

# The Country Cries for Truth

D R B R O N W Y N B A N C R O F T



## Acknowledgment of Country

The State Library of New South Wales acknowledges the Gadigal people, the First Peoples and custodians of the land on which the Library stands and whose skies and waters surround us. We offer our respects to Elders past and present and extend that respect to other First Nations people.

---

This publication accompanies the free exhibition *The Country Cries for Truth: Dr Bronwyn Bancroft* at the State Library of NSW from 1 June 2024 to 1 June 2025.

1 Shakespeare Place  
Sydney NSW 2000 Australia  
Telephone +61 2 9273 1414  
[www.sl.nsw.gov.au](http://www.sl.nsw.gov.au)  
@statelibrarynsw

ISBN: 978-1-925831-90-0 (print)  
ISBN: 978-1-925831-91-7 (online)

E&D-6072-5/2024  
Print run: 10,000  
Printed by SEED Print

Artwork © Dr Bronwyn Bancroft

### Exhibition team

Dr Bronwyn Bancroft  
Indigenous engagement:  
Damien Webb & Cherokee Lord  
Creative producer: Emily Mierisch  
Exhibition designer: Lisa Morey  
Graphic designer: Rosie Handley  
Editor: Cathy Hammer  
Registrar: Caroline Lorentz  
Conservation team: Cathryn Bartley  
& Jochen Letsch

All photographs by Digitisation & Imaging, State Library of NSW.



STATE LIBRARY®  
NEW SOUTH WALES

# The Country Cries for Truth

D R B R O N W Y N B A N C R O F T



Jingi wala

(hello and welcome)

Please be aware that this exhibition talks about colonisation, loss and the destruction of Bundjalung Country. The names and faces of people who are now deceased are used in text, old photographs and audio.



# The Country Cries for Truth

Dr Bronwyn Bancroft, distinguished Bundjalung artist, book author and illustrator, mother and truth-telling warrior from the Northern Rivers of New South Wales, has a masterly approach to her works, which will take you through a passage of curiosity and reflection. Allow yourself to be gifted a new lens into our shared history through Dr Bancroft's artistic practices — where Country was once captured being decimated, Bronwyn warmly invites you to see it being brought back to life through her use of colour, defining lines and added imagery.

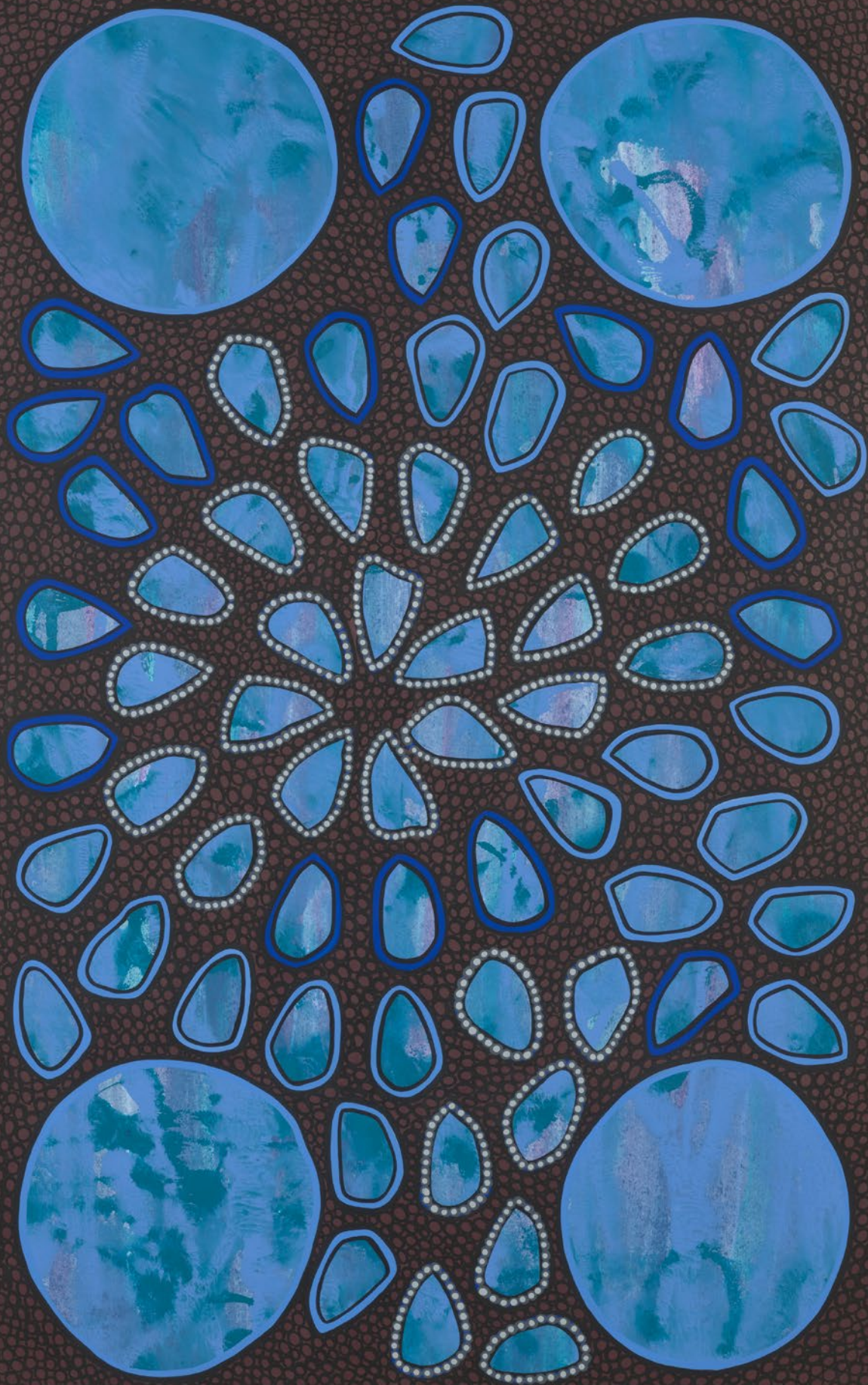
In 2021–22 Dr Bancroft completed a series of works as part of the inaugural NSW First Nations Creative Fellowship at the State Library of NSW. These works contain enlivened images of family, sacred belongings from Country and a sequence of mixed-media artworks that are a direct response to photographs of Solferino and Lionsville (1872–73) from the Library's JW Lindt collection.

Through her techniques of painting onto family photographs, arresting stencilled river-stone art, and intentional sprinkles of colour and patterning onto colonial historical images, Dr Bancroft's work gracefully highlights the attempted erasure of Country. At the same time, the works reclaim her ancestral lands through shadowing sentinel trees and watchful figures of mob, reminding the viewer that her people are still ever-present and living.

*The Country Cries for Truth* is a celebration of Dr Bancroft's family and their ongoing connection to Bundjalung Country. This exhibition calls for us to pause and consider the devastation of colonisation for Aboriginal people, and to remember the complex and painful legacies of this history that still live in Country. In Bronwyn's own words:

I think *The Country Cries for Truth* title is actually interconnected with the struggle of Aboriginal people across this country and the tears are real. You know, the tears of pain, the tears of anguish, the tears of displacement, the tears of togetherness, the tears of triumph, there can be happy tears and there can be sad tears.

**Cherokee Lord (Curator)**  
**Indigenous Engagement, State Library of NSW**



# Inspired by my Country & kin

My artistic practice is inspired by my Country in the Bundjalung Nation and my spiritual connection to my ancestors.

I have dedicated my life to exploring and recording my family and their history, while also weaving into this my own story as a Bundjalung woman, mother, and artist. When I commenced my first degree at the Canberra School of Art in 1977 — straight from high school — I was able to rephotograph many of my family's historic photographs, all taken by my grandfather Arthur Bancroft with a Brownie box camera.

I have continued to this day, reclaiming images, and incorporating those images into my artistic practice. This journey is deeply personal and creating work around my family and our resilience is paramount to my existence and my extended family as Bundjalung people.

My Uncle Pat Bancroft passed away in 2014 at the age of 94. He bequeathed me his collection of axes, pocketknives, crystals, and calcite samples. Some of these stones are thousands of years old and would have been made by family. Uncle Pat's knowledge of Bundjalung Country was phenomenal and it was an absolute joy and privilege to learn from him.

I am in awe of my history, and the fact that my family have lived in the same spot since colonisation is to be admired.

In 2021 and 2022, I undertook the inaugural NSW First Nations Creative Fellowship at the State Library of NSW (funded by Create NSW) during the COVID-19 pandemic. I relied on the invaluable support of the Library's Indigenous Engagement team, who sent me digital copies of historical journals, maps and photographs relating to my research, and who I corresponded with over countless emails and Zoom meetings. I produced a series of mixed-media artworks as a direct response to the historical material and these are on display as part of this exhibition.

To be able to paint on an image captured in time like this has been an incredible experience. The reclamation of these photographs brings my family history and bloodline into other people's lives. It provides the opportunity to share a tiny glimpse of intertwined lives brought together by time and place.

Creating an exhibition based on my family and Bundjalung Country is an honour, and I believe that many conversations will ensue after visitors to this exhibition view a different perspective of this country's history — a snapshot of one family's existence, resistance and survival.

**Dr Bronwyn Bancroft**

*From the Hands of My Ancestors 6, 2015*



*Long Time Passing*, 2021-24, Bancroft family photographs, c 1940s

'I've created the trees as sentinels ... viewing the destruction ... the slaughter .... as witnesses to the history of this Country.'

— **Dr Bronwyn Bancroft**



*Ngullingah Jugun Cries for Truth 4*, 2023-24, scene near Lionsville, c 1872





*Ngullingah Jugun Cries for Truth 3, 2023–24, scene near Lionsville, c 1872*

### ***Ngullingah Jugun Cries for Truth series***

Artworks in this series use photographs of Solferino and Lionsville from the JW Lindt collection at the State Library of NSW.

JW Lindt (1845–1926) was a landscape and ethnographic photographer whose works feature in many libraries, museums and galleries around the world. He is most widely known for a series of staged ethnographic portraits taken in the 1870s of people from the Clarence River area. These were among the most widely shared photographs of Aboriginal people in the 19th century but were not reclaimed and identified by Community until the early 2010s.



*Ngullingah Jugun Cries for Truth 1, 2023-24,  
Digger's Camp, Lionville, c 1872*





‘One of the things I wanted to do was illuminate the family struggle. And in that, there’s also the struggle for Country and recognition. I think they’re inextricably linked. You can’t have family without community, community is Country, and therefore it’s always worth defending ...’

— **Dr Bronwyn Bancroft**



*Family 2, 2023–24, Bancroft family photographs, c 1940s*



One of Nan Annie's postcards, c 1900s



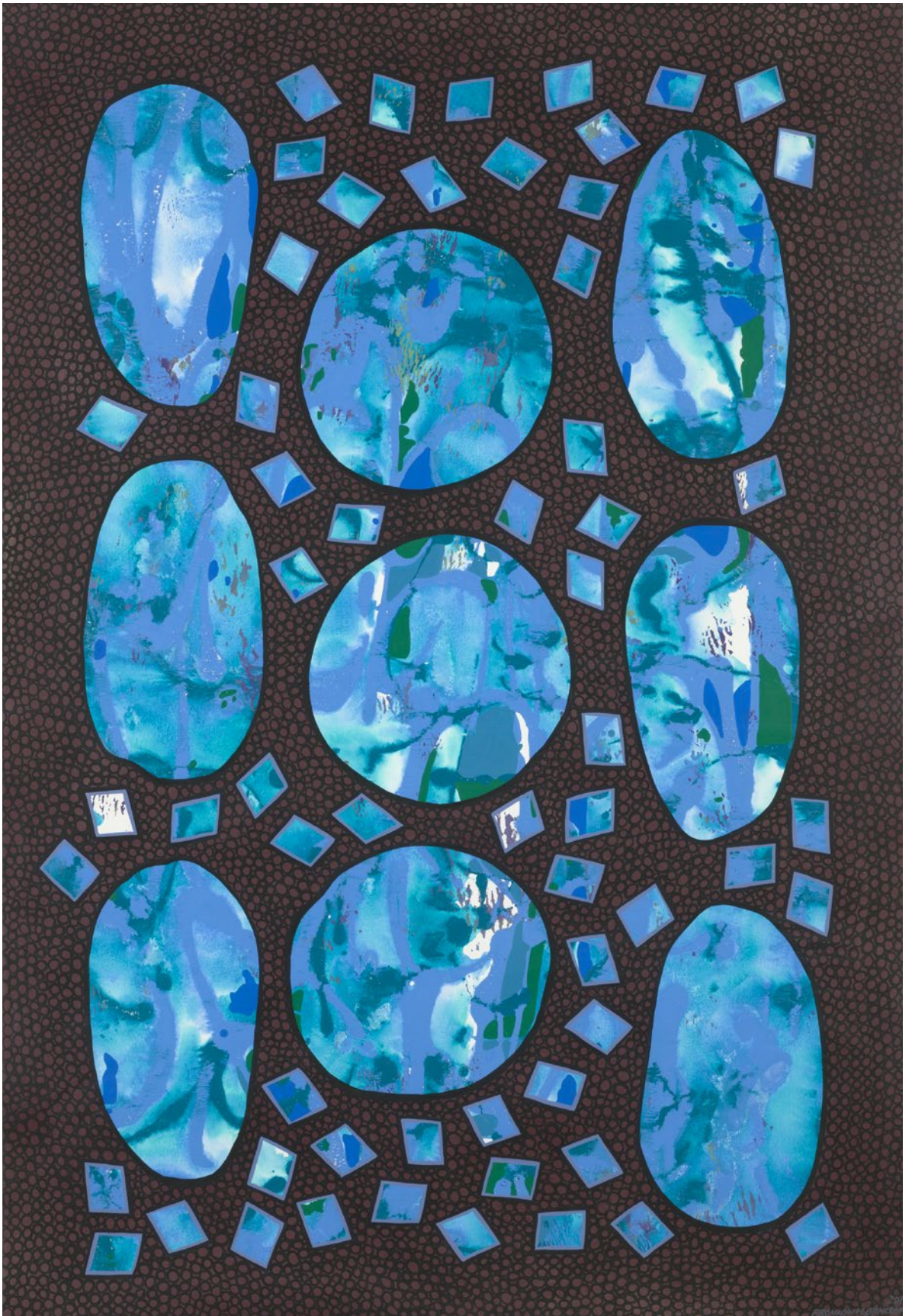
One of Nan Annie's postcards, c 1900s



Bush crystals

'Remnants remain of our old people's ways. These rocks are not just rocks but they are rocks who knew our old people intimately ... these are the rocks our ancestors held. What great magic there is in that.'

— Ella Bancroft (daughter)



*From the Hands of My Ancestors 1, 2015*

# Item list

All exhibition items are copyright and courtesy of the artist, Dr Bronwyn Bancroft.

Artworks titled *Ngullingah Jugun Cries for Truth* use State Library of NSW collection photographs of Solferino and Lionsville, 1872-73, by JW Lindt, PXA 1128. These works were created as part of the NSW First Nations Creative Fellowship that Dr Bancroft completed in 2024.



**Family 2, 2023-24**  
Bancroft family photographs, c 1940s mixed media and photography



**Resilience 2, 1995**  
c 1900-1950s hand-painted family photographs framed in laundry doors from grandparents' Lionsville home



**Christmas Dinner on the Verandah, 2023-24**  
Bancroft family photographs, c 1950s mixed media and photography



**Resilience 5, 1995**  
c 1900-1950s hand-painted family photographs framed in laundry doors from grandparents' Lionsville home



**Resilience 7, 1995**  
c 1900-1950s hand-painted family photographs framed in laundry doors from grandparents' Lionsville home



**Resilience 4, 1995**  
c 1900-1950s hand-painted family photographs framed in laundry doors from grandparents' Lionsville home



**Resilience 6, 1995**  
c 1900-1950s hand-painted family photographs framed in laundry doors from grandparents' Lionsville home



**Long Time Passing, 2021-24**  
Bancroft family photographs, c 1940s mixed media and photography



**Black Hands Marry, 2010-24**  
Bancroft family photographs, c 1940s mixed media and photography



**Resilience 3, 1995**  
c 1900-1950s hand-painted family photographs framed in laundry doors from grandparents' Lionsville home



**Family 1, 2023-24**  
Bancroft family photographs, c 1940s mixed media and photography



**Resilience 1, 1995**  
c 1900-1950s hand-painted family photographs framed in laundry doors from grandparents' Lionsville home



**Uncle Pat's  
pocketknife and  
rock collection**



**Gaol hatch,  
c 1860-1880s**



**Family 3, 2023-24**  
Bancroft family  
photographs, c 1930s  
mixed media and  
photography



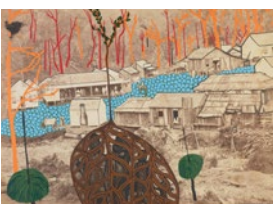
**Ngullingah Jugun  
Cries for Truth 1,  
2023-24**  
Digger's Camp,  
Lionsville, c 1872  
mixed media and  
photography



**Ngullingah Jugun  
Cries for Truth 4,  
2023-24**  
Scene near Lionsville,  
c 1872  
mixed media and  
photography



**Ngullingah Jugun  
Cries for Truth 7,  
2023-24**  
Solferino township,  
c 1873  
mixed media and  
photography



**Ngullingah Jugun  
Cries for Truth 5,  
2023-24**  
Solferino township,  
c 1873  
mixed media and  
photography



**Ngullingah Jugun  
Cries for Truth 6,  
2023-24**  
Solferino township,  
c 1873  
mixed media and  
photography



**Ngullingah Jugun  
Cries for Truth 3,  
2023-24**  
Scene near Lionsville,  
c 1872  
mixed media and  
photography



**Ngullingah Jugun  
Cries for Truth 2,  
2023-24**  
Solferino township,  
c 1873  
mixed media and  
photography



**Uncle Pat's bush  
crystal collection**

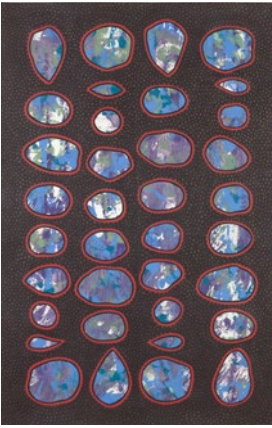


**Uncle Pat's stone axe  
collection**



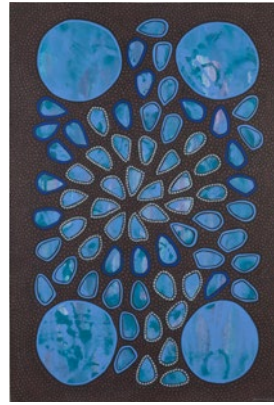
**From the Hands  
of My Ancestors 1,  
2015**  
acrylic paint on  
archival paper





**From the Hands of My Ancestors 2, 2015**

acrylic paint on archival paper



**From the Hands of My Ancestors 6, 2015**

acrylic paint on archival paper



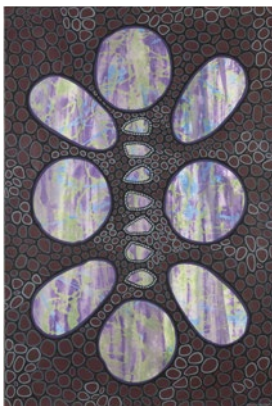
**From the Hands of My Ancestors 3, 2015**

acrylic paint on archival paper



**From the Hands of My Ancestors 7, 2015**

acrylic paint on archival paper



**From the Hands of My Ancestors 5, 2015**

acrylic paint on archival paper



**Postcards collection of Nan Annie, c 1900s**

These works add to the volume of what has yet to be overturned in terms of my history, my personal history and also my family's history.

We have not been moved off.

And as I say to my other family members, we have a tiny fingerprint in the country and that's what we stand by.

— Dr Bronwyn Bancroft



*Family 3, 2023-24*  
Bancroft family photographs, c 1930s



While hiding the truth might come as second nature to the modern-day society that we all live in, my mum and my family know that the truth lives inside of Country and inside the bones of those who carry the stories of their ancestors.

In 2024, it's time for truth telling, about the history of this country and about the truth of our existences and our participation in this world.

— Ella Bancroft (daughter)