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Cultures crossing over through art

CROSSINGS (Metro Arts Gallery 2, 109 Edward St, until July 14). Reviewed by **SUE SMITH**.

C**CROSSINGS** is a mix of mostly fresh and exciting experimental installations, mixed media works, sculpture and prints by 17 visual artists of non-English speaking backgrounds.

Many of the works on view are infused with humour, eccentricity or mystery.

In a bafflingly obscure but witty installation, Franz Ehmann uses blocks of chocolate, honeycomb, an Australian history textbook, and a chocolate-coated lightbulb to construct metaphors for the ways multiculturalism is sometimes mistakenly "read" and "consumed" in Australian society.

The theme of how people, from non-Eng-



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lish speaking backgrounds, integrate into a different culture is further explored in another collaborative installation by Donna Toussaint, Mariangela Vecchi and Sebastian Di Mauro.

This installation — incorporating a veiled room, a length of green silk, incense sticks and bowls of Asian spices (deliberately wrongly labelled) — has a seductive physical presence and conveys strong feelings of isolation, nostalgia and loss.

The reluctant social role-playing of new migrants is handled with engaging silliness and

good humour in two striking photographic mixed media pieces (by Sandra Maldonado, Sonja De Sterke and Krzysztof Bialoskorski) which testify to the power of art to raise social consciousness without preaching.

At times the show is diminished by the inclusion of a few eclectic (and some very conventional) pieces which are less than vigorous and which don't engage with the show's stated multicultural theme.

Less would have been more in this show, which seems to reflect a degree of curatorial confusion about its aims — not surprisingly, as two organisations (the Institute of Modern Art and the Brisbane Ethnic Music and Arts Centre), two curators, and 17 artists have all had a hand in its presentation.