

10 Tips to Enjoy an Artwork and Spark Conversation

Art helps us see with fresh eyes, feel more deeply and connect with something beyond words. Through their art, artists can spark thought, stir emotion and open conversation.

Art history can reveal how people have used art to express, reflect and shape the world over time and helps us understand culture, ideas and ourselves.

Pause and be fully present with the artwork. Take in the colours, shapes, textures, and composition. Notice what draws you in.

Notice how the art makes you feel. Acknowledge sensations, memories or thoughts.

Describe what you see. Talk about the themes, atmosphere, and brushstrokes. Is the scene familiar? What has changed, or remained the same?

Step into the artwork. Hear the sounds, smell the air, sense the movement. Imagine what comes before or after the moment captured.

Ask open questions to invite insight. What is happening here? What story is unfolding? What might this image mean to someone else?

Trust your perspective. Your interpretation is valid. What you see and feel is part of your personal connection to the piece.

Listen to others and be curious. Someone else's view may reveal something you hadn't noticed.

Make personal connections. Reflect on how the painting relates to your life. Share memories, thoughts or emotions it brings to mind.

Follow your curiosity. If something intrigues you, explore it. Learn about the artist, the style, or about the time it was made to lead you in deeper.

Embrace not knowing. Not everything needs to be understood. There's no right or wrong when having a conversation with art. Enjoy your response and interpretation.



Explore Timaru's stories of people and place through art from the Aigantighe Art Gallery collection, right where history happened.

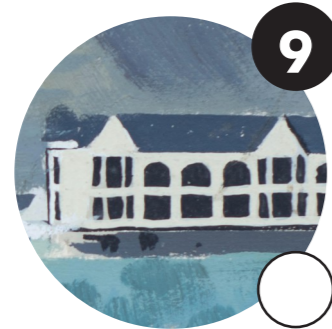
ART HISTORY GUIDE & HUNT

TIMARU COASTAL TRAIL

WUHOO TIMARU - FIND FREE FUN



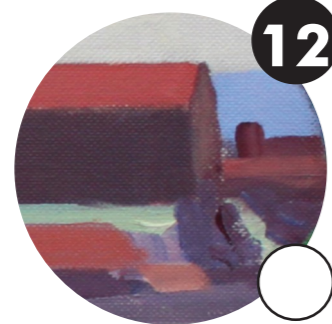
How do your own memories, feelings or experiences help shape what you see and feel in the artwork?



Russell Clark (1905-1966)

Caroline Bay Timaru During a Southerly Gale, c.1950

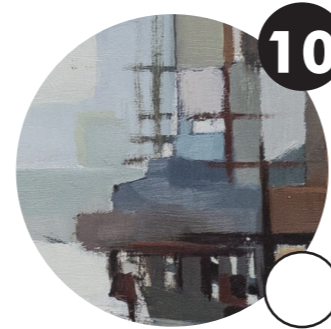
If you had the chance to speak to the artist, what would you want to ask them about this artwork?



Clifford Brunsten (1909-1969)

Timaru from South Street Railway Bridge, c.1960

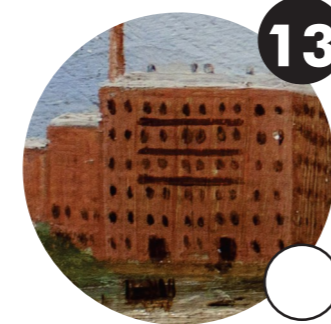
How are the things in the artwork arranged, and how do they guide your eyes around the piece?



Astrid Mollie Steven (1921-1987)

Ports and Journeys No 1, 1967

What might the way the artwork is arranged tell you about what the artist wanted to show or say?



John Liddington Higgs (1864-1919)

Timaru Coastline, 1884

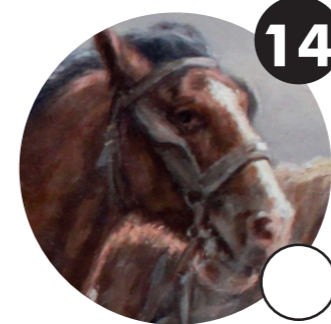
Can you tell how the artist made the artwork? Does it feel smooth, rough, careful or wild?



William Ferrier (1855-1922)

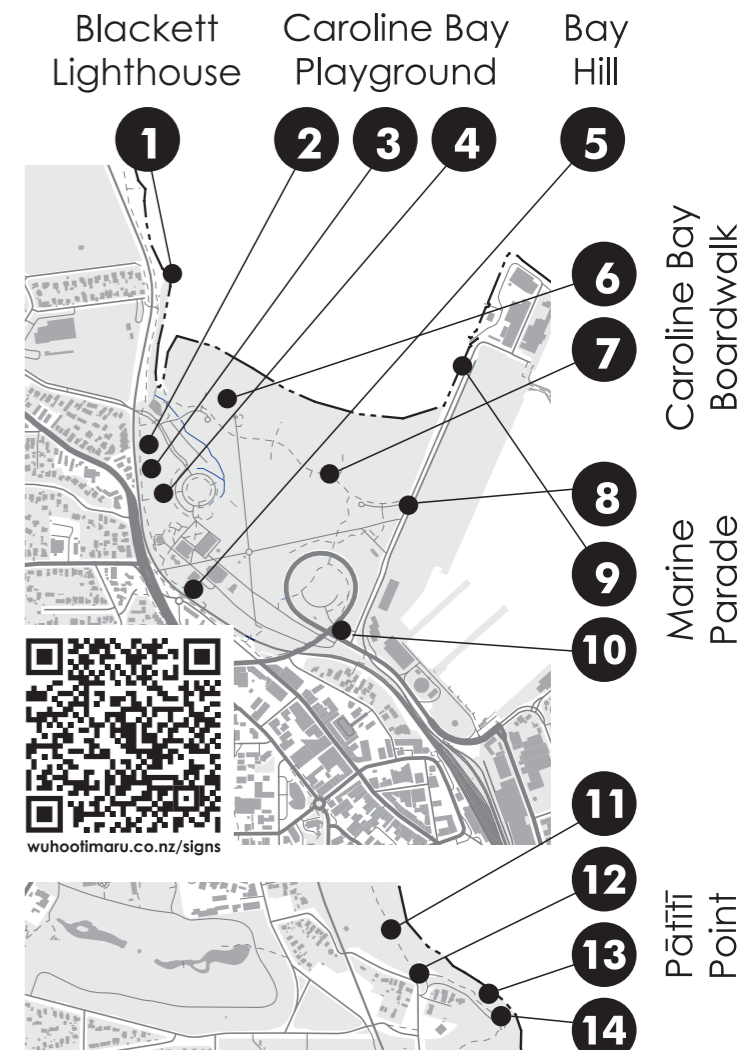
Breakwater Timaru Running a Southerly Gale, 1888

If the painting could make a sound, what would it be? Would it be loud or quiet, calm or busy, soft like a whisper or sharp like a shout?



William Greene (1872-1925)

The Roadmakers, 1916



South Canterbury's Art. Shaped by land, sea, and people.

Shaped by lava 2.5 m years ago, Timaru's reefs provided a food source for Māori and a natural harbour for European settlers.

The braided rivers made land access difficult, so travel by sea was vital. Ships anchored in the harbour, and small boats transported cargo and passengers from ship to shore. Between 1864 and 1892, 30 ships were wrecked or refloated along Timaru's coast. To improve safety and efficiency, and reduce transport costs associated with using the ports of Christchurch or Dunedin, the harbour's construction began in 1878, linking South Canterbury to international markets.

Caroline Bay was once known as the area stretching from Washdyke to Pāfifi Point. The construction of the port affected sediment flow and reshaped the coastline. The stony shore below the cliffs began to build out north and south of the port. Sand started to

accumulate to the north as a new sandy bay. This area was developed for recreation by the council and volunteers, and Caroline Bay became known as the Riviera of the South. The land to the south, became an industrial hub for logistics, storage, and business.

Timaru's port was one of two independently owned ports in New Zealand. 71.43 % was held by Timaru District Holdings Ltd, a subsidiary of the Timaru District Council. This was a key asset for ratepayers and a driver of enterprise, opportunity, and employment.

Wool led exports in the 1860s, followed by grain in the 1870s. By 1913, half of New Zealand's wheat land was in Canterbury. The frozen meat trade boom began in 1885, with South Canterbury becoming a major exporter, especially to Britain.

By 1912, the region's abundant crops of wheat, turnips, canola, and potatoes earned it a reputation as the country's food bowl.

Today, the port supports a wide range of industries, including dairy, wool, meat, timber, fishing, horticulture, tourism, cold storage, and the container terminal.

The Bay continues to develop as a place to play by volunteers. In the 1930s thousands used to visit Timaru for the carnivals and shows. In the 2000's a sculpture trail was installed. In 2023 a new playground opened, designed to reflect the area's stories through themed play and integrated artwork.

The wealth accumulated by the Port and industries like agriculture, helped support the arts. This is one of the reasons why the art from the Canterbury region is so strong. The arts community, educators, and societies consistently supported artists, offering a progressive platform that nurtured creativity and art collecting.

Many of these artworks are cared for in the Aigantighe Art Gallery's collection, which was established in 1956 with 80 works from the Grant family and the South Canterbury Arts Society.

The significant permanent collection has grown to over 1,500 artworks, many of which were donated. The collection includes works from New Zealand, the Pacific, Asia, and Europe, dating from the sixteenth century to the present day.

You can explore some of these artworks along the coastal trail, connecting with Timaru's people and stories of the past through the eyes of artists.

The Aigantighe Art Gallery is free to visit at 49 Wai-iti Road, Timaru.

The Friends of the Aigantighe are volunteers and a registered charity that supports the Gallery, the Friends group, and the wider community in inspiring a love of art.

These signs are a collaboration between Aigantighe staff, volunteers, and WuHoo Timaru. Artworks were commissioned and gifted to the Aigantighe Art Gallery.

These commissions, along with selected works from the Gallery's collection, were photographed and printed onto signs. Artist and historical information was included, along with photographs from the South Canterbury Museum.

The signs have been installed at Benvenue Cliffs, Caroline Bay Playground, Boardwalk, The Bay Hill, Marine Parade, and Pāfifi Point. Each sign was placed to ensure the art connects to the view or theme of the location.

What do you notice first in the artwork, and why? Is it a colour, a shape, the subject, or something that simply stands out to you?



Michael Armstrong (1954)
Blackett on the Breakwater, 2019

What feeling do you get when you first look at the painting? Does it seem calm, joyful, unsettling or mysterious?



Lindsay Crooks (1957-2005)
Untitled – Carnival Scene, 1983

What kind of story might the painting be showing, or hiding? Is it clear, or more open to interpretation?



Francine Spencer
Ngā kai ā te Moana, 2023

How do the colours affect the mood or energy of the artwork? What kind of feeling do they create for you?



William Greene (1872-1925)
The Unemployed, 1912

What can you spot in the painting? Do any objects or details seem to suggest a hidden message or deeper meaning?



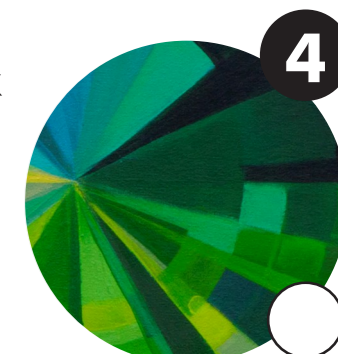
Sue Tennant
Act 1 – Scene 3 – The British Empire, 2020

How does the light affect what you see in the painting? Does it shine on certain parts, hide others, or create a dramatic feeling?



William Gibb (1859-1931)
Timaru Harbour, 1888

Why do you think the artist used these colours and included the infinity symbol? What do you think the colours might mean or represent?



Roselyn Cloake
Infinite or Finite? Lens Series 2, 2023

When do you think this artwork was created, and what makes you think that?



Ainslie Manson (1917-1983)
Timaru Port, c.1957

The hunt is on. Can you find them all?

