



Ziggle!

The Len Lye art activity book

REBECCA FAWKNER



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65 WAYS TO BE AN ARTIST THROUGH THE WORLD OF LEN LYE

This bumper art activity book brimming with ideas and inspiration has been developed by the team at the Len Lye Centre in New Plymouth, who work with the thousands of children who visit the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery every year and really understand how the great New Zealand artist Len Lye's approach to art sets young minds abuzz and alive.

With 65 activities, and a running narrative thread about Lye's fascinating life, it offers hours of fun to young readers, their whānau and teachers.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

REBECCA FAWKNER is Pouako Ara Aunua Educator at the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery in New Plymouth. She works with the gallery's Learning Experiences Outside the Classroom programme, designing and implementing programmes for both preschool, school and tertiary students.

SALES POINTS

- A fabulous resource for parents and teachers
- The fun and educational activities teach young users about the internationally famous New Zealand artist Len Lye
- Activities designed by experienced educators



CONTENTS

Introduction xx
 Kick off xx
 Crazy about motion xx
 The 'A-ha!' moment xx
 Modern Art here I come xx
 Making movies xx
 Art that moves xx
 Sculpture for everyone? xx
 Set your 'old brain' free xx
 What next? xx
 You've reached the end! xx

Lexiconary xx
 Len's timeline xx
 Acknowledgements xx
 About the authors vi

THE 'A-HA!' MOMENT

Some ways to make 3D shapes from wire and foil.

1. Spring: These skewer pieces of foil or a short length of wire around a pencil to make a spring shape.
2. Fountain shape: Make short coils (feather coils) close together along a small strip of foil or wire and open the fountain by bending back the foil.
3. Making a hole in a pie plate: foil saucer: Drill holes in the foil by laying the foil on the firm foam base and pushing a nail through the foil into the foam.
4. In the art gallery, kinetic sculptures often sit on a base called a plinth. A base for your sculpture could be made from cardboard or foam. To attach the sculpture to the base, cut some wire into short pieces and bend them into tent pegs. Make holes in the sculpture, and then slot the pegs into these holes and the holes in the base, to join the sculpture to the base.

Any problems?
 Should I 'cleanse' itself up? How long? No good! No lead duster, too fat! And a scientist soon discover that not all experiments work out, but that just makes them keep trying harder, and they analyse what has happened so they learn from their mistakes.
 Try these problem-solving techniques:
 Team up — share your ideas with another artist. Sometimes just talking about your idea or problem can help you solve it or at least give you a puzzle to sit it together, you may find an answer!
 Take a break, put the problem away and come back later. You'll have a fresh view.
 Change direction. Watch out for a 'happy accident', and turn the mistake into a new idea.
Experiment with your microscope
 Shine a small light on the microscope, making shadows and reflections.
 Testify strength by jiggling it. Can it be made stronger?
 Try moving your microscope in different ways.
 Does it make sense? If not, try adding something to it that does.
Want more?
 Write a label for your microscope to help others GET IT, will it even sit on display in an art gallery.
 My sculpture is titled _____
 It is powered by _____
 My sculpture reminds me of _____
 My sculpture makes me feel _____

SET YOUR 'OLD BRAIN' FREE

LEARNING ABOUT LEN

Leonard Charles Haka Lye was born on 8 July 1903 in Christchurch, a station near Otautahi Christchurch. His family were Pākehā. His Irish mother, given Len a Maori middle name, Teke, after a clever warrior chief who had bravely led his people against the British army. His father, Harry, was a barber. They had a happy life together, but they had to work hard to get by. However, when Len was three his father and his younger brother, Phyllis, age one, changed suddenly when their father died of tuberculosis.

Len had to take on jobs housekeeping and cleaning. But she couldn't have her young sons with her at the home she worked at, so the family was forced to be apart. It was a very difficult time, and the brothers were moved around homes of other family members and foster families. They quickly learned to look after themselves.

In time Len's mother married again, and his stepfather Frederick Powell got a job as the assistant lighthouse keeper at the southernmost point of the Cook Strait at Cape Campbell. The brothers did not have much schooling, and after they had finished their chores they would go exploring.

Living at the lighthouse had a huge effect on Len. He called the flashing light beams 'The Great Train'. Memories of the clockwork machines inside the tower that lit the light, work, and of the storms and the sea and the rock pools, stayed with him and inspired his obsession with projecting light and moving sculpture.

But Len knew at the lighthouse came to an unexpected and painful end when his stepfather became unwell and the family had to leave. They were charged again. Len's mother had to find work, and for a time couldn't look after her sons, so Len and Phyllis went to live with their Aunt Aggie and then with foster families.

Len missed his mother and the freedom of life at the lighthouse, but he also discovered a new love — drawing. This was a way he could be himself. It was stuck inside the house, there was a way he could escape to a new happy place. The adults encouraged his new hobby because it kept him busy.

LEARNING ABOUT LEN

Len had worked hard to learn traditional Western forms of art. He was very good at drawing and I had learned to draw a person's body in a realistic way (almost like a photograph), but he now felt able to explore other ways. He decided the time between studying 'indigenous art' (that is, art by the original or first people who live in the area) and Modern Art, since he found them both very exciting and he thought they had a lot in common.

He made his own studies of Maori carvings, art from the Pacific Islands and art from Africa, as these showed him other ways of presenting human figures. Other Modern artists in Europe were also becoming aware of indigenous art from around the world. To him this art wasn't only about how things looked, but also about feelings and ideas. He loved the shapes and patterns, and it gave him some important new ways to draw what he saw and experienced.

Modern Art was also about different ways of drawing figures, not feeling that you had to copy figures exactly. These examples become a starting point for Len in making original images of his own. His later made paintings and sculptures that were inspired by the art he had been studying. Len wanted to be an artist like him and to find other artists like him.

Len had a job delivering newspapers, which meant that he had to get up very early. It was a favourite time for thinking, and watching the changes of light as the sun came up. One morning he was at the top of a hill in windy weather. As he later wrote:

It had been raining all night, and there were these marvelous but little already clouds in the blue sky. All new looking, these clouds, new looking, new to the artist. (Obviously who else could be there, other artists and teachers, and eager to form his own ideas about art, and about the art of modern art in particular.)
 Then came his great idea, his 'aha' moment. Here it how it happened.

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When he couldn't find the perfect word, he made up his own like these ones listed below in the word-finder. He hid them out from the letter printer, and then by using them to describe the art you have made in these activities.

Zoo	Sprinkle	Hardy	Sting-bee,
Ziggle	Spangle	hardy	stinger
Zoop	focker	staying	stinger
Skidder	focker	staying	stinger
Sprinkle	focker	staying	stinger

Word-finder grid:

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S I E Z O O G G S K F I G P S G
Z P F B R I E B N O I M F C L
Z Z F F S S K K C O I C E G
G I J G Z W O U I O N I M A G
C M K Z D V S Z K I M S G J
S K I P P E N C I P K J Y G Z
Y K J Y S Y V Y K I I I P Z
D P H Y D L K A G J Z S N E U
M M G P N Z O M P Z M M W S P
G H V K P S O Y F F G G P S
G C Y Y Z Z O Y R G N L I J
S J E C E M F Z B R F Z S S
C O E Z O G L G Z E N M S
Y K J C O E Y I W O G G D P
F R Y Z O F Y I K S C I N A B
    
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Poetry
 As we know, Len often writes poems to go with the artworks he does. These poems used real words rather than his own made-up ones. They don't usually rhyme. Here is an example.

DOES WATER
 DOES WATER MEET THE SUN? THEY GET THE SUN READY BEFORE THEY WAVE DOWN THE WAVE LIKE BEINGS. THEY WAVE IN THE SUN AND THEY WAVE IN THE SUN AND THEY WAVE IN THE SUN AND THEY WAVE IN THE SUN.

Team up with Len. Write a poem to go with this artwork.

LEARNING ABOUT LEN

Len was very interested in early human beings because of the art they produced, and so he had great respect for what he called the 'old brain'. Len got the term from science. In the 1930s some scientists made a model to help understand how our brains developed over millions of years of evolution, and get Len thinking about where his art and ideas came from.

The most ancient part of the brain, the 'old brain', is the kind of brain that early (prehistoric) human beings would have had, and it does instinctive and emotional activities. We still have such a brain, though evolution has added a new layer, the 'new brain' or 'cortical cortex', which we use when we are doing intellectual thinking, such as speech and logic.

When Len made art without planning it first, he called it the art of the 'old brain'. He believed a person's old brain opens deeper hidden knowledge, and that an artist's old brain knowledge can come through in their art. These ideas are just as you sometimes might know things that you don't remember learning.

Other artists were making art in similar ways they called their type of art 'Surrealism'. Len sometimes joined in their exhibitions. In London in 1930 there was a huge exhibition of Surrealist art that included artworks by Salvador Dalí, Max Ernst, Paul Klee, and Marc Chagall — and three artworks by Len. Two photographs and a painting. These artists all had their own interesting ways, some painting dream-like scenes, and others making collages of strange and surprising combinations.