

Guido Maestri

Arrangements

8 July – 1 August 2026

The longer one looks at a face, the less fixed it becomes. What begins as likeness gradually shifts into something more elusive: an accumulation of gestures, memories, impressions and revisions. In Guido Maestri's recent sculptures, portraiture becomes less a means of securing identity than a prolonged encounter with its continual transformation. Faces open, multiply and reconfigure. Hands emerge across heads, while branch-like forms extend outward as though thought itself has taken material shape.

Several works in this exhibition emerged during a particularly emotionally difficult period in the artist's life. While working through these sculptures, Maestri returned to an earlier clay model of his own head, originally made more than twelve years ago. Alongside newer sculptures based on his present likeness, these works allow different temporal versions of the self to exist simultaneously. The encounter appears less nostalgic than searching. The younger face is no longer preserved as a stable document of the past, but reconsidered through the present.

There is something in this movement through time that recalls Andrei Tarkovsky's *Mirror*, where memory folds inward upon itself and identity is encountered through fragments, repetitions and emotional residue rather than fixed narrative. Maestri's sculptures operate with a similar psychological logic. They do not present singular, resolved images, but accumulations of states through which time itself seems to pass visibly.

The bust has remained a constant subject throughout Maestri's sculptural practice, though these works resist the idealised coherence historically associated with portraiture. Like Giacometti, whose repeated attempts to capture the human face only revealed its instability, Maestri approaches the head as something continually shaped through observation, repetition and physical reworking. Surfaces retain traces of handling, pressure and adjustment, holding onto the evidence of their own making. One senses that the forms have been repeatedly pushed apart, reconstructed and refined through sustained engagement with the material.

Despite their conceptual complexity, the sculptures remain deeply human. Their distortions and reconfigurations never obscure the bodily presence of the works, but instead heighten it. Bronze, a material so often associated with permanence and monumentality, is treated here with remarkable openness and sensitivity. Maestri allows the medium to hold uncertainty, multiplicity and change without forcing resolution.

If portraiture has traditionally sought to preserve the illusion of coherence, Maestri's sculptures suggest something more fluid and enduring. They propose identity not as singular or fixed, but as something continually shaped through memory, repetition and time. In bronze, these shifting states are given unlikely permanence.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

A graduate of The National Art School, Maestri has been a repeat finalist in the Archibald Prize (which he won in 2009) and Wynne Prize at the Art Gallery of New South Wales. In 2021, Maestri was honoured with a major solo exhibition titled 'Stories from Homedale' at the newly opened Mudgee Arts Precinct. His work is regularly curated into institutional exhibitions and is held in several public collections, including the National Portrait Gallery, Art Gallery of South Australia, Art Gallery of New South Wales and Parliament House collections.