Pivot
Sebastian Di Mauro

Pivot

The objects collected and represented in Pivot – blankets, pillows, bottomless cups, a shirt, all woven from bark and placed in domestic settings – enact a domestic scene for Sebastian Di Mauro's ongoing exploration of life 'between materials'. These woven objects and their photographic representations invoke for us Di Mauro's earlier works comprising loose organic shapes made of felt carpet underlay, pot scourers and astroturf that play out ever more irresistibly the overlapping domains of inside and out, technology and nature. Just as these earlier works based on organic forms imagine their shared roots with industrial materials, so too do Pivot's highly domestic – and in this sense cultured – objects trace their imbrication in nature. Di Mauro's work imagines a 'new' ecology that takes us, as Alison Kubler has noted, closer to the musings of Joseph Beuys, the moulding and shaping of our thoughts and the world, the ongoing process of sculpture[1].

Di Mauro is entranced by the materiality of the everyday, the textures of the worlds around us, the ways they shift from work to play, from home to home, across the borders or art and design, the stories and technologies of our lives. His works resonate in terms at once aesthetic and industrial – leading us to reflect on our own familiarity with and knowledges of particular materials and substances (sugar, oil, carpet, wool, metal, bark) which are, as a consequence, themselves imbricated in broader narratives of domestification and industrialisation. Specifically Australian histories of settlement, immigration and dispossession are interlaced in these works; the use of native barks to provide warmth, protection, comfort, sustenance, the foundation and the culture of human life suggests a point where history might be shared between indigenous and immigrant cultures, the constructs of necessity for both nomadic and bushcraft lifestyles, just as earlier works (such as Respirare, 1999) nominated specific shared histories, the industrial, cultural, domestic and elegiac resonances, of the commodities olive oil and sugar. From substances we move more strongly in Pivot into the realm of materials; but Di Mauro's focus on usage, and the ways specific technologies impress themselves onto and into both materials and substances through our daily lives, is sustained.

In his insistent returns to nature, Di Mauro is working at the point where we become human[2], the leap to culture, to fire, and to building, weaving and settling. Working also at an imagined meeting point (and disciplinary divide) between art and design, Pivot draws on and reworks specific aesthetic and representational traditions - the loose bark familiar to us through the shimmering forms of the Heidelberg paintings are here literally worked into domestic textures; while the staging of the works - the photographing of blankets in front of roaring fireplaces or on crisply sheeted beds - insists on a parallel aesthetic deployment of lifestyle catalogues. Through such conjunctures we are reminded that the very fabric of our daily lives – sleeping, waking, folding, looking – speaks eloquently of the aesthetic and ecological histories of colonial cultures; the impact of violent and unexpected commercial and aesthetic meeting points between cultures, traditions, practices and materials.

There are also of course more precise temporal and material contexts being invoked in these works. The objects in Pivot have been woven from the bark of Mountain Ash trees growing in open bushland around Nilja, a property owned and administered by Parks Victoria beside the Yarra at Warrandyte, where Di Mauro was awarded a residency for 3 months through the Gold Coast Art Prize in 2000. Mountain Ash trees shed large quantities of bark between December and January (the period spent at the property by Di Mauro) providing fuel for fire, which is needed, in the way of many native species, for regeneration. The mundane lifecycles

of domestic objects are here linked to larger cycles of nature, of decay and regeneration as well as to more contemporary social and cultural temporalities; the patterns of professional demands and occasions, even the particular itinerancies of a system of endowments for artist studios.

There are mysteries at work too, in Pivot, reminding us of the complex networks of symbol and silence that tie cultures to their environments. Cycles of death, decay and regeneration are played out across the nature/culture divide most expressly through the aesthetics of comfort and making-do invoked in the bushcraft progenitors for these objects. In this way, Di Mauro re-engages the conventional (and foundational) dichotomising of nature and culture through an account of the complex appeal of the natural world – for Di Mauro both powerful and vulnerable[3] - together with a reminder of the sources of ritual and the poetic in the everyday. In the process we are provided with a new fabric that itself hints at a shift away from the self-contained internal circuitry of the sheep's back economy at our national colonial heart, towards an economics of domestification, of habitat and of location.

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(Footnotes)
[1] Alison Kubler, Enjoin Ex.Cat., 1998, p.9.
[2] See Linda Carroli floccus: wild and woolly, 2000 for a fuller discussion of the aspect of Di Mauro's work.
[3] Interview with Jane Magon in Between Material, published by Sebastian Di Mauro, 1998, p.43.

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Selected Solo Exhibitions

2000 *Spill, Tuft and Lure*, Global Arts Link, Ipswich
floccus, Brisbane City Gallery, Brisbane
1999 *Respirare*, Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane
1998 *Pane e Zucchero*, Cairns Regional Gallery, Cairns
Manifestations, Smith + Stoneley on Stratton Gallery, Brisbane
1997 *Manifestations*, Beatty Gallery, Sydney
1996 *Slippage*, Beatty Gallery, Sydney
SKIN, Ipswich Regional Art Gallery, Ipswich
Between Material, Switchback Gallery, Monash University, Gippsland Campus, Churchill, Victoria
1995 *Pagine dal Libro Muto*, Beatty Gallery, Sydney
1994 *Underlay*, Beatty Gallery, Sydney
1993 *Praeparatio Physica*, Omniscient Gallery, Brisbane
evanescence, Space Plentitude, Brisbane
Recurrence, Magazine Space, Brisbane
1992 *IMbalance*, Ipswich Regional Art Gallery, Ipswich
1991 *Transference*, Above the Apothecary, Brisbane
1990 *being-BECOMING*, Roz MacAllan Gallery, Brisbane
1989 *Passage*, Roz MacAllan Gallery, Brisbane

Selected Group Exhibition

2002 *Transit/Narratives*, Centro per la Cultura e le Arti Visive, Villa Letizia, Treviso, Italy
2001 *National Sculpture Prize & Exhibition 2001*, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
Woollahra Sculpture Prize and Exhibition, Woollahra Municipal Council, Sydney
Spectacle, University of Southern Queensland Gallery, Toowoomba
Glory, Gallery 482, Brisbane
2000 *Gold Coast Art Prize*, Gold Coast City Art Gallery, Gold Coast
Against the Grain, Brisbane City Gallery, Brisbane
1999 *Wish You Were Here*, Smith + Stoneley Gallery, Brisbane
Enjoin, Cairns Regional Gallery, Cairns
1998 Enjoin, GSIS Museum, Manila, Philippines
excat, Smith + Stoneley on Stratton Gallery, Brisbane
Im/material, Soapbox Gallery, Brisbane
1996 *Diverse Alliances*, Ecole D'Art, Noumea
Queensland Artists Books, Brisbane City Gallery, Brisbane
1995 *Paper*, Queensland Museum, Brisbane
Have a Look, University Art Museum, University of Queensland, Brisbane
Contemporary Australian Works from the Collection, Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane
A Selection from the Downlands Art Collection, Toowoomba Regional Art Gallery, Toowoomba
1988 *Brisbane/Hanoi Exchange Project*, Queensland College of Art, Brisbane & Hanoi University, Hanoi, Vietnam
FOI - Festival Of installation, Noosa Regional Gallery, Tewantin
Beat The Drum - Assemblages, Beatty Gallery, Sydney
Reference Points, Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane
The River Styx (Sticks), An Australian-New Zealand Artist's Book Project, National Library of Australia, Canberra
1992 New Art Six, Museum of Contemporary Art, Brisbane
1991 *Aberdare Art Prize*, Ipswich Regional Art Gallery, Ipswich
1990 *Melbourne Contemporary Art Fair*, Roz MacAllan Gallery, Melbourne
Crossing Over, University of Southern Queensland, Toowoomba
1989 *Not Another Archibald Prize*, Roz MacAllan Gallery, Brisbane
1987 *THAT Group Exhibition*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Brisbane

Collections

Queensland Art Gallery, James Hardy Collection, State Library of Queensland, Woollahra Municipal Council, Mackay City Library, Artbank, Brisbane City Gallery, Queensland Symphony Orchestra, Allied Queensland Coalfields Ltd, Art Gallery of Western Australia, Gadens Ridgeway, University of Southern Queensland, Attorney General's Department Queensland, Downlands College, Toowoomba Regional Art Gallery, Australian Construction Services, Sly and Weigall Solicitors, Queensland Cement Limited, Global Arts Link Ipswich, Griffith Art Works, Corrigan Collection

Awards

2001 Selected for the National Sculpture Prize and Exhibition, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
Winner - Woollahra Sculpture Prize
Woollahra Municipal Council, Sydney
2000 Recipient – Parks Victoria Residency (awarded Gold Coast Art Prize)
1999 New Work, project grant, Australia Council
1997 Toowoomba Regional Art Gallery Acquisitive Award
1996 Project Grant, Arts Office, Queensland
1991 Aberdare Art Prize, Ipswich Regional Gallery, Ipswich
1990 Logan Art Award, Painting
1989 Artist of the Year Queensland Symphony Orchestra

Commissions

2001 - 2002 175 Eagle Street, Brisbane

Selected Bibliography

Carroli, L. 2000, Floccus: wild and wooly, Brisbane City Gallery, Brisbane
Carroli, L. 1999, 'Respirare' Artlink, Vol. 19 No 3, p82, p83
Drury, N. 1997, Images 3- Contemporary Australian Painting, North Ryde, Craftsman House, p159, p175.
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James, B. 1996, "Galleries", Sydney Morning Herald, Friday, November 22.
Kubler, A. 2000, "The locus of memory in the art of Sebastian Di Mauro", Eyeline, Number 42, Autumn/Winter, pp26-29.
Magon, J. 1993, "Entrances, exits and immortality", Eyeline 22/23, Summer, p30-p33.
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Morrell, T., and Magon, J. 1998, Between Material, Sebastian Di Mauro, Brisbane.
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Courtesy of Dianne Tanzer Gallery

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