



Roaming Hut on the West Coast, where it was built.

## Curriculum Links

Visual Art, Social Studies,  
Technology, Physical  
Education

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# Urban Hut Club

## 2020 TEACHERS RESOURCE

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**New Zealand**  
**Festival** OF THE ARTS

Wellington  
**Community Trust**  
supporting community initiatives

# ABOUT URBAN HUT CLUB

Website: [urbanhutclub.nz](http://urbanhutclub.nz) Instagram: [instagram.com/urbanhutclub](https://www.instagram.com/urbanhutclub)

Inspired by iconic huts of rural and alpine Aotearoa, this collection of handcrafted structures await discovery along the Kāpiti Coast, from Paekākāriki to Ōtaki. Roaming around Wellington, Porirua and the Hutt Valley you may also be surprised by a pop-up hut enticing you further afield to find its regional siblings.

Playing with architectural forms typically found in the backcountry, artists Kemi Niko & Co. have co-designed and built five enchanting mini- huts with Kāpiti Coast communities, using salvaged materials that tell stories rich with history. Housed within each unique hut are logbooks where you can share your thoughts with other explorers. Writers Mandy Hager, Apirana Taylor, Chris Maclean, Bernard Beckett and Renée have gifted each hut with its own short story. Discovery directions and extra content can be found on at [urbanhutclub.nz](http://urbanhutclub.nz) and on a downloadable map [here](#).

“We did a similar project with seven huts in Wellington back in 2014 when we were pretty fresh, so it was always in the back of our minds to have another go. A chance encounter with Bret McKenzie in a Wellington park lead to the New Zealand Festival offer to make it a reality. The happenstance of that moment was crazy. We gave Bret the project book for that last hut project, *Miniature Hikes*, which we just happened to have on hand and he goes ‘I’ve been looking for you.’ Turns out he loved that project and had been trying to find out who the artists were!” Kemi Niko & Co.



Niko and Kemi

## WHO ARE KEMI NIKO & CO.?

Kemi & Niko are a multi disciplinary artist duo working across art and design in their socially engaged, values based practice. Graduates of Massey University (BFA & BDes, respectively) their projects connect the public to the environment and each other, often utilising salvaged materials.

In summer 2014/15 they ran a widely successful public art project, *Miniature Hikes*, funded and exhibited by WCC Public Art Fund in the Courtenay Place Lightboxes and in green spaces throughout Wellington.

Since then they have worked with art, community and educational groups installing new public works, running workshops and curating exhibits. In 2018 they attended an artists’ residency camp run by Artshouse Melbourne in Victoria exploring adaptive practice with

30 international artists. For the Performance Arcade 2019 they ran *Ocean Store*, an immersive space where the public could engage with ocean plastic collected from Wellington beaches.

After 10 years living and working in Wellington they recently moved to Punakaiki on the West Coast of Te Wai Pounamu with their young daughter.

The & Co. in their name comes from wanting to acknowledge the communities that activate and inform their work.

# TECHNIQUES AND CORE CONCEPTS

## MATERIAL QUALITIES

Each hut is hand built by Kemi and Niko, just like the do-it-yourself building techniques of typical backcountry tramping huts. The materials reflect the environment and community around them and inform the final shape the huts take both the function and craft of the hut is taken into consideration. Materials are salvaged and locally sourced, mirroring the ethos of the artist.

“We have access to heaps of different materials, plenty of native woods, new and old cladding, natural materials found on site, such as driftwood and hazel ‘rods’, and heaps more. We’ve been experimenting with how a material can be utilised to highlight its unique strengths, while staying true to a hut’s appeal and simplicity... Another big consideration was their use by the public. They needed to be safe and strong, able to withstand all kinds of stresses.” Kemi Niko & Co., Urbis Magazine ([urbismagazine.com/articles/the-urban-hut-club/](http://urbismagazine.com/articles/the-urban-hut-club/))

## ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY

The ethos of Kemi Niko & Co. is focused around respect and care for the environment. Using salvaged and recycled materials adds character and reduces waste going to landfill. Materials come from variety of sources including skips, sheds, tip shops and donations from the community.

The project actively encourages visitors to engage with the special sites along the Kāpiti coast where each hut is located, connecting people with wild spaces that they may not know about.

## COMMUNITY

Each hut has been created with the support and consultation of the community group that looks after the reserve or dune area. These communities have been involved from the very beginning of the project, donating materials to construct the sculptures and attending consultations along the way.

## DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY

A core part of the project is a special wayfinding app designed to help visitors find the hut and unlock special content including the short stories written for each hut. This is accessible online at [urbanhutclub.nz](http://urbanhutclub.nz).

## HAUORA AND WELLBEING

Referencing the history of backcountry tramping huts in New Zealand, the mini-tramps encourage visitors to head out, stretch their legs and discover a different part of the Kāpiti coast. Each one caters to a different experience, mixing length and difficulty of the walk and terrains. Kemi Niko & Co. also considered how visitors would travel between the huts using public transport, walking and cycling.

Participating in the Urban Hut Club encourages hauora/wellbeing across all dimensions, using your body and exercising (taha tinana), finding meaning, value and connection in the natural world (taha wairua), problem solving directions and responding to your visit via the app and logbook (taha hinegaro) and spending time exploring nature with whanau (taha whanau).



## BUILD DETAILS – ROAMING HUT



The Roaming Hut travels around Wellington, Porirua and the Hutt Valley. There are lots of special details in this pop-up hut, which is built almost entirely out of salvaged materials. The hut is built on a trailer - you can watch a video of the Roaming Hut being assembled from flat here: [youtu.be/WHWScRWA1e8](https://youtu.be/WHWScRWA1e8)

# FURTHER RESOURCES AND READINGS

## INTERVIEWS

Kemi and Niko talk about sustainability and collaboration with Good Magazine:

[good.net.nz/article/urban-hut-club](http://good.net.nz/article/urban-hut-club)

“Huts are often built so we can survive in the bush for longer periods of time. You could say their purpose is derived from that same place of wonder and joy found in nature.” Kemi and Niko in discussion with Urbis Magazine: [urbismagazine.com/articles/the-urban-hut-club/](http://urbismagazine.com/articles/the-urban-hut-club/)

## WATCH

Kemi and Niko talk about their 2014 project *Miniature Hikes*: [youtu.be/xDJMwvNOBLw](https://youtu.be/xDJMwvNOBLw)

## READ

About the 2014 *Miniature Hikes* project: [wildernessmag.co.nz/miniature-huts-hikes/](http://wildernessmag.co.nz/miniature-huts-hikes/)

## LISTEN

To Kemi and Niko talk about their ethos and early work to RNZ:

[rnz.co.nz/national/programmes/standing-room-only/audio/2600591/kemi-niko-and-co](http://rnz.co.nz/national/programmes/standing-room-only/audio/2600591/kemi-niko-and-co)

## GO FURTHER

Explore the history of tramping in New Zealand on Te Ara: [teara.govt.nz/en/tramping](http://teara.govt.nz/en/tramping)

Take a look at the website ‘Remote Huts’ which has lots of photos and images of backcountry huts maintained by the Permolat Trust: [remotehuts.co.nz/huts](http://remotehuts.co.nz/huts)

The New Zealand Trampler is another great resource with lots of information and photographs: [tramper.nz/huts](http://tramper.nz/huts)

For younger audiences take a look at some ideas for nature play activities and how you can integrate this into children’s learning at the [thewildnetwork.com](http://thewildnetwork.com)

## MAKE

Save up your recycled tin cans and follow this tutorial by Kemi Niko & Co. to create a Tin Can-dle holder: [youtu.be/Jp-66PFIVQs](https://youtu.be/Jp-66PFIVQs)

“Thank you for providing this little sanctuary. In a time where the world is crazy, a bit of peace is all we need. An amazing view; an amazing idea; an amazing thought come to life.” Anonymous visitors to *Miniature Hikes* huts

“If art should be accessible, participatory and fun, then Kemi and Niko have succeeded spectacularly.” Shaun Barnett, Wilderness Mag, 2015

‘A brightly painted miniature hut placed in a small area of tussock can make it seem like a grand, distant wilderness.’ Mark Amery, The Big Idea, 2015

**Need something more? Contact your SchoolFest team with any questions about the performance.**

[schoolfest@festival.co.nz](mailto:schoolfest@festival.co.nz) | (04) 473 0149

# PROVOCATIONS AND ACTIVITIES

## BEFORE YOUR VISIT

What is tramping? Have you ever been on a tramp? Did you stay in a hut? What was that experience like?

Go to Kemi Niko & Co's website and explore past projects. What sort of artworks do they make? Discuss the philosophy behind their practice.

Prepare what you will need for your Urban Hut Club adventure. Book mark the website (the best way to view the directions) and read through any safety information on [urbanhutclub.nz](http://urbanhutclub.nz). The directions can also be downloaded as PDFs, [download it here](#).

## DURING YOUR VISIT

How easy was it to find the hut? Were the directions easy to follow? What skills did you have to use to find the it? What was the terrain like – steep, rocky, sandy, flat ...?

What did you feel like when you first spotted the hut? What is the effect from far away? What did you discover as you went closer?

Look closely at the materials the huts are made from. They are all recycled. Can you spot anything that has been repurposed? How have they been constructed? How has scale been used?

What is the environment like around you? Use all your senses to engage with the environment.

Take a photo of the hut or bring a pencil and paper and make a sketch. Think about the composition – how does the structure sit within the landscape? Is your image of the details, the hut as a whole or the scene from afar?

## AFTER YOUR VISIT

Download and print out the *What hut will you build?* resource on the following page and design an Urban Hut of your own.

Talk about the process of building a hut. What materials and tools would you need? How would you get the materials to the site? What skills would you need?

Write a story about your visit to the hut. What did you see, hear and smell? What was the process of getting there like? How did you feel when you first found the hut?

You could also write a story about a visitor to the hut who are they, why are they there, and where are they going?

As a class read or listen to the short story that accompanies the hut (these are accessible online using the FOUND IT code inside each hut or email your SchoolFest team and we can send directly).

How have Kemi Niko & Co. used the aesthetics (e.g. materials, architecture and stylistic choices) of the backcountry hut to inspire Urban Hut Club?

How was your experience of visiting Urban Hut Club reflected in the four concepts of Hauora?

How do Kemi Niko & Co. communicate and promote their ethos for protecting and respecting the environment throughout the different aspects of the Urban Hut Club project? Think about the different aspects of the project including, directions, website, social media, materials and overall concept.

# What hut will you build?

Design your hut here

Hut name \_\_\_\_\_

Location \_\_\_\_\_

Materials

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Your name \_\_\_\_\_

Directions

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**New  
Zealand  
Festival**  
OF THE ARTS

21 Feb – 15 Mar 2020  
Pōneke, Wellington

Use this space to design your own hut using any medium, pencil, pen, collage, digital etc.

We'd love to see and share your designs, send them to us at [schoolfest@festival.co.nz](mailto:schoolfest@festival.co.nz)