

= Danie Mellor =

Danie Mellor (born 13 April 1971) is an Australian artist who was the winner of the 2009 National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art Award . Born in Mackay , Queensland , Mellor grew up in Scotland , Australia and South Africa before undertaking tertiary studies at North Adelaide School of Art , the Australian National University (ANU) and Birmingham Institute of Art and Design . He then took up a post lecturing at Sydney College of the Arts . He works in different media including printmaking , drawing , painting , and sculpture . Considered a key figure in contemporary Indigenous Australian art , the dominant theme in Mellor 's art is the relationship between Indigenous and non @-@ Indigenous Australian cultures .

Since 2000 , Mellor 's works have been included regularly in National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art Award exhibitions ; in 2003 he was awarded a " highly commended " , for his print *Cyathea cooperi* , and in 2009 he won the principal prize , for a mixed media work *From Rite to Ritual* . His other major exhibitions have included the Primavera 2005 show at the Museum of Contemporary Art , Sydney , and the National Indigenous Art Triennial at the National Gallery of Australia in 2007 . In 2012 , his work was included in the National Museum of Australia 's exhibition *Menagerie : Contemporary Indigenous Sculpture* as well as in the second National Indigenous Art Triennial , while international recognition came in 2013 with representation in the National Gallery of Canada 's exhibition of international indigenous art .

= = Life = =

Mellor was born in Mackay , Queensland , in 1971 . His father was of American and Australian descent ; his mother had Irish , Mamu , Ngagen , and Ngajan heritage . Mellor 's maternal great @-@ great @-@ grandmother , Eleanor Kelly , and great @-@ grandmother , May Kelly , were Indigenous Australian people from the rainforest country around Cairns . The family was peripatetic : in his first twenty years , Mellor lived in Mackay , Queensland ; Scotland ; Brisbane , Queensland ; Sutton Grange , Victoria ; Adelaide , South Australia ; and Cape Town , South Africa , as well as in the Northern Territory . Mellor went to school at Steiner Schools in South Australia and South Africa ; in high school he was taught art by his mother . Looking back at the influence of his schooling upon his art , he remarked how , despite the Eurocentric origins of Rudolf Steiner 's approach to education , " there are comparable elements and themes inherent in [Steiner 's] philosophical narrative that parallel an Indigenous outlook , which is holistic in the way it approaches deeper and more intuitive readings of the environment and landscape . "

After completing a Certificate in Art at the North Adelaide School of Art in 1991 , Mellor undertook a Bachelor of Arts with Honours at the ANU in 1992 ? 1994 , and a Masters in Fine Art at Birmingham Institute of Art and Design , part of the Birmingham City University , in 1995 ? 1996 . In the early 2000s , he entered a doctorate at the ANU , where he also taught print @-@ media and drawing . He completed his PhD in 2004 . As of 2013 , Mellor is a lecturer at Sydney College of the Arts , within the University of Sydney . Mellor is married to artist Joanne Kennedy .

= = Career = =

In the early 1990s , Mellor won drawing prizes at the ANU 's Canberra School of Art and the Grafton Regional Gallery in New South Wales . Through the mid @-@ 1990s , while studying in Canberra and Birmingham , he was represented in numerous student and other exhibitions , in Australia , Belgium , Japan , Korea and the United Kingdom . These included exhibitions titled *Passage* , at Kyoto Seika University in Japan in 1994 , and *Fragile Objects* at the National Library of Australia in 1996 .

Mellor 's works have been included in the National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art Award on several occasions , in 2000 , 2001 , and every year from 2003 to 2010 . In 2003 , his mezzotint print *Cyathea cooperi* , portraying tree ferns native to the Queensland rainforest , was highly commended . Subsequent entries have included *Of fragile dreams the heart which nevermore* in 2005 , *Untitled* (

Ernie Grant in Blackman Street) in 2006 , Exotic lies and sacred ties (the heart that conceals , the tongue that never reveals) in 2008 , and A Transcendent Vision (of life , death and resurrection) in 2010 . Reviewing the 2008 exhibition , academic Sarah Scott expressed surprise that Mellor 's 2008 piece had neither attracted an award nor been purchased for the Northern Territory 's public collection .

Primavera 2005 , an annual exhibition of young artists ' work held at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Sydney , included Mellor 's work Fig 1 @-@ 100 (This particular collection made sense) , a mixed media composition that included specimens of Ulysses butterflies . He has had numerous other exhibitions , both individually and as part of group shows , at galleries including the Queensland Art Gallery in 2003 , the Canberra Museum and Art Gallery in 2006 , and the Indigenous Ceramic Art Awards , at Shepparton Gallery in Victoria in 2007 .

Mellor 's work was represented in the first National Indigenous Art Triennial in 2007 , with the elaborate (and elaborately named) sculpture The contrivance of a vintage Wonderland (A magnificent flight of curious fancy for science buffs , a china ark of seductive whimsy , a divinely ordered special attraction , upheld in multifariousness) featuring a diorama that included sculpted kangaroos made with blue and white crockery fragments (evoking Spode bone china) , real kangaroo skin (used for the ears and paws) , and synthetic eyeballs ; stuffed birds sat in a life @-@ sized mixed @-@ media tree overhead . The work featured in media reports of the exhibition , including by The Adelaide Advertiser , The Canberra Times , The West Australian and the Australian Broadcasting Corporation .

Since graduating , Mellor has won several awards , including the Canberra Critic 's Choice Award in 2006 , and the \$ 15 @,@ 000 John Tallis National Works on Paper Acquisitive Award in 2008 . The following year , he won the Victorian Indigenous Ceramic Art Award , held at Shepparton Art Gallery in Shepparton , Victoria . In August 2009 , Mellor won the AU \$ 40 @,@ 000 National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art Award , for his mixed media work From Rite to Ritual . It was only the third time in the award 's 26 years that an urban Aboriginal artist had been the winner . Earlier that year his solo show at Brisbane 's Jan Murphy Gallery had sold out . Also in that year , Mellor 's work was featured alongside that of Patricia Piccinini and Cherry Hood in the Newcastle Region Art Gallery 's show Animal Attraction . Though Mellor has not had a painting hung in the Archibald Prize , he was the subject of Paul Ryan 's portrait that was a 2010 finalist in that competition . In 2012 , his work was included in the National Museum of Australia 's exhibition Menagerie : Contemporary Indigenous Sculpture , and in the second National Indigenous Art Triennial . He was also selected for inclusion in that year 's Blake Prize , with his work Bulluru Storywater . Mellor received international recognition in 2013 , when he was included in Sakahàn , the National Gallery of Canada 's " most ambitious contemporary art exhibition in its history " .

Among the national collections containing Mellor 's work are the National Gallery of Australia , which owns his prize @-@ winning From Rite to Ritual , and the Parliament House Art Collection . Most other major Australian art collections have holdings , including the state gallery of his birth state , Queensland , and the main public gallery of the city where he completed much of his tertiary study , the Canberra Museum and Gallery . Other state and territory galleries in which he is represented include the Art Gallery of South Australia , the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory and the National Gallery of Victoria . Public regional galleries that have collected Mellor 's creations include Newcastle Regional Art Gallery in New South Wales , and Warrnambool Art Gallery in Victoria . He is also represented in the Australian government 's collection , Artbank , as well as in large , private collections such as the Kerry Stokes .

In the 2010s , Mellor became involved in administrative and leadership roles in the arts community . In 2010 , Mellor became a member of the Visual Arts Board of the Australia Council for the Arts . In 2011 , Mellor was not an entrant in the National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art Award , as he instead became one of its judges . Appointed to the Visual Arts Board for a further term , Mellor in 2013 became its Chair . At the same time , Mellor continued to exhibit works . In 2014 , a survey of his works opened at the University of Queensland Art Museum , and was scheduled to travel to the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory later in the year . The exhibition was favourably reviewed in theguardian.com , with art critic Sharne Wolff drawing attention to Mellor 's newest

sculpture , Anima , which she said " marks a dramatic change " for the artist , bearing " no resemblance to Mellor ' s more glamorous output " . His work featured as part of the Edinburgh International Festival , with a show titled Primordial : SuperNaturalBayiMinyjirral displayed at the National Museum of Scotland .

= = Technique and themes = =

Mellor 's extensive scholarly art education has led to his art having a strong theoretical base . In interviews he has acknowledged the influence of diverse artists , including Indigenous painter Rover Thomas , Australian Sulman Prize winner Tim Storrier , Romantic painters including Germany 's Caspar David Friedrich , and contemporary German artists Joseph Beuys , and Beuys ' student Anselm Kiefer . He has harnessed a wide range of media during his career , including printmaking , drawing , painting and sculpture utilising wood , glass , steel and ceramics , as well as a range of more unorthodox materials , as his 2007 Indigenous Art Triennial entry demonstrated . Reflecting on that sculpture , Artlink Magazine 's reviewer , Daniel Thomas , remarked on how the work signified " how colonisers always get things wrong ; how Europeans looking for China , and its fine porcelain manufactures , stumbled instead upon the land of the kangaroo , and traded and planted ideas of racial and cultural superiority " .

When Sarah Scott considered the 2008 work Exotic Lies and Sacred Ties , which , like From Rite to Ritual , drew on evocations of Spode china , she highlighted its exploration of the history of cross @-@ cultural relations . Noting the landscape that forms the central element of the painting , she observed :

The stuffed parrot and upside @-@ down cockatoo that hang above the landscape recall the bizarre renditions of these birds produced by European artists following the eighteenth century European voyages of discovery to Australia . In front of the ' landscape ' are two mosaic kangaroo ' messengers . ' One kangaroo points to the painting . Another covers his ears in a ' hear no evil ' gesture , graphically signifying how under the black armband view of history ... , the oral history accounts of Indigenous people have been largely ignored . This work recalls the museum dioramas in which Aboriginal people , who until 1967 were classified under the Flora and Fauna act , appeared amongst exotic taxidermy objects .

From Rite to Ritual examined relationships between Indigenous and settler cultures , including differences in spiritual practices . Mellor , in an artist 's statement for the awards , described the work as showing " what is a moment of contact , a conversation and interaction between two cultures ; it speaks of the challenges of settlement , and the differences in spiritual enactment and belief " . Commenting on the work , the judges of the prize remarked that the " surprising scale and layering of imagery , with its understated political and historical references " made the work " outstanding " and of " great complexity and grace " . Art writer Nicolas Rothwell described the work as drawing a parallel " between Aboriginal initiation rituals and the ceremonies inside a Masonic lodge . "

Mellor 's earlier works examined the relationships between cultures , including in his mezzotint prints in which he juxtaposed " images of native and introduced flora and fauna ? for example , a kangaroo with a bull ? to symbolise two different peoples and cultures " . These issues were also addressed in his painting for the exhibition Native Titled Now , shown in South Australia in 1996 . Mellor 's interest in cultural interactions extends beyond the making of his art . In a panel discussion on Indigenous art education , Mellor emphasised that , in teaching Indigenous art within visual arts , it was important to be aware of both Aboriginal and settler history , " so you can talk about their interaction and the whole set of issues that arise from those two things being parallel " . Mellor 's emphasis on past interactions between cultures led gallerist and critic Michael Reid to consider that Mellor 's works had earned him " an important place in the visual narrative of Australian history " .

For Mellor , Indigenous identity is a theme highlighted both in his work and (not necessarily by his own choice) in public life . As a fair @-@ skinned man with blue eyes and caucasian features , his appearance has occasionally raised questions of " authenticity " . Mellor found himself the target of columnist Andrew Bolt , who took issue with Mellor entering and winning the 2009 National

Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art Award . Bolt wrote " This white university lecturer , with his nice Canberra studio , has by winning pushed aside real draw @-@ in @-@ the @-@ dirt Aboriginal artists such as Dorothy Napangardi , Mitjili Napanangka Gibson and Walangkura Napanangka , who had also entered and could really have used that cash and recognition . " Commentator Ellie Savage , criticising Bolt , wondered why someone who " neither draws in the dirt nor lives in it " should therefore have " no right to enter competitions for Indigenous artists " . Bolt two years later lost a case brought by nine Indigenous Australians ? not including Mellor ? for racial discrimination over articles that criticised fair @-@ skinned Indigenous people , including the post that had lambasted Mellor . Art writer Maurice O 'Riordan , reviewing the 2009 Award , noted the Bolt controversy , but pointed out that Mellor , while in early works acknowledging his own Indigenous heritage , is not concerned with the definition of Aboriginality , but with historical interaction between cultures and the re @-@ imagining of history .