

Teacher resource

Mobile maquette programme

Years 5 – 8, 90 min.

Visual Art/Science: Physical world/Technology

Len Lye: Happy Moments

5 Aug — 26 Nov 2017



How to use this resource

This information is designed for teachers and students to enhance their learning experience when visiting the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery/Len Lye Centre. If you or your students have further questions or require additional information please contact the Gallery education team. Phone 06 759 0858 or email gbeducation@govettbrewster.com

How does a class visit work?

Please download the Visitor Guidelines for Schools http://www.govettbrewster.com/media/files/visiting_guidelines_for_schools.pdf

Please discuss the Gallery rules with your students

- Students behave in an appropriate manner; walking feet, inside voice, respect the speaker
- Students respect all exhibition objects, including no touching unless otherwise informed
- No food or drink in the exhibitions

Students with Len Lye's kinetic sculpture *Universe* 1976.
Photo Mark Dwyer

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What are we going to see on our visit?

In the *Len Lye: Happy Moments* exhibition students will experience kinetic sculpture, two short films and see excerpts from a video of a historic kinetic sculpture exhibition. For information about the exhibition please see our website.

<http://www.govettbrewster.com/exhibitions/len-lye-happy-moments>

**Students benefit from previewing the art they will see.
Please share images of the artworks with your class.**

Extracts from the lesson plan:

- What problems did Len Lye have to solve when making his sculptures?
- What materials did he use and why?
- Compare the properties of plastic, metal and foam
- What does being creative or innovative mean?
- Who are the innovators in our society? Why are they important?
- How do you get a new idea? What can a person do to help themselves or others create, innovate or solve problems?



Govett-
Brewster
Art
Gallery

Len Lye
Centre

Potential learning outcomes:

We learn

- where and how Len Lye got ideas
- ways to get new ideas ourselves
- to be more creative and solve problems
- to think about the problems of making kinetic sculpture
- how science and art can go together
- about the role innovation plays in our society
- Te Reo words for movement
- to use limited materials in creative ways
- to get new ideas by doing
- to be safe when using metal
- to share ideas and encourage others to be creative

Get the most out of your art gallery learning experience

At school activities:

Pre-visit

- Discuss the gallery rules and why we have them
- Find out more about Len Lye. Start internet search at www.govettbrewster.com
- Familiarise students with terms they will hear on their visit material, sculpture, 2D and 3D
- Visit or read about the new sculpture, Len Lye's *Waving Wands*, at Te Henui river mouth
- <http://www.stuff.co.nz/taranaki-daily-news/news/90700999/Waving-wands-welcomed-to-their-new-home>

Post-visit

Science: Physical world/Technology

- Follow up questions and topics that students listed on their group poster during visit
- Mind map the scenario in which their sculpture maquette was transformed into a full size outdoor sculpture. What problems and solutions would there be?
- Make a list about how things move, sort into natural or man-made, use science words to describe them
- Find out about other artists who focus on movement
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kinetic_art
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexander_Calder
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jean_Tinguely

Visual Arts

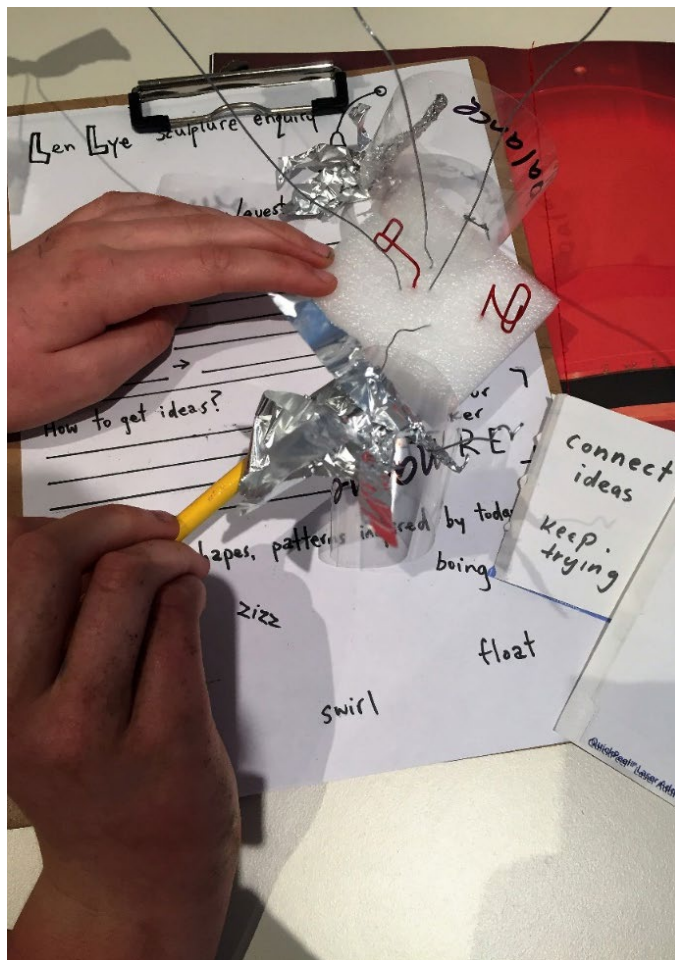
- Turn hanging sculptures into mobiles
- Construct a group exhibition of sculptures on a recycle theme
- Make a painting of the maquette as a large outdoor sculpture in a real site

Animation

- Make flick books and build your own zoetrope
- Research the beginnings of film
- Ask an older person about going to the movies when they were young

Performing Arts

- Make a group dance inspired by the movement of sculpture
- Record patterns of movement seen in nature and use as motivation for dance
- Make or use poi to show types of movement seen in sculpture
- Experiment with qualities of energy in dance eg sudden, sustained, vibratory



Mobile Maquette hands on activity

Students watching the Len Lye film *TusaIava* 1929.
Photo Mark Dwyer

Te Reo Māori

Practice kupu Māori to do with movement

turning/spinning	hurihuri
forward	mua
backwards (movement)	muri
quick	tere
slow	pōturi
high	runga
low	raro
sideways	tahataha

English

Write a poem describing the movements and sounds of Len Lye's sculptures.

More learning

The story of Len Lye

Len Lye is an important New Zealand artist. He was multi-talented and made films, sculptures, paintings and photographs. He was born in Christchurch, New Zealand in 1901.

Young Leonard Charles Huia Lye was a very inquisitive child, he came from a family that did not have much money. He was fascinated by light, sound and motion in its many forms. He noticed movement much more than most people and was very interested in the science behind movement in both nature and machines. When he was quite young he invented his own games and exercises, he was striving to sharpen his senses. He wanted to create new artistic ways to express what he saw, heard and experienced. For part of his childhood he lived at Cape Campbell Lighthouse at the north east tip of the South Island, his stepfather was the lighthouse keeper. Lye said "My brother and I slept under a roof of very good tin for rain. It sloped to the waves that pounded the rocky beach... The wind always whistled in the wires of the telegraph poles to the lighthouse..."

Lye filled many sketch books with his observations of the world and experimented with artistic ways to interpret motion through his own body. He investigated how traditional artists used drawing and painting to record movement but he wanted to take it further. The games and exercises he invented fed his search for new art forms that 'composed motion' in the same way that musician composes sound. When he was younger he sketched waves moving, then he thought, why not just make art that moves? He also talked about not just seeing how movement makes patterns but experiencing movement by imagining the feeling in his body.

When Lye left school he worked at different jobs and continued his art education after work at night school. He read overseas art magazines and was excited to find out other artists were making art experiments similar to his. Some of these artists called themselves Futurists. He loved their idea of 'new forms'. In his younger years Lye made close studies of Māori art. In the 1920s not many New Zealand artists of European descent were seriously interested in Māori and Pacific art and Lye found he could learn a lot from indigenous art forms. In the early 1920s he spent time living in Australia and in Samoa where he studied the dance of Polynesia and Australian Aborigines. In Australia he became involved with film making which he saw as an excellent way to show his 'art of motion'. It was there that he began to teach himself how to make animated film.

Lye was determined to head to Europe to join in the new directions that art was taking, to learn and to contribute his own ideas. In order to pay for his ticket to London, Lye worked as a coal stoker on a ship. When he arrived in London he soon became part of the modern art scene.

Why is Len Lye important in the history of film?

Lye's first completed film was the cartoon *Tusalava*, which he finished in London in 1929. He found the process of animation very time consuming. The film is black and white and silent, as colour in films was new at that time. When movies were invented (in the 1890s) they were all silent. Music was added by a piano being played at the front of the movie theatre and actors' voices were written in subtitles in October 1927. *Tusalava* is very different to these films. It is silent but it had a music score which has been lost.

Lye experimented with scraps of film from the editing rooms where he worked. This led him to come up with exciting ways of making films that were quicker than traditional animation. This new approach to filmmaking involved stencilling.

Moving images to moving steel

Lye also began producing kinetic (moving) sculptures. Many of his sculptures had motors in them, they were mainly made from stainless steel. The sculptures drew on the beauty and science of kinetic energy, magnetism and gravity. He was also a highly original painter and writer. In 1977 Lye returned to his homeland to have his first New Zealand exhibition of sculptures and films at the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth. A strong bond developed between the artist and the Taranaki region. Shortly before his death in 1980, the Len Lye Foundation was set up. This group of people aim to look after the existing artworks and bring Lye's plans, such as the sculptures *Wind Wand* and *Waving Wands* (on the waterfront in New Plymouth) and *Water Whirler* (on Wellington's waterfront) to life.

Find out more about Len Lye, start your internet search at: www.govettbrewster.com/len-lye/



Len Lye *Waving Wands* 2017.
Photo Bryan James

