

EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES AT WHIRINAKI WHARE TAONGA

EDUCATIONAL RESOURCE

 Whirinaki Whare Taonga
ARTS | CULTURE | EVENTS

Whirinaki Whare Taonga is Upper Hutt's own art and culture hub. We are committed to offering FREE engaging and accessible experiences for local students and have a range of exciting world class programs

About Whirinaki

Whirinaki Whare Taonga is a living house of treasures. Our name was gifted by Ōrongomai Marae in 2011 and reflects the centre's deep commitment to community, cultural connection, and creative learning. "Whirinaki" means "to lean on" or "to support," reminding us this is a space where people, knowledge, and creativity are woven together.

We host incredible exhibitions curated by experts and drawn from collections around the world. These taonga (treasures) are now here in Aotearoa for us all to enjoy, explore, and connect with.

Whirinaki Whare Taonga is proud to welcome your ākongā to our latest exhibition

TERM 2: NUGENT WELCH; SKETCHES FROM THE TRENCHES



Nugent Welch: Sketches from the Trenches invites ākongā to step back in time to the **First World War** through the eyes of Nugent Welch, New Zealand's first official war artist.

Having served as a soldier in the trenches, Welch recorded what he experienced through delicate watercolours and quick sketches. Influenced by **Impressionism**, his paintings focus on light, atmosphere, and landscape rather than dramatic battle scenes. Human figures rarely appear, instead, quiet landscapes and empty spaces suggest the presence and experiences of soldiers.

Before leaving for Europe, Welch was already developing his artistic practice in Aotearoa. After returning from the war, he continued painting landscapes, including scenes in the **Hutt Valley**, where he spent time working at **Pumpkin Cottage in Upper Hutt**. Many of the places he painted are in the same area where we live and work today, creating a special connection between local history, place, and art.

Through Welch's work, students will explore how artists record history differently from historians and how art can capture emotion, memory, and lived experience. The exhibition opens conversations about resilience, perspective, identity, and remembrance.

NUGENT WELCH



Lifetime:

30 Jul 1881 - 16 Jul 1970

Came to New Zealand: As a child

Lived: Wellington

Career: Artist & teacher at Wellington Technical College

Known for:

- Expressive landscape paintings
- Capturing light, mood, and atmosphere

BEFORE THE WAR

- Painted peaceful New Zealand landscapes
- Inspired by Impressionism
- Focused on light, colour, and atmosphere
- Worked outdoors (*plein air*)
- Loved painting natural, quiet places

Favourite subjects:

- Castlepoint
- Rivers, hills, and coastal scenes



HIS LIFE AS AN ARTIST

- Worked as both a teacher and practising artist
- Dedicated to painting regularly outdoors
- Captured everyday New Zealand scenes
- Became increasingly committed to art as his main focus



DURING WORLD WAR I

- Served in **World War I**
- Was called away from his artistic life
- His experiences had a lasting impact on him

WHAT CHANGED AFTER THE WAR?

- Decided to focus more seriously on being a full-time artist
- Paintings became more emotional and expressive
- Brushstrokes became looser and freer
- Less focus on perfection

More focus on **feeling and atmosphere**



PUMPKIN COTTAGE

In the late 1800s, Upper Hutt was known for farming and sawmilling. When the railway arrived in 1875, nearby Silverstream became a popular getaway for visitors and a perfect place for artists to paint.

James McLachlan Nairn arrived from Scotland in 1890. He was part of the *Glasgow Boys*, a group of artists who supported the new and modern Impressionist style.

LIFE AT PUMPKIN COTTAGE

By the 1890s, Nairn began staying at Pumpkin Cottage in Silverstream.

- He brought students and artists from the Wellington Art Club
- Artists painted outdoors during the day
- Evenings were filled with music, storytelling, and laughter
- There was swimming, fishing, and long creative days

The cottage became a creative retreat—full of energy, ideas, and friendship.



WHERE DID THE NAME COME FROM?

The name *Pumpkin Cottage* came from a clever local signal:

- A pumpkin was placed on top of the chimney
 - This told someone on the train to get off at Silverstream
- The artists loved the story so much, they even painted a golden pumpkin on the cottage.



WHY IT MATTERS

- The cottage was small and simple—but important
- It became a hub for Impressionist artists in Aotearoa
- It helped shape a new way of painting: capturing light, mood, and moments

After Nairn died in 1904, the cottage remained an artist gathering place until the

Impressionism in Aotearoa

Pumpkin Cottage artists painted in the **Impressionist style**:

- Focused on light, colour, and mood
- Captured moments quickly
- Less about perfect detail, more about feeling

This was very different from earlier art styles that aimed for realism and precision.

Not everyone understood this new style some critics disliked it but the artists supported each other and built a strong creative community.

CURRICULUM LINKS

Visual Arts Curriculum Links (Year 7)

Visual Arts: *Investigating how art from different times and places communicates meaning and develop and share their own artworks in response to historical themes.*

Level 4 Achievement Objectives

- Explore and apply art-making conventions (composition, tone, colour, texture, space) to develop ideas and create artworks.
- Investigate how artists use techniques and processes to communicate meaning in different contexts.
- Develop and refine observational and expressive drawing skills.

Analyse and discuss how artworks reflect the time, place, and experiences of the artist.

Social Sciences Curriculum Links (Year 7)

Social Studies: *Understanding how people remember and record the past, and why it's important. Exploring how people's lives have been shaped by significant historical events and the actions of individuals and groups and understand how cultural practices, values, and perspectives are expressed and preserved.*

Level 4 Achievement Objectives

- Understand how people pass on and sustain culture and heritage for different reasons and that this has consequences for people.
- Understand how people's perspectives on events are influenced by their values and experiences.
- Understand how historical events have significant impacts on individuals, groups, and societies.

Gallery & Workshop Schedule

Mihi whakatau & karakia – A warm welcome.

Presentation and discussion in classroom

Guided gallery exploration – Close looking, discussion. Sharing impressions, questions, and reflections on perspective and memory.

Creative Workshop – Students create their own watercolour landscape painting

Reflection & Poroporoaki – Sharing artworks and insights.



Our Big Questions This Term

1. What do pictures show us that words sometimes cannot?

Pictures can communicate **emotion, atmosphere, and experience** in ways that words often struggle to fully describe. Through elements like colour, tone, light, and composition, artists can show how something *felt*, not just what happened.

For example, a painting of a WWI trench might not include written explanations, but students can still understand:

- the **cold, muddy conditions** through colour and texture
- the **mood or tension** through dark tones and enclosed space
- the **isolation or scale** through composition

2. What can art tell us about life in the trenches during WWI?

Art provides insight into the **everyday realities of soldiers' lives** that may not always appear in official historical records. While records often focus on dates, battles, and strategies, artworks reveal:

- the **living conditions** (mud, cramped spaces, weather)
- the **emotional experiences** (fear, boredom, exhaustion, loneliness)
- the **environment and landscape** of the trenches

Artists like Nugent Welch painted from personal experience, meaning their work reflects both **observation and memory**. Students can analyse these artworks to better understand what life may have been like beyond textbook descriptions.

3. Why is it important to preserve personal perspectives alongside official records?

Official records often present a **broad or formal version of history**, focusing on major events and outcomes. However, personal perspectives—like paintings, letters, and diaries—provide:

- **individual experiences and emotions**
- **different viewpoints** on the same event
- a more **complete and balanced understanding** of history

By preserving both, we gain a richer picture of the past. Students learn that history is not just one story, but many voices and perspectives.

4. How can artists tell stories about the past?

Artists tell stories through **visual storytelling techniques**, including:

- **subject matter** (what is shown)
- **composition** (how elements are arranged)
- **colour and tone** (to create mood and meaning)
- **symbolism** (objects or scenes representing deeper ideas)

In the context of WWI, an artist might show:

- an empty landscape to represent loss
- dark skies to suggest danger or uncertainty



Learning Before & After Visiting Whirinaki Whare Taonga

ONLINE LEARNING RESOURCES WORLD WAR I (AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND)

Resources	Link to resources	What the resources about
WW100 Programme Office Events and teaching resources	http://ww100.govt.nz/	A website sharing stories, timelines, and resources about New Zealand's involvement in World War I.
Te Papa Tongarewa Rehabilitation of returned soldiers	http://collections.tepapa.govt.nz/Topic/818	An online collection of WWI objects and artworks that help students explore real historical evidence.
WWI Factions: The New Zealand Army	WWI Factions: The New Zealand Army	A resource explaining the role and experiences of the New Zealand Army
World War I teaching resource	World War I teaching resource Te Papa	A school resource with activities and personal stories to help students learn

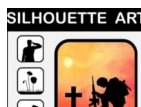
ARTIST & PUMPKIN COTTAGE

Te Ara Biography of Nugent Welch 	https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/4w12/welch-nugent-herrmann	A biography explaining Nugent Welch's life as an artist and WWI war artist.
Expressions Whirinaki Arts and Entertainment Centre Pumpkin Cottage Collection	https://www.expressions.org.nz/online-collection	An online gallery of New Zealand artworks, including the Pumpkin Cottage artists.
Upper Hutt City Libraries Local history archive	https://uhcl.recollect.co.nz	A digital archive of local history, photos, and stories from the Upper Hutt community.
PUMPKIN COTTAGE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES	Pumpkin Cottage Educational Resource » WHIRINAKI WHARE TAONGA	An education resource about New Zealand Impressionist artists and the Pump-

CREATIVE

LEARNING & ACTIVITIES

Silhouette art



[Suzanne Welch Teaching Resources](#)

Painting background as glue on black silhouette

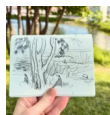
Poppy crafts



[Pin on remembrance crafts](#)

Creating poppies for ANZAC with wool

Plein air



Take the glass outside to draw Plein air

The Artful Parent Outdoor art ideas for kids

<https://artfulparent.com/21-outdoor-art-ideas-for-kids>

Craft ideas to do in Plein air

Learning Before & After Visiting Whirinaki Whare Taonga

EXHIBITION QUICK QUIZ (WITH ANSWERS) WORLD WAR I

1. When did World War I start?

4 August 1914

2. When did the fighting stop (Armistice)?

11 November 1918

(The Treaty of Versailles was signed on 28 June 1919)

3. What was World War I also called?

The Great War

4. Name TWO countries that were allies of New Zealand:

France, Britain, Ireland, Australia, Italy (any two)

5. Name TWO countries that were enemies of New Zealand:

Germany, Austria-Hungary, Turkey, Bulgaria (any two)

ARTIST: Nugent Welch

6. What type of scenes did he like to paint?

Landscapes and nature

7. How did his art change after the war?

It became more emotional and expressive
Brushstrokes became looser and freer
Less focus on perfection, more on feeling

8. Name ONE place he liked to paint:

Castlepoint

PUMPKIN COTTAGE

9. Who started Pumpkin Cottage as an artist retreat?

James McLachlan Nairn

10. Where was Pumpkin Cottage located?

Silverstream (Upper Hutt)

11. What style of art were the artists exploring?

Impressionism

12. What was placed on the chimney to send a message?

A pumpkin

