

Timeless Toi: Reframing the Canon

An Educational Resource for Visual Arts (NZC Levels 6–8)

Overview:

Timeless Toi invites students to explore iconic New Zealand artists through a new lens — one that brings Indigenous, feminist, and place-based perspectives into conversation with the colonial legacy of our visual culture. This resource supports students in critically engaging with the artworks and artist labels, and in developing their own ideas about representation, history, and identity in Aotearoa.

Curriculum Links (Visual Arts – Levels 6–8)

Achievement Objective	How This Resource Supports It
Understanding the Visual Arts in Context	Investigate how artworks reflect and shape cultural, political, and historical contexts.
Developing Practical Knowledge	Analyse and apply artist methods, materials, and symbolism in student work.
Developing Ideas	Use Timeless Toi artists as a starting point for generating original, critically informed ideas.
Communicating and Interpreting	Interpret meaning in artworks; reflect on multiple perspectives and how artworks communicate ideas.

Artist Case Studies

For each artist, read the interpretive label and consider the following questions:

Charles Goldie

- *How do Goldie's portraits both honour and limit their Māori subjects?*
 - *What does it mean to be represented by someone outside your community?*
 - *How can we value technical skill while questioning cultural context?*
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Lois White

- *How did Lois White push boundaries in her time — as a woman, and as a narrative painter?*
 - *Whose stories are told in her paintings, and whose are missing?*
 - *How can stylised realism be used to communicate complex ideas?*
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Colin McCahon

- *How does McCahon use text and land to explore belief?*
 - *Where do we see tensions between his faith-based worldview and the Indigenous histories of the places he painted?*
 - *What responsibilities do artists have when drawing from cultural languages that are not their own?*
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Toss Woollaston

- *What feelings or impressions do Woollaston's brushstrokes evoke about the land?*
 - *Why might some viewers find his landscapes emotionally powerful, while others find them disconnected from the cultural context of place?*
 - *How can style affect how we connect with an artwork?*
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Doris Lusk

- *What role does infrastructure (like dams or buildings) play in Lusk's landscapes?*
 - *How might her paintings offer an early environmental perspective?*
 - *What does it mean to represent a changing land?*
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Nigel Brown

- *How does Brown use symbols to critique national identity?*
- *What makes his work distinctly "New Zealand" in style or content?*
- *How can visual art contribute to national conversations about history and belonging?*

Philip Trusttum

- *How does Trusttum's work reflect everyday life in Aotearoa?*
 - *Why might personal or domestic subjects be important in art?*
 - *What can abstraction or exaggeration tell us about a person or place?*
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Ivy Fife

- *What stories are told through Fife's portraits and urban scenes?*
 - *Why is it important to recognise women artists who worked quietly or outside dominant movements?*
 - *How does simplicity in style help us connect emotionally to a painting?*
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Bill Sutton

- *How did Sutton's work shape the visual identity of Canterbury?*
 - *How might his landscapes feel different today, knowing what we do about land use and history?*
 - *What makes an artwork iconic to a region?*
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John Weeks

- *How did Weeks introduce modernist ideas into New Zealand art?*
 - *What is gained or lost when artists adapt international styles to local contexts?*
 - *Why is it important to consider both innovation and relevance in evaluating an artist's impact?*
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Creative Tasks (for Classroom or Independent Work)

1. Artist Reframe

Choose one artist from *Timeless Toi*. Create a response work that “reframes” their practice through your own lens — personal, cultural, feminist, ecological, or Indigenous.

- Use techniques that reflect or adapt their style.

- Annotate your work to explain your choices.
- Consider what voices or perspectives you are highlighting or challenging.

2. Place-Based Inquiry

Choose a place you feel connected to. Create a visual work that explores:

- Its history (visible or invisible)
- Its personal meaning to you
- How it has changed, or how you wish to see it

Use inspiration from how artists in *Timeless Toi* represented place.

3. Artist Debate

In pairs or groups, research an artist from the show. Prepare arguments for and against this question:

"Can we celebrate an artist's work while still critiquing the worldview it came from?"

Present your arguments and reflect on your learning.

Assessment Ideas (for Teachers)

- **Internal NCEA Visual Arts Achievement Standards** this resource can support:
 - AS90915 / AS91322 / AS91457 (Develop ideas in a related series)
 - AS91460 (Produce a resolved work)
 - AS91461 (Analyse meaning and context in artworks)
- **Possible Cross-Curricular Links:**
 - History (colonialism, national identity)
 - English (visual texts, perspectives)
 - Māori Studies (Te Tiriti, cultural narratives)

For Class Bookings please email gALLERY@timdc.govt.nz Timeless Toi opens Friday 23rd May and runs until July 13th. Guided and Unguided visits are available.