

WORLDS APART

Brisbane City Gallery's latest exhibitions range from carpet to the cosmic

THE invitation to the exhibition was set between two pieces of carpet underlay that moulted all over the desk. Still, it grabbed my attention.

Downstairs at the Brisbane City Gallery it was grabbed even more firmly by the reality of Brisbane artist Sebastian Di Mauro's intriguing installation *Floccus* — a series of monolithic sculptures built with metal frames covered in jute-based carpet underlay teased to form a woolly "flocked" or tufted surface. (*Flocculent: consisting of or containing loose woolly masses.*)

The overall effect is that these large-scale sculptures look like bits of the long-extinct woolly mammoth, that gigantic furry elephant which once roamed the earth.

To other eyes they will appear differently, and that's the aim, says Sebastian.

"There's an ambiguity about them," he says. "They could be this, they could be that. They're tactile, woolly and hairy ... they could be human, plant (or) animal."

In her catalogue essay on the

installation, Linda Carroli suggests "you will consider your own responses to these suggestive and random shapes, to determine human, animal and vegetable resemblances...".

Rather than imposing on the viewer, Sebastian seems to have created space for us to wonder at his creations, which are titled pithily with names like *Flirt*, *Spill* and *Tuft*. Ambiguous as they may be, they also seem to have an irresistibility and attraction that will have kids wanting to stroke or hug them. Or run in the opposite direction, depending on the bent of their imaginations.

Upstairs, Stephen Killick's work is equally as intriguing. His sculptures, painted wooden structures, exhibit a satirical humour with deeper, more cosmic messages. What those messages are is for you to work out.

Some of them seem to be solid reveries, explorations through fun ideas. *The docking procedure for the coincidental appearance of another identical world*, for example, in which two planets are coupled in a kind of interplanetary coitus.

Others exhibit a similar humour.

Like the darkish *Localized 'big bang' experiment*, complete with its own black hole (Stephen suggests one doesn't get too close to this one!).

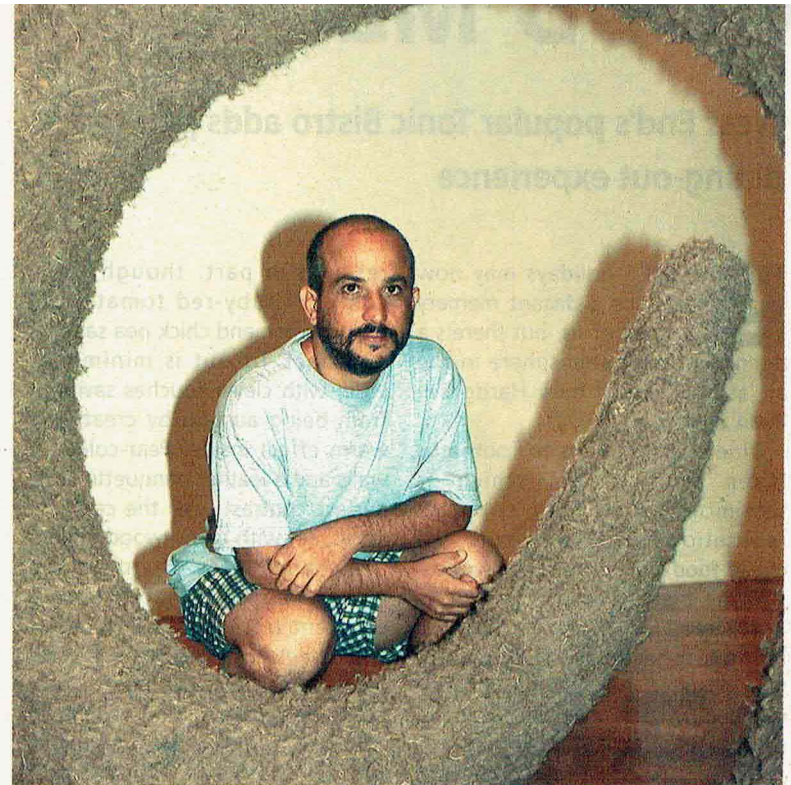
Some of his sculptures feature moving parts and text, to useful purpose. *An instrument for divining sense*, for example. Others are simply weird organic pieces like the *Seed of the giant "money" tree* or *The unique "Golden Alchemist" bird*.

There is whimsy and wonder in the work that will transport the viewer into Stephen's weird world of cosmic dimensions, just for a little while.

The exhibition in the main gallery of black and white photographs, many of them quite small, seems a little too realistic after the otherness of the others.

Still, perseverance results in rewards when one looks closely at these 65 vintage photos which examine the work of American photographers Tina Modotti (1896–1942) and Edward Weston (1886–1958), partners in life and art.

They travelled to Mexico in 1923 and immersed themselves in bohemian life. These photos explore the culture and people of the time. The photographers



Warm and fuzzy: Sebastian Di Mauro with one of his works

were drawn to a cultural movement of the day, Mexicanidad, led by a community of artists, writers and political activists. It celebrated things Mexican and realigned Mexico's national identity with its indigenous and ancient heritage, rather than the colonial past.

The indigenous working class is celebrated in many of Modotti's photos and Modotti herself is

celebrated in many of Weston's. **> Floccus** (an installation by Sebastian Di Mauro); *A Survey of Cosmological Appliances for the Twenty-first Century* (sculptures by Stephen Killick) and *Mexicanidad* (photos by Tina Modotti and Edward Weston); until 5 March at Brisbane City Gallery, ground floor, City Hall. Open daily from 10am to 5pm. Phone 3403 4355.