

Danie MELLOR

(born 1971 in Mackay, Queensland, Australia. Lives and works in the Southern Highlands, New South Wales, Australia.)



Dark star waterfall (2025), 2-channel 4K video projection, 25:10, colour, sound

Dark Star waterfall, Mellor's major new two-channel video, contemplates the immense power of elemental forces through its sweeping vistas of rainforest Country. The "Dark Star", an early astronomical term for a Black Hole, is symbolically expressed here by the irresistible pull of water towards a waterfall and its subsequent "fall" when the precipice and the edge of the waterfall become, at a certain point, inescapable. In a converse way this happens when the event horizon of a Dark Star blocks the flow of light and matter from escaping it. Mellor has used both infrared and visible light cameras to film waterfalls situated in the traditional Ngadjon and Mamu Country on the Atherton Tablelands in ways that have extended his previous use of still photography as a symbolic means of disclosure and revelation. Historic footage shot both there and in the Cairns region is interspersed throughout the video, crossing over and blending the timelines of past and present, to provide a counterpoint to Mellor's contemporary imagery.

Here, Mellor contrives a convergence of time, creation, power, and the sublime, which he explores through the phenomena of landscape and nature. At its heart, he seeks to reveal the invisible by conveying the subtlety and enormity of both the material and immaterial world through ideas of overlapping timelines (past, present, future) in cultural and scientific terms. Traversing a timeless plane, reaching back to *jujuba*, the ancient time of the totems, and across Country (the traditional lands of his people), it seeks to

understand the universe itself. Several audio sequences in the film are based on the sonification of astronomical data, (including infrared light), and Sagittarius A*, (Sgr A*), the supermassive Black Hole at the centre of our Milky Way is converted into audible tones. This reference to astronomical data reinforces the connection of “local” cosmology to the video, and the Milky Way as the place of origin and habitat of the Rainbow Serpent (often known in Aboriginal cultures as the “Creator God”); it also emphasizes the significance of *Yamani* (a “rainbow” or the coming together of different peoples and languages in song) and its centrality to Aboriginal rainforest legends of landscape and creation.

There are no words for “time” or “future” in the 500 languages of the First Peoples of Australia who, according to their beliefs, conceptualise the Universe, the World, and their place in it, in different *Dreamings*. These mythological orders of harmony between people, plants, animals, and the physical features of their land provide strong expressions of group identity and ways of living, where time is eclipsed by the continuous need to preserve balance through the observance of each Dreaming’s stories, landscapes, identity, motifs, rules and moral codes. This continuum also provides a strong aesthetic foundation with which most Australian Aboriginal artists concur. The Dreaming is a perpetual present, where future and past dissolve in the now; it exists *before, within, and beyond* linear time. In this way, it resonates strongly with the themes of cyclical and non-linear time in *Landscapes of Futures Past*. By collapsing distinctions between past, present, and future the Dreaming challenges Western notions of history and progress; it offers instead a vision of time that is present, lived, and ever active. The land is a living archive of these stories, and Aboriginal art often makes visible the unseen layers of these Dreamings. In this way, The Dreaming becomes a vital lens through which we can understand alternate temporalities and landscapes —those of futures that are not just imagined, but remembered.

As a living archive the Aboriginal concept of **The Dreaming** is inseparable from **landscape**. Far from being just a passive backdrop, a physical environment or resource, the land becomes a holder of time, an active, sentient, and sacred *Country*. **The Dreaming** complicates non-aboriginal notions of landscape as something to be framed, owned, or developed by positioning it instead as **alive, storied** and sacred – as a vast, ongoing network of ancestral narratives that are **inscribed into the land** in its rivers, rocks, deserts, and skies. The Dreaming shows us that landscape is where all times meet, and where the future may already be present, waiting to be remembered. This understanding resonates profoundly with the exhibition’s exploration of layered temporalities, shifting ecologies, and the reactivation of pasts within imagined futures.

Courtesy Cassandra Bird Gallery, Sydney

Historic footage and images: National Film and Sound Archive of Australia, Queensland State Archives, State Library of Queensland.

This project has been assisted by the Australian Government through Creative Australia, its arts funding and advisory body through a VACS Major Commissioning project. `

ARTIST BIO

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Danie Mellor is an award-winning Australian artist of Ngadjon and Mamu Aboriginal, Scottish-Irish, and settler heritage. His interdisciplinary practice draws on his Indigenous and Anglo-Australian background to consider Australia's colonial past and its legacies today. He holds a Master's degree in Fine Art from the Birmingham Institution of Art & Design, University of Central England, and a PhD from the National Institute of the Arts, Australian National University (ANU), Canberra, Australia. Mellor's multidisciplinary research and practice explore intersections between contemporary and historic culture, and the legacies of cultural memory and knowledge. His works - held in all major Australian public collections as well as the National Gallery of Canada, British Museum, and National Museums Scotland - explore themes that are critically linked to indigenous cultural histories and concepts of the landscape.

Mellor's work examines the entangled narratives of Indigenous and settler histories, colonial ecology, and evolving land relationships. His signature landscape is a richly textured field where archival photographs and colonial artifacts interweave with Aboriginal iconography and rainforest imagery to question what we consider timeless landscape. Through this aesthetic lexicon, Mellor visualises unseen histories—ancestral presences, environmental transformations—and challenges viewers to reflect on memory and witnessing. Whether via pastel drawings, mosaic taxidermies, giant chromogenic panoramas, or infrared video, his art collapses past, present, future into coexisting narratives, proposing that our landscapes are never neutral, but charged with overlapping stories of loss, resilience, and re-imagination.

Selected recent solo exhibitions include: *Danie Mellor: marru | the unseen visible*, Queensland Art Gallery, Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane, Australia (2025); *Redux*, Tolarno Galleries for PHOTO 2022 Festival, Melbourne, Australia (2022); *Jujaba [a thought space]*, Artspace, Sydney, Australia (2021); *The Sun Also Sets*, Tolarno Galleries, Melbourne, Australia (2020); *The Landscape: [all the devils are here]*, Tolarno Galleries, Melbourne, Australia (2018); *Exotic Lies Sacred Ties*, The University of Queensland Art Museum, TarraWarra Museum of Art, and Museum & Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, Australia (2014). Selected recent group exhibitions have been held at: Fondation Opale, Lens, Switzerland (2023); Ngununggula, Bowral, Australia (2022); Dobell Australian Drawing Biennale, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia (2020); Adelaide Biennale of Australian Art, AGSA Art Gallery of South Australia & The Anna and Gordon Samstag Museum, Adelaide, Australia (2016); 8th Asia Pacific Triennale of Contemporary Art, Queensland Art Gallery, Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane, Australia (2015-16); Edinburgh International Festival, National Museum of Scotland (2014); National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, Canada (2013), and others.