

Arts

SOUNDADVICE

Patricia Kelly

An Irish air

SOUNDS of Ireland feature in *She Moved Through the Fair*, next Friday's BEMAC World Music Cafe at the QPAC Cascade Court. It is led by Celtic group Tulca Mor, founded by former Cairns fiddler Fred Graham, who spent several months testing his fiddling skills at gigs and music sessions in Ireland. Now he takes his Tulca Mor players Steve Cook (bouzouki, a Greek instrument that became popular in Ireland in the 1950s), Andrew Heath (guitar) and Claire Fitzpatrick (accordion) to folk festivals all over Australia. Guest musicians Liam Fitzpatrick (banjo), Leah Cottrell (vocals), Kevin Higgins (flute), Adrian Jefferies (uilleann pipes) and five Irish dancers join the Cafe program beginning at 8.15pm. (bookings 3391 4433)

Heavenly voices

FORMER Brisbane choral man Michael Leighton Jones (founder-director of vocal ensemble Jones & Co) now lives in Melbourne where he directs the University of Melbourne's Trinity College Choir. It has released an ABC Classics disc *Rejoice: Sacred Choral Music Through the Ages* featuring, in the finest English cathedral tradition, music such as Franz Biebl's *Ave Maria* and the Durufle *Ubi Caritas*, both also sung divinely by University of Queensland choir Concentus for Cathedrals Week in Brisbane last month.

Opera thrives

A *NEW York Times* report on opera in the US confirmed what Opera Queensland general manager Chris Mangin found when he attended an Opera America conference in Canada earlier this year: that opera is not in its death throes, as is often claimed, but is alive and well, with the biggest growth in commissioning and presenting new operas since the mini-boom of the post-World War II years. The report says attendances are growing, helped by the use of surtitles in most American opera houses.

New take on home photos

Sandra McLean

ON ENTERING Sebastian Di Mauro's latest show, the first reaction is to walk right out again. This isn't due to an adverse reaction to his art, it's just that the work doesn't look like the Di Mauro we know and love.

No astroturf. No large, weird shapes sculpted from carpet underlay. In fact, there are no sculptures at all. Instead, what you get is a series of photographs. What's going on?

Di Mauro admits it can be a little confusing. He is no photographer, and the works on the wall at Gallery 482 don't obviously relate to his recent history as an artist. And for this he is grateful.

"That is the most exciting thing about art in the 21st century," he says. "You can work in any way that you like, doing whatever you like. I would get bored just being a painter."

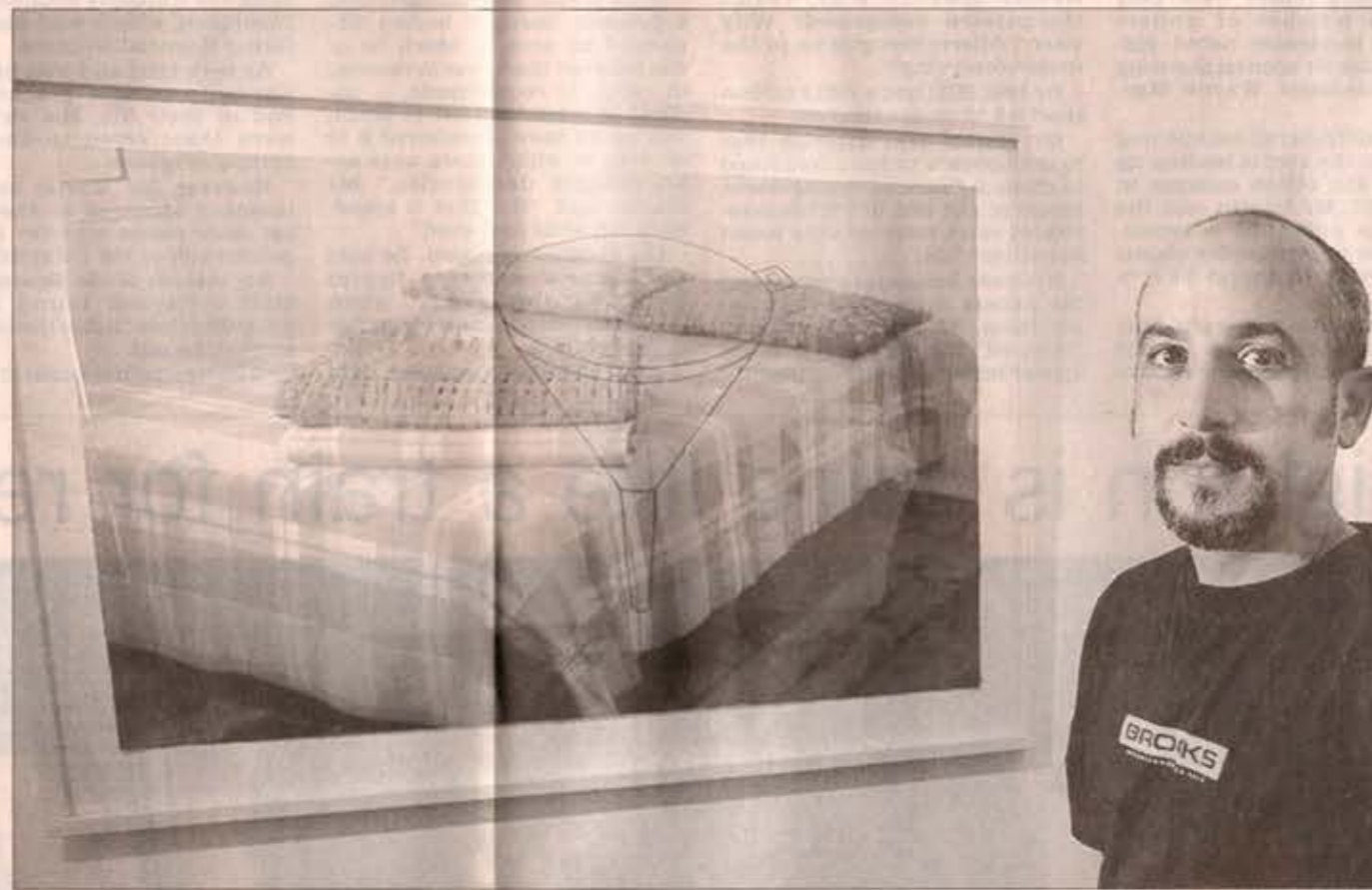
Luckily for Di Mauro, he is able to swap media effortlessly. He started out as a painter, but in the past 17 years has worked successfully on installation, sculpture and now photography. With *Over and Over*, he also reveals himself to be an adept weaver.

Look closely at the photographs and you see several decidedly homely objects such as pillows, a mat and a rug made out of bark. Di Mauro fashioned them from pieces of mountain ash bark which he collected from the back yard of a house in Warrandyte, near Melbourne, where he spent three months earlier this year.

The residency was awarded to him when he won a major sculpture prize at the Gold Coast City Art Gallery last year. It was his second sculpture prize in a matter of months — he also won the inaugural Woollahra Sculpture Prize in Sydney and his work was selected for the National Sculpture Prize and exhibition at the National Gallery of Australia in Canberra in 2001.

Di Mauro took his paints and sculpting equipment with him to Warrandyte but didn't use them. He was too entranced by his surroundings.

This attraction seeped into his art and the result is a suite of 12 works — as well



LIVED in . . . Sebastian Di Mauro, left, and two of his works from *Over and Over*. Main picture: Suzanna Clarke

as Di Mauro's lovingly crafted bark homewares. These simple yet attractive pieces are works of art in themselves, and the artist has already exhibited them at the Queensland College of Art where he works as a lecturer.

He says he didn't want to show them with the photographs, and one can almost understand why. They are scene stealers. Still, the photographs have their own dreamy appeal. Indeed, there is something surreal about them — bags abandoned in a tree, a clutch of boats bobbing on Brisbane River, those pillows placed on blankets in a bath with a jug of water painted over with the artist's trademark blue paint. The latter has the title *Vibration travelled from my feet*.

Obviously there is more going on here than snapshots of cosy home scenes. Di Mauro, despite the simple outcome of his ideas, has always been interested in complex questions about who we are and the world around us.

In *Over and Over* he has layered each work so there is more to look at than a pretty photograph. Each has either been painted over or features poetic text.

The 46-year-old Di Mauro, who was born in Innisfail in north Queensland, has often touched on everyone's search for a cosy space. He once exhibited a collection of electric blankets.

The metaphysical is important to him, and he remains fascinated by the nature of being, especially the way materials

and objects can be transformed into something else. In *Over and Over* he turned bark into a pillow. In his installations and sculptures he has made carpet underlay and stainless steel pot scourers the stuff of high art.

"I like to break tradition," Di Mauro says. "I don't think things should be called this or that — it can be anything you want it to be."

"It is why I started out a painter and then moved into sculpture and installation and now I have moved into prints and photography. I don't even bother calling them anything any more. I just call them artwork."

Di Mauro, despite his growing national profile, has remained in Brisbane, con-

tinuing to work and keep his sense of humour. He first came to live here as a teenager. Unsure about his future as an artist, he spent two years working as a public servant before he enrolled at the Queensland College of Art.

The diminutive Di Mauro, who lives and works out of his Kelvin Grove home, proved to be a hard-working graduate. His diversity as an artist is reflected in the collections of many of Australia's key art institutions which may have a Di Mauro sculpture, art book, painting or installation. He has had 28 solo exhibitions in Australia, shown internationally and made a mark in public art. His cheeky *Chat* sculpture — which features two silver hands — located on Brisbane's Eagle St is more evidence of Di Mauro's winning adaptability and a hint of more public art works to come.

Despite his continuing love affair with underlay — which he used to stunning effect in his *Floccus* show at Brisbane City Gallery two years ago — Di Mauro has moved on to stainless steel pot scourers which he used in his winning sculpture in the Woollahra Prize. A piece using this material also won him the Gold Coast sculpture prize which resulted in his trip to Warrandyte.

The managers of the Warrandyte house, run by Parks Victoria, were so impressed with the way Di Mauro used his natural surroundings in his art, they have invited him back later this year.

Over and Over, Sebastian Di Mauro, Gallery 482, Brunswick St, Fortitude Valley, until July 10