



The Boomalli Ten

Presented by Boomalli Aboriginal Artists Co-operative

Curated by Djon Mundine OAM.

Supported by the Boomalli Board, curatorial and administration team.

Friday 3rd November 2017 - Sunday 28th January 2018

Michael Riley

Bronwyn Bancroft

Euphemia Bostock

Arone Meeks

Fiona Foley

Brenda L. Croft

Jeffrey Samuels

Tracey Moffatt

Avril Quail

Fern Martins

Reproduced courtesy of the photographer, Margaret Olah

Foreword

On behalf of the current Board of Boomalli Aboriginal Artists Co-operative I write this small note of reflection.

I was 50 when we founded this Co-operative. 30 years later, I am pleased to see this tribute exhibition being held at the Co-operative. I wish everyone the very best not only for this Anniversary Exhibition but also I know that more people will become aware of the contribution that we have all made.

I am thrilled to see this event happen. I also want to acknowledge Michael Riley as he was integral to the setting up of Boomalli.

It is with heartfelt appreciation that I acknowledge all the Artists who have contributed to this show.

It would be remiss of me not to acknowledge Bronwyn Bancroft's contribution for the last nine years as a volunteer strategist and curator. Her dedication to the Co-operative has been enormous to say the least. Thank you Bron.

Euphemia Bostock

Chairperson

Boomalli Thanks

It's been three decades since 1987, and Boomalli Aboriginal Artists Co-operative is celebrating its 30th year Anniversary in 2017 at the Flood Street premises, curated by Djon Mundine and supported by our skilled administration and curatorial team, including Kyra Kum-Sing, Kathryn Miller, Laura Jones and Bronwyn Bancroft.

As with any journey in the arts, there have been incredible highs and lows. We have persisted at every turn to stay open for our Artists and the wider community.

We are euphoric that this exhibition of the Founding Members can be held.

The Co-operative has survived threatened closure, potential eviction and fluctuations in popularity. But we have survived.

We were a group of Ten Artists who wanted to see change, who embraced change and worked hard for it.

It is important to acknowledge Gary Foley (Aboriginal Arts Board Director 1983-1986) and Uncle Chicka Dixon (Chairperson Aboriginal Arts Board) who after meeting with Michael Riley, secured rental for 18 Meagher Street, Chippendale, which was the original birthplace of Boomalli.

There are many volunteers who have assisted us over the years, too many to name and you know who you are, this includes our Board members. We acknowledge your efforts and spirit of generosity.

As a grass roots organization, Boomalli would like to acknowledge funding support from the ATSI Board of the Australia Council for the Arts for providing us with 11 times our normal budget to produce this exhibition.

Thank you to Create NSW for their ongoing support and Annual Program Funding.

I would also like to acknowledge Allens Law Firm for securing the Flood St premises, Boomalli's permanent home and Indigenous Land Corporation for assisting us with renovating the building.

Congratulations Boomalli. May we not just survive but thrive into the future.

Bronwyn Bancroft



To Strike – To Leave My Mark

Djon Mundine
OAM

This year all Aboriginal artists should celebrate the actions of the 'Boomalli Ten' who were fired to create a 'new Aboriginal art' in 1987. They were; Bronwyn Bancroft, Euphemia Bostock, Brenda L. Croft, Fiona Foley, Fernanda Martins, Arone Raymond Meeks, Tracey Moffatt, Avril Quail, Michael Riley, and Jeffrey Samuels. Their success was really the result of twenty years of Aboriginal political action.

The Academy Award winning film of the year in 1967 was; "Guess Who's Coming to Dinner", where a handsome, urbane, sophisticated African-American man confronts a 'socially sleeping' conservative 'white' middle-class family in dating their daughter. In Australia, this year, 2017, is the 50th anniversary of a pivotal moment in Australian race relations in 1967, when Australians voted 93% in favour of Aboriginal people being counted as human beings in the national census, and, that dealings with Australia's original, and still, owners of the land, were seen, as a national issue. As such the Commonwealth government could make laws regarding Aboriginal people that could override those laws of the states where deemed necessary.

In 1968, the cult classic film; 'Night of the Living Dead',

was released. Against the societal fashion of the day, and all odds in this art-form, an African-American is the hero in the script, in fighting off mobs of zombie-like 'white' Americans, and protecting another group of largely 'stupid' 'white American' refugees. He is shot dead by stereotype racist police rescue forces, when he emerges with relief from hiding to greet them.

Very little actually happened in Australia after the 1967 Referendum in regard to Aboriginal affairs, but a scholarship program was started by the Whitlam national government to provide financial support to allow Aboriginal students to remain in school, and enter university and other higher educational institutions, to obtain a profession and better their lives. A system of private financial supports had existed until then – I finished my High School Certificate on one of those in 1968. Initially you were encouraged to obtain a 'real' trade of sorts and certainly not to be an artist, I trained to be an accountant, or possibly an economist, self-taught artist Lin Onus trained as a panel beater. Filmmaker photographer, Boomalli founding member, Michael Riley apprenticed as a carpenter before attending a photography course at University of Sydney's Tin

Sheds studios. Boomalli Ten artist Avril Quail, trained as an office worker cum secretary before entering Sydney College of Arts. Fiona Foley finished a Dip.Ed at Sydney Teacher's College to possibly become a teacher, as well as an artist.

A large body of young Aboriginal people now existed from the scholarships in educational institutions in the 1970s-80s; a 'next generation' of Aboriginal youth, who, disappointed and disgusted with the inaction by 'white' Australia following the Referendum, decided to take up action ourselves. This year, 2017, is also the 30th anniversary of the establishing of Boomalli Aboriginal Artists Co-operative by ten people who were in a sense recipients of this educational program. After appearing in the Koori Art 84 exhibition at Sydney's Artspace in 1984, a number, of these younger artists, after visiting Northern Territory Aboriginal art co-operatives as part of their western art school courses, decided to begin their own 'urban' Aboriginal artist co-operative. Their art used western art school technologies, concepts and metaphors to tell their same but different Aboriginal history and personal struggle and triumphs. They were Aboriginal, and they were artists, and would not be

denied their recognition, voice or place in history. It was a right move for the right time in history, the 1980s being a time for many such alternate communities and group co-operatives in Australia. It was also the time where the term post-colonial gained currency – with the breaking up of colonial empires in large parts of the world, non-European people were no longer colonial subjects, and no longer western stereotypes. Although Australia took a long time to realise, this included Aboriginal people. It is ten of these who took action that we honour here – Bronwyn Bancroft, Euphemia Bostock, Brenda L. Croft, Fiona Foley, Fernanda Martins, Arone Raymond Meeks, Tracey Moffatt, Avril Quail, Michael Riley, Jeffrey Samuels. It was the result of twenty years of political action. Largely female in number, gay, communal, and widely open to ideas, new artists, and a pan Aboriginal movement.

The group is interesting from several angles in that the group was across all genders, ages, and training. – all had or were attending western art courses or art schools, most members were women (7-10), almost half were refugees from Joh Bjelke-Peterson's Queensland (4-10), the other half were from New South Wales, most weren't

teenagers anymore, and the two 'gay' men members had been 'out', proud and well known nearly all their lives.

I really, first met several of this group who were in the Koori Art 84 exhibition at Sydney's Artspace in 1984. I was living and working as an Art & Craft Advisor in central Arnhem Land then and had just curated an exhibition of the Art Gallery of NSW's bark painting collection in 1983. Following the Koori Art 84 show, several artists started to correspond with me and wanted to visit. They were travelling to the Tiwi Islands as part of their western style art courses to be exposed to 'real' Aboriginal art. About half of the ten visited and worked and formed relationships with Ramingining or Maningrida communities.

At least half of the original ten soon moved on to commercial galleries and commercial success, but they had left their mark in establishing the Co-operative that has influenced and provided openings for so many Aboriginal artists. This year Founding Member Tracey Moffatt represented Australia at the Venice Biennale. This year we honour her and the rest of the ten for their struggle and triumph.

Michael Riley



Both: **Untitled**, 2000/2005

From the series **cloud**
Chromogenic Pigment Print
image size: 110 x 155 cm

Images courtesy of The Michael Riley Foundation and The Commercial, Sydney.

cloud (2000) is a photographic series representing opposing values of Aboriginality, Christianity and pastoralism. *Poison* (1991) is a film about the lives of Aboriginal teenagers brought to ruin by drugs. Both works won Riley prestigious international awards.

Michael Riley (1960-2004) was a Wiradjuri/Kamilaroi photographer and filmmaker who was an active, deeply-committed member of Boomalli from its beginning until he died. Michael was part of an important generation of Aboriginal artists who changed history through the advent of strong, positive voices speaking for themselves on their own terms against the prejudice of non-Indigenous Australia. In doing so he created images which are now icons of Australian contemporary art. Riley's body of photographic work is diverse. It includes traditional portraiture, social documentary, photo-collage as well as a number of major conceptual/allegorical series. The subtlety and intelligence of Riley's voice, his sense of beauty and the hypnotic lucidity of his imagery is unmistakable amidst this diversity. Parallel to his photographic work, Riley produced a number of

conceptual and documentary films and videos. He received international acclaim for both his photographic and moving image work.

In 2006, the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra hosted a posthumous retrospective of Riley's work, *Michael Riley: sights unseen*, curated by Brenda L. Croft, which travelled to a number of venues. The Musée du quai Branly, Paris, commissioned a large-scale permanent installation of Riley's *cloud* series in 2006, for the Australian Indigenous Art Commission curated by Brenda L. Croft and Hetti Perkins for the Australian Government.

The Estate of Michael Riley is represented by The Commercial, Redfern, in association with The Michael Riley Foundation. The Trustees of the Michael Riley Foundation are Hetti Perkins, Anthony 'Ace' Bourke and the Hon. Linda Burney MP.

"The Michael Riley Foundation would like to thank The Art Gallery of New South Wales for facilitating the loan of the *cloud* photographs for the exhibition."

Bronwyn Bancroft



Photography by Sharon Hickey



Lionsville Livin

Acrylic on Canvas
300 x 200 cm

Photography by Sharon Hickey

The genesis for this painting was almost 6 years ago. I have been frustrated by knowing it was not completed. I was prompted to finish the work as a tribute to my uncle, Pat Bancroft, and all our family.

I have constantly been amazed by the stories of my family, their tenacity, endeavor, love and empathy.

To create pictorial representations that illuminate my place in the world, cultivated by my family in the land of my ancestors is an honour.

This painting is about my home/studio at Lionsville, Northern New South Wales.

The Pear Tree is represented from a bird's eye view, with the branches stretching across the bank to sit over the Washpool Creek.

Best yarnning spot under the Pear Tree, Best swimming spot in the Washpool.

Bronwyn Bancroft is a Djanbun clan member of the Bundjalung Nation. In a career spanning over three decades, Bronwyn has exhibited continuously in Australia and internationally. Some collections that have acquired her work are Newark Museum USA, Prime Minister of Turkey, the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, National Gallery of Australia, the State Library of New South Wales and Parliament of Australia Art Collection.

Bronwyn has a diverse artistic practice including public art commissions and she has authored and/or illustrated 40 children's books. She was shortlisted for the Prime Minister's Literary Award for Children's Fiction for her book *Why I Love Australia* and in the same year received the Dromkeen Medal for her contribution to Australian Literature.

Bronwyn currently holds Board positions with Australian Indigenous Mentoring Experience (AIME), Commonwealth Bank RAP Committee, Arts Law, and Copyright Agency.

Bronwyn is constantly involved in activism for New South Wales Aboriginal Artists, particularly in her role at Boomalli Aboriginal Artists Co-operative. Bronwyn has a Diploma of Visual Arts; two Masters degrees from the University of Sydney, one in Studio Practice and the other in Visual Art. She is currently a Doctoral candidate at the University of Sydney.

Euphemia Bostock



Photography by Sharon Hickey

Possum Skin, 1990

Screenprint on Cotton

When I attended Sydney College of the Arts I had an old photograph of a possum skin I had seen at the Melbourne Museum. I said to George Hardwick, who was my teacher at the time, I'd love to learn how to do this. He said to do my own version of the possum skin but do it big and bold.



Euphemia Bostock is a proud Munanjali-Bundjalung Woman and Elder.

Affectionately known as 'Phemie', she has worked across many mediums including textile, printmaking, design and sculpture from the early 1960's.

Her textiles combine traditional and historical imagery, often referred to by Phemie as her 'cultural memory'. These images are transferred to silk and utilise contemporary textile technology. The 'Possum Skin'

textile was collected by the National Gallery of Australia in 1988 and was exhibited in the New Indigenous Gallery, which opened in 2011.

Phemie's ceramics are created in a practical methodology, using shape and form to develop her unique pieces. Phemie cites Thancoupie as an enduring inspiration. Phemie was taught her skills in ceramics from The St. George Pottery Co-operative and Annie Coroneos.

As a sculptor, Phemie has collaborated with sculptor, Ms Jan Shaw who was initially her teacher at the Sculpture Society 40 years ago. Their work "The Warawara Friendship Stone" was

commissioned by Macquarie University for the Sculpture Garden.

Phemie has exhibited extensively in Australia and internationally. Phemie is currently the chairperson at Boomalli and is continuing to create inspiring works. Her long history of creating images ranges from travelling to Paris in 1987, as a textile and fashion designer to having her work reproduced by Australia Post in 1999 for the Design Australian Stamp Series.

Arone Meeks



Spirit Ark

1/15 Oil Based Ink on Arches Paper
(printed by Editions Tremblay)
109 x 167 cm

Photography by Sharon Hickey



Arone Raymond Meeks was born in Laura in Far North Queensland, his tribal area.

He has had both a traditional and formal education, having been taught by his grandfather and other relatives before going to study at the City Art Institute in Sydney. He later returned to Queensland to study with various tribal elders, including those of the Lardil people of Mornington Island.

Meeks values this combination of training and experience; his work employs both traditional images and themes arising out of his concern with the issue of land rights. A Founding Member of the Boomalli Aboriginal Artists Co-operative, he won an Australia Council fellowship to study in Paris in 1989 and went on to exhibit throughout Europe and North and South America.

Arone began printmaking in 1982 in collaboration with printmaker Theo Tremblay.

His work was also influenced by his participation in a cultural exchange to Santa Fe, USA, during the 1990s. He believes that: "Printmaking has given me another medium of creativity to explore. The directness and fluid qualities have made it possible to introduce a freshness and immediacy to my work. I began to create a new language of symbols through this process". Arone has a very keen eye for graphic detail and always works with several possibilities as he enters an intellectual discourse with the work.

He is well known for his illustrations for children's books, including 'When the World Was New', 'This Is Still Rainbow Snake Country' and 'The Pheasant and Kingfisher'. He wrote and illustrated 'Enora and the Black Crane' which won the 1992 UNICEF- Ezra Jack Keats Award for International Excellence in Children's Book Illustration.

Fiona Foley



Photography by Mick Richards



HHH #3, 2004

Ultrachrome Print on Paper
100 x 76 cm Edition 15

In the guise of an anthropological portrait, this *HHH* (Hedonistic Honky Hater) turns Ku Klux Klan glorification on its head.

One of Australia's most significant visual artists, Fiona Foley has a heroic ability to communicate powerful ideas and concepts through elegant, understated and sometimes humorous artistic expressions. Born in 1964, Fiona has lived in Sydney, Brisbane and Hervey Bay but now resides and works in Lismore in northern NSW. In her final year at Sydney's College of Fine Arts, Fiona's sculpture *Annihilation of the Blacks* 1986 was acquired by the National Museum of Australia. Since then, her works have been regularly collected by art museums around Australia and the world.

Fiona has exhibited worldwide since her early days as a Founding Member of Boomalli, the ground breaking co-operative that embraced and promoted the first generation of significant urban based Aboriginal Artists. She has developed numerous major public artwork commissions

and won a number of significant awards. Her works are held by the British Museum, National Gallery of Australia, National Museum of Australia, Australian National Maritime Museum, most state galleries, and numerous regional and university gallery collections.

As a curator, scholar, writer and artist, Fiona is deeply engaged with histories of interaction between Australia's multifarious Indigenous cultures, particularly that of her own Badtjala clan, and those of transplanted European and Asian settlers. Her research and resulting artworks explore lesser-known histories about conflict between Indigenous Australians and colonial latecomers, exposing them to the attention of a wider audience. She sees herself as an educator and 'guide' for others through events, attitudes and histories that are often unpleasant and difficult to understand.

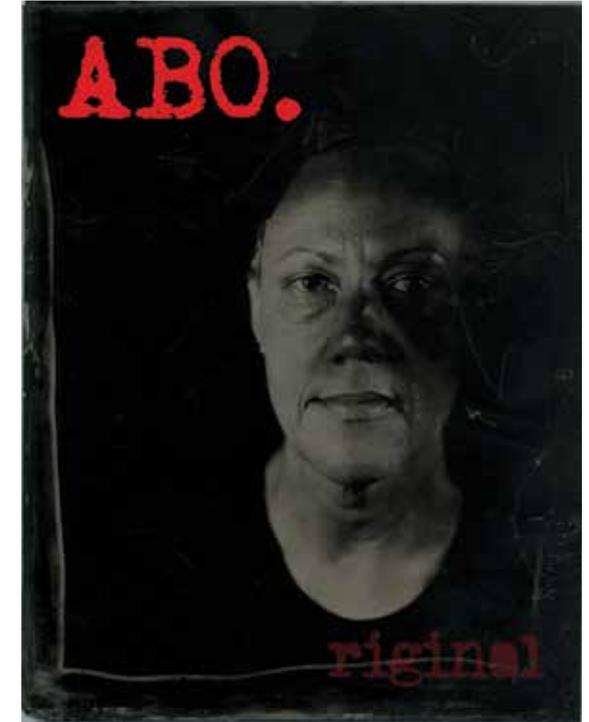
Brenda L. Croft



ABO.riginal, 2016

From the series *blood/type*
Pigment Print
110.0 x 90.5cm

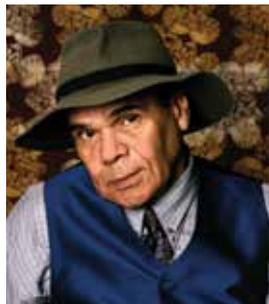
Croft's work features images of the artist drawn from original wet collodian plates where she appropriates descriptors used for her father and others in her immediate and extended family – *full-blood, half-blood, half-caste, quarter-caste, quadroon, ABO*. Her image challenges such debasing classifications used to subjugate Indigenous people now, as in the past, whilst also highlighting there is no single Indigenous way of being.



Brenda L. Croft is from the Gurindji/Malngin/Mudburra peoples from the Victoria River region of the Northern Territory of Australia, and Anglo-Australian/German/Irish/Chinese heritage. She has been involved in the Indigenous and broader contemporary arts and cultural sectors for three decades as an artist, arts administrator, curator, academic and consultant. Brenda's artistic practice encompasses critical performative Indigenous auto-ethnography, representation and cultural identity, creative

narratives, installation, multi-media and multi-platform work, often drawn from personal and public archives and memory. Brenda's work is represented in major public collections in Australia, international public collections and private collections. Brenda is an Adjunct Research Fellow with the National Institute for Experimental Arts, UNSW Art & Design, where she has been undertaking doctoral research. Since 2017 Brenda has been based in Canberra where she works independently as an artist, curator and researcher.

Jeffrey Samuels



Photography by Sharon Hickey

A changing continent, 1984

Oil on Hardboard
188.8 x 126.0 x 2.4 cm
Image and artwork loan courtesy of
Art Gallery of New South Wales

Arts and culture has always invigorated all my senses: Hearing, sight, taste and touch at a very early age and it still uplifts my spirit and soul with healing, happiness, family and identity.

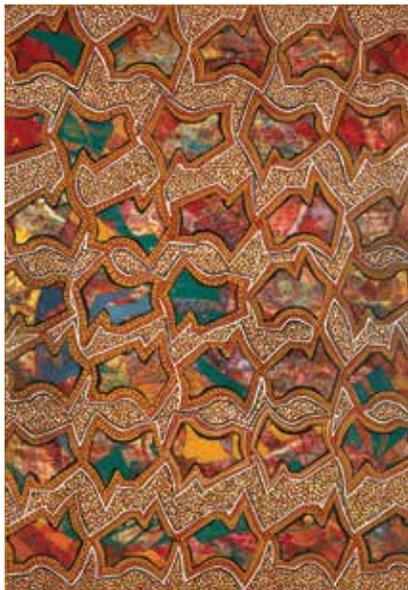
I define myself as an Aboriginal contemporary artist creating in an urban environment. This however does not exclude my art making as 'genuine' Aboriginal Art. It comes from my interest and involvement since childhood, and later through study at art school and from actively participating in the Aboriginal and broader contemporary Australian art scenes through exhibiting. This made me want to correct assumptions and stereotypes about Aboriginal Art that

relegated Koori artists to the periphery of Australian art in the mainstream discourse regarding Australian Aboriginal art.

I create images that relate to Koori social and political issues, the natural and built environment that are based on my connection to community and the attitudes and assumptions

of the wider Australian society. Through artistic training and artistic practice I have been able to present my individuality as an Aboriginal and Australian artist.

Making contact with the Black Theatre in 1975 I came in touch with Koori artists and young Aboriginal activists involved with theatre, poetry, music, language, and the social commentary of the day (e.g., Gary Foley, Marcia Langton, Kevin Gilbert, Bob Maza, Bob Merritt, Gerry Bostock, Euphemia Bostock, Lester Bostock, Maureen Watson and Tiger Bayles etc.). I felt I was no longer isolated because other Aboriginal artistic and educated people seemed to have the same attitudes that I



had: they were challenging and questioning the perceptions and stereotypical attitudes non-Aboriginal people held about Aboriginal people. In 1984 I studied traditional art practice and Aboriginal culture under the then great Lardil artist of Mornington Island Mr. Lindsey Roughsey.

Art is critically important to the cultural wellbeing of any society and where art confronts, as Koori art often does, it can lead people to dialogue. Art is critical to the cultural identity and wellbeing of Australians, as much as to the cultural identity and wellbeing of Koori people.

Special thanks to Nigel Parbury for his patience and his mastery of words and sentences.

Tracey Moffatt



Photography by Kate Ballis

NICE COLOURED GIRLS, 1987

This seventeen-minute film (16 mm) remains one of Moffatt's strongest statements about the society she grew up in. The mood is "cheeky" and challenging as she unsettles long held assumptions about relationships between indigenous and non-indigenous Australians. Three young Aboriginal women (Gayle Mabo, Cheryl Pitt, Janelle Court), all dressed up, start out on an evening out on Darlinghurst Rd. (The Strip), Kings Cross, Sydney.



Tracey Moffatt represented Australia at the 57th International Art Exhibition, Venice Biennale 2017 with her solo exhibition *MY HORIZON*, curated by Natalie King. Moffatt has exhibited in numerous national and international art exhibitions and film festivals for three decades. In 2012, a retrospective programme of her films was held at the Museum of Modern Art, New York. Moffatt first gained significant critical acclaim when her short film, *Night Cries*, was selected for official competition at the 1990 Cannes Film Festival. Her first feature film, *beDevil*, was also selected for Cannes in 1993. Moffatt was selected for the international section of the 1997 Venice Biennale (curated by Germano Celant) and has also featured in the Biennales of Sydney, Sao Paulo (1998) and Gwangju (1995). She held a major exhibition at the Dia Center for the Arts in New

York in 1997-98 and in 2003, a large retrospective exhibition of her work was held at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney which also travelled to the Hasselblad Museum in Sweden. In 2007, her photographic series, *Scarred For Life*, was exhibited at the Guggenheim Museum and her video, *LOVE*, at the Brooklyn Museum in New York. The same year, she was awarded the prestigious Infinity Award for art photography, selected by an International panel at the International Center of Photography in New York. Tracey Moffatt has been represented by Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery since 1998.

Avril Quail



Avril QUAIL's Trespassers Keep Out poster, 1982

Colour Screen Print on Paper
49 x 73 cm

Photography by Sharon Hickey

Designed and printed under the tutelage of Pam Debenham and Leonie Lane of the Lucifol Poster Collective at Sydney University.

Avril Quail is a descendant of the Quandamooka peoples of the Moreton Bay islands region in Brisbane, Queensland. She is a graduate of the Sydney College of the Arts with a long-term career in the arts as an artist and curator. In 1987 she was awarded a Visual Arts Fellowship by the Australia Council for the Arts and traveled to the Northern Territory taking part in arts workshops at the Raminginning Arts Crafts centre. She was directly involved in establishing Boomalli Aboriginal Artists Co-operative becoming its chairperson in 1989. As a curator she has held significant positions with the National Gallery of Australia and the Queensland Art Gallery. Of note is her work with the Queensland Indigenous Arts Marketing and Export Agency in the Department of State Development and Trade which raised the profile of

Queensland Indigenous arts in national and international markets. Avril was Artistic Director of the 2011 and 2012 Cairns Indigenous Art Fairs and in 2013 joined Arts Queensland working in development and policy on specific programs including the Backing Indigenous Arts program. She has served on many committees including as a Member of the Board of Trustees, Queensland Art Gallery/Gallery of Modern Art Brisbane; the National Cultural Heritage Committee; Indigenous Reference Committee, Museum of Contemporary Art. Avril is Festival Curator of the Quandamooka Festival – a three-month arts and cultural festival celebrating culture, country and people of the Quandamooka coast.

Fern Martins



Palm Buds

Lead Pencil on Canson Paper
51 x 93 cm

As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and make it bud and flourish, so that it yields seeds for the sower and bread for the eater, (Isaiah 55:10, 11) On loan from Dianna Rea.

These drawings are from the book "Just Drawings" which documents 5 different series of prophetic works inspired by the Scriptures.

In 1992 my Art practice went through a radical change in inspiration by hitting rock bottom emotionally, physically and mentally. During this time I experienced for the first time God's Love through the Holy Spirit. I sought council about my experience with Pastor Rex Morgan an Elder who was a Founding Member of the Awabakal Medical Service and my relation. Pastor Rex led me

in prayer to receive Jesus Christ as my Saviour and disciple me through that time. Since then and today my Art practice and inspiration is motivated by my following the path of Jesus.



From left to right: Bronwyn Bancroft, Tracey Moffatt, Arone Meeks, Brenda L. Croft, Avril Quail, Fern Martins, Fiona Foley, Euphemia Bostock, Jeffrey Samuels and Joyce Wright at the 25th Anniversary Boomalli Exhibition "Ripple Effect", November 2012, curated by Keith Munro. Photography by Shane Rozario.