

# My Tūrangawaewae

by Georgina Barnes



The hallways at Sylvia Park School in Auckland are full of student artworks. A tapa artwork called *My Tūrangawaewae* hangs in one of the hallways. Each square in the artwork explores a student's identity (who they are).

## What is tapa?

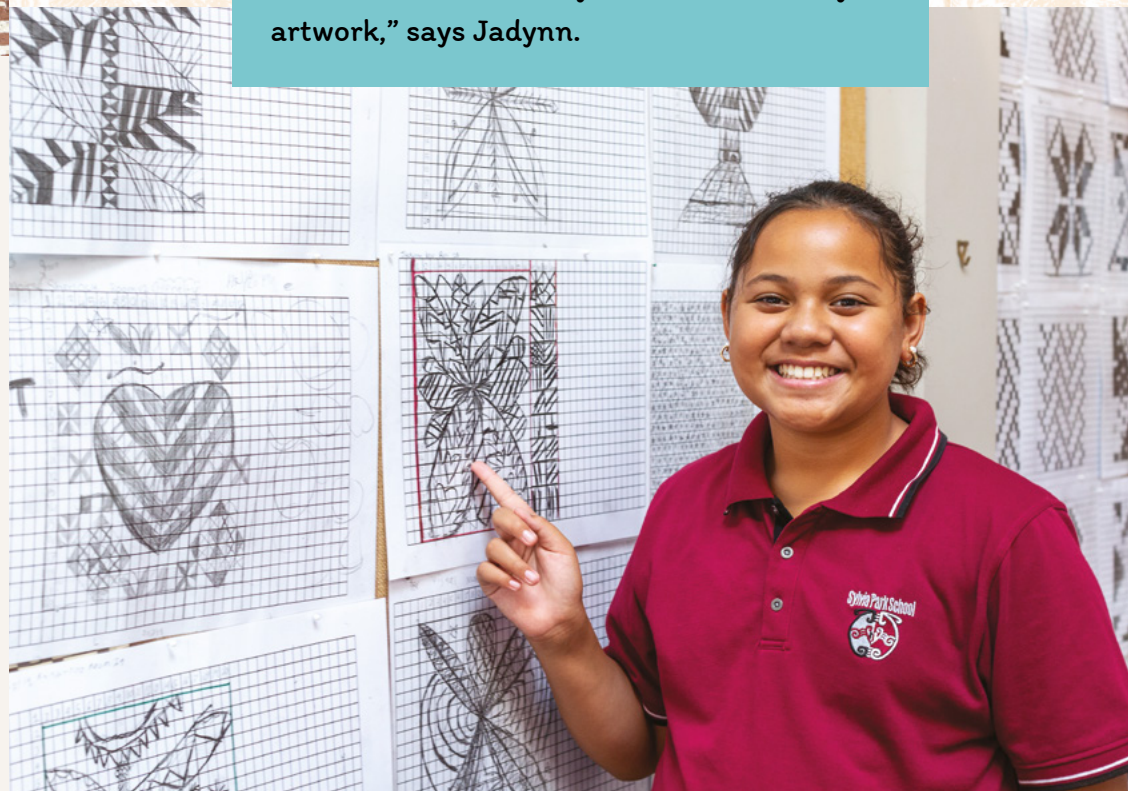
The artwork was influenced by patterns used in tapa. Tapa is a cloth that's made in many Pacific countries from the bark of a mulberry tree. First the tapa is painted with brown or black paint. Then patterns are added.

## Getting inspired

Students from four classes worked on the project with artist Alexis Neal. Her iwi are Ngāti Awa and Te Āti Awa.

Each student designed a square for the tapa. They had to develop a strong idea that showed something special about themselves. Alexis's goal was for the students to show themselves in their class and in their school community.

"During lockdown, I drew flowers with my dad, who is Samoan. There are lots of flowers in Sāmoa, so that's why I used them on my artwork," says Jadyynn.



The theme of the tapa was “my tūrangawaewae”.

Tūrangawaewae is a unique or special place where people belong.

Before they began work on their tapa squares, Alexis asked students to consider their identities and “what makes you, ‘you’”. They spent two weeks exploring their tūrangawaewae.

## Using symbols and patterns

The students then thought about the symbols and patterns they would use to show their identities on the tapa. “There are lots of flowers in Tongan tapa cloths, so I used them in my design,” says ‘Alai.

## Using maths

Alexis gave each student a grid of squares to plan and draw their design. Some students had big and **complicated** ideas. They found it hard to decide what to include and what to leave out. Everything had to fit into the grid, so students had to use their maths skills.

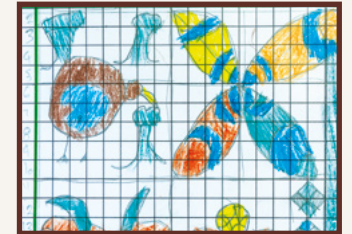


“I had to measure the grid exactly so my triangle pattern could fit inside it three times,” says Alexander.

## Making collographs

Now it was time for students to make a collograph, which is a type of printing plate. Students used materials with **texture**, such as tissues, cardboard, and wallpaper, which they cut out in shapes to make a design. Then they stuck these shapes onto a piece of card as a **collage**. Lastly, they printed their designs onto paper with ink.

1. The students looked at their grids and used pencils to colour in anything they wanted to show on their printing plate.



2. They used tracing paper to copy the shapes they had coloured in from the grid.



3. Then they cut out the collage shapes.



4. Finally, they stuck the collage shapes onto the printing plate (using their grids to check where to place the shapes).



## Printing proofs

Next the students printed **proofs** from their printing plates. This allowed them to check that their designs looked exactly how they wanted them to look.

To make the proofs, the students rolled the ink onto the printing plate. Alexis showed them how to make sure the ink spread evenly on the plate. Next, each student placed a piece of paper on top of it. They pressed down with their hands to make sure the paper was evenly covered with ink. Then they carefully peeled off the paper to show their design.

## Printing the tapa

Finally, it was time to print the tapa. There were four pieces of paper – one for each class. All the printing plates from one class had to fit onto their piece of paper.

When the plates were ready, the students printed them. Alexis then joined the four pieces of paper together and added a border.

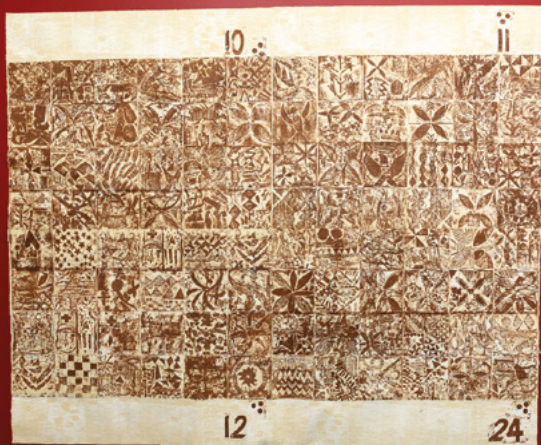
## Celebrating the work

During the project, each class worked as a team so their part of the tapa would be ready. Students showed manaakitanga – respecting each other’s work and helping one another. If a student was away, their classmates helped them catch up.

When *My Tūrangawaewae* was complete, the students were excited to see their own squares, showing their identities. They could also see how the other classes had shown their identities.

“After all our work and effort, I felt proud when it was printed,” says Julio.

“I always thought it would look good, but I was surprised how the printing process magically transformed our art,” says ‘Alai.



A printing plate



## What did the students learn?

It wasn't until they had completed the project that students saw the success of their artwork.

Alexis told the students they were leaving a piece of themselves behind on the tapa. She was pleased they had reached the goal of seeing themselves in their class and in their school community.



“We had to go through a whole process before we made the actual art. It was different from the way I’d done art before,” says Alexander.

## Glossary

**collage:** an artwork made from different materials, like paper and cloth, that are stuck onto card or paper

**complicated:** made up of lots of different parts

**proof:** a copy of something to see how it will turn out

**texture:** something that has a rough or uneven surface

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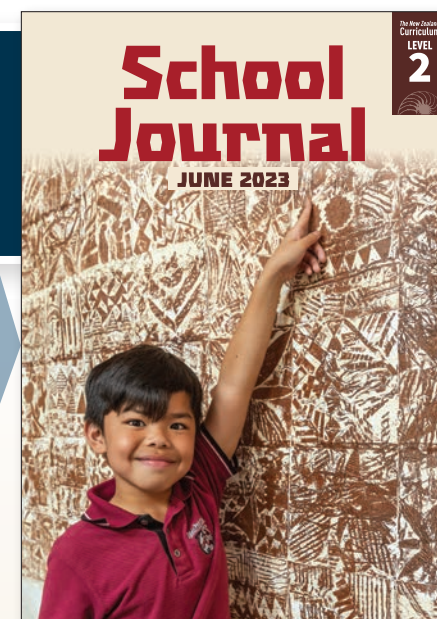
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