



Sitting Room, 2009 anodised aluminium, aluminium, plastic, Bakelite 152 x 134 x 6 cm
Collection of the Faculty of Arts, the University of Melbourne Courtesy of the artist

DONNA MARCUS
RADIATE
EDUCATION RESOURCE

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MEET THE ARTIST

HOTA Collection artist, Donna Marcus, is a Sydney-born Australian artist, who has been connected to the Gold Coast and surrounding Hinterland for much of her career.

Donna Marcus creates sculptural pieces, installations and assemblages that repurpose and rearrange everyday domestic and kitchen objects. In doing so, she plays with composition, pattern, colour and form, and draws audiences into a world of memory and nostalgia. Donna Marcus' work has been acquired for collections both nationally and internationally.

MEET THE EXHIBITION

Donna Marcus: Radiate showcases key themes in her practice, especially in relation to collecting, modernism, materiality, composition and memory.

Radiate prompts us to ask how materials have been found and uncovered, sifted and sorted, reinvented and reimagined by Marcus, whilst also considering the histories of these salvaged materials. Repurposed in artistic contexts, her creative composition of materials invites viewers to appreciate beauty in the mundane, the qualities and materiality of these everyday artifacts, as well as our personal memories of domestic life.

Please refer to the *Donna Marcus: Radiate* exhibition publication for more information about the exhibition and the artist.



Donna Marcus: Radiate exhibition view.

CURRICULUM ALIGNMENT

VISUAL ARTS | EXPLORING AND RESPONDING

| | |
|------------------------|---|
| FOUNDATION | AC9AVAFE01 explore how and why the arts are important for people and communities |
| YEAR 1 & 2 | AC9AVA2E01 explore where, why and how people across cultures, communities and/or other contexts experience visual arts |
| YEAR 3 & 4 | AC9AVA4E01 explore where, why and how visual arts are created and/or presented across cultures, times, places and/or other contexts |
| YEAR 5 & 6 | AC9AVA6E01 explore ways that visual conventions, visual arts processes and materials are combined to communicate ideas, perspectives and/or meaning in visual arts across cultures, times, places and/or other contexts |
| YEAR 7 & 8 | AC9AVA8E01 investigate ways that visual conventions, visual arts processes and materials are manipulated to represent ideas, perspectives and/or meaning in artworks created across cultures, times, places and/or other contexts |
| YEAR 9 & 10 | AC9AVA10E01 investigate the ways that artists across cultures, times, places and/or other contexts develop personal expression in their visual arts practice to represent, communicate and/or challenge ideas, perspectives and/or meaning |

DEVELOPING PRACTICES AND SKILLS

| | |
|------------------------|---|
| YEAR 5 & 6 | AC9AVA6D01 experiment with, document and reflect on ways to use a range of visual conventions, visual arts processes, and materials |
| YEAR 7 & 8 | AC9AVA8D02 reflect on the ways that they and other artists respond to influences to inform choices they make in their own visual arts practice |
| YEAR 9 & 10 | AC9AVA10D02 reflect on the way they and other visual artists respond to influences to inspire, develop and resolve choices they make in their own visual arts practice |

PRESENTING AND PERFORMING

| | |
|------------------------|---|
| YEAR 9 & 10 | AC9AVA10P01 evaluate art exhibits to inform the curation and exhibition of their own and/or others' artworks and/or visual arts practice |
|------------------------|---|

VISUAL ARTS IN PRACTICE (APPLIED QLD)

SUBJECT MATTER: EVALUATE ARTWORKS

- Make judgments about own and others' artworks, reflecting on and justifying strengths and limitations in relation to context and purpose.
- Analyse and interpret how artists and/or artisans use visual arts practices to communicate and explore local, national or global issues.
- Examine and discuss how visual language, media, technologies and skills are chosen and used in isolation or combination to communicate ideas about local, national or global issues.

VISUAL ARTS (GENERAL QLD)

UNIT 1: ART AS LENS

OBJECTIVES

2. apply literacy skills to communicate understanding of visual language, expression and meaning in the work of self and others
3. analyse and interpret art practices through the personal and contemporary contexts
4. evaluate art practices, traditions, cultures, and theories to explore diverse figurative and nonfigurative representations of the material world

UNIT 2: ART AS CODE

OBJECTIVES

1. implement ideas and representations to decode artworks and communicate in visual forms
2. apply literacy skills to communicate understanding of visual language, expression and meaning in the work of self and others
3. analyse and interpret artworks and art practices through the formal and cultural contexts
4. evaluate art practices, traditions, cultures, and theories to examine how diverse symbol systems are used by artists to communicate meaning
5. justify viewpoints using evidence of communication in artworks

UNIT 3: ART AS KNOWLEDGE

OBJECTIVES

1. implement ideas and representations to communicate knowledge gained through self-directed inquiry
3. analyse and interpret visual language, expression and meaning in contemporary and traditional artworks and practices using the contemporary, personal, cultural and/or formal contexts
4. evaluate art practices, traditions, cultures and theories to inform student-directed making and responding

UNIT 4: ART AS ALTERNATE

OBJECTIVES

3. analyse and interpret the impact of contemporary context on visual language, expression and meaning in artworks and art practices
4. evaluate art practices, traditions, cultures, and theories to inform an alternate approach
5. justify new viewpoints and evolving ideas



Roland Wakelin Down the Hills to Berrys Bay, 1916
oil on canvas on hardboard
68 x 122 cm
Collection Art Gallery of New South Wales
Courtesy of Estate of Roland Wakelin

Berrys Bay in Sydney was an important site for Australian artists and history during the Depression. Donna Marcus' mother's home as a child in the 1930s was the SS Gabo, which was moored in this bay, and was the site for both her home and family maritime salvage business. It situates the story of how Marcus' work plays on small and grand, personal and national stories. The artworks GABO, Waist, and Pulse in this exhibition refer to this history.

THEMES IN DONNA MARCUS' ART PRACTICE

- collecting
- sorting
- sifting
- assembly
- iteration
- seriality
- salvage
- memory
- everyday
- materiality
- Modernism
- public art
- composition
- mathematics

HOW TO USE THIS RESOURCE

Radiate offers a rich teaching and learning experience, exploring concepts of history, design, art, sustainability and mathematics.

Teachers will find critical thinking inquiry questions and responding activities that appeal to this range of curriculum areas, as well as creativity and collaboration.

For the purposes of teaching and learning, this resource has been organised in the following sections. Each section provides a lens for teachers to approach and engage with Donna Marcus' work.

| SECTION 1 | SECTION 2 | SECTION 3 | SECTION 4 | SECTION 5 |
|---------------|--------------------|-----------|-------------------|--------------------|
| Artful Arrays | Symmetry and Shape | Light | Cracking the Code | Scale & Public Art |



Donna Marcus: *Radiate* exhibition view.

KEY INQUIRY QUESTIONS

- How do objects and materials used in artworks evoke ideas of **familiarity**, **memory** and **place**?
- How can art affect our experience or appreciation of the world around us?
- What is the role of artists in documenting and preserving social or cultural history?
- How does **composition** and **patterning** of objects relate to minimalism and Modernism?
- What impact does **scale** and **lighting** have on how artworks are perceived by audiences?

GLOSSARY

Assemblage – a work of art made by grouping together found or unrelated objects. Often everyday objects are scavenged by an artist or bought specially for their assemblage part/s.

Composition – the arrangement of visual elements within a work of art. Artists use composition to engage the viewer. Sometimes traditional compositional 'rules' are followed to provide an aesthetically-pleasing artwork; other times, an artist breaks composition guidelines to create their own visual effect or statement.

Materiality – involves the use of materials in making and creating art. This speaks to the quality of the material itself and is explored specifically in the artwork.

Collections – is the accumulation of something – usually in group or multiples – that has been deliberately acquired by the artist for the purpose of artmaking.

SECTION 1: ARTFUL ARRAYS

CONCEPTS/THEMES

collecting, arranging, sorting, iteration, everyday

In this section, we look at the way Donna Marcus has transformed the objects of her collection into striking assemblages that are composed, sorted and arranged into arrays of rows and columns, often in square formations. Looking through an historical lens, it is interesting to consider collecting as part of an artist's practice.

It wasn't until humans gave up their nomadic lifestyle over 12,000 years ago that collecting became possible. Some people collect as a hobby or to decorate their home, while others collect for the challenge and reward of finding rare, unique items from across the globe. For Donna Marcus, collections of objects are also a way of preserving an experience of place and time.

DONNA MARCUS NOTES THAT;

"The objects I collect are my 'pigments'. They are what I use to 'paint' with. Materials and objects in themselves bring inescapable meanings.

Over the years I have done a large series of 'cities' including Naples and San Francisco. All the 'cities' are made with similar materials and are not literal interpretations of place. I have been interested in the idea of souvenirs that are rarely bought from the same place in which they are manufactured."

Many visual artists incorporate found objects into their work, and Donna Marcus' practice is a particularly comprehensive example of this approach.

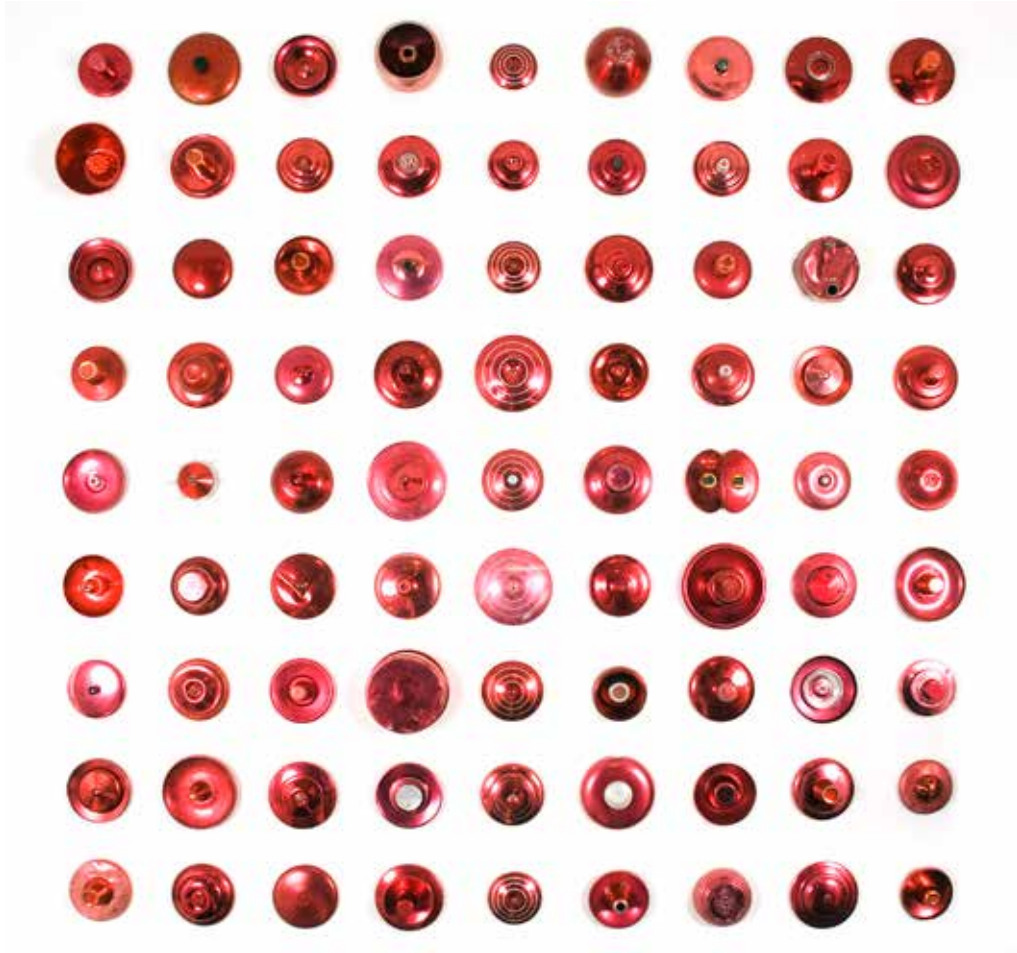
THROUGHOUT THIS SECTION, CONSIDER:

- What does it mean to create and curate a collection?
- Why do you think Donna Marcus chose the array composition?
- What is the impact of organising items in this way?
- What are you curious about when viewing these works?

Donna Marcus: Radiate exhibition view.



MEET THE WORK



Naples, 2011
aluminium, anodised aluminium, adhesive
280 x 278 x 18 cm
Collection of the artist
Courtesy of the artist and Gallery Sally Dan-Cuthbert, Sydney



San Francisco, 2022
aluminium, adhesive
150 x 150 x 10 cm
Collection of the artist

RESPONDING – INQUIRY VIEWPOINTS

- Consider the titles of these artworks. Why do you think Donna Marcus has chosen these titles for her artworks?
- What everyday items do you like to collect? Where are they from and when were they made? What does this collection say about you as an artist?
- What do Donna Marcus' works make you think of or imagine?



Donna Marcus: Radiate exhibition view.

MAKING

VISUAL ARTS

- Arrange/assemble the objects in your collection in an array like Donna Marcus. Consider each object's size, shape, colour, material or texture.
- Explore different compositions according to what you want the viewer to see, think or feel. Think about how your objects relate to each other. Take photos to document different arrangements.
- Rotate your array by 45 degrees and see how that changes the composition.
- Experiment with spacing between your rows or columns. Consider the use of design elements in this approach.
- What title would you give your artwork? What importance does a title have on how the work is perceived by audiences?

HISTORY AND GEOGRAPHY LINKS

- Which places are your objects from? Where did you find them? How old or new are they? Explore arranging them in chronological order from when they were created to make a timeline.
- If they're from a particular architecture and design period - like those in Donna Marcus' collections - consider researching or documenting this era to further contextualise your objects.
- Are your objects manufactured or organic? What qualities do your objects share?

MEET THE WORK



Radiate, 2017
aluminium, anodised aluminium, adhesive
98 x 83 x 7 cm
Private collection of Sally Dan-Cuthbert and Chris Cuthbert

MAKING

MATHS LINKS

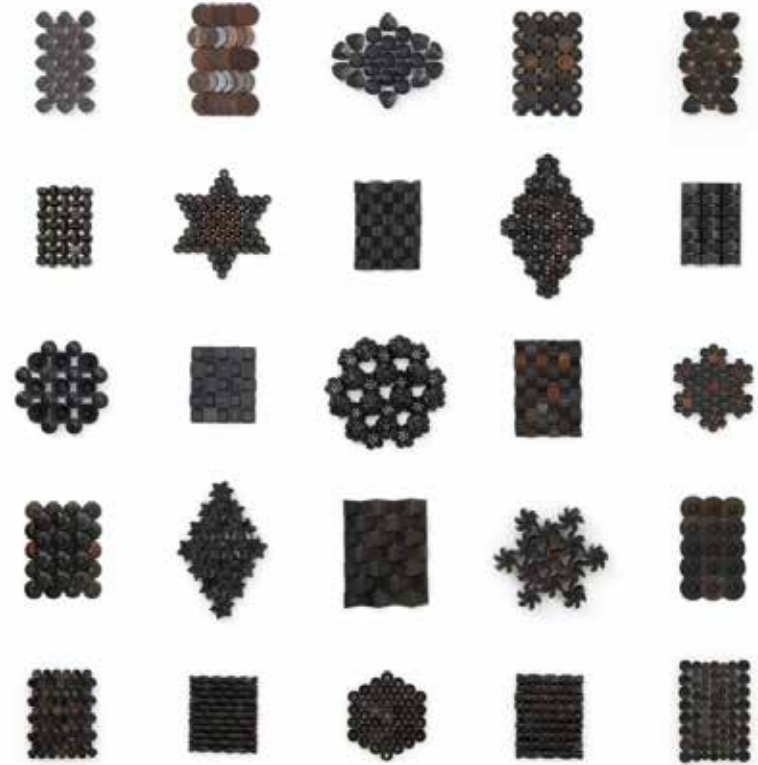
- **Fractions:** Fractions represent an amount of a whole collection. With your collection, see what fractions you can create. For example, if your collection has 30 objects and 5 of them are red, you could express this as $\frac{5}{30}$ or $\frac{1}{6}$.
- **Multiplication arrays:** Grids like the ones used in these artworks are an example of multiplication arrays. Each column or row is a group. Organise your collections into equal groups and represent your composition as a multiplication number sentence. You can practise using multiples as you count your array to work out the whole amount of objects involved.
- In these square formations, Donna Marcus' work represents square numbers. Can you explain how and why?
- **Division:** When you are composing your collection, consider that you're applying division skills by sharing out your objects into groups. See if you can make equal groups or if you have any remainders.
- **Measurement:** Measure accurately the distance between your objects to ensure the grid composition is achieved. Measure the dimensions of your artwork. Determine the area (use the formula $L \times W$) that your artwork covers when installed onto a wall.

MEET THE WORK

Using sixteen pink-toned, round moulds, Donna Marcus produced *Ballerina*, 2021 - a simple grid assemblage that aptly traces a rhythm of contours.



Ballerina, 2021
anodised aluminium, aluminium, adhesive
85 x 85 x 16 cm
Collection of the artist
Courtesy of the artist and Gallery Sally Dan-Cuthbert, Sydney



Hotpoint, 2014-2023
2200 x 2100 x 50 cm overall
Courtesy of the artist and Gallery Sally Dan-Cuthbert, Sydney



Donna Marcus: Radiate exhibition view.

RESPONDING – INQUIRY VIEWPOINTS

- Consider the title of this artwork together with the dominant colour pink. How does it evoke images of a ballerina?
- Consider the monochrome nature of this artwork. How would the addition of other colours – other than pink – transform this piece? What impact would this have on how the artwork is interpreted?

“Hotpoint is a sedate, regular work that quickly becomes busy and energetic. It is a grid of roughly two metres square, a little higher than it is wide, comprising twenty-five components, mostly oblongs, with some hexagons and diamonds and a star, the dimensions of each mostly 25-30 cm high and wide, and sitting up to 5 cm out from the wall.

Each of those twenty-five components is in turn made up of smaller pieces, some of which are themselves yet smaller constructions – spike or rounded daisy-shaped whorls bunched together into tiny spirals or hexagons – or simply found objects, fixed together in minimalist patterns.”

– PROF BRIGITTA OLUBAS

HOTA, Home of the Arts. (2023). Donna Marcus Radiate. HOTA Home of the Arts, Gold Coast.

SECTION 2: SYMMETRY AND SHAPE

CONCEPTS/THEMES

Repetition, symmetry, radial symmetry, geometry

A line of symmetry divides a shape into two identical parts. In these works, Donna Marcus uses lines of symmetry throughout her assemblage compositions. Sometimes her artwork employs a radial symmetry composition – using multiples lines of symmetry so that similar parts are arranged around a central point.

THROUGHOUT THIS SECTION, CONSIDER:

- Which elements of design can be seen in these artworks and what is the impact on the viewer?
- How might someone from a different time view these artworks?
- How might someone from a different place view these artworks?



MEET THE WORK



Spare Room, 2006
anodised aluminium, aluminium, plastic, Bakelite
134 x 134 x 6 cm
Collection of Alana Hampton
Courtesy of the artist and Gallery Sally Dan-Cuthbert, Sydney



Sitting Room, 2009
anodised aluminium, aluminium, plastic, Bakelite
152 x 134 x 6 cm
Collection of the Faculty of Arts, the University of Melbourne
Courtesy of the artist

MEET THE WORK

"[Donna Marcus] made use of seventy-two blueish, rounded-triangle lids to create a mandala-like sculpture for the wall; a seemingly simple compilation that gives the impression of an expansive field. This "emergence" is indebted to the most important formal aspect of Marcus' work: repetition."

- JAMES GATT

HOTA, Home of the Arts. (2023). *Donna Marcus Radiate*. HOTA Home of the Arts, Gold Coast.



Naples, 2011
aluminium, anodised aluminium, adhesive
280 x 278 x 18 cm
Collection of the artist
Courtesy of the artist and Gallery Sally Dan-Cuthbert, Sydney

RESPONDING – INQUIRY VIEWPOINTS

HUMANITIES

Consider the radial symmetry in these artworks.

- Shapes in cultures: Many cultures and belief systems refer to geometric and symmetrical designs including mandalas in Buddhist and Hindu traditions, sacred geometry, and Native American and Polynesian motifs as just a few examples.
- Research different examples of designs and cultures that use geometry or radial symmetry. Consider design and architecture in buildings as well. In what countries or cultures might you see tiling patterns or designs arranged in hexagonal or radially symmetrical forms?
- For Donna Marcus, the intention of these artworks is not linked to any religious symbols; however, she is interested in the hexagonal shapes within each artwork, noting that these are the most fundamental tessellating form.

SCIENCE

- Hexagons and shapes with radial symmetry are present and naturally occurring in many areas of nature including honeycombs, snowflakes, insect eyes, jelly fish and many flowers
- Hexagons are also some of the strongest shapes, second only to triangles.

MAKING

- Create a shape and produce/ cut out a large quantity of these shapes, of the same size. You may create shapes of different colours.
- Begin creating a composition. Where will you begin? Consider working in sections, creating a hexagon pattern and repeating it in different directions. Or think about symmetry and how your design can be mirrored in different directions.
- How far could you extend your composition? Would there be elements that are repeated?
- Take a photo from a bird's eye view.
- Using Photoshop, duplicate your design to create a repeating pattern or sequence.

MEET THE WORK



Ryde, 2021
ceramic, epoxy, stainless steel, silicon
42 cm diameter
Private collection of Dianne and Jack Gringlas



Pail, 2018
vitreous enamel on steel
38 cm diameter
Collection of Leila McKinnon, Sydney



Donna Marcus: Radiate exhibition view.

RESPONDING – INQUIRY VIEWPOINTS

HUMANITIES

Consider the radial symmetry in these artworks.

- Do you recognise which objects Donna Marcus uses in these assemblages?
- The objects used in these artworks are aluminium lids from a style of stove pot popular in the 1950s -1970s. These pots usually came as a set of three, and sometimes included a basket for steaming. As we can see by Donna Marcus' artwork, the lids came in many colours. The steamer baskets that correspond with these lids can be seen in the exhibited artwork *Polymatic #1*.

MATHS

- **Patterns:** Look at these artworks. Can you see a pattern or sequence? If so, describe the pattern that is repeated.
- **Symmetry:** Explore the works in this section to identify where they are symmetrical. What is the impact of this?
- How has Donna Marcus used tone and colour to create lines of symmetry?
Tessellations: a pattern of shapes repeated to fill a plane. We often see tessellations in nature such as hexagonal cells in a beehive or diamond shaped scales on snakeskin.
- Using 2D shape tiles, create your own tessellating patterns. Which 2D shapes tessellate and which don't?
- On isometric dot paper, draw unique and creative tessellated patterns.

SECTION 3: LIGHT

CONCEPTS/THEMES

Radiate, salvage, material, shapes, light, negative space, metallic

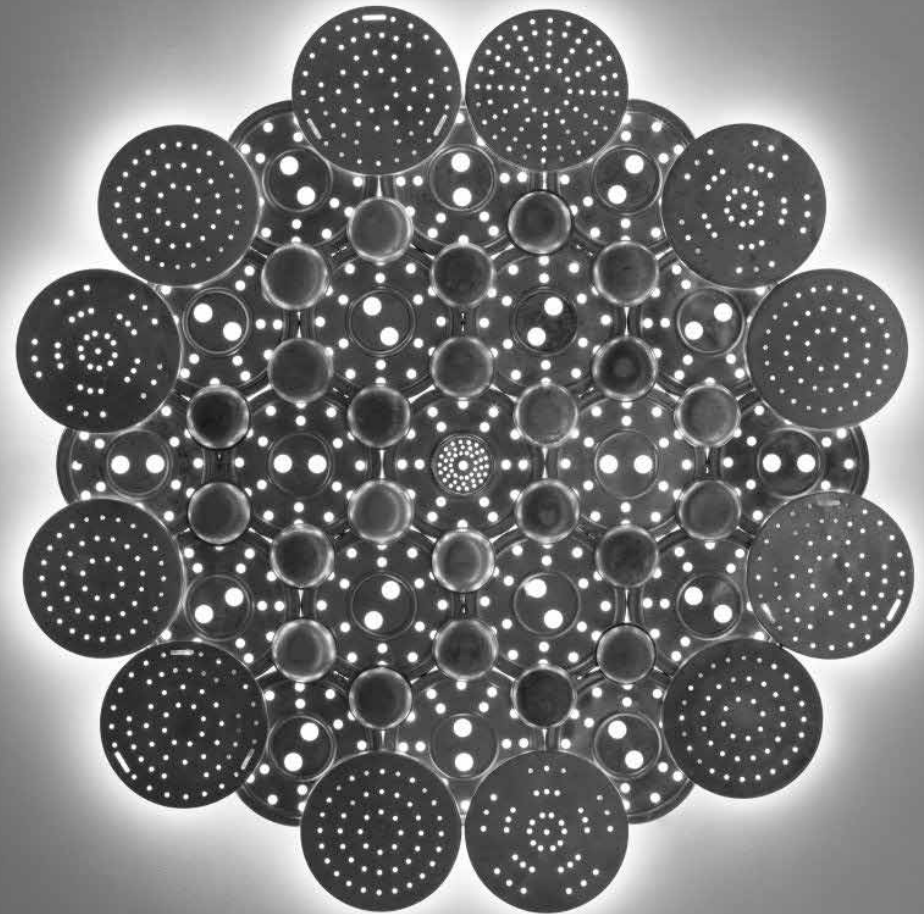
Certain lighting and effects can determine the composition of an artwork and help to communicate the message an artist is wanting to project. Donna Marcus' Gabo series lights the assemblages from within, creating great aesthetic value for audiences to appreciate.

- What is particularly clever, effective or ingenious about this series?
- What big idea connects all these works together?

“A work that evokes Marcus’s familial maritime story of salvage. Constructed from discarded aluminium kitchenware including sieves and pizza trays from Manhattan’s Bowery kitchenware shops and other salvage from recycling skips and the shelves of Gold Coast’s Molendinar Lifeline, each of these eight works have a porous and mesmerizing sensibility, conducting light, pattern and electron-like conductivity across their circular shapes.”

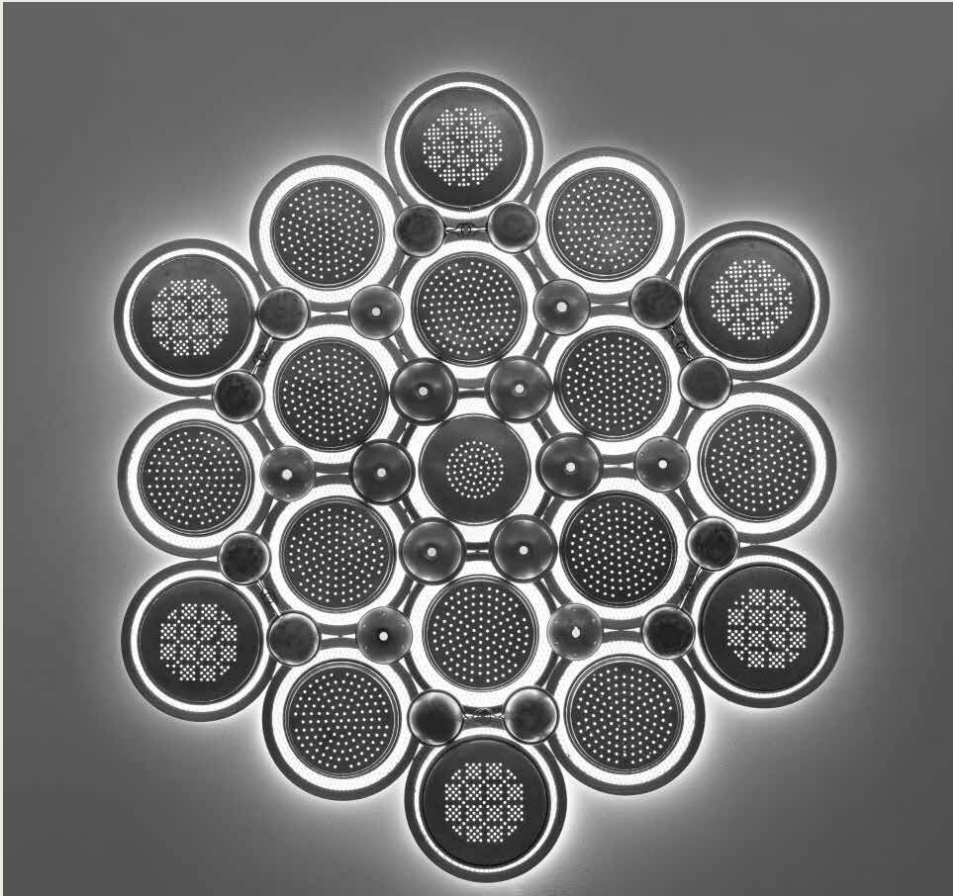
- LOUSIE MARTIN-CHEW

HOTA, Home of the Arts. (2023). *Donna Marcus Radiate*. HOTA Home of the Arts, Gold Coast.



GABO (2), 2022-23
aluminium, LED lights
99 x 99 x 4 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Gallery Sally Dan-Cuthbert, Sydney

MEET THE WORK



GABO (7), 2022-23
aluminium, LED lights
101 x 90 x 4 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Gallery Sally Dan-Cuthbert, Sydney

RESPONDING – INQUIRY VIEWPOINTS

- How does lighting enhance the display of an artwork?
How does it operate as a design element in these artworks?
- Identify the positive and negative space in the artworks.
How does the light accentuate this aspect of the works?

SUSTAINABILITY

- In repurposing discarded kitchenware, Donna Marcus is engaging in a recycling practice. Why is it important to recycle? Research what materials can be readily recycled by your local council.
- Salvaging can be thought of in terms of rescuing or saving goods from being damaged or destroyed. Recycling is a form of salvaging as it enables goods to be reclaimed and recycled into something else, saving it from precious landfill. Research how much of our solid waste finds its way to landfill, both nationally in Australia and across the globe. Do some countries have better recycling rates than others?

MAKING

- Brainstorm ideas for an artwork that utilises recycled metal such as aluminium. Collect these objects and consider how they could be rearranged and reconfigured into an artwork. Create sketches of your idea before creating your artwork.
- Using a lamp, shine light onto your artwork. Take photos of your artwork from different angles to capture the effect light has on the work. Consider the type and source of light best suited to your artwork.

Materials: Aluminium

Aluminium does not occur naturally in its purest form and requires technical processes by industry to create the metal we are familiar with today. By the 1950s, aluminium had become part of everyday life and began to be used for the mass production of houseware that completely replaced copper and cast-iron utensils. Because aluminium was lightweight, versatile and didn't rust, it changed the way we prepare, store and cook food.

SECTION 4: CRACKING THE CODE

CONCEPTS/THEMES

Modernism, memory, monochromatic, sequencing, patterns

MONOCHROME

means something is composed of one colour

A code can refer to a system of words, letters or signs used to represent a message in secret form. Donna Marcus often presents her artwork as a code, inviting viewers to read more into it. Arranging her compositions in particular sequences and patterns according to colour and shape, Marcus creates a visual language to be interpreted.

“The sleekness of Marcus’ other works, and of their components, was affected through the losing or indeed prising away of the grips and knobs and fastenings that had been riveted to their centres or their edges. Before their time in the studio or exhibition space, back in their kitchens, these clunky appendages had enabled the utensils quite literally to function; to be handled, held, used, worked; to be put on the stove or taken off it. Having lost their rigid plastic edges and grips in the kitchen or the op-shop or indeed the studio, the utensils have been transformed, drawn away from their found grubbiness, swans fleeing the kitchens.”

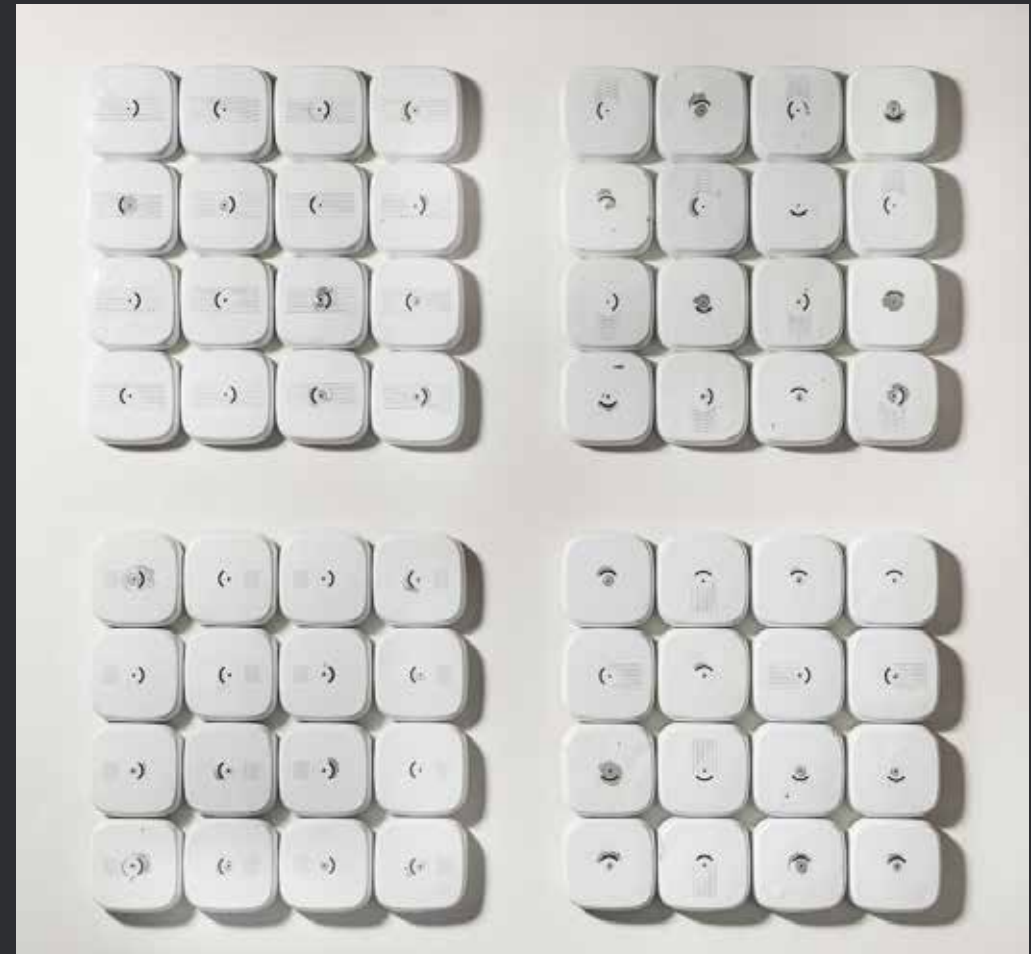
- BRIGITTA OLUBAS

HOTA, Home of the Arts. (2023). *Donna Marcus Radiate*. HOTA Home of the Arts, Gold Coast.

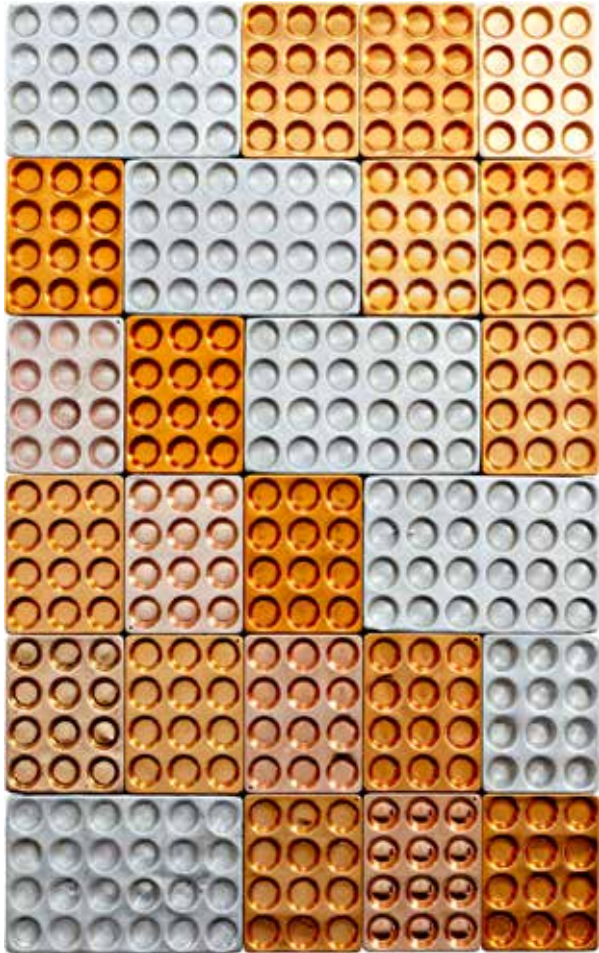
Code, 2006
aluminium and synthetic polymer paint
274 x 274 x 10 cm
Collection, HOTA Gallery. Donated through the Australian Government’s Cultural Gifts Program 2017

RESPONDING – INQUIRY VIEWPOINTS

- How do these artworks relate to other key themes you have identified in Donna Marcus’ work?
- What do these artworks make you wonder?



MEET THE WORK



360 Degrees, 2009
aluminium
164 x 100 x 50 cm
Collection of the artist



Metro, 2019
anodised aluminium
108 x 108 x 17 cm
Collection of the artist

MEET THE WORK



Donna Marcus: Radiate exhibition view.

RESPONDING – INQUIRY VIEWPOINTS

- Imagine some of the processes enacted by the artist to construct this work. What did she do first? List some of the steps she might have taken to create this finished product.
- Consider how the materials in *360 degrees* evoke memories. What role does nostalgia play when viewing this artwork?
- Describe a favourite meal that evokes memories of family or home for you.
- Describe the materiality of this artwork. What role does materiality play in the overall aesthetic?
- What are some of the strengths and weaknesses of working with this material?

MAKING

- Collect items from the kitchen. Arrange these in an interesting composition for a still life drawing. Attempt to capture line, form and tone through lead pencil, always drawing from observation.
- Create another still life artwork, this time using only kitchen items of one colour. Apply paint in tints and shades of this colour to your artwork to create a monochromatic painting.

SECTION 5: SCALE & PUBLIC ART

CONCEPTS/THEMES

collecting, salvage, assembly, freestanding sculpture, texture, balance

Put simply, public art is art in public spaces. Donna Marcus has been known to present her 3D large-scale sculptures in diverse locations across Australia such as Brisbane Square, Queensland, and Station Square in Joondalup, Western Australia. Donna Marcus uses scale to impact the audience's experience of the work in these settings.



- What ideas do these large-scale works convey to you? What are you curious about?
- How might your own life, experiences and values influence your interpretation of these works?
- How might someone with different beliefs and values see these sculptures differently?

Pivot, 2022
aluminium, steel, concrete
270 x 34 x 34 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Gallery Sally Dan-Cuthbert, Sydney

RESPONDING – INQUIRY VIEWPOINTS

- What constraints can you think of that would prevent an artist from working larger scale? How could you overcome these problems?
- Donna Marcus utilises the concept of the 'multiple' in her artworks. What do you think this means?
- Can you think of household objects that come in multiples that you could collect to create a sculpture, using a similar approach to Marcus?
- Re-imagine the form of this sculpture. Make a drawing to represent what it could look like.

Where could this sculpture be installed? How would it look differently in a gallery as opposed to a public outdoor space? What would you need to consider when installing work like this in either of those settings?

GEOGRAPHY

- Imagine what the artwork *Pivot, 2022* would look like installed in different locations. How would they relate to the landscape or other built elements?

MAKING

Frottage is an artmaking technique that involves blending tone over an object using the flat side of the pencil to create an image on the paper.

- Look closely at the surfaces of these sculptures and notice their textures. What would it feel like if you were to touch it?
- Go on a 'texture hunt' outdoors or around your school and create a series of frottage drawings using lead pencil or oil pastels.
- Cut and paste to create a collage of your frottage.