

# Colourful palate

A north Queensland artist often raids the kitchen for his materials, says Douglas Kennedy, and is on the Gold Coast to explain why

**C**ONTEMPORARY Queensland artist Sebastian Di Mauro, whose work is as much about food for thought as nourishment for the eye, will share his own special repast with the Gold Coast today.

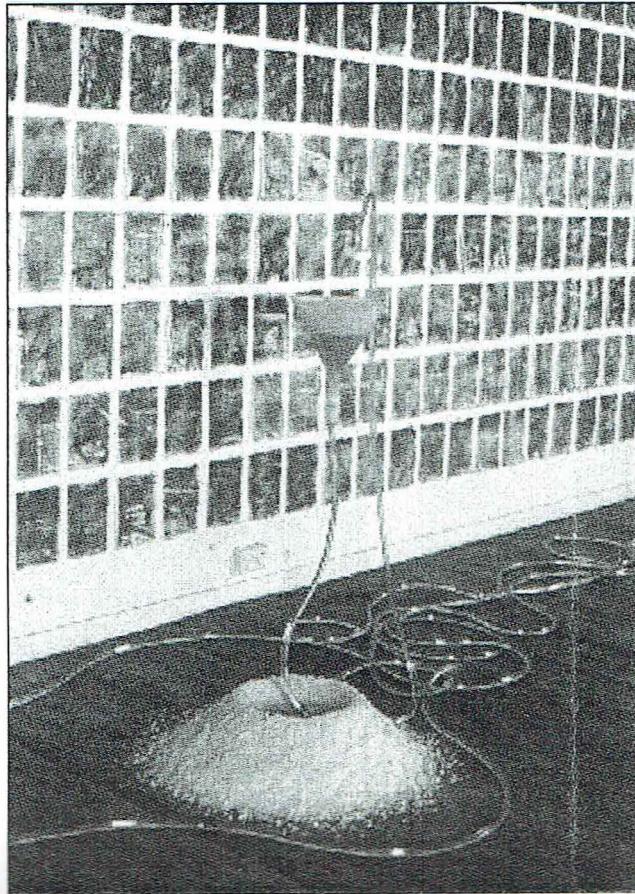
Di Mauro, who is the latest artist to talk about his work at a Gold Coast City Gallery free artistic lecture, often uses sugar, ash, coconut essence, and even quantities of olive oil in his work.

Gallery public programs curator Alison Kubler says Di Mauro aims to trigger interest in his work through a sense of smell as much as more traditional forms of awareness.

When Di Mauro first made *Pane e zucchero* for the Cairns Regional Gallery, recently recreated and modified for the Institute of Modern Art in Brisbane, he filled one whole gallery with his sugar mounds nestling on a mountain range of musty carpet underlay," says Ms Kubler.

"The evocative title, *pane e zucchero* translates literally as bread sugar, and reads as a metaphor for the Di Mauro family history based in the north Queensland town of South Johnstone.

"Their family history is an experience shared by so many migrants who are responsible



Sugar is the central theme of this work by Sebastian di Mauro.

for a significant part of the colonisation of large tracts of rural Australia."

South Johnstone is a sugar-

farming town, and Di Mauro's grandfather worked in the industry as that most Aussie icon, a cane farmer. His son,

Sebastian's father, also began his working life in the sugar industry before buying a bakery, hence the significance of bread and sugar in the title.

"On a base level everyone is familiar with these food staples, yet they have a special resonance for Di Mauro," says Ms Kubler.

In another aspect of Di Mauro's work there's the 1996 piece *Nine books of silence* for which Di Mauro created huge tomes from carpet underlay.

"The books were installed on the floor with their covers closed creating an intrigue about their contents, and printed on a random page within in Di Mauro's trademark blue was the Italian word *Silenzio*," says Ms Kubler.

"The word reflects the muffling quality of the jute itself but specifically articulates an intense personal memory for Di Mauro, of his childhood experience as an altar boy. Catholicism is a recurring theme in his work, gently implied through the use of metaphor."

Di Mauro, whose work is exhibited widely throughout Australia and overseas, will talk about his installations, using olive oil and sugar, as well as the locus of memory and nostalgia in his personal works at the Gold Coast City Gallery today from noon-1pm.