



## **TANGIBLE**

FEBRUARY 20 – MARCH 22 2014

**CARLY SCOUFOS**

**SEBASTIAN DI MAURO**



Some from the 'Suburban Abstractions 6' series 2014  
Timber, artificial grass  
13 x 810 x 250 cm

## TANGIBLE Sebastian Di Mauro

Sebastian Di Mauro's Suburban Abstractions suggest a cunning and playful alternative to the dearly held image of the luscious green Australian lawn. As a starting point, these works address the arguably unsustainable obsession with the perfect green lawn, requiring absurd levels of maintenance in our year-round hot climate. Of course it isn't simply green grass itself that Di Mauro is fascinated with, but the metaphorical weight it holds; it evokes questions of 'maintaining' an identity in a country that has only faced outside influences for less than 250 years. As the second generation in his family to be Australian-born, with a parent and grandparents who were Italian immigrants, Di Mauro has faced questions of an ever-shifting Australian identity since childhood.

In his artworks, Di Mauro proffers a contemporary Australian culture that has been grafted from many other places, held together by a hybrid connectedness. Yet, it is also one that continually faces up against rigid conceptions of this identity. Indeed, Di Mauro's Suburban Abstractions fit multiple possible classifications. Are they paintings, sculptures, installations, stage sets, or pieces of interior decoration? These works are adaptable, changing with each installation to suit rooms that are long or high, wide and open, or perhaps curving. In this way, Di Mauro adapts the green lawn—this little piece of 'identity'—and plays with the many possibilities for its use, detachment, and reconfiguration.

Behind these adaptables also lies the long lineage of abstract art. While these works pay heed to symbols of Australian identity (such as Ned Kelly), they also pay homage to a line of important international abstract artists who have influenced Di Mauro's own development as an artist. Making reference to such artists as Clyfford Still, Jackson Pollock, Barnett Newman, Mark Rothko, and Frank Stella, Suburban Abstractions consider the possibilities to be found in revisiting abstraction as a movement today. While these artists are all known primarily for their work with paint, Di Mauro expands his scope to include the use of everyday and industrial materials. And, although still monochromatic, these Abstractions are ever-changing in their shade, as the nap of the green synthetic grass bounces light through its shifting textures.

Given such diverse points of reference, we might wonder were all these ends meet. Whether driven by concept or making decisions intuitively, the glue holding Di Mauro's ever-evolving propositions together is simple:

material. This reaches beyond the artistic process, as the exhibition curator becomes involved in deciding how these works must be reconfigured, and, indeed, later on as the audience must physically navigate these forms in space. Even while Di Mauro's works evoke the weighty issue of cultural identity, the luscious textures of his materials inspire enthrallment. In fact, these works evidence that Di Mauro always returns to questions of materiality in working through his difficult ideas. Indeed, what better way to reconsider a topic as complex as a nation's identity than to look at its very fabric?

Laura Brown

Sebastian Di Mauro is a Queensland based sculptor and installation artist who has gained a national reputation through extensive exhibition activity, numerous awards, and public art commissions in Australia and Asia. Sebastian is represented by CREATIVEMOVE.



Ned from the Suburban Abstractions 2 series 2005  
Timber, artificial grass  
184 x 148 x 15 cm



Carly Scoufos began the process of wrapping objects while on a three-month residency in Tokyo in 2009. Although she initially intended to make work using woven wire, (a technique common within her practice) she could not help but respond to the local Japanese culture and history of using paper in both art and everyday life. Scoufos sought to 'sterilise' her studio space, which was a sanatorium in the 1950s. Developing a method of sewing together sheets of Japanese washi paper to envelop the room, her forms at once concealed and drew attention to this space. This installation, *Seam*, was open to the public for a week, beginning as a clean, crisp room of white paper only. As each day passed, Scoufos added drawings to sections of the room, while the delicate paper unavoidably absorbed visitors' presence through scuffed footprints and grubby fingerprints. At the end of the week, Scoufos packed up the installation, folded it neatly, and posted it home to Australia in a small parcel box.

In *Domestic Seam*, created especially for this site at the Pine Rivers Art Gallery, Scoufos has recreated an interior section of her great grandparent's old farmhouse, which she now uses as her studio. The paper-wrapped objects are those that once existed in the homestead, serving for a time as her interior surroundings. We can only imagine the splashes of paint or the warm smells of family life that imbue these objects. The effect of this wrapping is a new space, far away from the original, that feels uncannily familiar yet concealed and unknown. We might be able to recognise the forms that protrude, but we can no longer know the details of their colour, texture, or smell. Simply, we no longer have access to understanding the small sparks of history that we would otherwise have ignored.

Unwrapped, these objects are easily taken for granted in our everyday lives. Nevertheless, they undeniably possess something of the history of our lives passing. Domestic and familial memories are evidenced by scratches in wood or the stain of spilt food. Here, wrapped in white, we can no longer access this history and are denied the ability to attribute our own associations to these objects. Scoufos emphasises the 'invisibility' of these objects in our daily lives to the point that we literally no longer see them. The only things relieving this tension are a wry humour and sense of irony. This is found most acutely in the fact that the cheap paper used here is sourced from IKEA, one of the biggest influences on our idea of the 21st-century domestic interior.

This process of wrapping evokes many compelling tensions. While it seeks to return objects to a 'neutral' state, we cannot avoid the fact that the very nature of a fresh 'blank canvas' invites a ripe opportunity for marking, for use. As spaces at once filled with humanity and sanitised afresh, Scoufos's white rooms stand waiting for the bruising to occur from the presence of passersby. Deeply poetic in this double-bind, *Domestic Seam* serves to record the marking that occurs from the passing of time through space.

Laura Brown

Carly Scoufos is a Queensland based sculptor and installation artist who has exhibited widely, won numerous awards and undertaken major public art commissions in Australia and Asia. Carly is represented by CREATIVEMOVE.



Front:

*Domestic Seam* (installation view) 2014  
Ikea MÅLA drawing paper, cotton thread  
and found objects  
550 x 550 x 240 cm

Inside left:

*Domestic Seam* (detail) 2014  
Ikea MÅLA drawing paper, cotton thread  
and found objects  
550 x 550 x 240 cm

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Laura Brown is a curator and writer based in Los Angeles, and is the co-founder of the journal *The Maximilian*.