

Case study

Artist Alison McDonald joins the war on waste with touring exhibition *Wanton, Wild & Unimagined*

The touring exhibition *Wanton, Wild & Unimagined* uses sculptured recycled plastics to address excessive waste and evoke environmental reflection.

What

Wanton, Wild & Unimagined, an exhibition by Townsville based environmental artist Alison McDonald, was inspired by John Wyndham's book *The Day of the Triffids*. It features work made from single use plastics to address excessive plastic waste as a critical environmental issue.

With the exhibition, Ms McDonald unites her lifelong passion for recycling, environmental awareness and art. She describes single use plastics as "the worst" because they are used once and thrown away.

Wanton, Wild & Unimagined is a travelling exhibition organised by Townsville's Umbrella Studio Contemporary Arts and toured by Museums & Galleries Queensland.

When and where

2017: Moranbah Coalface Gallery, Noosa Regional Gallery, Hervey Bay Regional Gallery, Pine Rivers Heritage Museum (QLD), and Maitland Regional Art Gallery (NSW).

2018: Hurstville City Library (NSW), Port Pirie Regional Art Gallery and Signal Point Gallery (SA), Arts Space Wodonga (VIC)

2019: Childers Arts Space, Dogwood Crossing @ Miles, Redland Art Gallery and Warwick Art Gallery



Alison McDonald, Working in studio 2015
Photography by Aaron Ashley.

Key stats

- 1 artist
- 13 galleries across Australia, 8 in Queensland, from 1 December 2016 to 19 August 2019.
- 28,495 visitors viewed the exhibition in 2017.

Arts Queensland investment

- \$205,000 annually to Umbrella Studio through the Organisations Fund 2017-2020 (includes \$55,000 Visual Arts and Craft Strategy [VACS] funding)
- \$355 000 annually (includes \$55,000 VACS funding) to Museums & Galleries Queensland through the Organisation Fund 2017–2020.

[*Wanton, Wild & Unimagined* has been assisted by the Australia Government's Visions of Australia program; and supported by VACS, an initiative of the Australian, state and territory governments.]

Outcomes

- *Wanton, Wild & Unimagined* is a travelling solo exhibition curated by Ross Searle and developed by Umbrella Studio Contemporary Arts, Townsville.
- Alison McDonald is being mentored by Museums & Galleries Queensland in exhibition development and touring through its Artist Touring Mentorship Program, supported by VACS
- In 2017, the exhibition toured to five regional galleries and the artist, Alison McDonald, travelled to each of these venues to assist with installation and deliver public programs.
- The exhibition is travelling with a filmed interview about *Wanton, Wild & Unimagined* between Alison and Louise Martin-Chew, recorded by Carl Warner and captioned for increased access.
- A comprehensive [Education Kit](#) has been developed to accompany the exhibition.

Reflections and learnings

I have spent many hours manipulating the humble plastic bottle, and collecting thousands of plastic lids to make a variety of unimagined and impossible creations inspired by plants, oceans.

I made this artwork called Global just so people would roll it around and see all the countries on there ... and say, 'okay so we're all in this together, this plastic stuff, it's all around the globe.'

Alison McDonald



More than 30,000 lids make up the 12m x 7m piece called *Flow*. Artist Alison McDonald. Photo by Louise Allgood



Global, up-cycled plastic lids from more than 40 countries, cable ties, PVC, Artist Alison McDonald. Photo by Louise Allgood.

Reviews and feedback

The inspiration for these pieces [are from the] novel, *The Day of the Triffids*. ...best described as a post-apocalyptic world where most people have been blinded by a meteor shower... These sculptures are as exotic as the plants in the novel and come in various colours. They're overgrown as well as delicate and you're invited to look closer at the artistry and design. Many hours were spent manipulating the plastics to create this imaginary world that engages the senses in wonderment. They have won me over and are my favourite part of this showcase.

Irene Forsyth, *Wanton, Wild & Unimagined* in Sydney <https://www.weekendnotes.com/wanton-wild-unimagined-hurstville-museum-gallery/>

What next?

The exhibition is travelling through Queensland, New South Wales, South Australia and Victoria until 2019.

Find out more

[Museum & Galleries Queensland](#)

Alison McDonald was interviewed for the ABC's *War On Waste*: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-05-23/war-on-waste-artist-uses-plastics-in-artwork-to-raise-awareness/8551102>

Umbrella Studio Contemporary Arts facebook <https://www.facebook.com/UmbrellaStudio/videos/alison-mcdonald-wanton-wild-unimagined/10155179794052667/>