Puppets and Self-Discovery: A Fresh Perspective on Rita Angus’s Self-Portraits

Abstract

This paper describes the self reflexive analysis of a cross-curricular teaching unit created in response to the New Zealand touring exhibition Rita Angus: Selected Works. Rita Angus (1908 – 1970) is one of New Zealand’s most well known twentieth century painters and is best known for her portraits and landscapes, both in watercolour and oil paint. Though based in the visual arts and developed in the context of an art gallery, the teaching unit used drama reciprocally with visual arts content to reframe learning. The underlying rationale was to create dynamic learning experiences which took the essence of Rita Angus’s portrait work and moved it into the children’s world, making it significant and engaging to the visiting students. Through the creation of ‘identity puppets’, the concept of self in Rita Angus’s portraits was linked to the students’ own lives. Students viewed and created self-imagery, as well as developing identity and character through the use of puppets. These expressed aspects of themselves, and the form of the glove puppet enabled students to have direct engagement with their work. The paper analyses the trial unit in relation to: individual versus group identities; agency; personal investment; hands-on learning; constructivism; personal transformation and the nature of reality.

Introduction

This paper describes the self reflexive analysis of a teaching unit devised by the writer of this article, Esther McNaughton, educator at The Suter Art Gallery, Nelson, New Zealand. This was done in order to study and enhance the researcher’s own practice through careful self observation, following La Pierre and Zimmerman’s (1997) rationale of action research. In doing so it aimed to help educators increase understandings of how they could enhance students’ learning through the arts.

The unit of work was created in response to the touring exhibition Rita Angus: Selected Works. At The Suter the author’s role is to provide education services to mainly primary aged students, and by extension to their families, educators and others who accompany these classes. The purpose of this unit was underpinned by her philosophy regarding education at The Suter, namely that learning in the arts has benefits which span far beyond their discrete curriculum area: the arts can serve as a conduit to enable cognition and facilitate learning in a general sense (McNaughton, 2010).

This unit was cross-curricular: the visual arts were obviously integral to the project since it was developed in the context of an art gallery, but drama was used, reciprocally with the visual art content, as the means of transformation, to reframe learning. Because of this the unit could also be termed ‘inter-curricular’. Neelands (2007) explains inter-curricular
learning experiences as “located at the interstices between the facts, knowledges . . . (which might be) neutralised in the curriculum plan; and the plurality of lived experiences, (which can be) enunciated in the drama space” where “students may find themselves moving between the illusionary reality of the normative curriculum and the reality of illusions they create in drama so their experience of the curriculum is transformed” (Neelands, 2007, p54).

The aim was to bring static images to life for students, to give so-called great works of New Zealand art personal relevance for the children. The unit was aimed at the Level Three of the New Zealand Curriculum but it could easily be adapted for lower or higher levels. This unit was trialled with an after-school art class of fifteen eight–twelve year old students who met once a week at The Suter Art Gallery to make art. In addition to being part of teaching relating to the exhibition **Rita Angus: Selected Works**, it was envisioned that this unit could be used at a later date using reproductions of the images which are part of the teaching material.[i]

Figure One: The research group display their completed puppets. Image credit: Martin de Ruyter, Nelson, 2012

**Overall Purpose**

From May – June 2012, The Suter Art Gallery in Nelson hosted Te Papa’s touring exhibition **Rita Angus: Selected Works**. The writer/educator was aware of the high level of interest this would have for local schools, due largely to the teachers’ interest in Rita Angus because of her fame and popularity as an artist. However she was also aware that the paintings themselves and their subject matter was not of direct or obvious interest to the primary-aged children who constitute the majority of students who visit The Suter. Although much of Rita Angus’s work deals with issues of personal identity, which can have relevance to everyone, her world and concerns are of an era very removed from the students’ experience. The most pressing aspect of this unit was to create dynamic learning experiences which took the essence of Rita Angus’s portrait work and moved it into the children’s world, making it significant and engaging to the visiting students.

Rita Angus’s self-portraits provide a clear example of the development of an individual’s understanding of the complex facets of their identity. She has provided many varied reflections of herself in the range self-portraits she completed throughout her life. The exhibition in question showed a number of these: three completed oil paintings as well as a number of watercolours and a pencil drawing, however her full repertoire includes over fifty self-portraits an a range of styles and media. She presents herself in many guises: as the modern woman; the Polynesian goddess; and the warrior, to name a few. She also boldly
exposes her inner self to the world. This is particularly seen in the nude full body self-portraits she made after her miscarriage in 1942.

A significant benefit of Rita Angus’s portraits for students is that they allow an insight into the complexity of facets in any one individual, and how different aspects of the self might serve different functions in one’s life. The overall purpose of the unit was for students to examine identity through both the viewing and making of self-imagery, and the creation of identity and character through the use of puppets. By the conclusion of the unit the students had, in effect, created a self-portrait painted on canvas, which expressed aspects of their identity. However because it was in the form of a puppet (like a glove) the students were able to have a more direct engagement with their work than with a standard painted self-portrait.

**Relating the Objectives to Theoretical Understandings of Drama and Curriculum**

(Refer Appendix One)

Identity is critical to how we function as people in the world. In Holzman’s (2008) view identity is fixed as opposed to developmental. Her view is that “socially, identity is not formed, but performed” (Holzman, 2008, p.72), and for this reason drama is a very suitable way to become increasingly competent in understanding and utilizing one’s identity. Holzman describes performing or playing with identity to get outside or beyond it, which is desirable since identity can be a form of (unintentional) resistance or reticence to becoming worldly or sophisticated. She stresses the value in awareness of our identity, since so many of our responses are guided and at times constrained by it.

The New Zealand Curriculum has the vision of developing “confident, connected, actively involved lifelong learners” (Ministry of Education, 2007, p.8), which clearly can be facilitated by personal understandings of oneself and one’s role in the community, through developing an awareness of who we are, namely our identity. The curriculum’s five key competencies of thinking, using language and text, managing self, relating to others and participating and contributing, represent aspects of the way we manifest our identities.

Specifically The New Zealand Curriculum describes *The Arts*, as a medium for “students to explore, refine, and communicate ideas as they connect thinking, imagination, senses, and feelings to create works and respond to the works of others” (Ministry of Education, 2007, p.20). The writer suggests that freedom to explore the arts allows an effective way to develop an understanding of one’s identity, on multiple levels.

In this case drama was used, hand in hand with visual art, to enable students to explore the boundaries and possibilities of their own identity. As the New Zealand Curriculum states “Drama expresses human experience” (Ministry of Education, 2007, p.20). In this unit identity was explored “through purposeful play, both individual and collaborative, (as students) discover how to link imagination, thoughts, and feelings” (Ministry of Education, 2007, p.21). Students had fun blurring the boundary between who they are and who they are not. Through this they gained a deeper appreciation of themselves and their place in their community. The aim was that the puppets they created and performed with enabled the students’ reflection and the enrichment of the cultural life of their schools, whānau, and communities” (Ministry of Education, 2007, p.21).
Outline of the Lesson Sequence

- **Lesson One: Rita Angus**

Students visited The Suter Art Gallery to view *Rita Angus Selected Works* and through a scaffolded lesson learnt contextual information about her life and ideas. Initially students surveyed the range of artworks on display and made observations about her as an artist. This was developed as students moved on to focus on the portraits in the exhibition. In groups they analysed an assigned portrait in three ways: firstly they viewed the image and discussed a range of surface features relating to the artwork such as colour and brush strokes, as well as looking at the subject and decoding and analysing visual cues to provide insight into the sitter. Next the puppets were introduced: Each group had a puppet which was simply a laminated A3 colour photocopy of the subject of their portrait with an attached handle. In their groups students took turns holding the puppet and taking on the role of its character using the drama convention of hot seating. Other students in the group asked questions (a suggestion sheet was provided) which the puppeteer had to answer in role. Some questions need to be answered factually and some required inference. The final stage was the groups developed a kind of a mihi for the character, to introduce themselves, in role, to the rest of the class. They used ideas discussed in the prior two stages of the lesson for this.

The second aspect of this lesson involved using Rita Angus’s tonal work as a model for a practical art exercise. Students looked at the painting *Flight* and practiced using tone to do pastel drawings of doves, in preparation for the creation of their personal puppets.

- **Lesson Two: Clowns**

Using a range of paintings of harlequin clowns (showing different moods) as models, students made an acrylic painting of a clown and concurrently discussed the function of clowns and the group’s emotional response to them and why. In this way students examined their feelings about role-playing and uncertainty. Students also were able to talk about the clown’s character and imagine the person beneath the costume as this related to creating a role for oneself, which was the task in the creation of the puppets. Additionally in this lesson students practiced the use of analogous colour contrasts in preparation for their puppets.

- **Lesson Three onwards: Self-Portraits Puppets as Alter-Ego or Magnified Self.**

With reference to Rita Angus and the clown lesson the group discussed their own identities and who they were in different situations, how they might appear, what they might feel underneath and what people might think about them. The group discussed nicknames and how these could tell us something about one’s personality. There was discussion of alter-egos versus magnified personalities.

The teacher introduced her puppet in role, as a very contrary but funny version of herself, as an introduction to the puppet making task. Following this students sketched themselves in pencil using a mirror making the image as realistic as possible.

- **Lesson Four and Five: Making the Puppets**
Students used photographs of themselves and the sketched from the previous lesson as reference to develop designs for their possible alter-egos or magnified selves. One of these was developed into an image for the puppet. This was then painted on to triangular canvas shapes using textile ink, using colour and tone concepts discussed earlier in unit.

- **Lesson Six: Using the Puppet.**

In prior lessons students had been talking about and developing their character in the process of making the puppet. Students then used a worksheet which compared their usual self to the self in the puppet in order to clarify the identity of the puppet. At the final stage students developed a kind of a mihi for their character so it could introduce itself to others (refer to Lesson One). Each student developed a number of personal qualities, attributes and anecdotes suiting their puppet’s personality, before choosing a name which that reflected its character. The conclusion was a performance of their mihi, introducing each character to the group, followed by class discussion of the process and the outcome.

**Selected Puppets**

Figure Two: Completed Puppet Credit: Esther McNaughton, Nelson, 2013
Discussion: Identity

Exploring identity was the main purpose of this unit of learning. Because of this it was important to start with a clear definition of identity to establish a common understanding of what the concept comprised in this instance, including its purpose for an individual and their community.

- The Individual and the Group
Lave (1996) considers an awareness of one’s identity and its implications as integral to the learning process. He defines learning as “the identity-making life projects by participants in communities of practice” (Lave, 1996, p.35). This statement denotes both the individual and group as having roles in this. When considering their relationship Wright (2011) uses the term ‘intersubjectivity.’ This arises out of interaction, and is a notion which helps us better understand the unfeasibility of isolated individuality, by focussing on the socially shared elaboration of subjectivity. In the trial unit the learners constituted an after-school art class who met once a week at The Suter to create artwork. This community of practice differed from a class at school, in that, although they met less frequently, they had a specific shared purpose, an interest in and passion for art.

Discussing the roles of the individual and the collective in learning Gadamer (2004) states that the individual perspective emphasizes the importance of each person having the opportunity to be creative and construct new experiences in the process of meaning-making. On similar lines Saebo (2011) finds that, in drama, the individual aspect of the learning process is important because it is the person who constructs their own understanding through a conscious, phenomenological meaning-making process. She explains the individual’s importance in meaning making thus; “The focus on the individual aspect . . . is important as all meaning-making would be meaningless without a . . . subject” (Saebo, 2011, p.26). The individual and collective aspects of learning are reciprocally dependent; however it is the quality of the collective learning process that determines the quality of the individual learning process in drama. Saebo (2011) declares learning through classroom drama to always have individual and collective aspects. The individual has experiences and perspectives, and collectively the community uses these for the learning which the group creates together.

For this reason, drama is an excellent starting point for the type of individual understandings which underpin learning as suggested by Lave. In the current study, although the purpose of the after-school art class was making art, students were enthusiastic about the inclusion of drama as part of their sessions. Due to its casual nature and small class size students in this class tended to share ideas and anecdotes freely in the process of making their art. They discussed all sorts of things from religion to pop music, and expected to share their thoughts in a relatively unmediated way.

Mason (2008) stresses the significance of social identity, which is being formed and developed continuously through interactions with others. She explains that self understanding and self/other understanding develop at the same time, in parallel, and also notes the close relationship of these to cultural identity, and an individual’s need for collective continuity and belonging to a group. Most members of the pilot group had attended classes for at least a year, expressing enthusiasm for the group, The Suter, the teacher and art-making in general. This confidence in the process and belief in the value of the experience appeared to add to the student outcomes.

**Agency**

The term agency is described by Wright (2011) as “foregrounding individual choice, freedom and intentionality; it speaks of being powerful and taking control of one’s life” (Wright, 2011, p.111). However he cautions against the possibility of associated self-interest explaining that, “agency exists in relation to others with social bonds being a powerful way of
knowing ourselves and attributing meaning” (Wright, 2011, p.111). In his view agency enables young people to be intentional and active in creating their identities. He describes drama as enabling individuals to become creative and active constructors of knowledge in other words cultural producers rather than cultural consumers. This enables them to practice agency. In the current study, the fact that the trial group was voluntary gave a good basis for agency in these students. Additionally the teacher’s art instruction encouraged students to make as many decisions themselves as possible. In her view they were the artists, while she was the facilitator supporting them to fulfil their artistic vision.

Wright (2011) describes how drama, in particular, develops participant’s awareness and the capability of being social actors or agents in their own lives. However Neelands (2007) cautions that drama cannot of itself teach in any kind of way, nor can it be of itself powerful. It is what we do with drama, through our own human agency that has the power. As Wright (2011) proposes, “Human agency is embedded and iteratively engaged in cultural understanding, change and diversity” (Wright, 2011, p.114). However one related consideration is that, in this case, the students in the trial group were mainly from middle class backgrounds. The vast majority of them came from primary schools of Decile 7 and above. The group itself did not have have remarkable elements of diversity within it, with no children coming from “needy” backgrounds (the fact that the class was fee paying had an influence on this) and with almost all the students being New Zealand European.

- Personal Investment

Related to the concept of agency is that of personal investment. Zoss et al’s (2007) study engaged students from diverse backgrounds in personally meaningful activities. The researchers found participants were all drawn into mask composition in ways which allowed them to deal with ideas that were personally significant. One participant particularly, Peta, took on the mask design as a personal project in which he was highly invested, in contrast to his usual schooling. Zoss et al considered that it was the culture of the class in part which kept him significantly involved with the project. They described the neglect of the person in schooling in the last century, citing Dewey’s view that conceptions of identity need to be addressed in school, in order to make education a space for developing thoughtful democratic citizens.

The situated nature of the learning task in Zoss et al’s study was significant; the social networks of the classroom, school and the larger community in which the students are participants influence the learning which can take place. Lave and Wenger’s (1991) concept of ‘communities of practice’, involves social, situated learning. They describe “a community of practitioners within which situational learning develops, resulting in the community’s development of … a set of relations among people, activity and the world” (Lave and Wenger, 1991, p.98). “Communities of practice are groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly” (Wenger, 2006, para.4). He goes on to explain that they are dynamic and involve learning on the part of all members. Wenger (1998) also suggests that the community of practice occurs over time, as its members collectively develop and practice the specific characteristics, relating to its social, situational and domain-specific identity. This very much describes The Suter after school art class of the current study. Paris (2006), who has considered the museum environment in terms of communities of practice, suggests that establishing an identity as a
member of the community of practice, and being an expert in this group, instils a sense of personal pride. Although the students at The Suter were all working on their own task to create the puppets, expressing their own ideas and personality, in addition being part of the group could be seen to be affirming.

Neelands (2007) is “encouraged by the miracles of particular students finding a voice in drama, or students considered dysfunctional within the system who find some sort of home in the drama classroom that temporarily allows them to lower the barricades and reveal the hidden sides to their characters” (Neelands, 2007, p.47). The Suter students were extremely engaged in the unit, in particular the creation of the puppet. The unit was highly scaffolded, particularly in the foundation stages. After the lead-up of looking at Rita Angus’s work, making clown paintings, and pencil observational self-portraits, the puppet-making itself was less structured for the students. By then they were judged to have enough knowledge to develop their work largely independently. This had the purpose of increasing their sense of personal ownership of the artworks.

- Hands-On Learning and Constructivism

Puppets were integral to this unit; in an art gallery there is a strong emphasis on looking, due to the nature of the setting. However in line with Saebó’s (2011) idea of direct and concrete experience with a phenomenon being the premise for understanding; a hands-on approach was chosen. This was to take a fairly distant learning experience (namely learning from self portraits by Rita Angus) and make it engaging for students. The writer observed that immediately the students picked up the laminated puppets in the first lesson, their demeanour changed, becoming animated and playful. They appeared to be in control and said anything (within the boundaries of the role). Fantastic stories arose based on features observed in the paintings.

As Wright (2011) states, a long standing principle of drama is the notion of active participation or learning by doing, and specifically as Zoss, M., Smagorinsky,P.& O’Donell-Allen, C. (2007) explain, in relation to their case-study, “artistry was a means for engaging differently and individually each of the participants toward the common goal of creating an identity mask composition” (Zoss et al, 2007, p.7). Making puppets, as well as using them, gave students both the opportunities for hands-on with Rita Angus’s portraits and for using ‘artistry’ for self-expression. The two aspects elicited quite different responses from the students: using puppets showing Rita Angus’s portraits, students were bound to follow the rules of that character, the criteria for developing the role was largely pre-determined; but students’ prior knowledge and cultural backgrounds were acknowledged as their own puppets very much reflected the students themselves and their concerns.

However, as Wertsch (1991) explains, tools are implements either material or psychological through which people act on their environments. So, in the trial unit, as well as hands-on learning, cognitive tools were engaged as well. For example, during Lesson One as the students studied Rita Angus’s self-portraits, they learned about and practiced a range of cognitive tools which enabled the effective decoding of meaning within the visual texts under analysis (Rita Angus’s self portraits). The unit had a constructivist approach, with the view that the students would build their own learning. Gadamer (2004) describes “experience as construction” as the creation of new experiences that are not yet confirmed in our life-world.
These will then enter into and be included into the person’s life-world of experiences. It is this creative process of “experience construction” that Gadamer says is the premise and basis for the construction of understanding. The trial unit effectively used a range of structured learning experiences, using hands-on and cognitive tools, to enable students to build up the skills and knowledge they needed to create their own self-portrait puppets. This complex unit was built up over a period of time, continually revisiting concepts and practical approaches, using different lenses. The intention was that this construction of learning would lead to personal transformation within the students.

Transformation

Hodgson (1972) describes acting as an “experiment in living . . . Learning how to live comes through experiencing. Improvisation is a means of exploring which we create the conditions where imaginative group and personal experience is possible. It is a spontaneous human response to an idea or ideas or set of conditions” (Hodgson, 1972, p.212). He describes every single human being as a subject for research, purporting that we must accept opportunities to grow by finding out about ourselves, and discovering our particularities in relation to other people. This unit was designed largely to give the students an opportunity to experiment with their identities, to try on other aspects, like dress-ups. Although the unit was seen by students as fun and engaging (a strong objective of after-school programmes), the intention was that students would develop their sense of wellbeing through the freedom of playing with self-expression.

Neelands (2007) puts forward that different cultures share a common sense of expectation; that the transformation of performance may have personally and socially efficacious, aesthetic and socially entertaining purposes. He emphasizes Boal’s focus on drama being used to influence reality not merely reflect it. For Neelands these transformations, which are such valuable aspects of drama, are more likely to occur in artistic and pedagogic positions that are intended to produce change. Much art is produced to function as an instrument of cultural change, for example Rita Angus strongly advocated and expressed Pacifism in her artworks. However at The Suter artworks are generally on the wall, not to be touched, creating a separation between the viewer and artwork. The inclusion of drama involved a whole new physical way of relating to the artworks and concepts covered, which was both engaging and empowering. These two aspects are critical to transformation.

• Real Versus Not-Real

Robinson (1980) describes multiple identities within all of us stating, “None of us consists of a single unique self which we can casually express when called on. Personal consciousness is a maelstrom of competing self-images which shuffle and blend continuously according to past experiences, immediate events and the subjective states they produce.” (Robinson, 1980, p.155). Heathcote (1980) describes the focus of her teaching as, “the difference in reality between the real world where we seem to really exist and the ‘as if’ world where we can exist at will” (Heathcote, 1980, p. 8). It is the ease of agency in the world of “what if” that enables Neeland’s transformations (discussed in the last section). Heathcote explains the nature of her teaching as creating reflective elements within the existence of reality: Brecht’s “visiting another room.” Children have an advantage here since they seem to have a much better capacity to suspend their disbelief than adults.
Moving this back to identity it is interesting to consider Gee’s (2003) study on avatars. His term “projected identity” describes projecting one’s values and desires onto a virtual character, as well as seeing one’s virtual character as a project in the making. He describes it thus: “virtual character can be embedded with a certain trajectory through time defined by my aspirations for what I want the character to be and become” (Gee, 2003, p.55). In effect the self-portrait puppets acted as the students’ avatars. They were characters from Dorothy Heathcote’s “as if” worlds, with the child as their puppeteer giving them boundless agency.

Reflection

The two most important benefits of this unit were: firstly, that it gave the students means to experience Rita Angus’s portraits in a personally significant way; and secondly that it enabled them as individuals to develop more complex self-knowledge. Visual art and drama were an effective combination for delivery: the visual art viewed initially gave focus and purpose for the learning, the early role-play activated the students’ understanding of the images viewed; and later in the art-based puppet-making activity the dramatic aspect provided an engaging motivation. Additionally, the hands-on aspect acted as a vehicle for progressive development of concept throughout the course of the unit.

The students were highly motivated and regarded this as a fun unit which they could not wait to come and take part in. However regarding personal transformation, the type of students who attend The Suter’s after school classes tend to be from well-off families. In terms of Bourdieu’s (1977) concept of habitus (a set of dispositions which generate practices and perceptions), these children come from a social class with significant cultural capital. As Merriman (1991) points out that the likelihood of museum (or gallery) visiting is predetermined by one’s habitus. For the trial group in this study, the gallery was “their kind of place” and they saw reflected in the images their kind of culture. For this reason therefore it is hard to see this particular trial of the unit as having any significant effect of redressing social differences or allowing the identities of minorities to be shown and empowered. In this case the unit focussed on personal growth which is part of any human’s development regardless of social class or race. To use concepts from this unit with a different group of students from other backgrounds could achieve very different results, in terms of overt transformation. In Bourdieu’s terms the trial students might be seen to have the confidence of agency already if they have a sense of ‘ownership’ of the gallery.

The fact that this was trialled on after-school art students also had an effect on the outcome. The group was small, the children familiar with the gallery environment, and very interested in art. In a classroom however the unit could take place more flexibly, each session would not be a week apart, the teacher would have more capacity to extend or break up the lessons. Because of this the outcomes could be quite different.

Conclusion

It is my hope that this unit plan will be used by other teachers, adapted and developed. In my view it is very worthwhile to provide art experiences for children which are not only hands-on and engaging, but teach children that art is, in essence, a very meaningful and important thing, something which gives us the freedom to step into the unknown, be it the outer world, or as in this case, one’s inner world. This multi-layered unit had the capacity to reach children
significantly in a number of ways and help them develop their understandings of what it means to be human. Although it is hard to measure the outcomes of this unit, its solid structure, varied learning approaches around a theme and measured scaffolding ensured the maximum number of students benefitted from the learning opportunities provided.

Appendix One

Specific Learning Outcomes of the Unit:

This Level Three unit facilitates students’ learning towards meeting the following specific Drama and Visual Arts objectives, developed from New Zealand Curriculum Achievement Objectives.

1. Drama

Students will:

- Investigate the functions and purposes of drama in cultural and historical contexts through the examining of images of a variety of paintings of harlequin clowns. UC
- Use techniques and relevant technologies to explore drama elements and conventions through the creation and use of puppet alter-egos. Students will use techniques of role-play and puppetry to present a character to an audience. PK
- Initiate and develop ideas with others to create drama through the shared creation of character mihis for the portraits of Rita Angus. Students will use visual information from Rita Angus portraits to develop a character for role-play. DI
- Present and respond to drama, identifying ways in which elements, techniques, conventions, and technologies combine to create meaning in their own and others’ work through presenting both the mihi of Rita Angus’s characters and also the mihi of their own puppet character. Students will present a version of a mihi using their self puppet, identifying ways in which elements, techniques, conventions, and technologies using role-play to present an alternative personal identity to the audience. CI

2. Visual Arts

Students will:

Investigate the purpose of objects and images from past and present cultures and identify the contexts in which they were or are made, viewed, and valued, through the exploration of Rita Angus’s portraits and the ways they reflect aspects of her life, both of her inner and external world. UC

- Explore some art-making conventions, applying knowledge of elements and selected principles through the use of materials and processes, through the observation and practice of Rita Angus’s painting techniques (particularly tone) in the development and creation of the self-portrait puppets. Students will develop an understanding of how tone and colour contrast can work to create an effective self image. PK
- Develop and revisit visual ideas, in response to a variety of motivations, observation, and imagination, supported by the study of artists’ works, through the process of
analysis of Rita Angus’s self portraits, through use of puppetry, and the development of painted images both of clowns and themselves, leading to the creation of self portrait puppets. In the groups students will develop ideas of alter ego and self magnification to create drama. DI

- Describe the ideas their own and others’ objects and images communicate, through the use of the puppets to express concepts communicated in Rita Angus’s self portraits and those communicated in their own self images. CI


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**Biography**

Institution: The Suter Art Gallery

**Esther McNaughton** has been the educator at The Suter Art Gallery in Nelson, New Zealand for thirteen years. Prior to that she worked as a primary school teacher. She has recently completed her Masters in Museum Studies, and has a particular interest in the role of creativity in cognition. Esther has a strong belief that visceral elements can activate and improve learning.

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[iii] Deciles are used by the New Zealand Ministry of Education to allocate funding to schools. They reflect the average socio-economic backgrounds of students at the school. There are ten deciles; decile one having the highest proportion from low socio-economic backgrounds and decile ten, from high socio-economic backgrounds.