

An ironic medium

Art

By SASHA GRISHIN

Rogue Plastic, Canberra Contemporary Art Space, Gorman House, Ainslie Avenue, Bradon, Wednesday-Saturday 11am-5pm, until May 26.

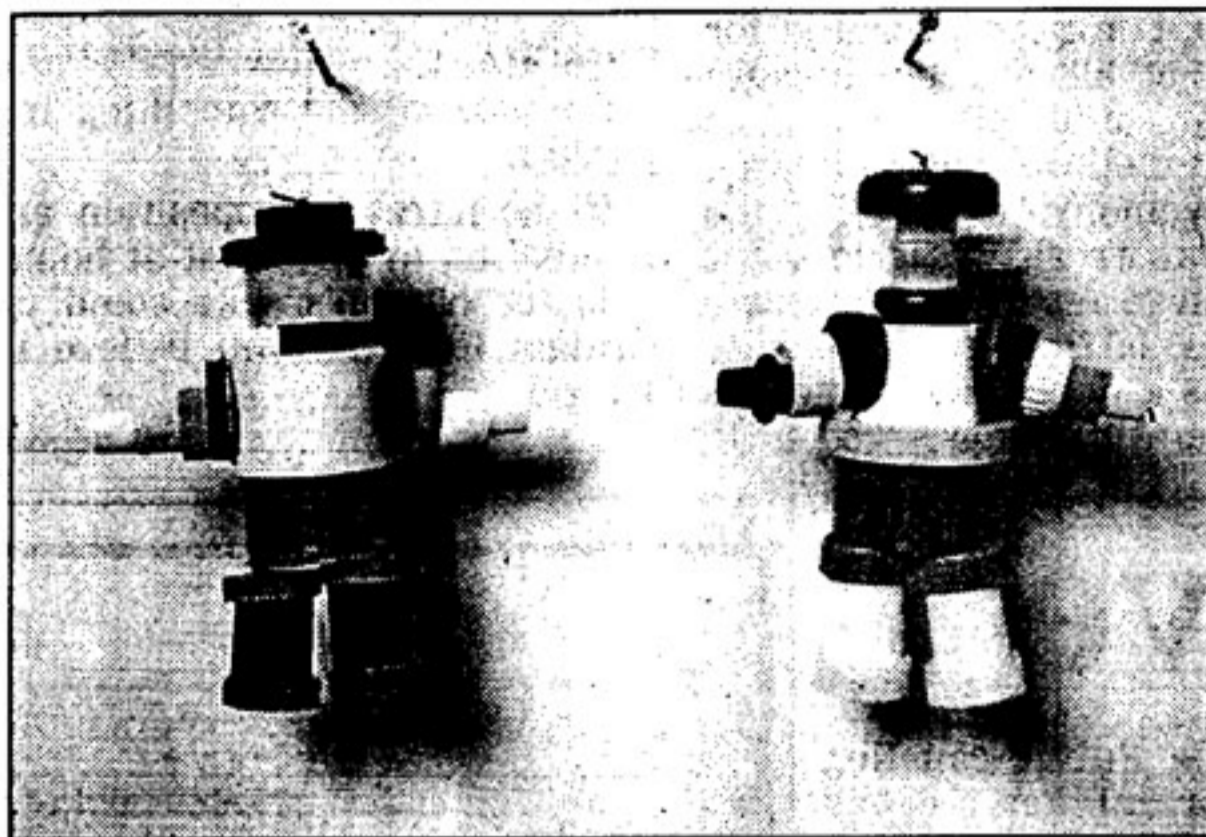
THE 20TH century was the plastics century — no other synthetic material had a greater impact on shaping the century.

Once polymers could be manufactured synthetically, the material became relatively inexpensive and could appear in a vast range of variety, including celluloid, bakelite, polythene and nylon. You could paint with it, make furniture out of it, pack food with it, use it for explosives or change the shape of your body with it.

Towards the end of the century, many of the virtues of plastics, like their toughness and resistance to biological attack, also emerged as major weaknesses. Plastics have begun to choke the planet with their indestructible pollution and more recently some of their sinister side effects have emerged.

In this exhibition it is declared that "Recent research has shown that plastic can exude a chemical which mimics synthetic oestrogen — a hormone which is a significant factor in the growth and multiplication of cancer cells."

The three artists in *Rogue Plastic* — Dani Marti, Paul



Constructivists are Go, by David Sequeira.

McInnes and David Sequeira — all celebrate plastics as an art medium, but do this within the context of irony.

Marti employs polypropylene and nylon rope as a pliable sculptural medium through which to weave patterns and images which serve as portraits of people whom he has known. As plastics consist of long chain-like molecules, or polymers, intertwined with one another, the idea arose of using specific patterns, woven from plastic ropes of brilliant colours, to create a specific code, like a unique identity which could be interpreted as a DNA signature. The idea is intriguing and the surfaces are beautiful, even if the portrait identity remains enigmatic.

Sequeira has the uncanny gift of collecting discarded waste, assembling it in un-

usual configurations which possess a certain sense of convincing inevitability, and then presenting it in the guise of a new and logical order. The gaudy vulgarity of shape and colour is sublimated by a sense of immaculate elegance.

McInnes says that in his work he pays tribute to the Danish designer Verner Panton, who pushed plastic's potential to be moulded into any shape when soft and to become rigid on cooling, to produce a moulded plastic chair. Employing plastic ice-cube trays, McInnes creates a wall installation piece as an example of funk pop art.

Today it is difficult to imagine a world without plastics. In this exhibition art imitates life to create an ironic surrogate reality, just a little more ridiculous than the real thing.