

# LAND BENEATH OUR FEET

THINKING ABOUT WHAT NZ ARTWORKS CAN TELL US.

NORTHERN CHIEFS SIGNED A DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE ASSERTING SOVEREIGNTY AND CREATING A NATIONAL FLAG. 1835

Taranaki rises, stylised and sharply defined as the focal point of this pyramidal composition. Perkins consistently used regionalist icons with symbolic meaning but he makes no reference to the battles that had raged here only 60 years before. Instead he uses a dairy factory which he saw as a symbol of progress.



“ART CAN EXPLAIN A RADICALLY CHANGING CULTURE TO ITS INHABITANTS.”

## QUESTIONS

What is Robertson saying about the connection between wāhi tūpuha and pākehā names for these locations?

What does this work remind you of?

When was it made, and what was happening in art and broader history at that time?

Robertson layers a single map from a surveyors' notebook over photographs of wāhi tūpuha arranged in a grid format. She wants us to question the consequences of European settlement on our idea of place and identity.

NATALIE ROBERTSON, THE SURVEYORS' FIELDBOOKS (NUMBER 5), 1996



PHOTOGRAPH, PRIVATE COLLECTION

### GRID

A geometric arrangement of squares or rectangles that form the underlying structure of an artwork.

### LAYERING

Placing images or information on separate picture planes.

### WĀHI TŪPUNA

Locations that have particular cultural or spiritual significance.

2015

TE AUPOURI, TE RARAWA, NGĀI TAKOTO AND NGĀI KURI TREATY SETTLEMENTS ENACTED INTO LAW ALLOWING THEM KAITIAKITANGA OVER ANCESTRAL LANDS.

MARY MCFARLANE, HĪKOIITI, 2015



INSTALLATION, WELLINGTON MUSEUM

## QUESTIONS

What is McFarlane saying about the effort and the never giving up that went into protesting about treaty injustices?

What do you think is worth remembering about this artwork?

If this artwork had been presented at another time would it have been as effective?

## QUESTIONS

What does Perkins think about who owns and makes decisions around land in New Zealand?

How do you think this artist felt about land?

What can you see just by looking at this art work?

1926

ROYAL COMMISSION INVESTIGATES THE CONFISCATION OF WAIKATO LAND.

### SUBDUED PALETTE

A restricted range of colours uses soft tones inside a narrow tonal range.

### NZ REGIONALISM

Defined by unpopulated landscapes with motifs to signify settlement; crisp, clearly defined forms; stark contrast between light and dark and a focus on place, isolation and identity.

### PYRAMIDICAL COMPOSITION

Placing objects within a large imaginary triangle in the picture plane creates a strong picture with a clear focal point.

CHRISTOPHER PERKINS, TARANAKI, 1931



OIL ON CANVAS, DUNEDIN

1947

'NATIVE' NOW REFERRED TO AS 'MĀORI'.



IN 1976, THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE LIVING IN NZ WHO IDENTIFY AS MĀORI.

1996

NGĀI TAHU RECEIVE AN APOLOGY FROM THE CROWN AS WELL AS ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL REDRESS.

WHAT DID THE ARTIST INTEND AND NOT INTEND TO SAY ABOUT WHAT IT IS TO BE MĀORI?

McFarlane chooses Whina Cooper's walking stick as a symbol of effort, struggle and protest. By repeating the walking stick she asks us to think about the protest stories of their former owners and the collective effort involved in achieving change.

### REPETITION

Repeated use of a shape, a colour, or an object in an artwork to create a rhythm, a pattern or an emotional response.

### SYMBOLISM

Using an item or an object to represent something invisible (such as an idea or a feeling).

### CONCEPTUAL

Art in which the idea being presented by the artist is considered more important than the finished product.