



Danie Mellor's Eye-catching Telstra Art Award Entry

A mounted bird caged kangaroo covered in blue and white willow mosaic has been installed at the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory.

The installation comes two weeks ahead of this year's prestigious 24th *Telstra National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art Award* with Danie Mellor's art work *Plucked from the Landscape of the Curious* likely to attract much attention.

Also featuring in the antique Chinese bird cage are two Indigenous finches, which Mellor says represents "inert life observing the kangaroo, an icon of Australian identity".

Dr Mellor is a lecturer in Theories of Art Practice at the University of Sydney.

"The work addresses the notion of presentation and display and relates to my investigation of museum collections and the way in which material culture and iconic objects are shown," Mellor said.

"The mix of objects and animals in the cage is a comment on the seemingly incongruous combinations of collected articles found in 19th Century museum displays and is an indirect comment on the nature of misrepresentation of Indigenous culture.

"The cage indicates frozen perception, the authentic and antique object holding in place a combination of stories, myths and national totems."

The Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory (MAGNT) Director Anna Malgorzewicz said entries had been submitted by artists from across the country and the calibre of entries was extremely high.

"We have received entries from right across Australia, from Perth to Brisbane and Tasmania to the Torres Strait. The *Award* is identifying new Indigenous artists every year and this year's entries are outstanding," she said.

Artists have submitted a diverse range of artworks, from 2D works on paper, bark and canvas to works made from a variety of media including photography, linocut and mixed media.

"With such a high calibre of artworks to choose from this year there are no doubts the judges will have a difficult time selecting the winners," she said.

The *Award* was founded by MAGNT in 1984, and remains the nation's longest-running *Award* dedicated to Indigenous artists. The *Telstra Award* attracts a \$40,000 prize and the four media category prizes attract an additional \$4,000 each.

The *Award* is non-acquisitive, meaning MAGNT will not automatically acquire winning entries. Last year, Ngoia Napaltjarri Pollard won the *Telstra Award* with her artwork *Swamps West of Nyirripi*. This piece later sold for \$21 960.

“We’re expecting many of the works to be in great demand following the announcement of this year’s winners,” Ms Malgorzewicz said. “Last year, 25 finalists sold their works for a combined total of more than \$250 000.”

Lawrie Mortimer, General Manager of the Telstra National Indigenous Directorate, said the *Telstra Award* provides incredible exposure for Indigenous artists from across Australia who in many cases come from remote and isolated communities.

“Telstra’s support for this *Award* helps ensure the continued development of Indigenous art in Australia by identifying and recognising the country’s most talented artists no matter where they live,” he said.

The *Award* is open to all adult Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists and aims to showcase the very best Australian Indigenous art from around the country.

The 24th *Telstra National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art Award* exhibition opens and *Award* presentations will be made on Friday 10 August 2007. The exhibition will be on display until Sunday 18 November 2007.

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