Celebrating Townsville

EDUCATION RESOURCE
ARTIST: ALISON MCDONALD  
ARTWORK: R.R.R. (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle)

McDonald has stated “this work began while I was on an artist residency in Aberystwyth, Wales. It was extremely complex to create and was made over three cold months, in a warm Welsh artist studio. I worked for many uninterrupted hours. It was bliss.”

The artwork was originally titled Choker. McDonald wanted it to look like an oversized piece of jewellery, a choker necklace. The sculpture also played on the idea that it was made of rubbish that ‘choked’ our waterways. The sculptor wasn’t completely happy with the title and renamed it to R.R.R. (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle) which relates to the chasing arrows that form our recycling symbol and to the Möbius Strip.

The Möbius Strip is a one-sided surface that can be constructed by affixing the ends of a rectangular strip after first having given one of the ends a one-half twist. This space displays interesting properties, such as having only one side and remaining in one piece when split down the middle. The features of the strip were discovered simultaneously in 1858 by two German mathematicians, August Ferdinand Möbius and Johann Benedict Listing.
McDonald 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 other designs. It is coloured with the ‘lolly like’ colours that designers utilise to attract us to purchasing unnecessary items instead of reusing”.

Alison McDONALD
b.1962 Australia

R.R.R. (as in Reduce, Reuse and Recycle) [detail] 2012-2015
Hand cut and coloured recycled PET plastic, silver-coated wire
68 x 20 x 38 cm

Collection of the artist, Photograph: Michael Marzik

INVESTIGATE

Make a Möbius Strip.
Obtain a thin length of paper and give it one only twist and tape the ends together.

What happens when you draw a line from the inside of the paper along its full length?

What happens when you cut the joined strip in half lengthways?

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

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

Each ring in this artwork comes from one plastic bottle. Identify which section of the bottle it comes from.
Discover where, when and who invented the recycling symbol.

What does PET stand for?

List what sort of everyday items are made of PET plastic.

What are some traditional and contemporary uses of the Celtic knots?

Draw your own Celtic knot design.

Reference List:

Celebrating Townsville EDUCATION RESOURCE for secondary students

The aim of this resource is to offer insights into the works of art featured in the exhibition. It is intended as a starting point for generating ideas, for encouraging student research, and as a basis for discussion during exhibition visits. The resource provides background information on the development of particular works, and offers focus questions and suggested activities. It can be used in a variety of ways, both for student groups, and for individual study and research.

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