may include personal or artistic, historic, religious, economic, social, political, technological, philosophic, theoretic, and gender'.²

Guidelines for teaching the visual arts within the New Zealand Curriculum include a focus on understanding the context for art. It is expected that students will identify 'particular

examples within art works that show the impact of a time, place, or culture on how and why they were made' and that they will develop the skills required to describe 'how personal, social, historical, and technological factors influenced or informed elements of the art work, such as how they were made, perceived, and appreciated by the audiences and critics'.³

When studying sculpture, and in particular public sculpture, the relationship between an art work and its physical location is a crucial factor. Determining whether a sculpture responds to its site, or whether the site was decided after the work was created, affects the way we understand its physical context.

^{2,3} tki.org.nz, 2013

CURRICULUM LINKS



Years 9–13

New Zealand Curriculum, levels 5–8

Learning area: The Arts

Visual Arts

- Understanding the arts in context
- Developing ideas
- Communicating and interpreting

NCEA Visual Arts

AS90913 1.1 Demonstrate understanding of art works from a Māori and another cultural context using art terminology.

AS91309 2.1 Demonstrate an understanding of methods and ideas from established practice appropriate to sculpture.

AS91444 3.1 Analyse methods and ideas from established sculpture practice.

NCEA Art History

AS91017 1.3 Demonstrate understanding of links between context(s) and art works.

AS91182 2.3 Examine the influence of context(s) on art works.

AS91484 3.3 Examine the relationship(s) between art and context.

AS91186 2.7 Demonstrate understanding of art works in relation to their physical environments.

Te Marautanga o Aotearoa, taumata 6

Ngā Toi

Ariā Matua

Hei whakawhanake i ngā tūmomo tukanga me ōna mōhio ki te huhua o ngā āhuatanga toi, i āna ake mahi toi me tērā o ētehi atu.

Toi Ataata, taumata 6

Ka tūhura hōhonu, ka rapu mātāpuna whakahihiri, ka tautohu, ka whai māramatanga:

- i ētehi ariā whakamahi i te hangarau
- hei whakamahi tōtika i ngā taputapu hei whakawhitiwhiti whakaaro
- ki te kunenga me te tūhuratanga a ngā kaitoi.

USEFUL BOOKS



- Ian Wedde, *Bill Culbert: Making Light Work*, Auckland University Press, Auckland, 2009.
- *Bill Culbert: Front Door Out Back*, exhibition catalogue, Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu in partnership with Creative New Zealand and Massey University, 2013.
- City Gallery Wellington, *Lightworks: Bill Culbert*, exhibition catalogue. City Gallery Wellington, 1997.
- Jenny Harper and Aaron Lister, *Wellington: A city for sculpture*, Victoria University Press, Wellington, 2007.

USEFUL WEBSITES



- **nzatvenice.com**
The official website for the New Zealand Pavilion at the 2013 Venice Biennale features images of *Front Door Out Back*, as well as videos of Culbert at work in his studio in France and installing the exhibition in Venice.
- **artstepapa.govt.nz**
Arts Te Papa is the online home of art at Te Papa. The website has images, articles, interviews, educational resources, and videos.
- **sculpture.org.nz**
The Wellington Sculpture Trust website dedicated to featuring public sculpture in Wellington, with images and information.

Drop



IMAGE: Bill Culbert, *Drop*, 2013. Photograph by Jennifer French. Creative New Zealand



Drop

BACKGROUND

Drop is a group of suspended, inverted chairs and a table, each of which has been pierced with a fluorescent light tube. The sculpture hangs high above the entrance lobby of the Istituto Santa Maria della Pietà – the site of Bill Culbert’s 2013 Venice Biennale exhibition, *Front Door Out Back*. It is the first art work visitors see when they enter.

QUESTIONS

- 1 Imagine standing underneath this art work and looking up at it. How does it make you feel? What does it remind you of?
- 2 Think about the art work’s title. Why do you think Culbert called it *Drop*? What does the title make you think about?
- 3 As the first piece that visitors encounter, *Drop* is like an introduction to the exhibition. The space in which it is exhibited is a small entrance lobby, which opens out to a canal. Within this context, why do you think Culbert chose to make a work that hangs from the ceiling rather than a floor or wall-based piece?
- 4 Venice is famous for its Murano glass factory and its opulent palaces, which are often decorated with chandeliers. How might this context have influenced the creation of this work?
- 5 The Venice Biennale is a huge contemporary art exhibition visited by people from all around the world. How might this context have influenced the creation of this work?

Bebop





Bebop

BACKGROUND

Bebop is a long sculpture made up of Formica tables and chairs and fluorescent light tubes. It is suspended along the entire length of a corridor that is famous for one of its previous uses. The Italian composer Antonio Vivaldi (1678–1741), who famously composed *The Four Seasons* in 1723, and taught students in the Istituto Santa Maria della Pietà, the site of the New Zealand Pavilion at the Venice Biennale 2013. The corridor is the second space that visitors encounter in the exhibition and leads on from the entrance lobby.

QUESTIONS

- 1 Culbert sourced second-hand furniture for this sculpture. What period does the style of furniture belong to? What does the style remind you of?
- 2 Think about the title of this sculpture. What does it remind you of? Why do you think Culbert chose the title?
- 3 Think about the physical properties of this long, narrow, high-ceilinged space, and consider its historical use by Vivaldi. What do you notice about the grouping of the objects, the angles at which the furniture and lights hang, and the way they have been arranged? What does the sculpture remind you of? In what ways do you think the sculpture may have been inspired by the space?

Strait





Strait

BACKGROUND

Strait is a linear, wall-based sculpture consisting of a series of white plastic 'Anchor' branded milk bottles with blue or green lids, held together by a fluorescent light tube. In Venice, it hung on the bare brick wall of a narrow passageway linking the front and back parts of the exhibition, between a long corridor and a garden.

QUESTIONS

- 1 Look at the sculpture's colours, shapes, and forms. What does it remind you of?
- 2 This sculpture hangs in contrast to its surroundings. Describe all the contrasting elements you can see.
- 3 What symbolism might be involved in each of the following aspects of the work?
 - The title (consider the different meanings of 'strait' and 'straight')
 - The sculpture's location, with a narrow passageway linking the front and back parts of the exhibition venue
 - The Anchor logo on the milk bottles
- 4 Consider the ways in which the milk industry is important to New Zealand. How do Anchor's new, light-resistant bottles relate to the potential interpretations of this work?
- 5 In what ways do you think this sculpture may have been influenced by the dual contexts of New Zealand and the Venice Biennale?

Walk Blue and Walk Reflection



ART IN CONTEXT | RESOURCES PART 1: FRONT DOOR OUT BACK ANALYSIS CARDS

IMAGES: Bill Culbert, *Walk Reflection* and *Walk Blue*, 2001/2013. Photographs by Jennifer French. Creative New Zealand



Walk Reflection and Walk Blue

BACKGROUND

Walk Reflection and *Walk Blue* are large sculptures made from wardrobes through which three fluorescent lights run horizontally. Each wardrobe has a different front panel: one is a mirror, the other is blue. Both sculptures are positioned in an enclosed garden, exposed to the elements, between the end of a narrow passageway and the entrance to another room in the exhibition.

QUESTIONS

- 1 Culbert sourced second-hand wardrobes for these sculptures. What style or artistic period do they represent? What do you associate with this style of wardrobe?
- 2 How do the fluorescent lights change the wardrobes' function, and the way we view them? What do they remind you of?
- 3 Culbert has removed these objects from their usual domestic context. How does their new context change the way you think about them? Why do you think he called the works *Walk Reflection* and *Walk Blue*?

IMAGE: Bill Culbert, *Walk Reflection* and *Walk Blue*, 2001/2013. Photograph by Jennifer French. Creative New Zealand

Daylight Flotsam Venice





Daylight Flotsam Venice

BACKGROUND

Daylight Flotsam Venice is a collection of fluorescent light tubes interspersed with an assortment of discarded coloured plastic containers and bottles. Apparently random in their placement, the objects that make up this sculpture are positioned directly on the floor of a room that opens out to a canal at its far end. The sculpture is arranged at the foot of an ornate brick stairway. The fluorescent lights give the sculpture its own light source, creating shadows and dramatic up-lighting that illuminates the space. This type of sculpture is called an ‘assemblage’ (a three-dimensional art work made up of found materials or objects) or ‘installation’ (an art work made for a specific environment).

QUESTIONS

- 1 *Daylight Flotsam Venice* uses plastic bottles that look like they previously contained cleaning liquids or chemicals. What symbolism might be involved in Culbert’s choice of these objects? What relevance does a work like this have in a throwaway, consumer society?
- 2 Consider the work’s title. ‘Flotsam and jetsam’ is a phrase often used to describe useless or discarded objects, but the words have specific nautical meanings. Flotsam is the floating wreckage of a ship or its cargo; jetsam refers to material that has been purposefully cast overboard, often to lighten a ship’s load. Why do you think Culbert has chosen to call his work *Daylight Flotsam Venice*?
- 3 *The simplest and cheapest material to me is often ... the most exciting ... no matter how beaten up it is or how disintegrated. It can continue on and on, even if what it’s used for changes. A throwaway society. That’s pretty dumb.*³
- 3 Look carefully at the way in which this art work is arranged in the space. What aspects of the space does it respond to? How might it look different in a different space?
- 4 Venice is built on an island surrounded by water, with canals as streets. The city regularly floods, and is at risk from rising sea levels. What aspects of the work may have been inspired by this context?

³ Quoted in Justin Paton, ‘There, Now! A conversation with Bill Culbert’ in *Bill Culbert Front Door Out Back Exhibition Readings*, Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu, 2013, p8.

Level





Level

BACKGROUND

Level is made up of a row of glass jars half-filled with water. The sculpture is suspended in an open doorway looking out to the canal, at the end of the room in which *Daylight Flotsam Venice* is exhibited. The jars capture light and distort reflections of their surroundings – ancient buildings, the canal, and passing boats and people. Each jar has been placed at a jaunty angle, but the water line remains level inside them.

QUESTIONS

- 1 *Level* is the only sculpture in *Front Door Out Back* not to use electric light; instead, it captures surrounding light. Consider what personal associations electric light and natural light have for you. In what ways are these light sources different? How does each affect the way we see things? How do these associations influence your interpretation of this work?
- 2 Describe the ways in which *Level's* physical surroundings impact on the work, and influence what you associate with it. If the work were exhibited in a different context, how might that change the way you experience and read it?
- 3 Think about the connotations of the word 'level'. A spirit level, for example, is used to determine a true horizontal line. What other phrases do you associate with the word?
- 4 Climate change is associated with rising sea levels. How may the work's title have been influenced by the context of Venice?

HUT, Made in Christchurch





HUT, Made in Christchurch

BACKGROUND

HUT, Made in Christchurch is enclosed by the ancient walls and ornate windows of a courtyard, which is exposed to the elements. Its stark modern frame contrasts with its surroundings. The shape of the sculpture is like a house or whareniui (meeting house). The sculpture is big enough to walk into – approximately the size of a traditional Māori whare (house), garage, tent, basic bush hut, boat shed, or garden shed. Culbert has said of this work:

*It's basically a refuge. Whether you make one up a mountain or in the bush or on a beach, a hut is about shelter. A light bulb is a bit like that too – elemental.*³

QUESTIONS

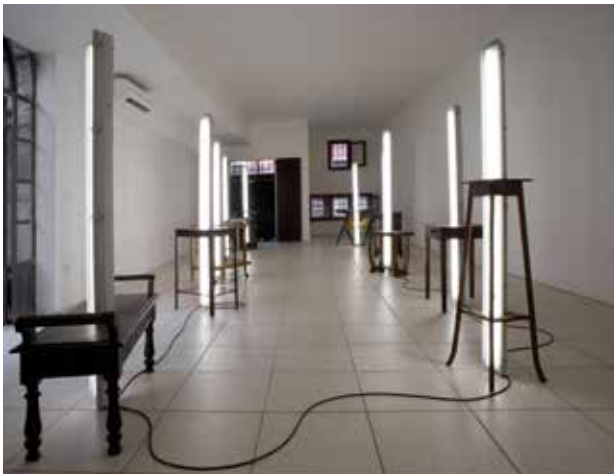
- 1 This sculpture relates to two different geographical contexts: the place it was made (Christchurch, New Zealand) and the place it is being exhibited (Venice, Italy). What connections do you make between this sculpture and these two contexts? How does the physical environment of the ancient courtyard change the way you view it?
- 2 After the Christchurch earthquakes, many people's homes were damaged or destroyed. How does the way you view the sculpture change if you consider it in this context?
- 3 Discuss ideas that you associate with light and shelter. Why are they both such important elements in life? What would life be like without them? Compare the types of light and shelter we have today with what was available to people 500 or 1,000 years ago. How would these differences have affected people's lives?
- 4 The sculpture's title has many possible connotations. Describe some things the word 'hut' makes you think about. What is the effect of using the word 'hut' to describe a structure that has no roof or walls, and offers no shelter from the elements? Why might Culbert have chosen this title for his work?

³ Quoted in Justin Paton, 'There, Now! A conversation with Bill Culbert' in *Bill Culbert Front Door Out Back Exhibition Readings*, Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu, 2013, p10.

Where are the other two?



ART IN CONTEXT | RESOURCES PART 1: FRONT DOOR OUT BACK ANALYSIS CARDS



Where are the other two?

BACKGROUND

Where are the other two? is an installation made from 10 small tables or desks, each of which has a fluorescent light tube running vertically through it. The objects are joined together as a group by their connecting black electrical leads. They stand in a loose circle on the tiled floor of a small, low-ceilinged room. This is the final room of the exhibition, accessed via a courtyard. It has a door that opens out to the canal.

QUESTIONS

- 1** Culbert sourced second-hand tables and desks for this sculpture. What might each object's former use have been? How have their original forms and functions been altered? How does this change the way you think about them?
- 2** Look at the way the different elements of the installation have been positioned within the room. How else could Culbert have chosen to arrange them? What does their current placement remind you of? Why do you think they have been linked together with their electric cords?
- 3** Reflect on the work's title, *Where are the other two?* What could it refer to? Why do you think Culbert chose to ask a question? What does it make you think about?

WELLINGTON WATERFRONT SCULPTURE TRAIL MAP



- 1 Michel Tuffery, **Ngā Kina** (2012).
Kumutoto
- 2 Bill Culbert, **SkyBlues** (2006).
Post Office Square
- 3 Len Lye, **Water Whirler** (2006).
Frank Kitts Park
- 4 Paul Dibble, **Fruits of the Garden** (2002).
Frank Kitts Park
- 5 Tanya Ashken, **Albatross** (1986).
Frank Kitts Park
- 6 Paratene Matchitt, **City to Sea Bridge** (1994).
Civic Square/Jervois Quay
- 7 Bill Culbert and Ralph Hotere, **Fault** (1994).
Civic Square
- 8 Neil Dawson, **Ferns** (1998).
Civic Square
- 9 William Trethewey, **Kupe Group** (1939).
Taranaki Wharf
- 10 Various artists, **Four Plinths** project.
Te Papa forecourt, Cable Street
- 11 Bill Culbert and Ralph Hotere, **VOID** (2006).
Te Papa (Level 2)

1 Michel Tuffery, *Ngā Kina* (2012)



IMAGES:

Michel Tuffery, *Ngā Kina*, 2012. Darren Foster, Nektar Films, Wellington, Aotearoa New Zealand
Michel Tuffery, *Ngā Kina*, 2012. Wellington Sculpture Trust

1 Michel Tuffery, *Ngā Kina* (2012)

Ngā Kina is an installation of nine giant kina (sea urchin) shells made from concrete-reinforced fibreglass. The kina weigh over 7 tonnes each and vary in size from 2 to 3 metres in diameter. At high tide, the kina are partly underwater; as the tide goes out, they emerge from the harbour.

Ngā Kina was commissioned by the Wellington Sculpture Trust and funded by various public and private sources. The artist, Michel Tuffery, originally submitted plans for a sculpture in 2004, but the Wellington Sculpture Trust did not initially select his proposal. Negotiations for the sculpture at its present site began in 2005. It was revealed to the public at an official opening in 2012.

Tuffery has commented about the meaning of the sculpture and its relationship to the site on Wellington waterfront, the former location of Kumutoto Pā:

In part its context acknowledges the history and physical geography of the area, although not visible or perhaps now not known, including the Kumutoto Stream, which flowed from Woodward Street to the sea, and the location of the historical, but now built over, Kumutoto Pā. The use of the kina shell forms can also be interpreted as a reference to a midden, a shell mound that may have existed at one time as part of Kumutoto Pā. Middens are archaeological features that contain the debris of human activity. They are a trace to the people and material culture that at one time existed. Its significance in indigenous terms resides in the midden's ability to provide tangible evidence of prior occupation.

Ngā Kina provides a strong and conscious link to the mana whenua of Wellington and pays homage to both their history and their significance, and the importance of their continued presence in the city as it evolves and reshapes.

According to the Wellington Sculpture Trust's former chair, Neil Plimmer:

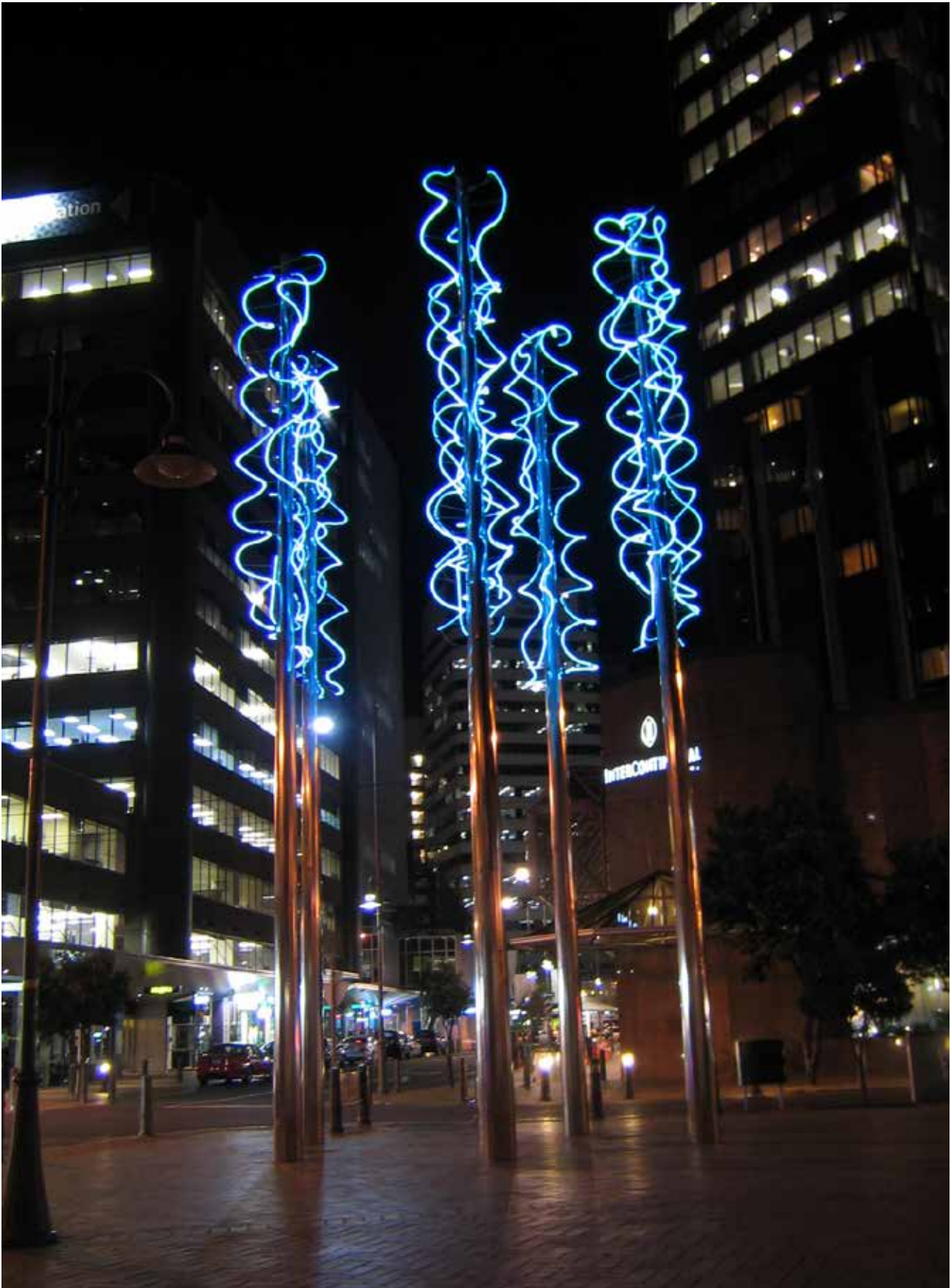
Ngā Kina commemorates and celebrates, but what it most obviously does is transform: its impact on this site is absolutely to change it permanently, to give it new life, an engagement, a dramatic and entertaining appeal.

Tuffery (1966–) is a New Zealand artist of Samoan, Tahitian, and Cook Islands descent. He lives and works in Wellington, and has exhibited widely overseas.

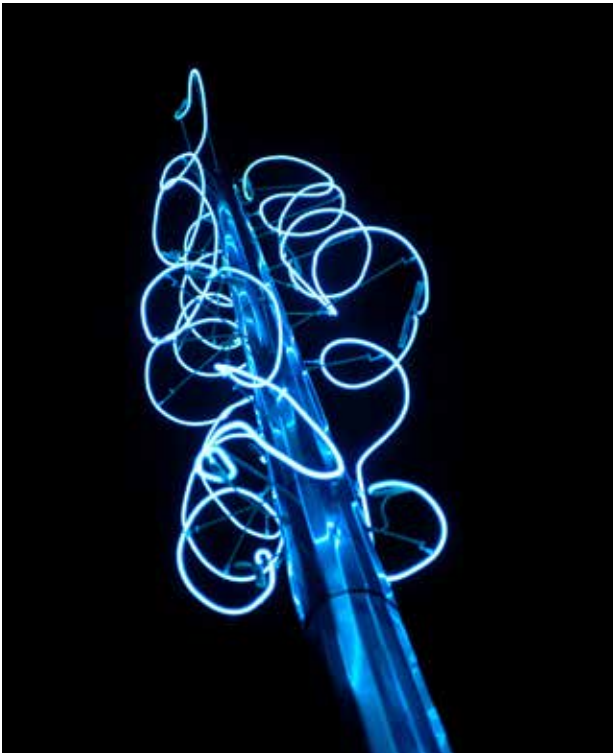


IMAGE: Michel Tuffery, *Ngā Kina*, 2012 (detail). Wellington Sculpture Trust

2 Bill Culbert, *SkyBlues* (2006)



2 Bill Culbert, *SkyBlues* (2006)



Bill Culbert's sculpture *SkyBlues* stands in Post Office Square in central Wellington. It consists of seven octagonal, stainless-steel poles that stand 11 metres high. The poles are arranged in a koru, or spiral formation. The position of the poles has been determined by the Fibonacci sequence – a mathematical formula found in aspects of nature such as sunflower seed heads and pine cones. Each pole has three squiggly blue fluorescent lights mounted on it – 21 in total. The squiggles may seem random, but Culbert actually provided his engineers with very precise technical drawings. It took them several months to craft the lights by hand.

The fluorescent lights are switched on 24 hours a day, but they are only visible when it is dark or if light levels are very low. Because of this, the sculpture looks very different during the day and at night. Neil Plimmer, former chair of the Wellington Sculpture Trust, recalls Bill Culbert referring to the sculpture as being like 'writing with light'.⁴

The sculpture was commissioned by the Wellington Sculpture Trust. The main funder was Tower Group, with additional donations from Wellington City Council, Creative New Zealand, private individuals, and trusts. Post Office Square had been selected as a site for a public sculpture, and Bill Culbert's work was selected based on drawings submitted in response to the trust's call for proposals. The completed work was presented to the city in 2006.

Culbert (1935–) is a senior New Zealand artist who has spent most of his adult life living between the United Kingdom and France, returning to New Zealand regularly to exhibit. Culbert's practice cannot be easily classified in terms of artistic genres, but various aspects of his work can be seen to relate to conceptual art, abstract art, arte povera, modern art, and minimalism. He has explored the use of light for many years as both medium and content. He has made many public sculptures both in New Zealand and overseas, including collaborative works with Ralph Hotere.

⁴ Neil Plimmer, public talk at Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, 18 April 2013.

IMAGE: Bill Culbert, *SkyBlues*, 2006 (detail). Photograph by Sam Johnson

3 Len Lye, *Water Whirler* (2006)



3 Len Lye, *Water Whirler* (2006)

Len Lye's kinetic sculpture *Water Whirler* is a flexible fibreglass pole mounted on a specially constructed pier over Wellington Harbour. It was built after Lye's death, based on drawings the artist made while he was alive. Lye wrote that it was intended to be 'a fantastic choreography, jet streams fling their spray, in three dimensions'. The sculpture is animated for short periods several times each day, spraying water that is pumped up from Wellington Harbour.

Initial funding for the sculpture came from a Lottery Board Millennium Grant to the Wellington Sculpture Trust. The work was developed by the trust in association with Wellington Waterfront, with funds from donors including ECC Lighting. The trust strived to ensure that *Water Whirler* performed just as Lye had intended it to.

The trust selected the location for the work and negotiated with the Len Lye Foundation, which maintains rights to produce the work. It was manufactured and installed by a team of engineers from the Technix Group, New Plymouth.

A computer programme had to be specially created to control the sculpture's working parts, which control its movement and water flow. The motors, springs, pivots, and weights are housed in the pier underneath the sculpture. The sculpture was completed in 2006.

Lye (1901–80) was born in New Zealand but spent much of his life living and working in the United Kingdom and the United States. As well as making kinetic sculptures, he created short films, drawings, and animations.



⁶ Len Lye quoted by the Wellington Sculpture Trust at sculpture.org.nz > Gallery > Len Lye.
IMAGE: Len Lye, *Water Whirler*, 2006. Wellington Sculpture Trust

4 Paul Dibble, *Fruits of the Garden* (2002)



4 Paul Dibble, *Fruits of the Garden* (2002)



Paul Dibble's bronze sculpture *Fruits of the Garden* is positioned on the top level of an open grass area at the edge of Frank Kitts Park, with Wellington Harbour as its backdrop.

The work was one of a number of sculptures exhibited along Wellington's waterfront during the 2002 New Zealand International Festival of the Arts. It was part of the 'Changing Spaces – New Zealand Sculpture Today' sculpture walk. The public received it so positively that it was subsequently purchased by Wellington Waterfront Ltd for permanent display.

Fruits of the Garden has three parts: a central bronze flanked on either side by fern fronds. The bronze at the centre depicts a woman's belly, thighs, and hips, one of which has been inscribed with a koru (spiral motif). A bronze apple sits on top of the female form. The apple could be read as a symbol of temptation reminiscent of the Garden of Eden.

Dibble (1943–) is a New Zealand figurative sculptor who regularly works in bronze. He has made many large-scale works, which are often exhibited outside. He often works in a lyrical style with abstracted human and animal forms.

5 Tanya Ashken, *Albatross* (1986)



5 Tanya Ashken, *Albatross* (1986)

Albatross was the first sculpture to be positioned in Wellington by the Wellington Sculpture Trust. The process involved in negotiating its creation and positioning led to the formation of the trust itself.

Water flows over each of *Albatross*'s three sculptural forms at regular intervals daily, temporarily transforming the work. The area surrounding the sculpture has undergone various stages of redevelopment and is now a popular place for leisure activities on Frank Kitts lagoon, particularly during the summer months. An outdoor cafe is adjacent to the sculpture.

The artist, Tanya Ashken, took inspiration for her work in the rock pools close to her home in Island Bay, on Wellington's south coast. The influence of British sculptors Henry Moore and

Barbara Hepworth can be seen in her approach to creating abstract forms. This work was originally conceived as three separate sculptures.

According to Ashken, the title for the work came in a moment of inspiration:

I have always been fascinated by the albatross, its size, its power, and its awesome grace. My sculpture is large and white and of the sea. There is a realistic albatross there too, as I realised when the sculpture was being built. I now think of it as a lament for the albatrosses as they disappear from this planet.

Ashken was born in England in 1939 and studied sculpture in art schools in Paris and London, before moving to New Zealand in 1963. She has exhibited widely in this country and lives and works in Wellington.



IMAGE: Tanya Ashken, *Albatross*, 1986 (detail). Wellington Sculpture Trust

6 Paratene Matchitt, *City to Sea Bridge* (1993)



6 Paratene Matchitt, *City to Sea Bridge* (1993)



Paratene Matchitt's *City to Sea Bridge* forms a pedestrian link between the Wellington waterfront and Civic Square. The bridge was built as the result of a competition launched in 1984 by the Wellington Civic Trust to find a solution to the separation of the city and the harbour. One of Matchitt's objectives was to enhance and respect the cultural significance of the harbour and waterfront for Māori and Pākehā, while also representing some aspects of Wellington's history.

On both sides of the bridge are two carved wooden manu (birds) and two taniwha (sea monsters). The manu have their wings spread wide open – a gesture of welcome. Birds play an important part in many Māori legends; it is said they brought the kūmara to Aotearoa. Kupe, the great explorer who first discovered Aotearoa, is said to have sailed with birds, which helped him identify land ahead. In other stories, birds play important roles as messengers.

Two taniwha named Ngake and Whātaimai are important characters in a Māori story about the formation of Te Whanganui-a-Tara (Wellington Harbour). The story tells how the harbour used to be a lake inhabited by the two taniwha.

Ngake wanted to break free from the lake and swim in the ocean waters, so he went to Petone, coiled himself around and around, then swam full speed towards the rocks next to the Miramar Peninsula. When he broke through them and made his escape to sea, he formed the harbour entrance. Whātaimai wanted to join him but got stranded on the rocks at low tide. His body is the piece of land now known as Hātaimai. Whātaimai's spirit is said to have transformed into a bird and flown to the top of Matairangi (Mount Victoria).

At the top of the bridge stand wooden poles that act like pou whenua (boundary posts) or modern-day signposts. Metal symbols are attached to the poles: star, moon, sun, mountains, arrow, and heart. Some of them represent symbols of navigation. Pacific voyagers used the stars to navigate their way to Aotearoa, and arrows direct traffic and pedestrians today.

Matchitt has used symbols such as the heart, cross, and triangular mountain before, inspired by those that appear on Te Wepu, the battle flag used by the Māori resistance leader Te Kooti during land wars in the North Island in the 1860s. In other contexts, the crescent moon can represent a tohu (portent) of a new world. The circle can symbolise the earth, the full moon, the sun, the universe, space, or Te Kore (the void before the creation of the universe). The triangle can represent a volcano, or maunga (mountain) – an identifier of place and belonging within Māori culture, and also a symbol of strength.

Matchitt (1933–) is one of a generation of Māori artists who played an important role in the development of the modern Māori art movement. His work incorporates aspects of traditional Māori art as well as influences from Western art practice.

7 Bill Culbert and Ralph Hotere, *Fault* (1994)



7 Bill Culbert and Ralph Hotere, *Fault* (1994)



Bill Culbert and Ralph Hotere's art work *Fault* consists of two parallel lines of diagonally positioned fluorescent tube lights that cross the width of Wellington City Gallery, in Civic Square. *Fault* is illuminated 24 hours a day, but the work appears less bright in daylight, becoming much more apparent and obviously luminous at night.

The work references Wellington's position on one major and several minor earthquake fault lines. The way it slices the building's facade is also a reminder of the geographical shifts that can take place after strong earthquakes. The 1855 Wairarapa earthquake, for example, reshaped Wellington's shoreline. It lifted new land out of the sea, including land now occupied by State Highway 2 between Wellington and the Hutt Valley.

Fault was commissioned by Scollay Holdings Ltd through the Wellington City Council Arts

Bonus scheme, which was designed to encourage local developers to consider incorporating art works on or near their building sites. Culbert and Hotere were invited to create a site-specific art work to mark the central library's transformation into the new City Gallery in 1994.

The large glass windows along the front of the building were boarded up to provide wall space to hang art works, and to cut out natural light, which can damage art works. Hotere and Culbert chose to use these new, blacked-out window spaces for their collaborative work. They were interested in the way the windows had moved from apertures of light to spaces of darkness.

Hotere (Te Aupōuri and Te Rarawa) died in April 2013. He and Culbert were friends for many years, and collaborated on several art works – Culbert's use of light complementing and contrasting with Hotere's signature black.

8 Neil Dawson, *Ferns* (1998)



8 Neil Dawson, *Ferns* (1998)



Neil Dawson's sculpture *Ferns* is suspended above Wellington's Civic Square by taut stainless steel wires that run between the Wellington City Council and City Gallery buildings. Made of coated aluminium, the work appears to float above the centre of the square.

The spherical sculpture is silver on the outside and gold on the inside, and depicts five types of native fern: whekī, pūniu, petako, lace fern, and ponga. It was commissioned jointly by the Wellington Sculpture Trust, the New Zealand International Festival of the Arts, and City Gallery, and was presented to the city in 1998.

Dawson was influenced by architect Ian Athfield's nīkau palm sculptures, which surround the square:

What I've aimed for is a sort of delicate intricacy that can float over the top of the palms so the two elements can work with each other ... because, of course, the basic form of the nīkau is overlapping ferns.

Born in Christchurch in 1948, Dawson is a senior Pākehā artist who is known for several public art works located in cities across New Zealand. He often explores optical illusions in his work.

9 William Trethewey, *Kupe Group* (1939)



9 William Trethewey, *Kupe Group* (1939)



The central figure of *Kupe Group* is Kupe, the legendary discoverer of Aotearoa New Zealand. He is depicted with his wife, Hine Te Āparangi, and Pekahourangi, their tohunga (priest). The three figures are standing on the prow of their waka, *Matahourua*. Hine Te Āparangi is pointing across the sea to this new land they have discovered. Its Māori name, Aotearoa (long, white cloud), is attributed to her.

Kupe Group was first exhibited as *The Coming of the Maori* in the 1940 New Zealand Centennial Exhibition in Wellington. It was part of a larger group of figurative works that each depicted some aspect of the progress of New Zealand, such as 'Pioneering Men' and 'Pioneering Women'. The sculpture was originally made of plaster.

Some time later, the sculpture was moved to the main hall of Wellington Railway Station, where Kupe could be seen pointing to the departing and arriving trains. It was vandalised and later taken to the Wellington Show Grounds in 1986. Subsequently it was held in storage at Te Papa, but in 1999 the Kupe Group Trust successfully fundraised to cast the sculpture in bronze. It has been situated on the Wellington waterfront since 2000. The new Wharewaka building now provides a backdrop to the sculpture.

The sculptor, William Trethewey (1892–1956), was born in Christchurch to English parents and worked as a wood carver and stone mason specialising in war memorials.

10 Various artists, Four Plinths project



10 Various artists, Four Plinths project

The Four Plinths temporary sculpture project is an initiative of the Wellington Sculpture Trust. The concrete plinths are located next to Te Papa and are intended for site-specific work that responds to some aspect of this unique location.

Every couple of years, a panel of arts professionals and trustees identify and invite a group of leading New Zealand artists to submit an expression of interest for this project. The works are installed for a minimum of 6 months and a maximum of 2 years, and remain the property of the artist.

Artists who have exhibited work as part of the Four Plinths project are Regan Gentry (*Green Islands*, 2007–10), Peter Trevelyan (*Mimetic Brotherhood*, 2010–12), and Joanna Longford (*Out of the Dusk*, 2012–).



11 Bill Culbert and Ralph Hotere, *VOID*

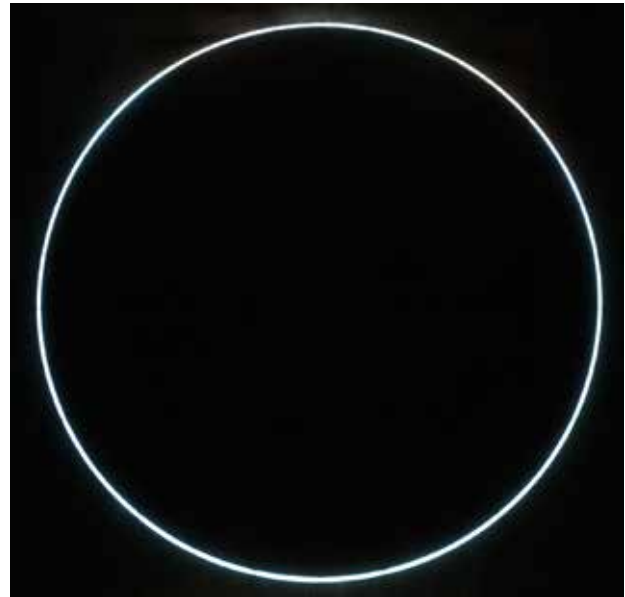


11 Bill Culbert and Ralph Hotere, *VOID* (2006)

VOID is a site-specific installation that spans the ihonui (central core) of Te Papa. One half of the work – a black rubber disc surrounded by a circle of neon light – is at ground level. The other half – a black painted disc dissected by a diagonal strip of neon light – is on the ceiling four levels above. It was commissioned by Te Papa in 2006.

Both Culbert and Hotere have explored the opposing forces of darkness and light in their work. In Māori belief, Te Kore (the void) is the empty darkness – the space of possibilities that existed before the formation of the world and the creation of light. The Māori creation story tells how Papatūānuku (earth mother) and Ranginui (sky father) held each other in a tight embrace. Their children were born and lived in darkness. The children grew restless and tried to separate their parents. Tānemahuta, god of the forest, lay on his back and pushed up against his father with his strong legs. By separating his parents, he let light into the world, after which all living things came into being.

The circular form on the floor can be seen to represent Papatūānuku; the diagonal line in the ceiling Ranginui. Visitors can walk over the bottom part of *VOID* and so become part of its story, caught in the space between its two halves. The work seems to create something from nothing – defining a space between.



QUESTION CARD 1: DESCRIBE AND INTERPRET A SCULPTURE

SHAPE AND FORM

Imagine you are describing the sculpture to someone who can't see it.

- What shapes can you see?
 - Describe the textures.
 - What do the shapes remind you of?
- Where else have you seen shapes like this?

Terminology: shapes, organic, from nature, from imagination, signs, symbols, figures, objects, text, geometric, hard-edged, repeats, patterns, cut out, outline, silhouette, lines (vertical, horizontal), diagonal, solid, smooth, rough, hard, soft, reflection, opaque, transparent.

COMPOSITION

Describe the composition:

- How are the shapes and forms arranged?
- Is the composition balanced or unbalanced?
- Is the composition simple or complex?
- What is the main point of focus? Where does your eye travel when you look at it?
- How do the different parts of the sculpture relate to each other?

Terminology: balanced, unbalanced, focus point, perspective, proportion, vertical, horizontal, diagonal, asymmetric, symmetric, clashing, harmonious, sympathetic, contrasting.

COLOURS

Describe the colours used:

- Which colours are most dominant?
- What mood or feeling do the colours give the sculpture?
- What do the colours remind you of? Where else have you seen them?

Terminology: warm, cool, contrasting, complementary, monochrome, bright, pale, bold, fluorescent, metallic, neutral, natural, light, dark, primary, secondary, shades, tints, tones, glossy, matt.

MATERIALS

- What materials have been used to create this sculpture?
- What mood or feeling do they give it?
- Where have you seen similar materials? What do they remind you of?

Terminology: wood, metal, plastic, found objects, textiles, organic material, plants, stones, shells, animal parts, glass, mirror, resin, paper, wire, electrical components, technological components.

PERSONAL RESPONSE

- What do you like about this sculpture?
- What does it represent to you?
- How does it make you feel?
- What do the objects, shapes, patterns, colours, or materials in the sculpture mean to you?
- What aspects of the work would you like to use in your own work?

[Draw or paste a picture of the sculpture here]

Artist(s) _____
Title: _____
Date: _____

SCALE

- Describe the scale of the sculpture and its various parts.
- How does the scale relate to human size?
- How does the scale make you feel?

Terminology: large, small, realistic, distorted, monumental, miniature, out of proportion, in proportion.

CONTENT AND SYMBOLISM

- How does the title help you understand the meaning of this work?
- How do you think the artist wanted people to respond to the work?
- What thoughts and feelings do you think he or she was trying to arouse?
- Could there be a cultural or symbolic reason for the colours, the scale, or the choice of materials?
- Could the artist be communicating a message through the sculpture? If so, what might it be?
- Which culture, period, or place do the shapes and symbols in the sculpture come from? Have they been 'appropriated' (taken from another artist or culture)?
- Are the shapes and symbols personal, culturally specific, or universal?
- What do other people you know think about this sculpture?
- Is the art work considered important in society generally? How do you know this?

CONSTRUCTION AND MOVEMENT

- How has the work been constructed?
- Was the work made by the artist or by someone else?
- What tools and techniques might have been used to make it?
- Does the sculpture have any moving parts? Does it need electricity or some other form of power?
- Describe the moving parts. How have they been constructed? What do they remind you of?
- What effect do the moving parts have on the way you respond to the sculpture?

Terminology: hand-built, machine-built, arranged, carved, woven, glued, balanced, sewn, welded, joined, sawn, constructed, moulded, manufactured, painted, sprayed, covered, upholstered, bound, engineered.

<p>SHAPE AND FORM</p>	<p>PERSONAL RESPONSE</p>	<p>CONTENT AND SYMBOLISM</p>
<p>COMPOSITION</p>	<p>[Draw or paste a picture of the sculpture here]</p>	<p>CONSTRUCTION AND MOVEMENT</p>
<p>COLOURS</p>	<p>Artists(s) _____ Title: _____ Date: _____</p>	
<p>MATERIALS</p>	<p>SCALE</p>	

QUESTION CARD 2: ANALYSE A SCULPTURE'S CONTEXT

49

PHYSICAL CONTEXT

- Was this sculpture designed to be site-specific, or was it positioned after it was made?
- Was the work made for a particular exhibition, organisation, building, public space, or landmark?
- Describe the sculpture's surroundings. How is the work displayed and positioned within them? Is it in contrast to its surroundings, or does it blend in? Do any of the shapes, forms, colours, or materials used in the sculpture also occur around it?
- How does the work respond to or relate to its physical site?
- Was the artist inspired or influenced by this location in the creation of the work? If so, how?

ENVIRONMENTAL CONTEXT

- Was the sculpture inspired by, or does it respond to, any issues relating to a particular environment or the environment in general? How?

POLITICAL CONTEXT

- Describe the political situation within which this art work was made or is being viewed.
- Does the work contain political symbolism?
- Have any political issues affected the reception of the work?
- What is the political position of the artist?
- In what ways may this work have been inspired by or respond to political issues?

[Draw or paste a picture of the sculpture here]

Artist(s) _____
Title: _____
Date: _____

VIEWER'S PERSONAL CONTEXT

- How does the work relate to you as the viewer?
- What angle do you view the work from (above, below, in front, behind, to one side, all around)?
- What does it remind you of? What do you associate it with?

CULTURAL CONTEXT

- Describe the culture within which the art work was made or is being viewed.
- In what ways may culture have influenced the creation of the work, or the way we view it?
- What is the artist's cultural heritage? Has this influenced the work? How?
- Is the work making a cultural statement?
- What aspects of culture does it relate to?

SOCIAL CONTEXT

- Describe the society that the art work was made in or for. Is that society different from the one in which it is being viewed? How?
- Does the art work have a social role, purpose, function, or effect?
- Has the artist been influenced or inspired by any aspects of society?

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

- Describe the historical period in which the art work was made. How is it different from the period in which you are viewing it?
- Does the work respond to any historical issues? What aspects of history does it relate to?
- Was the artist inspired or influenced by any aspects of history?
- How was the work received by critics when it was first displayed? Is it viewed differently now? How?

ECONOMIC CONTEXT

- Who paid for the art work?
- Was it commissioned?
- Was it made for a particular purpose or location?
- Has the content of the work been influenced by an economic issue?

ARTIST'S PERSONAL CONTEXT

- How has the work been affected by the artist's personal background, beliefs, or experience?
- How have the age, gender, ethnicity, or religious beliefs of the artist influenced the work?
- How has the artist been influenced by social, cultural, historical, political, or environmental events?
- How does the work relate to other works by the same artist? What is similar or different?
- How does the work relate to the work of other artists? What is similar or different?
- From where or whom did the artist get their ideas?

ARTISTIC CONTEXT

- What artistic styles or cultural traditions does the sculpture most strongly relate to?
- Describe some key attributes of these styles.
- Name other artists who have worked in this style or used similar materials, construction methods, shapes, or forms. Could this art work have been influenced by them, or been an influence on them? Why do you think that?

WORKSHEET 2: ANALYSE A SCULPTURE'S CONTEXT

<p>PHYSICAL CONTEXT</p>	<p>POLITICAL CONTEXT</p>	<p>HISTORICAL CONTEXT</p>
<p>ENVIRONMENTAL CONTEXT</p>	<p>[Draw or paste a picture of the sculpture here]</p>	<p>ECONOMIC CONTEXT</p>
<p>VIEWER'S PERSONAL CONTEXT</p>	<p>Artists(s) _____ Title: _____ Date: _____</p>	<p>ARTIST'S PERSONAL CONTEXT</p>
<p>SOCIAL CONTEXT</p>	<p>CULTURAL CONTEXT</p>	<p>ARTISTIC CONTEXT</p>

<p>PHYSICAL CONTEXT</p>	<p>POLITICAL CONTEXT</p>	<p>HISTORICAL CONTEXT</p>						
<p>ENVIRONMENTAL CONTEXT</p>	<p>[Draw or paste a picture of the sculpture here]</p> <table border="1"><tr><td>Artists(s) _____</td></tr><tr><td>Title: _____</td></tr><tr><td>Date: _____</td></tr></table> <table border="1"><tr><td>Artists(s) _____</td></tr><tr><td>Title: _____</td></tr><tr><td>Date: _____</td></tr></table>	Artists(s) _____	Title: _____	Date: _____	Artists(s) _____	Title: _____	Date: _____	<p>ECONOMIC CONTEXT</p>
Artists(s) _____								
Title: _____								
Date: _____								
Artists(s) _____								
Title: _____								
Date: _____								
<p>VIEWER'S PERSONAL CONTEXT</p>	<p>CULTURAL CONTEXT</p>	<p>ARTIST'S PERSONAL CONTEXT</p>						
<p>SOCIAL CONTEXT</p>		<p>ARTISTIC CONTEXT</p>						

PHYSICAL CONTEXT

POLITICAL CONTEXT

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

ENVIRONMENTAL CONTEXT

[Draw or paste a picture of the sculpture here]

ECONOMIC CONTEXT

VIEWER'S PERSONAL CONTEXT

Artists(s) _____ Title: _____ Date: _____	Artists(s) _____ Title: _____ Date: _____
---	---

ARTIST'S PERSONAL CONTEXT

SOCIAL CONTEXT

CULTURAL CONTEXT

ARTISTIC CONTEXT

PROJECT BRIEF: DESIGN A PUBLIC SCULPTURE

- 1** Select two public sculptures to draw or photograph as artist models for your own work. Record them from different viewpoints and angles, up close and far away. Try to record them at different times of the day and in different light and weather conditions. Include aspects of their surroundings.
- 2** Use the library or internet to research contextual information about these sculptures. If possible, interview people about their responses to the works.
- 3** For both artist models you have chosen, complete Worksheet 1: Describe and interpret a sculpture, and Worksheet 2: Analyse a sculpture's context. Use Worksheet 3 to compare and contrast the two sculptures.
- 4** Select an area of your local environment that you would like to create a public sculpture for.
- 5** Use the internet or library to research contextual information about this site.
- 6** Record all aspects of this location through drawings, notes, and photographs.
- 7** Use the images as backgrounds for designing your sculpture. Consider shape and form, colours, composition and scale, materials and construction, symbolism, meaning, and context.
- 8** Experiment with different options for your sculpture. Consider ways in which your sculpture might respond to the context of the site, composition, scale, materials, proportion, relationship to the viewer, and symbolism. Create a model of your final design.
- 9** Photograph your model and use collage or Photoshop to show it in position in the chosen location.
- 10** Describe how the selected artist models have influenced your work.
- 11** Describe how the chosen physical environment and its wider contextual factors have influenced the creation of your sculpture.
- 12** Explain any symbolism used and ideas being communicated by your sculpture.
- 13** Give your sculpture a title.

