

Colin McCahon – His Life and Work

This activity assesses:

Unit	10962	Research an artist and his or her work (Level 1)
Element	1	Research an artist's life and work
	2	Describe the artist's art works.

Task Conditions: Integrated with learning programme, research time

Instructions:

This activity involves researching the life and work of Colin McCahon through a variety of sources such as books, magazines and the internet, then describing a selection of his art works to show the links between his life and his work. You will present your findings in a work book (i.e. visual diary or art journal) presentation, or on A3 paper.

Task One: Research Colin McCahon's life and make a timeline chart.

- a) Locate and use any of the following resources to find information about the experiences in McCahon's life, which shaped his work. Write notes from these resources into your journal.

Books, Magazines, The Internet, Documentaries – (on Video and DVD), Interviews, Information from Museums and Art Galleries.

Some Recommended Resources:

Auckland City Art Gallery, *Colin McCahon, Gates and Journeys*, Auckland City Art Gallery, Auckland, 1988

Bloem, Marja and Browne, Martin, *Colin McCahon, A Question of Faith*, Craig Potton Publishing/Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, 2002

Brown, Gordon H. *Colin McCahon, artist*, Wellington, N.Z, Reed, 1984

Websites:

www.mccahon.co.nz

www.mccahonhouse.org.nz

Documentaries:

Rymer, Judy, (Director), *Victory Over Death*, 1988, 52 mins

Swadel, Paul, (Director), *I AM*, 2004, 72 mins

- b) From your research identify 7 important dates, where experiences in the life of Colin McCahon shaped his art works at that time. List these in your journal.

□ 1.1

- c) In your work book create a timeline, which identifies the 7 important dates you have chosen from McCahon's life.

On your timeline, accompany each important date with:

- A heading, e.g. 'Moves to Titirangi, Auckland from the South Island'.
- A small photocopy or drawing of an art work which was made close to that particular date.
- Written notes explaining the experiences in McCahon's life, which shaped his work.

□ 1.2

Task Two: Describing McCahon's Art works

- a) Choose 4 art works by McCahon from your timeline. Make a photocopy or print out of each work and paste each one onto a separate page in your work book.
- b) Using the following questions as guidelines, look closely at each art work. Then brainstorm your observations in relation to the questions around the art work in note form. Identify aspects of the work that relate to your ideas and observations.

Formal Qualities and Effects:

- Consider the formal qualities of each work. What do the: lines, shapes, forms, tonal shading, space, light, colour, composition look like?
- What effects (i.e. feelings, ideas or qualities) do the formal qualities of the work convey to you as viewer?

Subject Matter and Meanings:

- What is the subject matter of the work?
 - What messages or meanings was McCahon trying to convey by using this subject matter?
- c) Using your research from Task Two and your own observations, write 150 words describing each work and making links between the formal qualities, the subject matter and the life experiences of Colin McCahon. Present this neatly on the journal page with each work.

□ 2.1

Assessment Schedule

Task No.	Element and Performance Criteria	Evidence (The answers of performance expected from the students)	Judgement (A statement that defines the standard to be achieved)
1 a)	<i>Not assessable</i>		
1 b)	1.1	<p>The research identifies significant dates in terms of the artist's life and work.</p> <p>e.g. 1942: 'McCahon receives a copy of C.A. Cotton's 'Geomorphology of New Zealand' for a wedding present'. 1953: 'McCahon moves his family to Titirangi, Auckland from the South Island'. 1958: 'McCahon travels to America and views Modern American Art'.</p>	Five significant (important) dates are selected from research.
1c)	1.2	<p>The timeline explains the experiences which have shaped the artist's work</p> <p>e.g. 1953: 'McCahon moves his family to Titirangi, Auckland from the South Island'.</p> <p>McCahon came to Auckland expecting to gain a position working at the Auckland Art Gallery. He bought a house in Titirangi which was surrounded in Kauri trees and was close to the Manukau Harbour. He found the light in Auckland different to the light in the South Island.</p>	Three experiences are explained in notes based on the students research
2 b) & 2c)	2.1	<p>The description shows the links between the artist's works and his or her life experiences.</p> <p>e.g. <i>Manukau 2</i>, 1954, watercolour and gouache on</p>	One link is identified for each of three works, between the art work and the artist's life experiences.

		<p>paper, 54.3 x 74cm</p> <p>This work shows the change in subject matter that happened in McCahon's work when he moved to Auckland. The bare South Island hills have been replaced by the water and coast of the Manukau harbour.</p> <p>He has changed media from oil paint to watercolour to convey the watery quality of the light as he saw it.</p> <p>McCahon has fragmented the space to convey the changing qualities of the light created by the Auckland weather.</p>	
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