

THREE ARTISTS

Shane Cotton

- Shane Cotton was born in Upper Hutt, with tribal affiliations to Nga Puhī. He is an interesting artist to study because of his development of a language of personal symbols burrowed from many different sources such as; 19th century topographical drawings by European painters and adventurers, gang-patches, biblical texts, digital displays and Maori folk art.
- Much of Cotton's work aims to represent the shared experiences of Maori and Pakeha within Aotearoa/New Zealand – when he took up a teaching position at Massey University he was encouraged to explore his Maori heritage.
- His early works are often sepia-toned [earthy reddish-brown] and their 'old master' glow enhances their appearance of having been made in our colonial past. Waka, coastal views of land, flags, mountains, plants and vessels are common subjects.
- In his next series of paintings, black is the dominant colour and in these he is interested in the power of words – especially the language of the Bible as it was translated into Maori. These biblical texts relate to the presence of Christian missionaries in Cotton's ancestral region in the north, Te Taitokerau, from the early 1800s, begin to be included, along with images and patterning drawn from traditional carving designs. He stated; 'What I'm trying to do is to place myself where my family is and where I come from...'
- Shane Cotton's recent paintings reveal a space full of symbols which suggest the hidden spirit realm below. Birds are a strong presence in Cotton's work, explained by their "special significance in Maori folklore as messengers from the spirit world, and are connected in particular with the demi-god Maui, who chose several birds to accompany him on this fatal quest to give people everlasting life.
- In 'Freefall' we see a coastal landscape at the top – then a mysterious air-brushed space – the space and the symbols used here collapse travel, nature and technology into environments that appear to stretch time out and slow it down.
- Shane Cotton describes his painting as 'a juxtaposition of opposites – flat shapes vs illusionistic form/space, sky beneath land, images in motion painted static, distant landscape above to close proximity of a rock face beneath, pause/play symbols, words/images.'
- [More Images](#)

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Education programme and bus \$280 for up to 40 children, \$360 for 40 to 60 children (*limited locations). Bookings essential. Contact Kirsty on **09 373 6345** email: kirsty.glengarry@aucklandcity.govt.nz or Kate on **09 307 4522** email: kate.sellar@aucklandcity.govt.nz



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Faith, oil on canvas,
1995, Chartwell Collection,
Auckland Art Gallery Toi o
Tamaki,



Kenehi (Northern Light 1), 1998, oil on
canvas, Chartwell Collection,
Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tamaki



Southern Cross, 2002, acrylic
on canvas, Chartwell Collection,
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Free Fall, 2006, acrylic on canvas,
Chartwell Collection,
Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tamaki

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