

# Art imitates death

**Queensland College of Art lecturer and artist Sebastion Di Mauro takes a lively interest in death.**

His most recent exhibition, titled *evanescence*, explored death through installation work - a medium the artist now favours because it allows "people to be part of the work".

Walking into an artwork devoted to death is not as alarming as it sounds. Mr Di Mauro does not view death as pitching head-first into a black void, but as a release into another world.

"I see death as Eastern people see it - a peaceful transition from one plane to another," he said.

His transcendental installation utilized a variety of thought-provoking materials and objects.

Draped before black walls, a cloth billowed in a breeze stirred by electric fans, creating the illusion that the walls were moving and impermanent. A video screen flickered images of the ocean, waves breaking continuously. Behind a galvanised trough filled with blue water stood a copper-coated ladder, symbolising the transference of energy.

Transition is a recurring theme in Mr Di Mauro's work and his career.

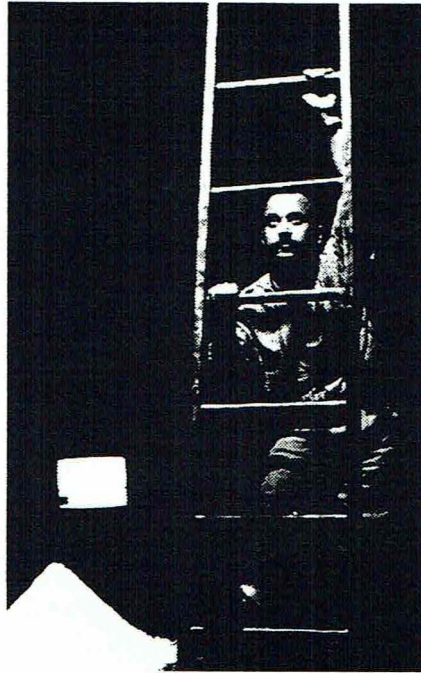
The Innisfail-born artist, now 37, never studied art at school and was a clerk in the public service when a chance suggestion led him to enrol part-time in the Associate Diploma of Arts course at the QCA in 1973.

"I really enjoyed the course. It was certainly a challenge - I had to start from scratch," he said.

After graduating in 1977, he spent four or five years working as a graphic designer for design studios and a large advertising firm. However, he missed the challenge of working in the fine arts medium and started to produce pieces on his own.

In 1981, he joined the teaching staff at the QCA and also enrolled in the Associate Diploma in Visual Arts course at the Kelvin Grove College of Advanced Education. The "conviction and integrity" of his lecturers convinced him to continue his work after graduating in 1984.

Several years later, while completing a Bachelor of Arts degree at the QCA, he staged a solo exhibition titled *Transience*,



*Artist Sebastion Di Mauro climbs from one plane to another in his transcendental installation, evanescence, which views death as a release into another world.*

looking at "humankind's changing relationship with the environment".

This exhibition and *Passages*, the one that followed two years later, were dominated by paintings. *Passages* examined "where we fit as individuals in the global context" and presented "dark sombre images - but each with a glowing light signifying hope".

Mr Di Mauro's next exhibition, *being-BECOMING*, was the product of transition. It was sparked by a request to provide a gallery with some pieces demonstrating "the artist as a designer". This artist designed a chair and a mirror - and discovered the creative excitement of working in three dimensions.

"I started to use real materials, instead of painting them," he said.

There is life after an exhibition on death. Following *evanescence*, Mr Di Mauro is continuing his transition as an artist; he is now planning installation works dealing with the environment and spirituality.