MARGARET WORTH *Genus I, No.2*

Artist Margaret Worth was born in Adelaide in 1944 and studied at the South Australian School of Art. Worth emerged during the 1960s as a hard-edge painter and modular sculptor. Prior to becoming an artist Worth was a mathematics and science teacher. She spent 14 years in New York in the 1970s and 1980s studying a Masters in Fine Arts and teaching and creating works of art for exhibitions.

Influenced by artists such as Sydney Ball, Piet Mondrian, Mark Rothko and Sol LeWitt, Worth pursued pure form and colour, creating works that had a minimalist or hard-edge aesthetic. By building up her surfaces with multiple thin layers of paint, she aimed to unite colour with its form making the components of colour, hue, saturation and tone central to her practice.

During the 1960s America was a place of great optimism and Worth wanted to engage with this. Theories in science, time and space were undergoing fundamental changes, which inspired Worth to explore the new visual language of abstraction.

The flat and smooth surface of *Genus I, No.2* erupts from the wall, switching optically between 2D and 3D to create an illusion of movement. As a single rhombus form constructed by four coloured parallelograms, it references a slanted Möbius strip.

image: Margaret Worth, Australia, 1944, *Genus I, No.2.*, 1968, Adelaide, synthetic polymer paint on plywood, 115.4 x 247.1 cm (trapezoidal irreg.); South Australian Government Grant 1991, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide. Courtesy of the artist

MARGARET WORTH continued

MARGARET WORTH
INTERPRETIVE RESOURCE | *Learning at the Gallery* | Art Gallery of South Australia artgallery.sa.gov.au/learning

WHAT IS MÖBIUS STRIP?

A Möbius Strip is a surface with one continuous side formed by twisting one end of a long narrow rectangular strip at 180 degrees then connecting the two ends together. This form was named after its inventor mathematician A. F Möbius (1790 – 1868).

DID YOU KNOW?

Since returning to Adelaide in 1985 Worth has pursued a career as a public artist with great success, enabling audiences an opportunity to experience their surroundings in new ways. Some of these works include *Making Tracks + Swinging Tales* in Port Augusta, *The Elements at Play* on the Brighton Jetty and *Collecting Thoughts* in Technology Park.

RESOURCES

Art Gallery of New South Wales – Margaret Worth
http://bit.ly/2vFuuhl

Charles Nodrum Gallery – Margaret North Exhibition Introduction
http://bit.ly/2w3VM2x

Margaret Worth
http://bit.ly/2wRrEVJ

KEY LITERACY WORDS

Aesthetic

Colour

Form

Genus

Geometric

Hard edge

Harmony

Hue

Minimalism

Möbius Strip

Parallelogram

Rhombus

Saturation

Shape

Site specific

Tone

EARLY YEARS

RESPONDING

View *Genus I No. 2* from different perspectives. Describe how this work of art changes as you move to a new position.

Think about the works of art you saw today. Now finish the following sentences:

Today I was surprised by…

I didn't understand the..

I could have stayed longer looking at the…

MAKING

Using pop sticks make as many different geometric shapes as you can.

Search through magazines and newspapers to find colours similar to those Worth has used in *Genus I, No. 2*. Tear out these examples and use them to create collage focussing on shape and colour.

PRIMARY

RESPONDING

Document the titles of works of art you see during your visit. Put them together to create a story.

Debate with a friend whether *Genus I, No. 2* is a painting or a sculpture?

Some characteristics of Minimalist works of art include repetition, geometry, limited colour, precise lines and a clear transition between colours. Based on these qualities, what other works in the Gallery would you classify as Minimalist?

Margaret Worth was a student of Sydney Ball at the South Australian School of Art. Compare *Genus I, No. 2* with *Banyon Wall* by Sydney Ball. Describe how these two works of art made in the same year are similar and how are they different?

MAKING

Using coloured paper create a series of identical sized quadrilaterals. Experiment with the shapes to create an optical illusion. Remember: quadrilaterals must have four straight sides e.g. parallelogram, square, rectangle, trapezoid or diamond, rhombus or kite.

Create your own Möbius strip by gluing two ends of a strip of paper together – be sure to twist one end of the paper slightly before gluing. Run your finger along one side of the strip. Where did your finger end up? Experiment by cutting your strip lengthways or create multiple versions using different colours. Try flattening your strip – can you see how Worth was inspired by the Möbius strip?
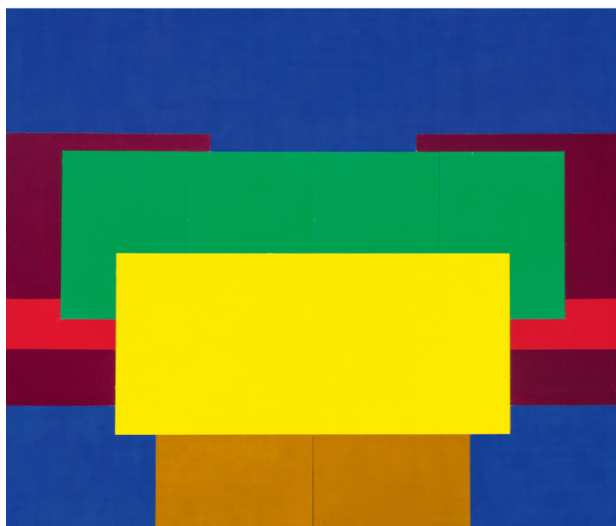

image detail: Sydney Ball, Australia 1933–2017, *Banyon Wall*, 1967–68, Collinswood, South Australia, synthetic polymer paint on canvas (combination of separate panels), 330.2 x 396.2 cm, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide

RESPONDING

Look up the definition of genus? Why do you think Worth titled her work *Genus I, No. 2?*

What is the difference between the following components of colour: hue, temperature, saturation and tone? Use the paintings in this room to explain your response.

Minimalism was intended to be free from human experience, dealing only with issues of form. Artists explored the activation of real space through objects and form, requiring the viewer to be an active participant. Compare Worth's practice with work by artists Gail Hastings and British Rachel Whiteread. How do each of these artists activate space with their works of art?

While some artists explored Minimalism in painting in the 1960s others like Carl Andre and Donald Judd explored geometric abstraction through sculpture. Discuss how such artists may have influenced Worth.

TIP Donald Judd's Untitled (1974–5) is located at the rear of the Gallery outside the Radford Auditorium.

Investigate Worth's commissioned public pieces. How has her 1960s Minimalist and Hard-Edge abstract aesthetic influenced her contemporary designs?

Worth described her public works as '*culturally coherent, imaginative and enduring'*. Discuss these qualities with reference to *Making Tracks + Swinging Tales* in Port Augusta, *The Elements at Play* on the Brighton Jetty and *Collecting Thoughts* in Technology Park.

MAKING

Minimalist artists sometimes rely on mathematic principles for inspiration. Focussing on mathematic theory e.g Pythagoras theorem or the Golden Ratio, create a minimalist work of art using plywood and paint. **Remember** Worth applied up to 10 coats of thin paint to ensure her surfaces had a smooth finish.

Take inspiration from your surroundings or images in magazines and newspapers. Using a viewfinder select a frame of interesting shapes. Redraw this composition and simplify it further. Create an interesting pattern and transform it into a large-scale painting.

Using only four colours, and considering harmonious and complementary colours, create a non-representational painting using different coloured shapes to create a patterned design.

Photograph a variety of geometric shapes. These could be carboard boxes, bricks, cylinders or repeated patterns in your environment such as tiles, drains or window grills. Using Photoshop simplify your shapes and assign distinct colours to each composition. Print your images and manipulate the paper to create three-dimensional forms. Arrange your forms on black paper until you are satisfied with your composition.

TIP Consider the Hard-Edge painting technique that Worth is known for.

Donald Judd, United States, 1928–1994, *Untitled*, 1974 75, Adelaide, reinforced concrete, 126.0 x 760.0 x 660.0 cm; South Australian Government Grant in association with Marshall & Brougham Pty Ltd 1974, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide

THINK AND DISCUSS

How are mathematics and art related? List some of the ways that mathematics is vital in the creation of works of art or design.