

onespace

**Darren Blackman**  
***Post Truth***

CIAF: 11 – 13 July 2025

Onespace Exhibition: 25 July – 23 August 2025



## CAIRNS INDIGENOUS ART FAIR

CIAF Dates | 11 – 13 July 2025

Opening Event | 10 July 2025

Where | Tanks Arts Centre, 46 – 64 Collins Avenue, Edge Hill, Cairns, Australia

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### ONESPACE

Onespace Exhibition Dates | 25 July – 23 August 2025

Opening Event | 26 July 2025, 5 – 7pm | Artist Talk 4 – 5pm

Onespace Gallery Hours | Tuesday to Friday 10am – 5pm, Saturday 12pm – 5pm

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Onespace will proudly showcase Darren Blackman's *Post Truth* at the 2025 Cairns Indigenous Art Fair (CIAF). The exhibition then returns to Brisbane after the Fair, ensuring Blackman's poetic words are seen across Queensland. *Post Truth* responds to the 2025 CIAF theme *Pay Attention!* by embracing the call to stay alert, informed, and critically engaged with the political and social forces that shape our lives. Blackman's politically charged works are grounded in cultural practice and reimagined in succinct LED neon text-based sculptures. They disarm the viewer through wit, vibrancy and his unique play on words. CIAF Artistic Director Teho Ropeyarn emphasises the power of artistic practice, stating that, "As artists, you hold the power to document, challenge, inspire, and innovate. Your work is a form of resistance, a means of survival, and a document of knowledge" (Teho Ropeyarn, 2025). Blackman's work not only continues this critique of alert autonomy, but also actively contributes to the strong political invitation embodied in *Pay Attention!* *Post Truth* is shaped by Blackman's solo exhibition *Language of Intent* (2023), the result of the 2023 Voice Referendum, and the newly elected Coalition Government's axing of the Queensland Truth-Telling and Healing Inquiry for First Nations people. Essay writer Bruce Johnson McLean states, "Poetic, poignant, and political, Blackman's neon text works illuminate the dichotomy between the white remembering and black forgetting that underpins so much of our national myth making."

## Post Truth



Darren Blackman, *Truth Hurts*, 2024, LED-Neon light with black acrylic back board, 100 x 65cm. Photo: Louis Lim. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace.



Photo: Ketakii Jewson Brown. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace.

**b. 1971 | Gureng Gureng and South Sea Islander.**

**Lives and works Kabi Kabi Country (Sunshine Coast) and Meanjin (Brisbane), Queensland**

Darren Blackman is a proud Gureng Gureng/Gangalu man from Queensland's central coast with Kanak South Sea Islander heritage from Vanuatu. Darren grew up in the Sunshine Coast town of Nambour and has been living and working throughout the Far North and Western Queensland since 1995.

Darren graduated from the Contemporary Indigenous Art Program at Queensland College of Art, Griffith University in 2024. Throughout 2024 and 2025 Darren has experienced quite a career acceleration having works acquired by several major institutions including the Queensland Museum (textiles), State Library of Queensland (prints and textiles), Queensland Children's Hospital (prints), the Queensland Performing Arts Centre (painting). Recently, Darren has been acquired by several international private collectors, from New Zealand to Switzerland.

Darren was part of the exhibition, *We Are Still Here*, presented by the Cairns Indigenous Art Fair at Parliament House in 2024, and more recently has been curated into a major survey exhibition, *Say Our Name* in August 2024 at the Queensland Museum. Onespace was proud to present his first major solo exhibition, *Language of Intent*, in 2023 during the national conversation and referendum on the Voice to Parliament. *Post Truth* marks Darren's second major solo exhibition with Onespace, which will be at CIAF 11 – 13 July 2025 and then tour to Brisbane from 25 July – 23 August 2025.

Through this work, Darren speaks to some of the issues at the centre of the Australian Government's Close the Gap campaign, that set intent to achieve health, education and employment equality by 2030 and reduce the seventeen-year life-expectancy gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous peoples.

Touching on oral history from his Elders and reworking those messages, Darren channels personal observations and his lived experience, to witness a wide range of Aboriginal perspectives and mainstream political and media inference.

# Darren Blackman

## *More Than Words*

Words are powerful. They have the power to move people, to provoke emotion, to generate love, to incite violence. The use of words, text, or language as forms of visual art is relatively new in the history of Western art, but, for Aboriginal people, words and text have been a fundamental tool within post-invasion art practices as a means of telling our truths.

Darren Blackman, a multi-disciplinary artist of Gureng Gureng and South Sea Islander heritage, has rapidly drawn attention for his bold and direct text-based works. His text installations are politically charged while socially and culturally astute, providing insights into the contemporary condition of our nation. In his latest installation *Post Truth*, Blackman moves beyond text-based paintings and textiles of previous exhibitions and engages with advertising-style, LED, neon-light sculpture, allowing for a wicked mingling of the political and the popular.

Blackman's *Truth Hurts*, a double-sided neon-light sculpture, plays on the idea that there are two sides to history, a concept that he seeks to subvert; for Blackman, truth is singular. In a settler-colonial society, however, truths are often ignored in favour of grand historical narratives that omit truths harmful to the making of these nationalist myths. Of course, these actions are not restricted to the past; over the past few months, governments have continued to censor or cancel dissenting or difficult artists. These actions are part of an ongoing culture war, waged for the rights to exclusively record a future history. Today, it is as important as ever for artists to continue to tell these inconvenient or hurtful truths and not be silenced, for the authenticity of the history of the future relies heavily on a cacophony of voices to ensure those who inherit the earth from us are left a rich and full understanding of our contemporary realities.

At the 2025 ANZAC Day dawn ceremony at Melbourne's Shrine of Remembrance, an Australian neo-Nazi heckled the Acknowledgement of Country, sparking caustic commentary from right-wing news sites that further emboldened attacks against this unique Australian protocol. The site and significance of this symbolic act of racism are not subtle: in the same moment that many were repeating 'Lest We Forget', the iconic slogan for the ANZACs, many right-wing conservatives were calling for the forgetting of thousands of generations of Aboriginal existence. Blackman's *Black Armband History*, featuring the text 'lest we know', was created in the months before this flashpoint and captures the tenor of this dialogue.

## *Post Truth*

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Whenever the suffering, dispossession, or sacrifice of First Nations peoples is mentioned, the resounding response from Australians is to forget or get over it. Poetic, poignant, and political, Blackman's neon text works illuminate the dichotomy between the white remembering and black forgetting that underpins so much of our national myth making.

At the heart of many of these issues is a strong sense of anti-intellectualism, which continues to pervade our national conscience and dialogue. Instead of mature and informed conversation, agendas or policies, Australia has often relied on a lowest-common-denominator approach to important cultural matters. This is perhaps best typified by the Australian deference to the 'pub test'—what a bunch of half-cut white men sitting at a bar would think—as setting the standard for Australian morality. Blackman's *Anti-Intellectualism*, which reads 'skool sux', highlights the lack of maturity in national cultural affairs that continues to resonate in mainstream politics, with slogans such as 'If you don't know, vote no' in response to the referendum on an Indigenous voice to parliament being worn like badges of honour for the wilfully ignorant.

In *Make Austraya Great Again*, which is emblazoned with the text 'Advance Australia Where?', Blackman asks, where are we going as a nation? Constant culture wars continue to waste so much time, energy and resources that could be better invested in advancing our cultural understanding, embracing our diversity and propelling our artists to take a greater seat at the table of international culture.

While some may see Blackman's political works as an attack on White Australia, in reality, they are a call for peace, self-reflection, mutual respect, and understanding. Few problems are ever solved through wilful ignorance, but rather through a critical investigation and taking action. In the same way that only someone who cares for you would point out the snot hanging from your nose, so Blackman brings these poignant issues to light not to denigrate, but in the hope that it will ultimately make us all pay attention and take action.

**Bruce Johnson McLean**



## Darren Blackman

## Post Truth

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Photo: Louis Lim. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace.

Darren Blackman

*Truth Hurts*, 2024

Pink LED-neon light with black acrylic back board, two sizes available

65 x 100cm | 2AP + Edition of 3 | \$10,000 (on display CIAF 2025)

43 x 75cm | 2AP + Edition of 3 | \$6,000

Philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer asserted that, “All truth passes through three stages. First, it is ridiculed. Second, it is violently opposed. Third, it is accepted as being self-evident.”

The double-sided light sculpture *Truth Hurts* physically strips away the narrative that there exist two sides of history. The metaphorical advertisement challenges the Commonwealth of Australia to accept our shared stories that have uniquely affected and influenced contemporary Australian attitudes concerning First Nations issues.

Glowing like a beacon, *Truth Hurts* demands attention where successive governments have silenced the truth. Regardless of your heritage, or what side of the light sculpture you stand, the truth remains irrefutable.



Photo: Michael Marzik. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace.

Darren Blackman

*Fear Less*, 2025

White LED-neon light with silver mirror back board, two sizes available

90 x 120cm | 2AP + Edition of 3 | \$10,000

118 x 200cm | 2AP + Edition of 3 | \$15,000 (on display CIAF 2025)

Italian political theorist, Marcello Veneziana states, “The culture wars uses and abuses all freedoms to enter everywhere and destroy from within all the values, all differentiation, all the spiritual riches of the peoples”.

First Nations culture is built on respect, trust, and a shared responsibility to mob and country. Our culture is not a threat to the Commonwealth of Australia but compliments the morals and values that their missionaries teach.

Western governance is political gamesmanship fraught with deception. Fear Less encourages the nation to question rhetoric that creates wedge politics instilling fear in the mainstream community. Fear is the platform from where policies are launched concerning First Nation peoples, some of which encroach human rights. Systemic racism at the basis of these policies maintains oppression, resulting in dependance, such the fear the colony has of our truth. Mob must be fearless and stand strong in resolve knowing our bloodline and practiced culture, claim our rightful sovereignty. To the Australian populous, stay informed, pay attention, FEAR LESS!



Photo: Michael Marzik. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace.

Darren Blackman

*Very Disco*, 2025

Yellow LED-neon light with silver mirror back board, two sizes available

51 x 100cm | 2AP + Edition of 3 | \$8,000 (on display CIAF 2025)

61 x 120cm | 2AP + Edition of 3 | \$10,000

On the 23 May 1770, the HMS Endeavour anchored off the coast of Gooragan. James Cook stepped onto the homeland of my people, the Merooni Clan. Today, the area is called the Town of Seventeen Seventy, celebrating an Anglocentric achievement while eliminating my people from history.

Discovery is erasure. It sanitises a narrative that celebrates coloniastion. It is not true history, it is propaganda. By subverting “Discovery”, I reclaim space while celebrating sovereignty and survival.

I flip the colonial script and push back against the fairytale of conquest by “pimping” Discovery. Those who wish to “Make Australia Great Again” can settle for a slice of nostalgia with the Merooni Clan’s proposal: “Make Australia Disco Again!”



Darren Blackman

*Anti-intellectualism*, 2025

Red LED-neon light with clear acrylic back board, two sizes available

6.5 x 38cm | 2AP + Edition of 10 | \$1,500 (on display CIAF 2025)

12.5 x 75cm | 2AP + Edition of 5 | \$3,000

Anti-intellectualism is a virus. In an age where hyperbole and slogans carry more weight than facts, The text Skool Sux highlights how knowledge is actively undermined. The work exposes a culture where ignorance is worn like a badge of honour and encouraged by the highest offices of the land.

The campaign slogan “If you don’t know, vote no” was blatant cheerleading of xenophobia, which irresponsibly went unchecked. This was a dangerous precedent in our nation, signifying a time to take stock. If the continuation of this rhetoric goes unchallenged, the Commonwealth of Australia will slide into the implausible turmoil that currently exists in the United States, where truth, freedom, and justice lack substance.

Photo: Michael Marzik. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace.





Photo: Michael Marzik. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace.

Darren Blackman

*Ignorance is bliss*, 2025

Pink LED-neon light with clear acrylic back board, two sizes available

10 x 75cm | 2AP + Edition of 5 | \$3,000 (on display CIAF 2025)

16 x 120cm | 2AP + Edition of 5 | \$5,000

Ignorance is bliss! Looking for terminology for an antonym of “wokeness”, dumb slumber gives a poetic soft delivery to what some may perceive as a disparaging remark. The font coupled with a soft pink glow would be a perfect nightlight for those wanting a peaceful rest.



Photo: Michael Marzik. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace.

Darren Blackman

*White noise*, 2025

White LED-neon with clear acrylic back board, two sizes available

23 x 75cm | 2AP + Edition of 5 | \$3,000 (on display CIAF 2025)

32 x 120 | 2AP + Edition of 5 | \$5,000

White noise is a mixture of sound waves extending over a wide audio frequency range also known as static, caused by faulty equipment, poor connections or interference. Manipulating white noise into a constant drone is used to assist sleep masking out unwanted noise interfering with sleep.

*Whitenoise* critiques how gaslighting and headlines are deliberate distractions used to maintain power structures, a volatile sound that fills a void where truth and justice should speak with clarity.



Photo: Michael Marzik. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace.

Darren Blackman

*Make Austraya Great Again*, 2025

LED-neon light with clear acrylic backboard, two sizes available

100 x 91cm | 2AP + Edition of 3 | \$8,000

63 x 75 | 2 AP + Edition of 3 | \$6,000 (on display CIAF 2025)

*Make Austraya Great Again* asks legitimate questions related to “making Australia great again”. Where, how, and who is involved?

How do we as a nation advance when, annually, our supposed day of national pride sidesteps accountability?

When was Australia great?

This work draws attention to the mechanisms driving the contemporary nationalism movement, where knowledge is feared and critique is painted as un-Australian. If Advance Australia Fair is the true context of the national anthem, we should consider which characteristics define a successfully functioning society.

A knowledge-based answer could not be disputed if we are authentic about what “advancing”, or “making Australia great” means. The actual challenge lies in how we, as a nation, can come together to have that discussion.



Photo: Michael Marzik. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace.

Darren Blackman

*Freedom to Hate*, 2025

Green LED-neon light with gold mirror backboard, two sizes available

82 x 50cm | 2AP + Edition of 5 | \$5,000 (on display CIAF 2025)

185 x 75cm | 2AP of Edition of 5 | \$8,000

The right to free speech in a democratic society should not be taken for granted. Enjoying such a privilege comes with the responsibility of respecting each other with whom we share space and common values.

*Freedom to Hate* explores the paradox where the right of expression becomes a weapon without social consequences or moral boundaries. Freedom should not be exploited at the expense of humanity.



Photo: Michael Marzik. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace.

Darren Blackman

*Black armband history*, 2025

Sunset yellow LED-neon light with clear acrylic backboard, two sizes available

80 x 50cm | 2AP + Edition of 5 | \$5,000 (on display CIAF 2025)

123 x 75cm | 2AP + Edition of 5 | \$8,000

On Anzac Day every year, Australians pay respect to all those who served and sacrificed during conflicts for the Australian and New Zealand nations.

Indigenous and nonindigenous fought side by side in the common cause for freedom. It is the only day of the year when this nation, as one people, shares ceremony and a mutual purpose.

*Lest We Know* reconfigures the solemn phrase “Lest we forget” to confront a deeper intentional forgetting: the silencing of First Nations histories and truths in the national story. It speaks to the catchphrases of “If you don’t know, vote no”, and “black armband history”. *Black armband history* challenges the Commonwealth of Australia to confront historical and present-day truths.





Darren Blackman  
*Djau (Home)*, 2025

Ice blue LED-neon light with clear acrylic backboard

28.2 x 200cm | 2AP + Edition of 5 | \$10,000 (on display CIAF 2025)

Photo: Michael Marzik. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace.

*Djau* is the Meerooni word for “country, home, land or soil”. The light sculpture presents the updated latitude and longitude coordinates, lifted from James Cook’s journal documenting his landing on my ancestral homeland.

Cook named the place Bustard Bay, after the bird he hunted there in 1770. 200 years after his landing the area was renamed Town of 1770, an act of historical branding that silences the living presence of the Meerooni peoples and our stories.

*Djau*, resists erasure, reclaiming and reframing Cook’s recorded coordinates as a declaration of sovereignty, rebranding the symbols as the international post code for my homeland. It marks the location as not a relic of history but a testament of enduring connection between Meerooni, our ancestors, and our country.



Photo: Michael Marzik. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace.

Darren Blackman

*Backward*, 2025

Double-sided green LED-neon light with black acrylic backboard,  
two sizes available

22 x 75cm | 2AP + Edition of 5 | \$5,000 (on display CIAF 2025)

12 x 38cm | 2AP + Edition of 5 | \$3,000

*Backward* is a visual statement of Australia's cultural regression. The work speaks directly to rising anti-intellectualism and the weaponising of nostalgic anglocentric mythology. One hundred and twenty-one years after the Federation of Australia, and the introduction of 'White Australia Policy', calls to restore a less tolerant past is coded in slogans, politics, and media who operate a campaign promoting 'fear of the other'.

By presenting the word "backward" in reverse, and then mirrored, the work itself is trapped in a loop without resolution. Backward demands the examination of regressive ideology and the way language, identity, and memory can be distorted to justify intolerance. Acknowledging hard truths encourages open communication, shared values and interests, creating a strong sense of community.

Onespace is a Brisbane-based gallery that presents and sells contemporary art, including work by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists.

We curate an exhibition program exploring diverse themes and media, showcasing emerging, mid-career and established artists whose works inform, stimulate and challenge. Onespace welcomes you to engage with the artists and artworks we exhibit.

Onespace is uniquely located adjacent to Maiwar (Brisbane river) beneath the Spice Apartments near the Go Between Bridge in South Brisbane. We are proudly surrounded by the dynamic buzz of the Queensland cultural precinct that is significant to this area of Brisbane.

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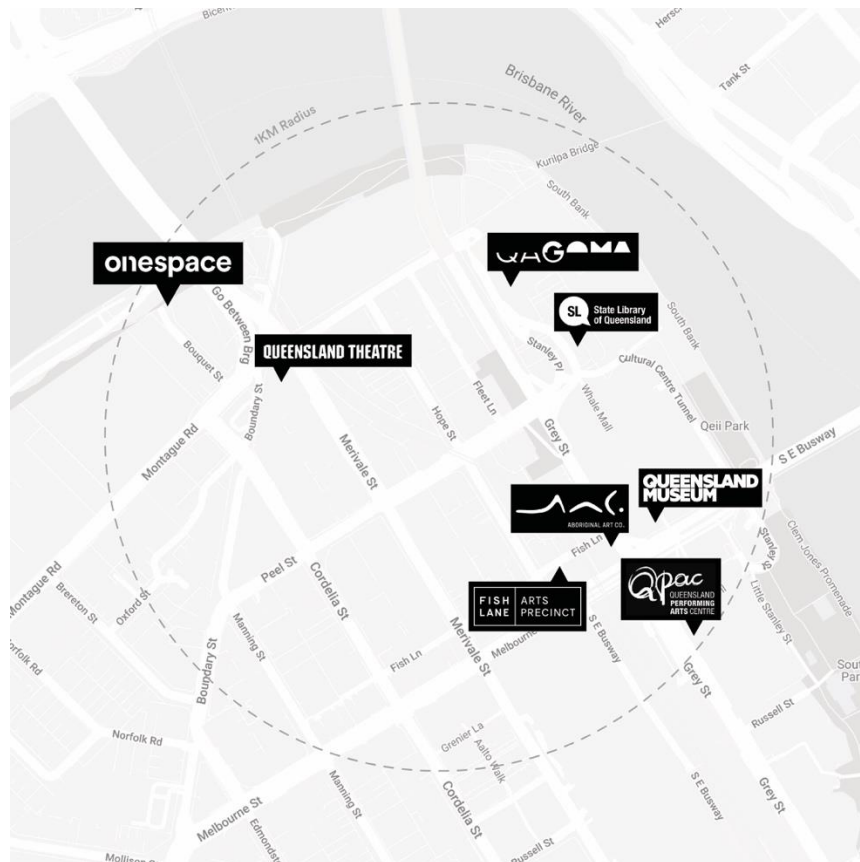
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Onespace Gallery Hours:

Wednesday to Friday 10am – 5pm, Saturday 12pm – 5pm

25A Bouquet Street, South Brisbane Q 4101 Australia



Onespace acknowledges the traditional custodians of Country throughout Australia and their continuing connection to the land, waters, culture and community. We pay our respects to elders past and present.