



SEBASTIAN DI MAURO
Evergreen

OPENING 09.08.08

SATURDAY 3.00-5.00PM



Evergreen is the dream. This promise of bounty and perpetual youthful blush finds materialisation in this group of new sculptures by Sebastian Di Mauro.

These are sensuous shapes extruded from the imagination, facets formed not by a glancing blow upon an anvil or the forging of hot metal within a mould, but by the softness of the way light catches the direction of the green pile.

For these surfaces are covered by a humble material and so continue Di Mauro's investigation with the use of one of the more maligned products of post war industrial chemical ingenuity - synthetic grass - generically known as astro turf. Designed in the early 1960s in good faith to fulfill a need for reliable sporting surfaces. It belongs to that generation of materials that sought to give the appearance of natural products and yet alter them to allow them to do new things, be cheaper to manufacture or easier to manipulate. We had nylon for silk, laminate for wood grain, acrylic for wool and a host of plastics for rubber.

Our changing responses to these products can be seen as a litmus for how we relate to the "real world". Wonder and fascination at what science could invent was followed by a slight distaste for the perceived cheaper qualities of these new materials and the fact that they tried to conceal their true identity. We now have an awareness that such equations of material, manufacture and use are not simple and that each decision and each object has an environmental and social impact.

Astro turf has recently unwittingly acquired an additional negative moniker. Astrourfing describes the practice by corporations or political interests of falsely setting up on-line community or interest groups to make them appear as though they are true 'grass roots' organizations. The problem of authenticity on the internet has allowed such voices to gain a currency they would not otherwise have had.

In an ironic way Di Mauros works reclaim the qualities of the material for Australia, the driest continent. Synthetic grass offers all the performance capabilities of the real thing and yet none of the labour or water use issues. It allows us to indulge in a year round fantasy of a lush European style manicured garden potentially becoming the only garden you will ever need.

In so doing, these works continue the themes addressed by di Mauros major sculpture for the 2008 Helen Lempriere National Sculpture Award. Folly (Themeda triandra syn.T.australis). Although prominently sited, that work was intended to be positioned near one of the few stands of native trees in the Werribee Park gardens to make poignant comment on the colonial reordering of the native landscape.

These new sculptures also reference the tradition of topiary, but rather than appear as tortured nature - cut and trimmed in the shape of spheres, twists or cones to reflect the precision of an over ordered mind - these new forms allow for possibilities, their extremities push and probe in unexpected ways. When they meet, silent conversations begin between their formal languages of shape and form. That dialogue is extended to the viewer who may choose to position the sculptures in different ways, and so create a new paradox of the evergreen to become ever changing.

Virginia Rigney

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Left: *Cirrus* 2008 polystyrene, fibre glass, astro turf 42 x 120 x 70cm
Front: *Pastoral* 2008 polystyrene, fibre glass, astro turf 60 x 60 x 80cm

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Opening Hours:

Tues - Fri 10am - 5pm

Sat 12pm - 5pm

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