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CLASSROOM PRACTICE CASE STUDY

MAY 2009

FASHION TEXTILE DESIGN TECHNOLOGY

YEAR 13



MARAE PANELS

Students in the Year 13 class at Wellington High School designed and created individual hanging panels for the school marae. These were created as samplers to demonstrate some of the textiles manipulation techniques they had practised in class. Students had to consider intellectual property and values, and make design changes in response to stakeholder concerns over an issue.

TEACHER GUIDANCE

- Developing textiles skills
- Intellectual property
- Values
- Integrating stakeholder concerns over an issue

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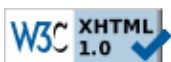
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Case Study CP902: Marae Panels

Background

Wellington High School is an inner-city decile 9 school with a 2008 roll of 998 students. All Year 9 students take a term of Fashion Technology, which is offered as an option at Year 10, and in Years 11-13 can continue in the Fashion Textile Design Technology course.

A number of students transfer to Wellington High at senior level, as it is the only city secondary school that is co-educational and does not have a school uniform. This often means senior classes are of mixed skill levels and experience. Teacher Kylie Merrick's Year 13 class, for example, included students who had mastered Fashion and Textiles knowledge and skills at an exceptionally high level and those who hadn't taken the subject before, as well as international students working on a non-exam course.

Having enjoyed the Clothing option at secondary school, Kylie applied to do either Fashion Design or Industrial Design at Wellington Polytechnic (now Massey University School of Design) where she was encouraged to take Fashion, because the Industrial course was then considered a "boys" area. After completing her diploma Kylie did freelance work in Wellington, doing shop window displays, graphic design and helping with exhibition installations, amongst other things.

During this period Kylie also returned to Polytech as a part-time lecturer in Fashion Design. She enjoyed this work and eventually decided to train as a Technology teacher at Wellington Teachers' College (now part of Victoria University). While teaching, Kylie was asked to lecture part-time in the Fashion school at Massey and she has also worked for NZQA in facilitating, moderating and examining roles. Since beginning teaching she has completed a Master of Design degree in order to upgrade her original qualification for teaching purposes. Kylie has also continued doing a wide range of freelance design work.



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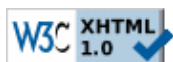
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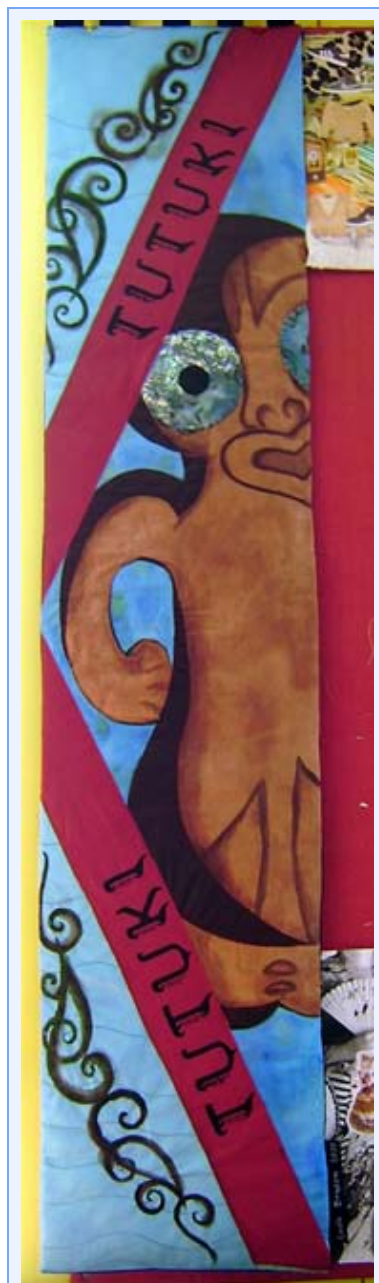
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Pre-planning

While sitting in the school marae **Taraika** at the annual beginning-of-year staff meeting, Kylie contemplated the aesthetics of the building. She says that in her experience maraes are colourful, decorative places with really beautiful interiors and exteriors, something which appeals to her love of visual stimulus. In contrast, Taraika is a young marae (built in 1994) and its whanau (family) is constantly moving on, consequently, she notes, there has been limited opportunity for "gifting" decoration and the interior "looked quite plain". Over the year she thought about how it might be brightened up and decided that creating some kind of decoration for Taraika would make a great project with a client for a Year 13 class.

In 2008, Kylie discussed the possibilities with her class, and suggested that a project like this would provide them, as seniors, with an opportunity to give something back to the school and to leave a little part of themselves behind for future generations. The students were enthusiastic about the idea and, when Kylie proposed a set of hanging panels to add colour and interest to the marae, keen to work on these. She notes that this sort of project allows the better students to be extended and also caters for those new to the subject or who lack advanced skills.

Students would design their panels as an artistic piece for a client, and also as samplers to display a variety of textile manipulation techniques. They had to consider a large number of stakeholders – all the students and staff in the school, as well as community groups which used the marae for meetings. However, Kylie identified HOD Māori **Matua Ben** (Ben Tangaere) and Principal Prue Kelly as the main clients. Other key stakeholders were teachers/auxiliary staff who were Māori or had strong links to Māoridom, and kapa haka (Māori performing arts) students.



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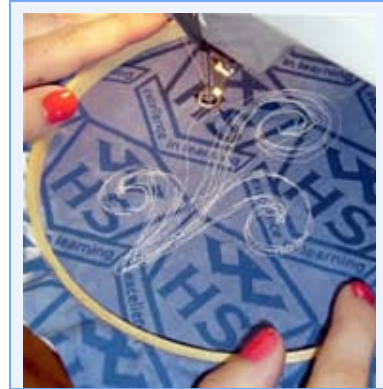
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Delivery

The unit started with a visit to Taraika, to give new students a more in-depth look at the marae and provide an opportunity for others to observe it in a new context. They discussed the opportunities and practicalities in hanging panels, and sketched ideas for installing the panels – one constraint being that they couldn't be placed on the back wall which is reserved for photographs commemorating those who died while attending/working at Wellington High. They also had to think about any other possible constraints imposed by cultural considerations while discussing how they might approach their brief. Kylie says she directed the class to work out their own solutions, rather than imposing hers, and that their brainstorming sessions resulted in some interesting ideas.



The students agreed that a common theme would unify the individual panels and decided to incorporate the school **tikanga** using words from it on each panel to make them learning tools as well as decoration. They researched the meaning and background of the tikanga and chose key words for the panels. Each student was randomly allocated a word. The girls linked the tikanga to their school environment and its location in Mt Cook, overlooking the city, and spent a lot of time thinking about how they would integrate everything into their designs. They walked around the area, sketching or taking photos, and interviewed teachers and fellow students about their viewpoint and the values they associated with the school (It proved too difficult to meet with non-school users of the marae, so students acknowledged their role but didn't consult them).

The class discussed their brief with Matua Ben who suggested some ideas and pointed out that Taraika is for everyone involved with the school, so that representing different cultures within the Māori context was acceptable.

The students researched traditional Māori crafts, particularly the tukutuku (panel weaving) and Kowhaiwhai (rafter paintings) commonly seen in maraes, as well as contemporary Māori art. They also looked at the commercialisation of Māori culture and its artistic use by non-Māori, both within New Zealand and internationally. This led on to a discussion about intellectual property and how this might apply to traditional indigenous art. The class visited the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa marae to observe the decoration, and sketched particular features or made rubbings of patterns which might be suitable to adapt and use in the panels.

Stakeholder consultation was an important part of the design process and the



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students made up a survey asking for feedback from some of their other key stakeholders – the principal and deputy principals, and teachers who were Māori or had strong links to Māoridom. They also met with wider stakeholders – kapa haka students, general teaching staff, auxiliary staff and fellow students, to discuss their ideas.

During this time the class practised a variety of fabric manipulation techniques which they might choose to use in their work – a variety of pleating, weaving and gathering methods, freehand stitch sketching, fabric painting, screen-printing, cross-stitching, and appliqué, and Kylie demonstrated photographic screen-printing. Students used some of these techniques in their panels and included other skills they had learnt at school or home, such as knotting or plaiting styles.

As the students designed their panels they had to think about how they might represent their theme, and what techniques they could use to do this, such as representing waves by pleating blue fabric. They trialled different sections before beginning construction of the panel, to ensure that features worked and fitted as planned, and to allow for any changes if something wasn't right or didn't look as effective as imagined.

Each student was given plain calico and allocated \$10 for materials. This was later increased to \$15 when it became too difficult to work within, but students still had to plan carefully and sometimes compromise, one student, for example, could only use a few dye colours rather than the assortment she would have preferred.

After completing their trialling and selecting their final designs, the class started to make their pattern pieces and prepare to dye fabric, hook wool, etc. They presented their designs to a meeting of eight teachers and received positive feedback but, as in the real world, controversy did arise. One participant questioned the placement of the Māori word on the panel, suggesting that its location below the English version implied an inferior status. During a heated discussion the teachers decided that given the marae context, the tikanga words should be in Māori.

The students were annoyed at their designs being misinterpreted, explaining how their positioning would have the Māori word at eye level, and why they thought it should be in English as well. They agreed to call the principal and deputy principal into class to adjudicate and, after listening to an explanation as to why the wording should be in Māori, understood the reasoning even though they still disagreed. This was a good learning experience for the students in terms of realising that although a technologist might be fully involved in creating something, it is the client who makes final decisions.

This was the main hiccup the students faced, and work progressed relatively smoothly from there, with individual students making any adjustments their design required during construction.



The Marae from before the installation of the panels



The Marae after installation of the panels

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Outcomes

The panels were successful both as works of art designed for a particular location, and in demonstrating student expertise in textiles manipulation. Stakeholders commented on how great the panels looked, and outsiders were also impressed with the creations. Nancy's Embroidery, a well-known Wellington store that exhibits, amongst other things, work by members of the Embroidery Society (City and Guilds of London Institute), displayed four of the panels – owner Mary Self said the panels were fantastic and praised the creativity, innovation, materials manipulation and finish shown in the works – "The panels were something special".



It was decided that it would be appropriate to hang the panels on the back wall of Taraika, above the photographs of the deceased, and they were installed in early 2009.

Ben Tangaere – HOD Māori

We are fortunate to have the whareniui – named after an ancestor of this area called Taraika.

The students' work has certainly enhanced the embrace of this ancestor, for all who enter him.

The panels promote many of the positive ideals of Wellington High School. The photographs of people who have been associated with Wellington High School and who have unfortunately passed away, they too look proud of the additions.

Tena koutou ki a koutou i whakakakahu i a Taraika.

Greetings to you all who dressed Taraika.

Prue Kelly – principal

The Year 13s have done a great job of encapsulating key aspects of Wellington High School and of tikanga Māori, in great designs that present a strong statement about the school and which place it firmly in Wellington, New Zealand. The panels complement and enhance Taraika and make me proud to be where I am!

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What next?

After completion of a successful unit, Kylie was ready to move on to another theme and didn't plan, at that stage, to work on a similar project with other classes. She prefers to find a new context for each senior class – it might involve, as in this one, working on a solution to a perceived need, or she might take inspiration from a current fashion or art exhibition and plan a new unit based on that. However, after viewing the completed marae panels the school librarians approached Kylie and suggested her class make something for the library and in 2009 the Year 13 Fashion students will create permanent fabric sculptures as hanging installations there.

The 2008 Year 13 class had a relatively large number of students planning careers around fashion and several are studying for a degree in Fashion Design Technology next door to the school at the Massey University School of Design.



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