

# Wanton, Wild & Unimagined

Alison McDonald



Education Kit





## INTRODUCTION

### How to Use the Education Kit

This Education Kit is designed to support the touring exhibition *Wanton, Wild & Unimagined*, and is a starting point for generating ideas and discussions. It can be used to prepare before your gallery visit, during your gallery visit and after your gallery visit in the classroom.

This kit contains information about the exhibition and information about the artist. It also looks at five key artworks in profile, with a series of questions targeted at secondary students for Years 7–8 and 9–10.

Educators are invited to select and modify as appropriate for individual students and classes. The questions and activities are to be used as prompts and provide opportunities for different levels of engagement for both phases of learning.

This Education Kit has been written to align with the *Years 7-10, Australian Curriculum: The Arts – Visual Arts* and incorporates the cross-curriculum priorities of the Australian Curriculum that are addressed through learning areas.

This Education Kit has been developed by Umbrella Studio contemporary arts and Museums & Galleries Queensland in collaboration with the artist, Alison McDonald, and education consultants, Christina Papadimitriou and Jacinta Lisec.

### Curriculum sources:

*Years 7–10 Australian Curriculum: The Arts – Visual Arts (version 8.2)*

- <http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/the-arts/key-ideas>
- <http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/the-arts/visual-arts/curriculum/f-10?layout=1#level7-8>

*Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority. Years 7 and 8 Visual Arts band plan*

- <https://www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/p-10/aciq/p-10-arts/year-7-arts>

*Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority. Years 9 and 10 Visual Arts band plan*

- <https://www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/p-10/aciq/p-10-arts/year-9-arts>



## ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

### From the Curator, Ross Searle

Environmental artist and sculptor, Alison McDonald, brings a focus to the complex beauty of recycled materials in an artistic practice that positions her sculpture within a broader debate about consumer culture and the environmental movement. *Wanton, Wild & Unimagined* is an intriguing exhibition of sculptured recycled plastic that "carefully weaves a strong sense of environmental conscience, attempting to influence and educate". Greatly influenced by her location in the tropical north of Queensland, the material that most dominates Alison's sculpture is plastic; and it is plastic that makes up the majority of marine debris not only seen on northern shorelines but also floating in oceans worldwide. She spends many hours manipulating the humble plastic bottle and collecting thousands of plastic lids to make a variety of unimagined and impossible creations inspired by land-based flora, the depths of the ocean environment and an imaginary world inspired by such things as John Wyndham's sci-fi novel, *The Day of the Triffids*.

By converting masses of everyday objects into a visually transformative and aesthetically charged new form, Alison's artworks communicate the optimism in regenerating rubbish, whilst raising questions about the relationship we have with plastic, the recycling of this material and its supposed sustainability. While the work draws attention to cynical and apathetic consumer culture and the anxious dialogue between contemporary art and environmental issues, there is also great humour in the way these playful transformations engage our senses.

The earliest work in the exhibition is the stunningly elegant *Fractal* triptych from 2008. Made from flattened recycled 'PET' plastic bottles, they are delicate fern-like structures that are reminiscent of crystallised minerals. A fractal is a natural phenomenon that exhibits a repeating pattern that displays at every scale, where nothing changes and the same pattern repeats over and over. Islamic architecture and its use of geometric patterns provides a perfect example of a fractal art form. Within the natural world, the connection between fractals and leaves, for instance, is currently being used to determine how much carbon is contained in trees. In Alison McDonald's hands, these refined objects gain a particular magic in the way she painstaking cuts and snips these delicate forms, which are held together with gossamer-thin monofilament. They speak of the magical order and symmetry of the natural world.

Clearly Alison has centred her recent practice on revaluing everyday materials including discarded PET bottles and plastic components. While her early work demonstrates a connection to the figure, her PET assemblages are expansive and are often presented in site-specific contexts. The work *R.R.R.<sup>2</sup>*, 2012–2015, was conceived whilst on residency in Aberystwyth, Wales, UK. Originally titled *Choker* to resemble an oversize piece of jewellery, its purpose was to play on the idea that it was made of rubbish that 'choked' our waterways. Our reaction of recognition arises from perceiving the work as new, complex, and unfamiliar, as well as understandable. Her formally complex assemblages can be seen on many levels and will be appreciated by a broad demographic. Clearly audiences will delight in the simple materiality and narrative of the work, but will also be intrigued by the complexity of its construction.



## ABOUT THE EXHIBITION (CONT)

The final series are the *Triffid* works created between 2011 and 2016. Mostly small and discrete, they gain their impact from being installed *en masse*. These colourful-looking plants are constructed and modified in such a way that their original materiality is lost, whereas large-scale works such as *Flow*, 2010–2013, and *Global*, 2013, leave the original components intact so we can see the impact of small plastic items on an enormous scale. In John Wyndham's 1951 science-fiction book (and film) *The Day of the Triffids*, his Triffids are described as a member of a race of predatory plants which are capable of growing to a gigantic size and are possessed of locomotive ability and a poisonous sting. Capturing this in essence, Alison's *Triffids* too are fictitious, exotic and colourful-looking overgrown plants that derive from single-use plastics, a material that grows to enormous quantities and slowly takes over the world.

Alison's interest in environmental art is long-standing and her influences are multi-faceted. While many artists in Australia work across the environmental art movement, clearly one of the artists who dominate this field is internationally recognised El Anatsui (born 1944), a Ghanaian sculptor active for much of his career in Nigeria. Alison is intrigued by his work and its capacity to be transformative. El Anatsui has drawn particular international attention in recent years for his iconic 'bottle-top installations', distinctive large-scale assemblages of thousands of pieces of aluminium sourced from alcohol recycling stations and sewn together with copper wire, transformed into metallic cloth-like wall sculptures.

Alison McDonald is a nationally significant regional artist, whose practice extends beyond the local and engages in questions about sustainability and environmental management, affirming the role that art has in critiquing and engaging with larger global issues. Humour is one of her strongest tools. The absurdity of producing bottled water at centralised urban bottling plants and shipping this product all over the Australian landmass is clearly illogical. Australians spend over \$500 million on bottled water every year. It has to be pumped out of the ground, packaged, transported and chilled before it gets to us. This creates over 60,000 tons of greenhouse gases a year in Australia alone. The manufacture and transport of the plastic bottles for all this water requires over 460,000 barrels of oil. Less than 40% of these bottles are recycled; the balance ends up in landfill or in our waterways<sup>3</sup>. Alison plays with these issues and she leaves us without any doubt about her intentions. It has been a 10-year journey that commenced in 2005, when Alison created her first work with plastic. Titled *A retribution of rubbish*, it featured in the 2005 *Strand Ephemera* exhibition in Townsville, Queensland. From this exhibition, she hasn't looked back.

### Ross Searle

<sup>1</sup> 'Art is garbage and garbage is art', Danielle Thorman. Retrieved 10 August 2016 <http://www.eyelinepublishing.com/write-about-art-5/article/art-garbage-and-garbage-art>

<sup>2</sup> R.R.R. represents Reduce, Reuse, Recycle.

<sup>3</sup> Cool Australia, 'Bottled Water', 2013. Retrieved 10 August 2016 <http://www.coolaustralia.org/bottled-water-secondary/>



## ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

Alison McDonald is a practising artist based in Townsville, North Queensland. She is from a Victorian artistic family that nurtured her creativity from an early age. She regularly exhibits new artwork in Townsville, interstate and internationally.

Alison completed a Master of Art in Public Space at Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT) (Melbourne, Victoria), and a Bachelor of Visual Arts (Hons) in Sculpture and Painting from James Cook University (JCU) (Townsville, Queensland). She taught sculpture at JCU for several years and currently teaches sculpture at Technical and Further Education (TAFE). In 2012 Alison completed a residency in Aberystwyth, Wales, UK. In 2009 and 2014, she completed two residencies in China at Red Gate in Beijing, and more recently she undertook a residency in Warwick, Queensland.

## ARTIST STATEMENT

By converting masses of everyday objects into visually aesthetic and conceptual discoveries, my artworks communicate the optimism in regenerating rubbish. Through my artworks, I aim to stimulate the history embedded within the object, its initial attractions and final deficiencies.

My inventory of accumulated everyday materials includes keys, hooks, plastic bottles, 'Tic Tac' packets, plastic lids, CDs, etc. Items are transformed into organic or recognisable structures, by either brazing or joining with traditionally female or male techniques such as weaving or welding. These structures range from very large public artworks to small, intricate and meticulously detailed works, which often render the original object unrecognisable. My work sits at the junction of sculpture, consumer culture and environmental concern.

When collecting materials, some are sought through serendipitous opportunity, some solicited as donations of waste from organisations, whilst others are collected from friends, family and local community, often portraying and mapping contemporary and consumerist culture. These materials are then hoarded and contemplated until an idea percolates. I begin my artwork by experimenting with the patterns that emerge from combinations, until I am able to manipulate that pattern into a concept that is often site-specific. Many of these patterns, whilst employing mathematical theory and geometry, transform the ordinary basic material into extraordinary, representative or abstract forms.

I have a deep affection for the environment, and am concerned about the impact that waste has upon our land and oceans. Humans exist in such phenomenal numbers on our planet, and we are the only creatures that make inorganic waste in such huge volumes. By reviewing this waste and combining it into a form made of multiples of the same item, I also reflect upon the large population we have on Earth. The use of materials from all this waste, to create spectacular large-scale artworks, helps to focus the viewer's attention on what is disposed of in our community. My aim is to show viewers that one person can make a difference, by presenting the effect that one ordinary item multiplied into the form of a sculpture can have.



## KEY THEMES FOR RESEARCH

### Forms:

- Sculpture
- Installation
- Intervention
- Jewellery
- Recycled media

### Viewpoints: Contexts – societal, cultural, historical: as artist and audience

- Environmental art
- Land art (UK and USA origin, using natural materials)
- Contemporary art
- Site-specific art
- Public art
- Arte Povera (Italian origin developed in the 1960s, using everyday materials)
- Bricolage (French origin, improvisation and tinkering with a construction made of whatever materials are at hand or available)

### Artists:

- |                                |   |
|--------------------------------|---|
| • Ai WeiWei                    | Chinese sculptor, artist                      |
| • Alfredo and Isabel Aquilizan | Philippine-born artists                       |
| • Andy Goldsworthy             | UK land artist                                |
| • Bronwyn Oliver               | Australian sculptor                           |
| • Chris Booth                  | NZ sculptor                                   |
| • Chris Drury                  | UK land artist                                |
| • Christo and Jean-Claude      | American/Bulgarian and American French artist |
| • Donna Marcus                 | Australian sculptor/artist                    |
| • El Anatsui                   | Nigerian sculptor                             |
| • Ellarose Savage              | Torres Strait Islander artist, Ghost Net Art  |
| • Fiona Hall                   | Australian sculptor/photographer              |
| • Lionel Bawden                | Australian sculptor/artist                    |
| • Lorraine Connelly-Northey    | Australian Indigenous sculptor                |
| • Richard Long                 | UK land artist                                |
| • Simryn Gill                  | Australian/Singaporean artist                 |
| • Thomas Heatherwick           | UK designer/architect                         |



## KEY THEMES FOR RESEARCH (CONT)

*The Australian Curriculum: The Arts* outlines a range of viewpoints — a collection of perspectives, lenses or frames through which artworks can be explored and interpreted. These perspectives, lenses and frames include the contexts, knowledge and evaluations that students consider when both making and responding to artworks.

The questions below are from the Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Years 7 and 8, and Years 9 and 10 Visual Arts band plans. They have been provided as a guideline for further discussion in addition to the specific questions about the artworks in profile in this Education Kit.

### VIEWPOINTS: AS ARTIST AND AUDIENCE KEY QUESTIONS

#### YEARS 7–8

##### Context

- How do social, cultural and historical forces influence an artist's approach to a theme or idea?
- How does this artwork relate to my culture?
- What thematic or conceptual ideas are expressed in the artwork?
- How are thematic or conceptual ideas expressed in the artwork?

##### Knowledge

- How did the artist manipulate materials, processes and techniques to enhance meaning and intention?
- What similar applications of visual conventions are consistent with the theme or concept in other artworks?
- What explicit and implied meanings are communicated from the symbols and codes within the artwork?

##### Evaluations and judgments

- How effective is the artwork in meeting the artist's intentions?
- How does the artist express their viewpoint through the artwork?
- How does the artist affect the audience's interpretation of the artwork?

#### YEARS 9–10

##### Context

- How would different audiences respond to this artwork?
- How is the representation of ideas and subject matter in the artwork a reflection of the artist's viewpoint?

##### Knowledge

- How does the artist's choice of materials, processes and techniques enhance representation of conceptual ideas?
- How does an artist's practice and personal style reflect their viewpoint and intentions?
- What explicit and implied meanings are communicated by the artist's use of personal symbols and codes in their artwork?
- How does the artwork employ physical, psychological, sensory and intuitive devices to engage the intended audience?

##### Evaluations and judgements

- How effectively does the representation of conceptual ideas in the artwork meet the artist's intentions?
- How do conceptual ideas and viewpoints compare between contemporary and past representations?
- What philosophical, ideological and/or political perspectives evident in the artwork affect the audience's interpretation of it?
- What is the value of artistic influence on personal style?



## ARTWORK IN PROFILE: FLOW

**Fun Fact:** The first man-made plastic was invented in 1856! The first plastic bottle was made in 1941.



*Flow*, 2010–2013. Up-cycled plastic lids and cable ties, 12m x 7m x 2cm. Installation at Bondi Beach, NSW. Image courtesy of the artist.

### About my Artwork

*Flow* is an enormous artwork that began in Townsville where I live, and has been created from approximately thirty thousand plastic lids that I collected over a three-year period. This intervention of up-cycled plastic lids flows like a comforting blanket over whatever it rests upon. However, in reality, it smothers all underneath and is reminiscent of what our waterways could look like if production of single-use plastics is continued at the same rate within our consumerist society.

This artwork highlights the massive amount of plastics that clog our waterways, and draws our attention to the stewardship and responsibility we owe to our sea creatures.

*Flow* has an entire blog of its own about its creation, how it has evolved, and those who have helped to create it, at: <http://www.alisonmcdonald.com.au/category/flow-blog/>

Intervention — An intervention artwork is made for display in a specific site or situation, including an object, artwork, audience, private space, or public space. It can also have the ability to alter the physical environment and make people see things in a new way.

**Teacher's Help:** One example is artist Christo's wrapping of Kunsthalle, Bern, Switzerland, 1967–68.

### Discuss

#### Questions for Years 7–8:

- Describe how you would feel if *Flow* was a blanket on your bed?
- Explain how a waterfall effect has been achieved?

#### Questions for Years 9–10:

- What does the word 'flow' indicate to you?
- Explain why the artist might refer to this artwork as a blanket?
- List some other artists who wrap buildings. Does the interpretation of the artwork change when it wraps different objects?  
**Teacher's Help:** Christo.
- Identify some other artists who use multiples of the same material to express a viewpoint.  
**Teacher's Help:** Simryn Gill, Lionel Bawden, Donna Marcus.
- Identify some other artists who explore environmental concerns. How do they do this?  
**Teacher's Help:** Andy Goldsworthy, Ellarose Savage: Ghost Net Art.





## CREATE

### Activity while visiting the gallery:

Using the boxes below, design symbols which reflect the concepts behind Alison McDonald's artwork. (See worksheet A)

#### Teacher's Help:

Environmental art 	Recycling 	Consumerism
Discarded materials	Up-cycling	Use of multiples
Geometry and Euclidean shapes	Meticulous details	Sculpture, installation and jewellery

### Activity for the classroom:

1. Collect multiples of a recycled plastic or other material to make your own sculptural artwork.
2. Analyse techniques used by other sculptors, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists.
3. Experiment with visual arts conventions and techniques to represent a theme, concept or idea in your sculptural artwork.
4. Analyse how your artwork communicates an idea.
5. Evaluate how your artwork could inform your future art making.

## AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM CHECKLIST

### Content descriptions

#### Years 7-8

- Experiment with visual arts conventions and techniques, including exploration of techniques used by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists, to represent a theme, concept or idea in their artwork (ACAVAM118).
- Analyse how artists use visual conventions in artworks (ACAVAR123).

#### Years 9-10

- Conceptualise and develop representations of themes, concepts or subject matter to experiment with their developing personal style, reflecting on the styles of artists, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists (ACAVAM125).
- Evaluate how representations communicate artistic intentions in artworks they make and view to inform their future art making (ACAVAR130).

### Cross-curriculum priority: Sustainability — OI.7

Actions for a more sustainable future reflect values of care, respect and responsibility, and require us to explore and understand environments.

### Suggested Resources:

- <http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-27442625>
- <http://www.tate.org.uk/learn/online-resources/glossary>

## ARTWORK IN PROFILE: GLOBAL

**Fun Fact:** As lids float and are transported around the world, they are growing algae that will now go to places it has never reached.



*Global*, 2013. Up-cycled plastic lids, cable ties, PVC, 120cm x 120cm. Image credit: Louise Allgood.

### About my Artwork

*Global* is about how our rubbish is continually strewn all over our planet. I imagine the tiny remnants of coloured plastic, like confetti, in the archaeological stratum layer of our time. *Global* is a large transparent beach ball that is covered with lids from all over the world, including Tibet, Peru, Thailand, China, Australia, Uzbekistan, Iran, Europe, the UK and many more. The aim is for the viewer to roll the ball around the gallery floor and discover the astonishing places that plastic lids can be found.

### Discuss

#### Questions for Years 7-8:

- Look closely at the artwork and describe some of the differences between the plastic lids used. Identify some of the different cultures and languages represented.
- How does the title *Global* help you to understand the artist's intent in the artwork?

#### Questions for Years 9-10:

- How do you think the artist was able to construct the plastic lids around the ball? What was her joining technique?  
*Teacher's Help: The artist connected one long string of lids together then coiled them around the ball, starting at the top and bottom of the ball.*
- What will our rubbish tell tomorrow's archaeologists about our contemporary culture?

## CREATE

### Activity while visiting the gallery:

Play the “Same, Same but Different” game. The aim of this game is to realise that we are all different, but have things in common. We are all global citizens who are linked by our actions and what we do. Follow these instructions to play:

Stand in a circle holding hands at full arm’s length. Each person should share one thing about themselves, for example, “I am a girl”. Everyone who this applies to in the circle takes a step forward. Other examples might be “I have two siblings” or “my favourite food is spaghetti”. The circle will continue to shrink as more people are added and step forward when they have something in common. As the game progresses, you should start to see that you have lots of things mutually shared with other people in the circle, even though you might be from different ancestors and cultures. The game is over when the centre is too tight for people to move!

This activity emphasises that people all over the world can be united by one single thing in common – if we all chose to reduce our plastic consumption, the effect will be significant.

### Activity for the classroom:

Research waste products around the world. Find an item that is a waste product common to many countries. Create an artwork using that item that illustrates how wasteful we are globally. Experiment with a variety of joining techniques in creating your artwork (e.g. gluing, knitting, stacking, tying with string, rubber bands, wire). Which technique achieved the best result? Why?

## AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM CHECKLIST

### Content descriptions

#### Years 7–8:

- Experiment with visual arts conventions and techniques, including exploration of techniques used by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists, to represent a theme, concept or idea in their artwork (ACAVAM118).
- Analyse how artists use visual conventions in artworks (ACAVAR123).

#### Years 9–10:

- Conceptualise and develop representations of themes, concepts or subject matter to experiment with their developing personal style, reflecting on the styles of artists, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists (ACAVAM125).
- Evaluate how representations communicate artistic intentions in artworks they make and view to inform their future art making (ACAVAR130).

### Cross-curriculum priority:

#### Sustainability – OI.5, OI.7

- World views are formed by experiences at personal, local, national and global levels, and are linked to individual and community actions for sustainability.
- Actions for a more sustainable future reflect values of care, respect and responsibility, and require us to explore and understand environments.

## ARTWORK IN PROFILE: TRIFFIDS

**Fun Fact:** Did you know that the lid and the bottom of a bottle are different plastics? When recycled they are separated in water, as the lids float and the bottle sinks. Different plastics melt at different temperatures and go through different recycling processes due to their chemical composition.



Installation view of the *Triffid* series, 2011–2016. Up-cycled PET bottles and stainless steel wire, various sizes. Image credit: Aaron Ashley.

### About my Artwork

This exhibit is a slightly nonsensical, but believable proposal of what can happen when things on planet Earth get out of control, such as occurs in the 1951 John Wyndham novel, *The Day of the Triffids*. Instead of real plants growing excessively, this exhibition addresses excessive plastic waste (that ends up in the rivers and oceans of our world) by creating large exotic and colourful flowers from single-use plastics. My aim is to encourage the viewers to imagine the possibilities with reusing and recycling single-use plastics.

### Discuss

#### Questions for Years 7–8:

- Do you recognise the original brand of these bottles?  
*Teacher's Help: Coca-Cola, Sprite.*
- List the techniques used to make these artworks?  
*Teacher's Help: Melting, Cutting. (Note: Student activities are not to include melting. Please access Safety Data Sheets (SDS — also known as Material Safety Data Sheets, MSDS) for workplace health and safety guidelines.)*

#### Questions for Years 9–10:

- These artworks look colourful and attractive, but have a sinister side. What is it? Explain how are they different to real flowers?
- In John Wyndham's novel, poisonous Triffid plants take over the Earth; and Alison McDonald's artworks imply that plastics may also take over the Earth. What do you think might take over the Earth in the future, e.g. technology, food, celebrities? How would you warn others – by telling a story like John Wyndham or creating an artwork like Alison McDonald, or via another way?

## CREATE

### Activity while visiting the gallery:

Select one or two of Alison McDonald's *Triffids* and draw them.

### Activity for the classroom:

1. Make your own Triffid by cutting recycled plastic.  
*Teacher's Help: Students are not to use melting as a technique – please see note on page 12.*
2. Consider techniques to manipulate the plastic to create different effects and shapes to communicate your ideas and your personal style.
3. Plan the display of your artwork in collaboration with your class to enhance your artistic intentions.
4. Evaluate how Alison McDonald might modify her art making in the future.  
*Teacher's Help: Incorporating sound and/or technology.*

## AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM CHECKLIST

### Content descriptions

#### Years 7–8:

- Experiment with visual arts conventions and techniques, including exploration of techniques used by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists, to represent a theme, concept or idea in their artwork (ACAVAM118).
- Analyse how artists use visual conventions in artworks (ACAVAR123).

#### Years 9–10:

- Conceptualise and develop representations of themes, concepts or subject matter to experiment with their developing personal style, reflecting on the styles of artists, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists (ACAVAM125).
- Manipulate materials, techniques, technologies and processes to develop and represent their own artistic intentions (ACAVAM126).
- Evaluate how representations communicate artistic intentions in artworks they make and view to inform their future art making (ACAVAR130).

### Cross-curriculum priority: Sustainability — OI.7

Actions for a more sustainable future reflect values of care, respect and responsibility, and require us to explore and understand environments.

### Suggested Resources:

- [www.cleanup.org.au/PDF/au/cua\\_plastic\\_recycling\\_fact\\_sheet.pdf](http://www.cleanup.org.au/PDF/au/cua_plastic_recycling_fact_sheet.pdf)
- [www.zerowaste.sa.gov.au/at-home/recycle-right/what-do-the-numbers-and-symbols-on-plastics-mean](http://www.zerowaste.sa.gov.au/at-home/recycle-right/what-do-the-numbers-and-symbols-on-plastics-mean)
- John Wyndham, *The Day of the Triffids*, Michael Joseph, 1951.



## ARTWORK IN PROFILE: R.R.R.



R.R.R., 2015. Individually hand-cut and coloured recycled PET plastic rings, 68cm x 20cm x 38cm. Image credit: Aaron Ashley.

### About my Artwork

I started this work whilst on residency in Aberystwyth in Wales, UK. It was titled *Choker* as I wanted it to look like an oversized piece of jewellery. I played on the idea that it was made of rubbish that 'chokes' our waterways. However, I wasn't completely happy with it and reformed it into *R.R.R.* (which represents Reduce, Reuse, Recycle) and the virtuous cycle of chasing arrows that forms via a Möbius Strip (doubled) which is synonymous with the recycling symbol. It is coloured with 'lolly-like' pop colours that designers utilise to attract us to purchasing unnecessary new items instead of reusing.

**Fun Fact:** Lids are available in about 20 colours. This allows for masses of design possibilities. What combination (e.g red, blue, yellow) would you use and why?

### Discuss

#### Questions for Years 7-8:

- Each ring in this artwork comes from one plastic bottle. Identify which section of the bottle it comes from.

*Teacher's Help:* The stopper ring or neck underneath the part where the cap screws onto the top.

- What does 'PET' stand for? List what sort of everyday items are made of PET plastic.

*Teacher's Help:* Polyethylene terephthalate. Plastic packaging, polyester, water, soft drink bottles, etc.

#### Questions for Years 9-10:

- Advertisers use subliminal messages to entice you. Is there a subliminal message in the colours used in this artwork? Does this make you desire anything?

*Teacher's Help:* The artwork is coloured with tempting 'lolly-like' colours to emulate what the designers of soft drinks do to entice and attract us to purchase and consume goods, even if we don't want them.

- Research some advertising that uses specific colours to entice specific feelings.

*Teacher's Help:* KFC advertising uses red to entice hunger. Greenpeace uses green to symbolise the environment and peace.

## CREATE

### Activity while visiting the gallery:

The artist states that “the woven pattern I utilised to join the rings in the work together was inspired by complex Celtic Welsh interlocking knot designs used in jewellery, drawings and other designs”. What are some traditional and contemporary uses of the Celtic knot?

Draw your own Celtic knot design.

*Teacher's Help: Tombstones, battle shields, tattoos.*

### Activity for the classroom:

1. Make a Möbius Strip/Loop. Use a thin band of paper (about thumb width) and give it only one twist and tape the ends together to form a loop.
2. What happens when you cut the joined loop in half lengthways?

*Teacher's Help: You end up with two interlocking rings.*

3. Doubling the Möbius Strip in this way also makes it appear like another mathematical symbol. What symbol is it?

*Teacher's Help: Infinity symbol.*

4. Can you identify where else you may have seen the Möbius symbol used?

*Teacher's Help: ABC symbol (in profile), recycling symbol — anything recyclable, infinity symbol.*

5. Choose a specific symbol and alter it, or use multiples of it to create an artwork which represents your artistic intention.

### Activity for the classroom:

Discover where, when and who invented the recycling symbol. Design a poster using the recycling symbol.

*Teacher's Help: California, 1970, Gary Anderson.*

## AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM CHECKLIST

### Content descriptions

#### Years 7–8:

- Experiment with visual arts conventions and techniques, including exploration of techniques used by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists, to represent a theme, concept or idea in their artwork (ACAVAM118).
- Analyse how artists use visual conventions in artworks (ACAVAR123).

#### Years 9–10:

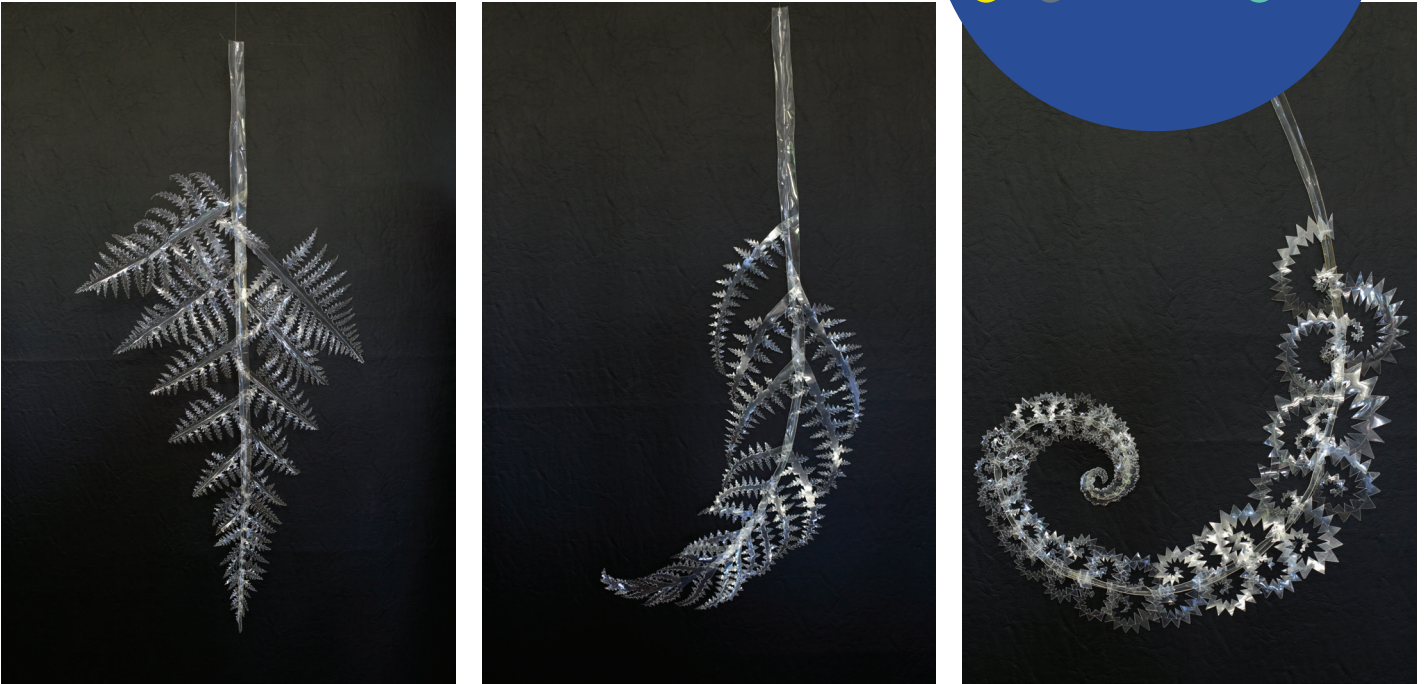
- Manipulate materials, techniques, technologies and processes to develop and represent their own artistic intentions (ACAVAM126)
- Evaluate how representations communicate artistic intentions in artworks they make and view to inform their future art making (ACAVAR130).

### Cross-curriculum priority: Sustainability — OI.7

Actions for a more sustainable future reflect values of care, respect and responsibility, and require us to explore and understand environments.

## ARTWORK IN PROFILE: FRACTALS

**Fun Fact:** The word plastic is derived from the Greek (plastikos) meaning "capable of being shaped or moulded".



Left to right: *Fractal 1*, *Fractal 2*, *Fractal 3*, 2008. Recycled hand-cut PET plastic bottles and monofilament, Triptych, 100cm x 32cm. Image credit: Aaron Ashley.

### About my Artwork

My aim is to display how one single thing or action repeated could have an enormous impact among many. I chose via the fractal. This, put simply, is a shape in nature that is repeated, like the triangle in a fern leaf that starts little and gets bigger, but then the overall shape still remains triangular.

### Discuss

#### Questions for Years 7–8:

- A fractal is a shape in nature that repeats itself. Name some fractals.  
*Teacher's Help: A floret in a cauliflower broken down is the same shape as the whole shape. Natural phenomena with fractal features include: river networks, pineapples, heart rates, DNA and the rings of Saturn.*
- These artworks are two-dimensional compared to the other sculptures in the exhibition. Why do you think they have been framed for display?  
*Teacher's Help: Delicate, precious.*

#### Questions for Years 9–10:

- A fractal is a shape in nature that repeats itself. What are some other mathematical patterns found in nature?  
*Teacher's Help: Spirals, waves, tessellations, hexagons in a beehive, helix or helices [spider webs, genetic materials, black holes].*
- What are some other mathematical patterns found in art?  
*Teacher's Help: The rule of thirds, symmetry, balance, pixels, repetition, composition, architecture, wallpaper, mandalas.*
- What is the difference between these artworks and the others in the exhibition? Do you think it fits with the exhibition? Explain why or why not.  
*Teacher's Help: The bottle is not obviously recognisable; there is a lack of colour compared to other artworks in the exhibition; they are two-dimensional instead of three-dimensional; they are the only artworks displayed behind glass and framed.*



## CREATE

### Activity while visiting the gallery:

Follow these simple steps to create your own fractal artwork:

1. Choose a simple shape (like a circle or triangle).
2. Draw this shape repetitively, only changing its size, and making sure the shapes overlap.
3. Add colour to enhance your drawing and represent ideas about your artistic intention.

### Activity for the classroom:

Design your own digital fractal pattern on the computer. Print and present your finished artwork. To help you, read the tutorial: <http://10steps.sg/tutorials/photoshop/how-to-create-fractals-in-photoshop-easily/> or create your fractal art by cutting out lots of coloured shapes in different sizes and collaging them onto a piece of paper.

## AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM CHECKLIST

### Content descriptions

#### Years 7–8:

- Experiment with visual arts conventions and techniques, including exploration of techniques used by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists, to represent a theme, concept or idea in their artwork (ACAVAM118).
- Develop planning skills for art-making by exploring techniques and processes used by different artists (ACAVAM120).
- Practise techniques and processes to enhance representation of ideas in their art making (ACAVAM121).
- Analyse how artists use visual conventions in artworks (ACAVAR123).

#### Years 9–10:

- Conceptualise and develop representations of themes, concepts or subject matter to experiment with their developing personal style, reflecting on the styles of artists, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists (ACAVAM125).
- Manipulate materials, techniques, technologies and processes to develop and represent their own artistic intentions (ACAVAM126).
- Develop and refine techniques and processes to represent ideas and subject matter (ACAVAM127).
- Evaluate how representations communicate artistic intentions in artworks they make and view to inform their future art making (ACAVAR130).

### Cross-curriculum priority: Sustainability — OI.7

Actions for a more sustainable future reflect values of care, respect and responsibility, and require us to explore and understand environments.

### Suggested Resources:

- “Fractals — Hunting The Hidden Dimension”: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s65DSz78jW4>
- Artist using repetitive patterning — <https://www.jemimawyman.wordpress.com>



## WORKSHEET A

Environmental art	Recycling	Consumerism
Discarded materials	Up-cycling	Use of multiples
Geometry and Euclidean shapes	Meticulous details	Sculpture, installation and jewellery



## TOUR VENUES

Venue	Exhibition period
Coalface Gallery, Moranbah, QLD	1 December 2016 – 23 January 2017
Pine Rivers Heritage Museum, QLD	3 February – 9 April 2017
Noosa Regional Gallery, QLD	24 April – 11 June 2017
Hervey Bay Regional Gallery, QLD	23 June – 30 July 2017
Maitland Regional Art Gallery, NSW	9 September – 3 December 2017
Hurstville City Library, Museum & Gallery, NSW	20 January – 13 May 2018
Port Pirie Regional Art Gallery, SA	22 June – 5 August 2018
Signal Point Gallery, Goolwa, SA	15 August – 30 September 2018
Arts Space Wodonga, VIC	2 November – 1 December 2018
Childers Art Space, QLD	15 January – 24 February 2019
Dogwood Crossing @ Miles, QLD	8 March – 30 April 2019
Redland Art Gallery, QLD	5 May – 16 June 2019
Warwick Art Gallery, QLD	4 July – 19 August 2019

Dates may be subject to change. Please refer to the Museums & Galleries Queensland website, <http://www.magsq.com.au/cms/page.asp?ID=8069>

A travelling exhibition organised by Umbrella Studio contemporary arts, toured by Museums & Galleries Queensland. This project has been assisted by the Australian Government's Visions of Australia program; and supported by the Visual Arts and Craft Strategy, an initiative of the Australian, state and territory governments.

Design: Designfront

Cover: Alison McDonald, *Trickle* (detail), 2013, Individually hand cast & reduced recycled plastic lids & wire, 100 × 60 × 1cm.

Photo courtesy of the artist.

