

Sebastian Di Mauro, *Passage II*, 1989.

SEBASTIAN DI MAURO PASSAGE - RECENT WORKS ON PAPER

Roz MacAllan Gallery, Brisbane
28 March - 22 April, 1989

Di Mauro's latest exhibition displays a development and evolution in his approach which relates more to the nature of the human rather than to the relationship between human and nature which was the theme of his earlier work.

The window, or grid, motif is still there but it now represents the individual, or the presence of the artist. The works could be called self-portraits. The grid produces a distancing effect and yet allows one to look past it into another dimension beyond which a multitude of layers and levels enter and exit, entice and repel. Provoking curiosity, these levels succeed in gaining the prolonged attention these works demand.

Viewing this exhibition takes time, time to carefully observe the complex subtleties that exist in each work. To skim over such subtleties is to miss their point, which is to make us aware of the complexities that exist in life, where consciousness confronts material existence.

Di Mauro is rebelling against superficiality and in so doing is asking questions about personal purpose. There is a strong sense of questing in these works. The artist wishes to discover, and to come to terms with suppressed elements in his life. *Passage No 17* heralds this realisation. Underneath the sombre blue-black colours, intensely brilliant and beautiful blues and greens break through, piercing with quiet joyousness and belief in their own luminous existence. In spite of the looming and repressive darkness of the grid,

traces of yellow gleam like a light at the end of a tunnel - a resurrection from hopelessness.

In *Passage No 19*, the use of charcoal and a blurring of the grid's edges to make it less defined, enhance the interior elements and create more of a balance between the forces of darkness and light. It is like looking through dreaming eyes, or a mist - peering into the dark, but seeing possibilities.

Di Mauro realises that although most people have thoughts about life, death and human nature, our commercial/technological society has little use for such speculations, so we bury them.

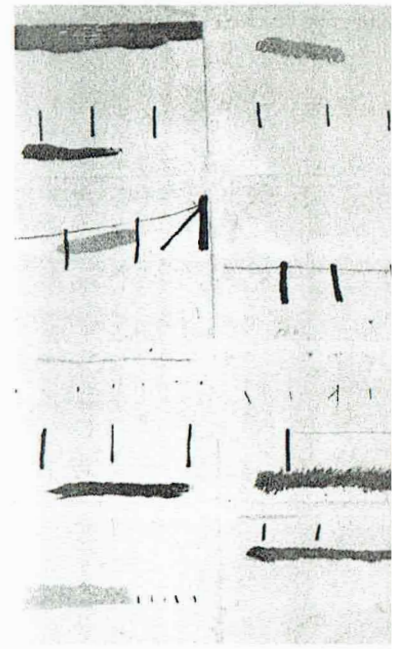
In these works Di Mauro confronts these issues and allows the speculation to re-emerge. The exhibition is individual and personal, but is, at the same time, a universal representation of that subtle and sensitive aspect of human consciousness increasingly threatened by the crass callousness of a materialistic society.

JANE BARNES

JENNY BELL

Mori Gallery, Sydney
14 February - 4 March, 1989

Jenny Bell's charcoal and pastel drawings of the country and its inhabitants convey a sense of nostalgic yet disenchanting familiarity with the subject. Dominated by themes of isolation and loneliness, the work also deals with the notion of tradition and the inherent restrictions placed upon the individual through family and social pressures, using the rural example as an epitome of the wider social situation. This new body of work continues these



Jenny Bell, *In My Father's Paddock*, from t

preoccupations which were prevalent in last year's exhibitions at the Blaxland Gallery and First Draft.

Displayed as an installation at the Mori Gallery, the drawings are grouped according to subject matter and each series is hung in a neatly measured grid pattern which, in its careful arrangement, reflects the highly introspective nature of the work. The artist's method is to examine her subject from a number of different angles and distances, so that, as a group, the drawings appear repetitive to the point of obsession. Nine drawings of a fireplace, for example, each with a varying amount of detail, demonstrate the process of elimination that is necessary in order to reveal the essential nature of the subject. The gradual shredding of cluttered details - chair, door, grate - represents the process of distancing oneself and substituting a complacent acceptance with a more objective perception of a situation swathed in tradition and familiarity.

A series of twenty "Fence" drawings, stark black lines across a sheet of white paper, challenge the traditional Arcadian view of farming as an harmonious and natural interchange between man and nature. The emphasis here is on ownership and territory; the fences cut through and divide the barren landscape, contradicting the myth in Australian painting (Drysdale, Nolan) of a dangerous and untamed outback. The fence can be seen as a metaphor for psychological boundaries and limitations which, like the taming of the outback, are born of a desire to control and conform. The metaphor is emphasized by the horizontal angle from which the landscape is depicted, as if observed from below the brim of an Akubra hat; not only is the land bounded by the fences which act as barriers, but one's view of it is