

Marti's garden

RUN, RUN, RUN

Dani Marti
Arc One Gallery, 45 Flinders Lane,
until August 16

WHAT FOLLOWS CAME BEFORE

Group exhibition
Seventh Gallery, 155 Gertrude St,
Fitzroy, until August 16

Contemporary art loves the uncanny; it cultivates indecipherable objects which are nevertheless almost recognisable, a something or other, a thing that deserves a name yet cannot easily be labelled. As an unidentified something, the art object can symbolise the unconscious.

At Arc One, Dani Marti has created a series of confectations that fold together a giant pin-cushion, a target, luminous safety equipment, pop art and an ornamental bouquet. The soft centres come out from the wall but simultaneously suggest a spongy accommodation to touch.

The surfaces are made from hundreds of reflectors, which have been artfully melted and distorted, like flounces on a hem. In their proliferation, the swelling shapes look as if they might be copious petals fanning out from a central stem of nectar.

As reflectors, they take on the ambient light with a vengeance. Any bloom may be brightly coloured; but these twisted inscrutable surfaces are radiant, poking you in the eye if you look too intently.

Like a humming creature, you're drawn to inquire, as if the large bull's eye asks you to find a sweetspot, to zero in on the yielding middle at its proudest bulge. On finding the detail beyond the glare, you see the centre

of each reflector is a mechanical attachment of no reflective quality.

The colour of the large central circle dominates, respectively determining the title for each of the five works. In form, too, the circular shape recalls not only pop art but the renaissance *tondo*, which was sometimes used to show a Madonna and Child in a lush garden.

Marti's garden of distorted reflectors makes you think of the yet stranger sexual attraction between plants, insects and animals, where both the plant and the creature take on colours to make themselves a target for a vector or a mate. The hue is a bid for attention, an outlandish advertisement of confidence, enticing



another agent to traffic the seed.

In Marti's garden of metaphor, ominously called *Run, Run, Run*, there is also a serpent. A long ornamental tube sits above an aluminium plinth in awful coils, as thick as your arm, with enough abstraction for the image to toggle between a snake and a door sausage. This slinking pile of loops is studded with glass beads; the pattern has enough graphic criss-cross to evoke the scales of a snake.

Though allusive, the objects in *Run, Run, Run* are an anti-monument, a proposition that

doesn't monumentalise something else so much as convolutions of metaphors of attraction and repulsion that grow out of the materials, construction and image.

The idea that we live in a fugitive post-monumental period is pursued in an exhibition about diaspora at Seventh Gallery called *What follows came before*. Among the works is a video installation by Nikos Pantazopoulos which documents the erection of a statue of Pericles in Brunswick. The scene of middle-age men using hardware to suspend the bronze and lock it in place upon the plinth is touching but also comic, as if the great Hellenic purpose is an anachronism.

Curated by Amelia Winata, the exhibition traces various inversions of meaning that arise over time and the diaspora. For example, photographic records of the Vietnam War have been collected by Phuong Ngo to reveal their lack of monumentality; and videos of Mariana Jandova reveal how forced migration heightens a determination to plan a future rather than champion the past.

Against the backdrop of globalisation, Winata explains how diasporas differ from cosmopolitanism; but she concedes that there's overlap, especially that "Art ... might offer a sort of cosmopolitan vision that acts as a mediator between people of divergent backgrounds".

If so, Marti's florid fantasy of a lush target destination in *Run, Run, Run* has the perfect symbol as the dazzling bloom: the reflector, the hazard sign that says "danger, turn back", and which therefore needs to be melted and twisted to accommodate human values.

of distortion



Dani Marti's uses hundreds of distorted reflectors to create radiant, evocative forms.