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Sebastian Di Mauro was born in Innisfail in 1955 and he currently lives and works between Brisbane and The United States. Since the late 1980s he has held over 45 solo exhibitions and his work has been included in excess of 100 group exhibitions in Australia and overseas. His paintings, sculptures, artist books and installations are collected by many of Australia's key art institutions, including: the Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art, the Art Gallery of Western Australia, McClelland Gallery and Sculpture Park, Bendigo Art Gallery, Besen Collection, Artbank, University of Queensland Art Museum and Deakin University.

In the past 5 years Di Mauro has been included in a number of group and solo exhibitions, including, Throw (2021) Bundaberg Regional Art Gallery; GREENBACK (2019) MARS Gallery Melbourne Victoria and a survey show, Always and Altered at Benalla Art Gallery Victoria. Collective Labour is Di Mauro's first solo exhibition in Australia since moving to The United States. Recently he was a finalist for the Hadley Art Prize (2023) and his GREENBACK series was included in Personal Structures – Reflections, European Cultural Centre, which ran concurrently with the 59th Venice Biennale (2022).

Recognised as one of Australia's sculptors to watch in terms of investment, his work has been celebrated in two monographs, Between Material (1998) and Footnotes of a Verdurous Tale (2009). Di Mauro's work has risen to national prominence through a number of achievements namely: inclusion in the National Sculpture Prize and Exhibition at the National Gallery of Australia in 2001; awarded residencies with Parks Victoria, Melbourne and later the British School, Rome in 2002; being judged a finalist in The McClelland Survey and Award in 2003; winning the Montalto Sculpture Prize (Mornington Peninsular, Victoria); selection for the Helen Lempriere National Sculpture Award and Exhibition in 2003, 2005 and 2008; awarded the Australia Council's Barcelona Studio in 2009; and more recently a survey exhibition of his work mounted at Queensland University of Technology Art Museum in 2009.

Sebastian Di Mauro is an Adjunct Associate Professor at Queensland College of Art Griffith University.

Onespace and Sebastian Di Mauro would like to thank:

Dr. Louise Martin-Chew; Connie Logan; Denis Chandler; Linda Schultz; Evie Franzidis; Dona Marcus; Pam Smith; Sam Di Mauro; Edward Niznik; Kat Walsh; Worldwide Printing - South Brisbane and Nick Toumpas.

A big shout out to my partner Denis Chandler for being my navigator across oceans, helping me discover new worlds and creating an engaging home and workspace. Your unwavering support, insight and humour make this journey truly remarkable.

We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the Brisbane region, the Turrbal and Jagera peoples.

We acknowledge their continuing connection to the lands, waters, culture and community. We pay our respects to Elders, past and present.

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Sebastian Di Mauro
Collective Labour

2 - 24 February 2024

Partnered with



As 2023 unfolded, the wars between Israel and Hamas, Russia and Ukraine seemed to emphasise growing differences of belief and resources throughout the world. In the first Onespace Gallery exhibition of 2024, *Collective Labour*, Sebastian Di Mauro reflects something of the disquiet in this international mood.

For decades he has used a diverse range of materials to engage with his own Sicilian/Australian heritage and identity. In *Collective Labour*, his use of vintage quilts extends a long-term interest in textiles. In his reuse of hand- and machine-stitched tattered quilts, made by people for everyday use and found in second-hand shops, Di Mauro examines what he understands of their past with care and respect, overlaying it with his own observations of emerging social and racial inequities. These are stark not only in his recently adopted home of the United States, but are also visible all over the world, with growing critiques of the value of human rights a flashpoint.

Frayed (2023) is dominated by the word ‘RIGHT’, embroidered in red thread. This becomes a curtain of tangled yarn that cascades down its surface. Over a vintage quilt of fabric rectangles with fraying edges is a regular horizontal pattern of coloured oval shapes, with other words sewn in red, ‘LOSS’, ‘the second’, ‘boys own adventure’, and the number ‘48,830 ...’. Rosy hues popping on a multicoloured background are emotive, the words referring to the second amendment of the American constitution (the right to bear arms) and the number of deaths in the United States as a result of gun violence in 2021.

Di Mauro’s reinvention of these vintage quilts builds on their material, cultural and physical history. He suggests that he and the quilts previous creators are, “working together in a sense”, with his treatment embracing existing holes, fraying edges and imperfections. He draws them like a shroud around his observations. As the grandson of Sicilian migrants to Australia, and in recent years a migrant himself, Di Mauro makes meaning of the changing social, cultural and political landscape through his work, noting the United States’ aspirations to openness and current threats to this, due to increasing measures to exclude minorities and outsiders. As an American resident but non-citizen (i.e., without the right to vote), Di Mauro has few other avenues to voice his concerns.

Over each of the five works in *Collective Labour*, a pattern made from handmade oval forms is applied over existing designs. This shape was first used in Di Mauro’s 1996 installation *SKIN*, an oval-shaped sculpture with a womb-like space within its form, elevating the female. In *Collective Labour*, the shape is used to note the ongoing marginalisation of women and other minority groups—it is a prompt, a plea for equal access to power.

Mariposa (2023) sees the ovals cascading down a discoloured white quilt in a rainbow of colours, its title drawn from the slang term that Mexicans use for people within the LGBTQIA spectrum. New restrictions in some American states (in the south) have led to the removal of books from libraries and changes to abortion access. The words ‘scapegoats’, ‘some people cry’, ‘malaise’, ‘humanity’ and ‘diversity’ speak to the rolling back of these freedoms taken for granted for decades. On the back of this quilt is an existing pattern of hand-embroidered and appliquéd butterflies, adding to the fragility of the ‘rights’, once believed inviolate, currently being stripped away.

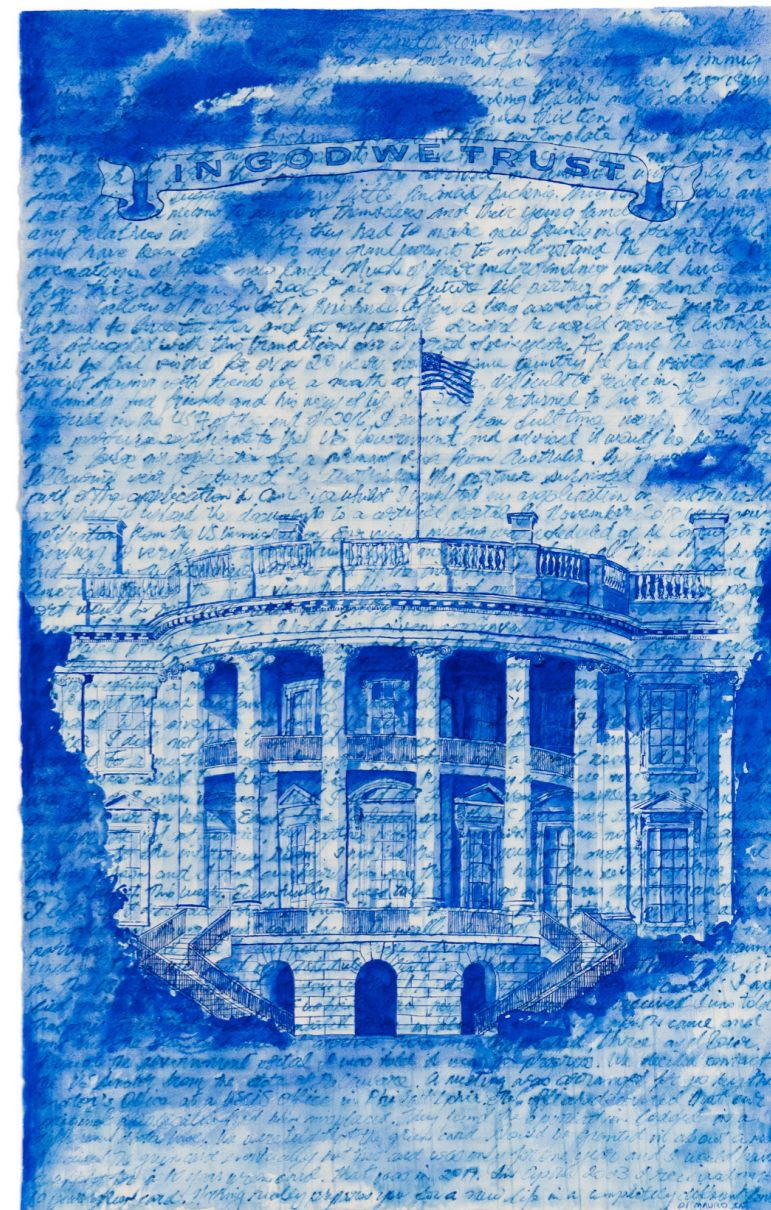
In *Threadbare* (2023), on a white quilt with chequered squares, the ovals cluster into a circle contained by words and short phrases that observe and memorialise a changing planet. This poetic and sensitive work sees the oval forms linked to the colours and concepts in the phrases, which the stitching palpably evoking Di Mauro’s grief and concern.

He comments, “While my work is rooted in the American experience, it carries a universal message. The issues I address, such as the struggle for equality, the impact of policy decisions, and the tension between tradition and progress, are not exclusive to the United States. They resonate with people around the world who grapple with similar dilemmas in their own societies.”

In the *Collective Labour* works, Di Mauro responds to a changing paradigm of growing social and cultural division. They highlight the current period in which rights may be viewed “as sand, rather than oil, in the capitalist machine”. The invocation of a ‘right’, so powerfully central in *Frayed*, notes the disjunction with the aspirations of the Bill of Rights, considered “to be fundamental to America”, introduced in 1789.

In the weaving of new thread into vintage quilts, Di Mauro summons hope for ongoing equality and sharing of resources, joins his work to the past and creates objects of tactile beauty inspired by contemporary events. He suggests, “Through art, we can weave a new narrative of unity and progress, transcending borders and divisions.”

Dr. Louise Martin-Chew



Above: Sebastian Di Mauro, *The Blue House*, 2023-24.
 Photo: Louis Lim. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace.

Cover: Sebastian Di Mauro, *Frayed*, 2023.
 Photo: Louis Lim. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace.

1 Floria Hoffman, “On the Value of Rights”, in *Constitutions of Value: Law, Governance, and Political Ecology*, ed. Isabel Feichtner and Geoff Gordon (London: Routledge, 2023), 199-215.
 2 “New Report Highlights”, John Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, <https://publichealth.jhu.edu/2023/new-report-highlights-us-2021-gun-related-deaths-for-second-straight-year-us-firearm-fatalities-reached-record-highs>.

3. Hoffman, “On the Value of Rights”, 212.
 4. The White House, “The Constitution”, last accessed 25 January 2024, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/about-the-white-house/our-government/the-constitution/#:~:text=On%20September%2017%2C%201787%2C%2039,of%20a%20bill%20of%20rights.>