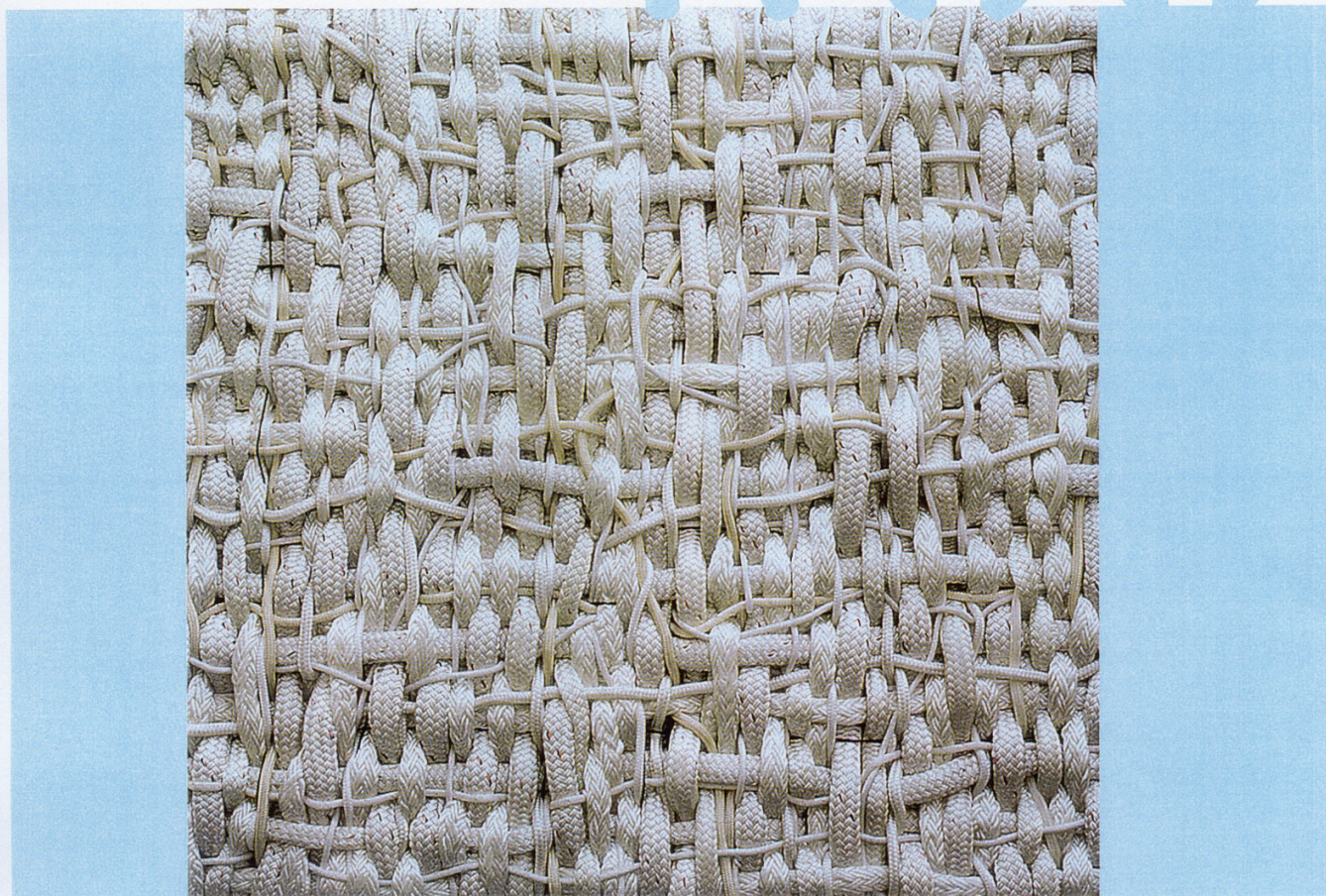


ROGUE PLASTIC

ARTISTS ■ PAUL MCINNES, DANI MARTI, DAVID SEQUEIRA

ROGUE



Dani Marti
Mad Babe 2001 (detail)
polypropylene and nylon
201 x 610cm
Photographed by Ian Hobbs

opposite page
Dani Marti
George 2001 (detail)
triplech (right)
polypropylene and nylon
201 x 610cm
Photographed by
Brenton McGeachie

ROGUE PLASTIC

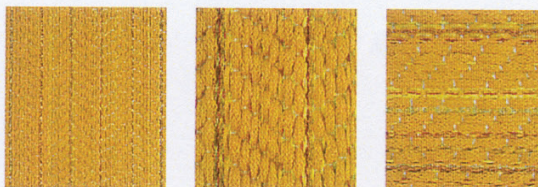
AUTHOR □ JANE BARNEY

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Plastic' has gotten away. It all began in 1862 when Alexander Parkes unveiled Parkesine - a material derived from cellulose that could be moulded when heated but retained its shape when cool. But it was with the invention of Bakelite in 1907 that plastic really took off. It was a revolutionary new material destined to solve all sorts of industrial and domestic problems. Lauded for its flexibility, and its role in saving 'natural' resources from plunder, by 1976 it had evolved into the world's most used material.

We surround ourselves with plastic – telephones, computers, sunglasses, bathroom fittings, clothing and even our food receptacles. But our plastic indulgence comes at an escalating price. Whilst it is accepted as a polluter of our waterways and garbage dumps, research has recently revealed that plastic poses a threat to our health. □ The main rogue is vinyl or polyvinyl chloride (PVC). It was invented as a replacement for rubber and has been used to make toothbrushes, lining for food tins, children's chew toys, babies' milk bottles, ice cube trays, bowls and plates. It is made with bisphenol A, a chemical which creates clear, hard, re-usable plastic but is also, incidentally, an endocrine disruptor which mimics the body's hormones - particularly oestrogen. According to research: □ "...people, especially fetuses and small children, may in fact be harmed by minimal exposure to the ingredients in some common plastic products. Furthermore, these chemicals act as endocrine disruptors; they interfere with the body's own hormones with the potential for causing a wide range of health problems from infertility and cognitive impairment to enlarged prostates and cancer. At a recent media briefing, scientists said that there are enough warning signs from animal, laboratory, and population studies to cause the public to demand more information and more research. As it stands now, the plastics manufacturers are not required to disclose the ingredients in their products."² □ In these early days of investigation, there is a lack of consensus amongst

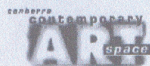
scientists about the extent of the dangers. Some argue that the concern over plastic is scare-mongering, others argue that we urgently need more research. There are 100 common compounds found in general household use that are suspected of causing hormone damage. The cumulative effect of exposure to these materials has never been analysed. □ There is an element of naivety in our approach to plastic. Knowing that the manufacturers apply heat and solvents to a cocktail of chemicals, why should we be surprised to discover that plastic is oozing strange hormones and toxic gases? □ There are countless billions of plastic items at large in the world. Most have already been discarded as we tacitly comply with plastic's obsolescence. In general, we don't collect and treasure it the way we do the family silver or the first edition book. □ The three artists in *Rogue Plastic* have been selected precisely because they do treasure plastic. Through their intervention, these everyday, throwaway items have become unique. They also understand the beauty of this pliant creature. But there is a trick here. The formal, beautiful and apparently still works in this exhibition are crafted from a material that is quietly rampant. □ Paul McInnes pays tribute to the Danish architect and designer Verner Panton who, in 1960, invented the first chair to be moulded from a single piece of plastic. This chair was a tremendous design breakthrough. It took advantage of the possibilities of mass production, it eliminated the usual 'forest of legs' needed to support



traditional chairs, and pushed plastic to its (un)natural limits. Verner Panton is also renowned for his domestic interiors which throb and hum with pure colour, light, and form. Panton dispenses with the usual transitions between walls, ceilings, floors and furnishings. His holistic interiors are as smooth and seamless as a Panton plastic chair. □ Paul McInnes' *Freize*, using white plastic ice cube trays, is domestic and regular, and part of our immediate experience of life. But there is something awry. Here the Verner Panton interior is white – bleached like a shadow, or a memory, or the aftermath of a flash bulb going off. This flash of white, this slice of life, is the advertising executive's sweetest dream of plastic production and consumption. □ Using polypropylene and nylon rope imported from Spain, Dani Marti takes advantage of plastic rope's pliancy and extraordinary colour range to weave portraits of people he knows. For him, ropes are carriers of strength and sensuality. The distinct repeat patterns in these works are like a type of morse code, or a string of DNA. There is an act of bondage inferred as Dani captures the essence of his subject in the rope. □ *Mad Babe* is all at once contained and wild. On initial viewing there seems to be no recognisable pattern but slowly a sense of this mad babe emerges. The pattern from the weave is embellished by flashes of colour in the rope which are the trademark of the manufacturing company. The triptych *George* is a portrait of an architect who is obsessed with the colour yellow. Here, every type of yellow in every diameter and texture of rope has been added to the palette to capture George's nature. The warp in *George* is a form of plastic tubing used to farm mussels. There is a smooth play on words here for a 'warp'

is also 'a rope used in towing or attached to a trawl net.' □ David Sequeira's obsession with collecting and cataloguing other people's discards makes him waste managements' pin up boy. *Zen Picnic* is life, the universe, wholeness and sustenance delivered to you on a plastic platter. His *Constructivists are GO* robots are ingenious assemblages of bottle tops and lids, all of them objects cast adrift from their original purpose and from their other halves. These things should be in landfill by now except that David has arrested their progress. Herein lies a beautiful irony - later, when the collector has been collected, the conservators in the museum will painstakingly clean these assemblages of plastic trays, eggcups, bowls, plates and bottle tops; keeping them from the harsh glare of bright lights and sunlight, worrying about how to avoid fading and cracking; whilst somewhere else the waste management people will ache for signs of plastic decay. □ *Rogue Plastic* is a loud, glowing and decadent tribute to the texture, form and function of one of our most remarkable materials. There is a touch of the tupperware party here - wall weavings, the imagined clink of ice cubes falling into the g & t glass, picnic food kept airtight and fresh for the whole family. Domestic, contained, and even tamed, this plastic is plastic indeed. But don't be deceived. Plastic's secret formula for success is also its greatest recipe for disaster – malleable, water tight, acid resistant, air tight, non-biodegradable, smooth, playful, beautiful, seductive, deadly plastic.

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Bio and acknowledgements □ Paul McInnes was born in Queanbeyan, NSW in 1961, and currently lives and works in Canberra. His interests include pop art, modernist