

**2006**

**Internal Assessment Resource**

**Level 2 NCEA**

Subject Reference: **Art History**

**‘Colin McCahon – The Changing Landscape’**

Supports internal assessment for:  
Achievement Standard 90231 version 2  
Research an art history topic  
Credits: 4

**Teacher Guidelines:**

The following guidelines are supplied to enable teachers to carry out valid and consistent assessment using this internal assessment resource.

**Context/setting:**

This activity assesses student's research into the importance of landscape to the work of Colin McCahon. The research leads to the writing of an essay for a publication entitled '*Colin McCahon-The Changing Landscape*'

**Conditions:**

Students will have four hours of class time and complete the activity as homework over three weeks.

**Resource requirements:**

Students will require access to the internet, books and magazines

**Recommended Resources:****Texts:**

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](http://www.mccahon.co.nz)

[www.mccahonhouse.org.nz](http://www.mccahonhouse.org.nz)

**Documentaries:**

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

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

**Additional information:**

- The brainstorm for Task One could be done in groups or as a class discussion
- Rather than an essay, the presentation of research findings could take the form of a research project, an interview, a role play, a video production, a radio documentary, a newspaper article, review, a wall chart, a web site etc.

2006

## Internal Assessment Resource

Subject Reference: Art History 2.5

Internal assessment resource reference number: ArtHist/2/5

### 'Colin McCahon- The Changing Landscape'

Achievement Standard 90231 version 2

Research an art history topic

Credits: 4

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## ***Student Instructions Sheet***

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### **Introduction:**

This activity assesses your research into the different approaches to landscape in the work of Colin McCahon. The research leads to the writing of an essay for inclusion in a publication called '*Colin McCahon – The Changing Landscape*'

**Task One:** Develop a research plan for your selected works.

**Task Two:** Gather information about your selected works, then organise relevant information about your selected works into the organising research sheet.

**Task Three:** Present your research in an essay to be included in a publication called '*Colin McCahon – The Changing Landscape*'

### **Conditions:**

This activity is to be completed using class and homework time over three weeks.

### **Hand in Checklist:**

1. Research Plan Sheet
2. Gathered and Organised Information
3. Written Essay
4. Bibliography

**Due Date:** This assessment is to be handed in on \_\_\_\_\_

**Task One:****Prepare a research plan which includes the following:**

- a) Choose 3 landscape works, each from different period/categories in McCahon's career. Identify your 3 chosen works in your research plan.

Some periods/categories that you could choose from when selecting works for your research

- **Otago landscapes, 1938-48**
- **Religious landscapes, 1940-50**
- **Canterbury landscapes, 1948-52**
- **Toward Auckland and Manukau series, 1953-54**
- **Kauri Trees, 1953-54**
- **Titirangi and French Bay landscapes, 1955-57**
- **The Northland works, 1958**
- **The Waterfall series, 1964-1967**
- **The Stations of the Cross, 1967**
- **Muriwai Landscapes, 1969-1970**
- **Parihaka and Urewera Landscapes, late 1970's**

- b) For each work brainstorm the initial ideas and observations you have from looking at the works and discussing them with others. Include these brainstorms in your assignment.
- c) List the places you could go to find resources and information about Colin McCahon and his work.

**Task Two:****In preparation for your essay, gather and organise relevant information to address the following:**

- a) Collect information about your chosen three landscapes by McCahon (from different categories in his career) For example:
- Titles, dates, media, size and location.
  - The specific subject of the work, i.e. the particular landscape depicted, any political issues or thematic issues which are addressed.
  - How the landscape is treated in the art work, e.g. through composition, colour, line, shapes, forms, light and dark, textures, text, symbols.
- b) How did local and international artists and artistic trends influence McCahon ideas and treatment of each landscape?
- c) How did McCahon's environment and context influence his ideas and his treatment in each landscape?
- d) What ideas did McCahon have about the New Zealand landscape? What did it mean to him?

Arrange your notes and photocopies neatly using headings to indicate their relevance to different aspects of the topic.

Optional: You may want to arrange your notes using the attached template for Gathering and Organising Information.

As you gather information, record your sources and organise these into a bibliography to be handed in with your essay.

### **Task Three:**

**Using the information you gathered and organised for task two, write an essay which is to be included in the publication entitled- '*Colin McCahon-The Changing Landscape*'. Your essay is to be 600-800 words long. In the essay include:**

- An outline of the importance of the landscape to McCahon's work
- An exploration of different approaches to the landscape in 3 works from different periods/categories in McCahon's career.

Within your exploration of the 3 works and in your essay conclusion:

- Explain and evaluate the ways in which context influenced the different approaches taken by McCahon to the landscape.

**Hand in all your notes and materials from task one to task three.**

### **Achievement Criteria**

To gain **Achievement** you will develop a research plan, gather and organise relevant information about McCahon's landscape works, and write an essay which shows that you are informed about the topic.

To gain **Achievement with Merit** you will develop a research plan, organise a range of information about McCahon's landscape works and write an essay which shows you are well informed on the topic.

To gain **Achievement with Excellence** you will develop a research plan, evaluate a range of information about McCahon's landscape works and write a comprehensive essay on the topic which evaluates the ways in which context influenced the different approaches taken by McCahon to the landscape.

## Template for Gathering and Organising Information

| Titles, dates, size, media, method of making, location | What is the specific subject of the work, i.e. the particular landscape depicted, any political issues or thematic issues which are addressed? | How is the landscape treated in the art work, e.g. through composition, colour, line, shapes, forms, light and dark, textures, text, symbols? | How did local and international artists and artistic trends influence McCahon ideas and treatment of the landscape? | How did McCahon's environment and context influence his ideas and his treatment in this landscape? | What ideas did McCahon have about the New Zealand landscape? What did it mean to him? |
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| Work One:  |  |   |   |  |   |
| Work Two:  |  |   |   |  |   |
| Work Three:  |  |   |   |  |   |

**Assessment schedule: ArtHist/2/5 – ‘Colin McCahon-The Changing Landscape’**

| Task   | Evidence towards Achievement  | Evidence towards Achievement with Merit                                    | Evidence towards Achievement with Excellence |
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| <p><b>One</b></p> <p><b>a)</b></p> <p><b>b)</b></p> <p><b>c)</b></p> | <p><b>Research plan identifies three appropriate landscape works by Colin McCahon</b></p> <p>e.g.<br/> <i>Takaka: night and day, 1948</i><br/> <i>Flounder Fishing Night, French Bay, 1957</i><br/> <i>The Northland panels, 1958</i></p> <p>A brainstorm of initial ideas related to McCahon’s landscape works is recorded</p> <p>Potential sources or places for research are listed</p>  | <p><b>As for Achievement</b></p>   | <p><b>As for Achievement</b></p>             |
| <p><b>Two</b></p> <p><b>a)</b></p>                                   | <p><b>Relevant information about the topic is gathered and organised in note form.</b></p> <p>e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information: <i>Flounder Fishing Night, French Bay, 1957, 72.5 x 81 cm, Painted in enamel on hardboard, Private collection, Sydney</i></li> <li>• Subject matter etc: This is a work which refers to fishing for flounder in French Bay, Titirangi, Auckland at night time.</li> <li>• Treatment of the landscape: The</li> </ul> | <p><b>A range of information is gathered and recorded in note form</b></p> | <p><b>As for Achievement with Merit.</b></p> |

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| <p>b)</p> <p>c)</p> | <p>landscape has been treated in an abstract way, reduced to small cubes and rectangles which suggest light reflecting on the water in the darkness etc.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Artistic Influences: This work shows an influence of Modern Artists from Europe such as the Cubists and Mondrian in the way the forms have been abstracted and broken down into small cubes. It develops from other cubist influenced works that he did in Titirangi.</li> <li>• Influence of environment and context: His move to Auckland changed his style from the solid, monumental landscapes that he was creating in the South Island e.g. <i>Six Days in Nelson and Canterbury</i>, 1950. He became more interested in the changing light and humid atmosphere of Auckland, compared to the strong light of the Canterbury plains.</li> </ul> <p>He painted in house paints on board as these materials were cheap and accessible. He did not have much money in his years at Titirangi to fund his painting.</p> |  |  |
| <p>Three</p>        | <p><b>Relevant information is organised and presented as an informed essay which includes:</b></p>  | <p><b>Relevant information is organised and presented in a well-informed essay which includes:</b></p> | <p><b>Relevant information is evaluated and presented in a comprehensive essay which includes:</b></p> |

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|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An outline of the importance of landscape to McCahon's work.</li> <li>• An exploration of different approaches to the New Zealand landscape by McCahon, including <i>description</i> of the ways in which context influenced the different approaches taken by McCahon to the landscape.</li> </ul> <p>e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• McCahon uses the New Zealand landscape as subject matter throughout his career, it is a constant subject matter despite his changing circumstances and context.</li> <li>• <i>Takaka: night and day</i>, 1948. In this work McCahon depicts the hills of Takaka in a simplified and stark manner, the repetition of the shapes creates a rhythmic quality. He uses the light over the landscape as a symbol to convey his ideas.</li> <li>• He was influenced by Renaissance painters such as Fra Angelico and by a book called C.A. Cotton's 'Geomorphology of New Zealand'. McCahon has tried to convey the underlying structure of the land in this work by stripping the landscape of any detail. This shows the influence of Cotton's diagrams.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An outline of the importance of landscape to McCahon's work.</li> <li>• An exploration of different approaches <i>and different ideas</i> McCahon had about the New Zealand landscape, including <i>explanation</i> of the ways in which context influenced the different approaches taken by McCahon to the landscape.</li> </ul> <p>e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• McCahon's landscape works are not just literal depictions of particular places. He saw the landscape as a spiritual place.</li> <li>• Using Renaissance influences and C.A Cotton's Geomorphology he depicts the landscape of the South Island in <i>Takaka: night and day</i>. in a simplified and stylised way which strips it of any detail and reduces it to being a symbol of the land or the 'essence' of the land, rather than a depiction of a specific place. The movement from light to dark over the land is a metaphor for a spiritual journey from darkness to light</li> <li>• His approach to the landscape changed significantly at different periods in his life. After travelling in America and experiencing the vastness of the American landscape and the large scale of American Modern art he</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An outline of the importance of landscape to McCahon's work.</li> <li>• An exploration of different approaches <i>and different ideas</i> McCahon had about the New Zealand landscape, including <i>evaluation</i> of the ways in which context influenced the different approaches taken by McCahon to the landscape.</li> </ul> <p>e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The landscape represents a range of meanings to McCahon. He saw it as being a spiritual place and used the landscape to explore ideas and issues to do with his faith and belief.</li> <li>• <i>Takaka: night and day</i> was executed from memory in Christchurch and represents symbol of the 'essential landscape' of New Zealand rather than a particular place. He purposefully represents a stark bare landscape, rather than the more pleasing landscapes which might appear in tourist magazines. There are connections to biblical messages from the creation myth when God says 'Let there be Light'. It also represents the idea of a 'promised land'. The symbol of the essential landscape is tied in with the symbolism of light and dark, representing a spiritual journey from darkness to light. This might represent</li> </ul> |
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|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• McCahon's changing context changed his approach to the landscape. As he became more aware of modern artistic influences such as the Cubists and Mondrian his style changed. This influence can be seen in the flat cubes of <i>Flounder Fishing French Bay</i>, 1957. This painting also conveys the qualities of a new landscape at French Bay, Titirangi, where he had moved to from the South Island. It is more decorative and fragmented than the stark landscapes from the South Island.</li> </ul> | <p>changed his style to incorporate these qualities into his painting. This can be seen in <i>The Northland panels</i>, 1958. Here McCahon dramatically changes format and painting style from the works he was previously making in Titirangi.</p> | <p><i>McCahon's</i> own spiritual journey, but also conveys wider meanings. McCahon uses early landscapes such as <i>Takaka: night and day</i> to explore the pre-dominantly Christian faith of New Zealand in the 1950's as well as exploring his own personal faith. He uses connections to religion through his treatment of the landscape and symbolism because he exploring his own faith, but also because these could be a common point of understanding and connection with the viewing audience at the time.</p> |
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