





Cover: Arthur Boyd, *Shoalhaven as the River Styx*, 1996, oil on canvas (detail). Bundanon family collection
Above: Arthur Boyd painting en plein air at Bundanon, c1993.

Arthur Boyd Landscape of the Soul

Education Guide

BUNDANON



Australian Government
National Collecting Institutions
Touring & Outreach Program



*I stress the uniqueness
of the Australian landscape
& its metaphysical &
mythic content.
–Arthur Boyd*

Introduction

This education guide for the Bundanon Trust touring exhibition, Arthur Boyd: Landscape of the Soul is designed to complement a visit to the exhibition, highlighting the key themes and providing a series of discussion questions and activities for students to explore with the guidance of teachers. Choose the discussion questions as appropriate to each age group and ability. The guide makes substantial use of the exhibition catalogue essay by Barry Pearce.

The theme of this exhibition relates to the landscape paintings of Arthur Boyd throughout his career. As a young artist Arthur created landscape paintings that celebrated light and represented his direct surrounds. He was also concerned with the application of paint and its tactility on the canvas surface. Through the middle of his career, his landscapes became more imagined. Arthur was concerned with the sorrows of the human condition, he referenced mythological and biblical stories to comment on human behaviour and set his imagery in imagined landscapes. Later in his life, Arthur discovered the Shoalhaven and with that his joy of light. He used the Shoalhaven landscape as a theatrical backdrop to continue to explore global and personal themes and contemporary issues.

The exhibition title relates to the name Merric Boyd gave his family property just before the First World War: *Open Country*. Here his eldest son, Arthur Boyd, destined to be one of Australia's greatest artists, was born in 1920 in what was then a developing, park-like outer suburb, Murrumbena, south-east of Melbourne. It was here that Arthur in his early adolescence was determined to set out as a landscape painter.

Growing up in the 1920s and 30s at *Open Country*, signified for Arthur a quest for landscape with ideological overtones. Born of entrenched faith, his attitude was simply that landscape as both idea and materiality could never be possessed exclusively.



Left: Arthur Boyd, *House at Murrumbena, 'Open country'*, 1932-33, oil on board.
Right: Emma Minnie Boyd, *Open Country*, 1921, watercolour on paper



*You can't own
a landscape.*
–Arthur Boyd

Arthur Boyd grew up within a family of artists, including his grandparents Arthur Merric Boyd Senior and Emma Minnie Boyd, and his parents Merric and Doris Boyd. They laid the foundation of value, in regard to the subject of landscape. Arthur Merric Senior was born in financially comfortable circumstances, comfortable enough for him to decide on a career as artist. He was admired for his drawing ability at school and enrolled at the National Gallery School in Melbourne whilst still an adolescent. He was a fellow student with artists who went on to form the legendary Heidelberg School, in particular, Tom Roberts, Arthur Streeton and Frederick McCubbin. He painted lyrical pastoral landscapes. Emma Minnie, whom he met through family connections, and as a fellow student at the National Gallery School was also a very competent watercolourist and had already taken private lessons with the immigrant Swiss painter Abram Louis Buvelot. Emma Minnie painted sensitive landscapes in watercolour and detailed oil paintings.

Activity

1.1 What is the date on Arthur Merric Boyd's watercolour *Porth Pean Cornwell*?

1.2 Imagine you are back in that year and you are taking a picnic to this exact spot, describe what you can see as you walk along the coastline to get to your picnic spot? What might you have packed in your picnic basket? What might you be wearing?

1.3 Now search Google maps and find the coastline of *Porth Pean Cornwell*? What can you see on the beach today? Again, imagining you are taking a picnic to this spot today, what might you see along the coast line, what you take in your picnic basket and how do you think what we wear has changed?



Top: Emma Minnie Boyd, *Coastal scrub*, Sandringham c1927, watercolour on paper.
Right: Arthur Merric Boyd, *Porth Pean Cornwell*, 1892, watercolour on paper.



Arthur Boyd's parents, Merric and Doris, also met at the National Gallery School. Merric's haptic and sometimes naïve imagery both in his pottery decorations and drawings, were based on the tree trunks, canopies, root forms and curvilinear backgrounds of countryside within near reach of *Open Country*, or down on the Peninsula. His images have a strange anthropomorphic effect, as if the roots were veins and the branches limbs. Merric was known for his iconic white gums of the Victorian bush.

When Arthur embarked on his first serious landscapes during the early 1930s, the closest living exemplar for a bright avant garde style was provided by his mother, Doris.

Discussion

1.1 Research online one or two paintings by Abram Louis Buvelot. Considering Buvelot's works, how do you think Arthur Merric Senior and Emma Minnie were influenced by his style and techniques?

1.2 Compare and contrast Emma Minnie Boyd's paintings *Open Country*, 1921 and *Coastal scrub, Sandringham*, 1927.

1.3 Describe the drawing style of Merric Boyd, referring to one or two images in the exhibition.

Activity

2.1 If you were to name your home, what name would you give it?

2.2 Draw an image of your home. Looking at Emma Minnie Boyd and Arthur Boyd's images of the house at Murrumbena, *Open Country*, think about the viewpoint you would draw it from, the front or back? close up or far away? What would we be able to see in your image: the garden, big trees, or the shed? Is there a trampoline in your yard or a long driveway?

2.3 If you were to paint your image, what colours would you use? Would you use soft water colours like Emma Minnie Boyd or thick impressionistic brush strokes like Arthur Boyd?



Theme 2: Genesis & Inflection

Arthur started painting seriously around 12 years old whilst still at school, from an early stage he showed signs of his mother's influence: strong colour, loose but definite gestures; and excitement at the prospect of a creative path opening up. Arthur's brother, David Boyd, recalled Doris's attitude that became imbedded in all the children: the creative effort or idea was the most important thing of all... that it was related to life, it was life. For the Boyd family, life and art were inter-linked. Family members were often portrayed in artworks.

After leaving school at the age of 14, Arthur enrolled in the National Gallery School and managed six months of night classes however he found it unsatisfactory. The saving grace was his fellow student and cousin Pat Boyd who Arthur found quite savvy about current techniques of painting. It was Pat who taught him how to use a palette knife, and indirectly brought about his first encounter with a work by European painter Vincent Van Gogh through a postcard owned by Pat's brother, architect Robin Boyd.

Then there was a major moment in 1936 that allowed him to surge ahead with his work. Arthur's grandmother Emma Minnie died, Arthur Merric senior moved to a family cottage in Rosebud, on the Mornington Peninsula. He invited his grandson to stay with him. Here young Arthur, with some useful tuition on offer from his grandfather, could concentrate on painting relatively undistracted. The influence of his grandfather and painting en plein air became apparent, working quickly and with the natural light of the outdoors.

Over the next three years he sent letters to his mother to keep her informed of his progress with little thumbnail sketches, and during visits to the city he would go to the Primrose Pottery Shop and Gino Nibbi's Leonardo Bookshop to find more illustrations of modern European painters.

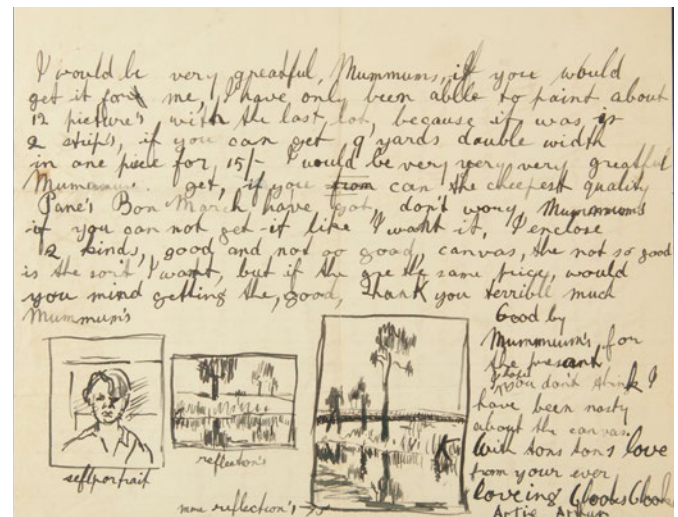


Discussion

2.1 Looking at the works in the exhibition, which ones do you think Arthur Merric Senior and Arthur Boyd may have painted en plein air? Describe why you think this.

2.2 Look closely at the artworks from this period of Arthur's career, hung together in the exhibition, describe the colours and texture Arthur uses.

2.3 What subject matter did Arthur base his landscapes on during this period?





Arthur returned to Murrumbidgee, at the end of the 1930s influenced by all the new artists he had encountered. Arthur met the talented painter Yvonne Lennie, at the National Gallery School, who later became his wife. He also met the immigrant Austrian-Polish Jewish painter Yosl Bergner who urged Australian artists to take a closer look at the German Expressionists. Boyd had become acquainted with artists gathered around John and Sunday Reed at Heide: Sidney Nolan, Albert Tucker and Joy Hester, who all became friends. Closest was John Perceval, who he met after being conscripted into the Army in 1941.

Activity

3.1 Research a landscape painting by the Post-Impressionist Vincent Van Gogh. Compare his painting techniques with either of Arthur's paintings: *Orchard with Cherry Blossoms*, 1939 or *Farm building and grazing sheep*, c1939.

How do you think Arthur was influenced by the work of Van Gogh?

What are the similarities and differences in their styles?

3.2 Imagine you are Arthur; how would you describe your work *Pastoral Landscape with Fence*, c1936, in a letter back to your parents. Draw three thumb nail sketches that Arthur may have included in this letter. Look at the examples in the display cases of original letters Arthur wrote to his mother from 1936-1939.

3.3 Compare Arthur Boyd's painting *Bent tree in a storm*, 1938, and *Hills near Rosebud and stormy sky*, c1938, with Doris Boyd's *Figure in a stormy landscape*, c1928. Discuss underpainting, brushstrokes and the use of dynamic movement when painting the natural elements.

*Kokoshka was well
regarded for his landscapes
of cities and their rivers
and bays, that went beyond
topography and likeness,
and plumbed a tremulous
language of his inner gaze.
—Barry Pearce*

Man launching boat, 1940, is one of the most intriguing paintings by Arthur Boyd of the 1940s. This work is a transitional one, which belongs neither to the optimism of his Mornington Peninsula landscapes that preceded it, nor the disturbing images of his early war period which followed. *Man launching boat* references Boyd's association with the shorelines of his teenage years, when his grandfather, at Rosebud on the Mornington Peninsula in Victoria, helped him turn a punt into a little sailboat to navigate the waterways of Port Phillip Bay.

Arthur followed Bergner's influence and through reproductions looked at the work of Austrian artist Oskar Kokoshka. Boyd was interested in a postcard of Kokoshka's most famous work, *The Tempest* (also known as *The Bride of the Wind*), 1913, in which passages of painterly energy dispersed across a completely flat picture plane. *The Tempest* also depicted a theme of two naked lovers, writhing with unrequited emotion. The tiny boat would become a symbol for a receptacle of passion, which Boyd was to employ later in the 1965 work *Lovers on fire in a boat with kite*.

Arthur's colour palette was often very light during this period and he was able to manage colour and technique like a musician, choosing at will major or minor keys, lightness or darkness, confounding predictability. Just before both Merric and Doris died – Merric in 1959, Doris in 1960 – Arthur began to use a much darker and heavier impasto. Merric's death was the trigger for a life-changing exit, with Arthur joining a major exodus of Australian artists to England. Arthur Boyd deeply felt the futility of war and forgetting of history. Whilst disinterested in organised politics, Boyd at times joined political actions. He participated in exhibitions protesting against the Vietnam War and commemorating the bombing of Hiroshima, and signed appeals to the Mexican government for clemency for artist David Sequeros.

Discussion

3.1 Curator Barry Pearce describes *Man Launching boat*, 1940, as having a “dark encroaching sea” and a “headland arching nervously upwards”. Looking carefully at the way Arthur Boyd has depicted this scene, describe the viewpoint of the painting and the composition.

3.2 Compare *Man Launching Boat*, 1940 and *Lovers on fire in a boat with kite*, c1965. These two artworks were painted 25 years apart and are a great example of how Boyd returned to earlier works for inspiration throughout his life. Discuss the composition, use of colour and brushstrokes and sense of movement in the paintings.

3.3 Research Oscar Kokoschka, using Google images and search text “Polperro II”. Choose one painting which you think has similarities to Boyd's *Man Launching Boat*.



Activity

These questions refer to *Picture on the wall Shoalhaven* (1979-80)

- 4.1 Describe the artwork *Picture on the wall Shoalhaven*
- 4.2 Take a journey down both the rivers depicted in the artwork. Describe your journey and the feelings and ideas you experience as you travel.
- 4.3 In what way could this artwork be considered to be a “reflection” type of painting, as seen in other works by Boyd?
- 4.4 Using Google Earth, make a virtual flying journey over the Shoalhaven River, starting at Nowra. Discuss the experience.
- 4.5 Use *Man Launching Boat*, 1940, as inspiration for a series of seascape paintings of your own. Experiment with viewpoints, focal point, horizon line, colour and texture.



This period includes *The expulsion*, 1947-48, on loan from the Art Gallery of New South Wales, again this work is an example of revealing links with old European masters. This work recalls Arthur's childhood in Murrumbidgee when Arthur and his siblings listened fascinated to Old Testament stories read by grandmother Emma Minnie from a Bible with stark illustrations that sometimes terrified the children. From this time, Arthur frequently placed historical and mythological subject matter and narratives in the context of the Australian bush.

The subject of *The expulsion* that matters most is the landscape, deep emerald green foliage and russet red rocks aglow like a stained-glass window, exuding a sublimely beautiful, if slightly uncomfortable informality of the Australian bush.

Following his religious paintings, Arthur moved into tempera style to a series of landscapes around Frankston, Berwick and Harkaway during 1948-49. These works show rural harmony where all signs of disturbance between people and nature have evaporated.

Within a year, Arthur was in the outback, recording open Wimmera country under heat and glare, followed in ensuing years with images of Central Australia such as, *The waterhole*, *Central Australia*, 1954, on loan from the National Gallery Victoria. He was aware of the revelatory paintings of his friend Sidney Nolan, who had been there in 1949 and created a new awareness of the great red heart of the continent.

Tempera painting technique

tempera—a method of painting with pigments dispersed in an emulsion able to be mixed with water, typically egg yolk. The method was used in Europe for fine painting, mainly on wood panels, from the 12th or early 13th century until the 15th, when it began to give way to oils. Egg tempera was another name for the technique.

The use of tempera in *Berwick Landscape*, 1948, and *A'Beckett Road, Harkaway*, 1949, is significant. Both these works were painted on composition board. In the early 1940s Boyd spent time at the State Library reading books on the old masters. Arthur became inspired by the world landscape paintings of Pieter Brueghel and responded to the luminous translucence of tempera in these works. He researched it in a book recommended by artist Albert Tucker, Max Doerner's, 'The materials of the artist and their use in painting.'

According to Doerner, tempera and oil painting are complementary techniques. Tempera can be used as an underpainting followed by glazes (transparent layers) of oil paint. This technique was used by the great masters such as Velasquez. Using neutral, light colours, tempera is applied to the prepared canvas or board. The advantages of a tempera underpainting for an oil picture is that a sketchy, simple tempera underpainting which has been painted with water or very thin emulsion becomes rapidly dry. Oil colour sits well on lean tempera. A tempera underpainting shortens the process of painting, and through its use the picture becomes more richly luminous and is protected more against later darkening, than if oil is used as an underpainting.

*His was an artist's
odyssey through land-
scape both seen and
imagined.*

—Barry Pearce

Activity

Describe the qualities of tempera used in Arthur Boyd's *Berwick Landscape*, 1948, compared with his oil painting *Gardiners creek*, 1935

Discussion

Research a work by Pieter Brueghel and compare this work with a work by Arthur Boyd from the 1940s, such as *Berwick Landscape*, 1948 or *A'Beckett Road Harkaway*, 1949. Discuss the placement of figures in space and the energy of the composition.

Theme 3: Between Worlds

Until the 1960s, Arthur had depicted the Australian landscape in its diversity, not only topographically but also its scope for embracing human stories and highly personal symbolism. Arriving in London at the end of 1959 a new challenge presented itself that he took on with his usual extraordinary energy.

His most powerful paintings of the decade, the Nebuchadnezzar series, begun in 1966, were set against landscapes of pain and despair.

There were many contexts to the Nebuchadnezzar paintings. In many works, Arthur makes use of allegorical themes to make comments on universal themes of love, vanity, racism, poverty and war.

Between 1966 and 1971, during which the first series was produced, the war in Vietnam was at its ugliest. Reports from the battle sites, of napalm bombing, wounded the artist to his soul, just as deeply as when he learned about Hitler's treatment of the Jews in the Second World War. But it was the self-immolation of a young man assumed by Arthur to have been in protest that shocked him most profoundly. It took place in 1967 on Hampstead Heath, not far from where Arthur and Yvonne lived. Arthur never really recovered, as he continued to unravel the Old Testament story of a king banished, humiliated, to the wilderness for seven years for placing his own status above God. *Nebuchadnezzar with blue flowers and white dog*, 1969, depicts a figure bowed beneath a poetic sky with crescent moon and stars indifferent to the tragedy below. A beaten, huddled man intended to be Arthur's father, or maybe even Arthur himself.

Activity

- 6.1 What are some contemporary issues that you are concerned with today?
- 6.2 How would you depict these issues as images in a painting or drawing?
- 6.3 Start a sketch of your ideas, use the sketch work of Arthur and the drawing style of Merric as a guide.



Discussion

These questions refer to the Nebuchadnezzar paintings in *Landscape of the Soul*; William Blake (1757–1827) was a visionary artist and poet who represented Nebuchadnezzar in prints. Research Blake's Nebuchadnezzar and discuss how do you think Arthur was influenced by Blake.

- 5.1 Describe some of the emotions you feel when looking at the Nebuchadnezzar paintings?
- 5.2 What techniques have been used to convey emotional states in these works?
- 5.3 What meaning is communicated through the use of colour in these works?
- 5.4 Discuss the use of rhythm and movement in the composition of the Nebuchadnezzar works.
- 5.5 How has Arthur communicated power and control in his artworks?
- 5.6 Looking at each of the Nebuchadnezzar paintings in *Landscape of the Soul*, compare:
 - The depiction of Nebuchadnezzar
 - The application of paint
 - The use of colour
- 5.7 Why would the sky in *Nebuchadnezzar with blue flowers and white dog* be described as poetic, are there other poetic elements in any of the other Nebuchadnezzar paintings?

Nebuchadnezzar Series

The Nebuchadnezzar series based on The Old Testament story of the fall from grace of Nebuchadnezzar, forms a significant body of work for Arthur Boyd. This series represented highly inventive responses to religious subject matter. Boyd's paintings on this theme relate to his fascination with the visionary art of William Blake and to memories of graphic biblical stories read to him as a child by his grandmother. Nebuchadnezzar was the greatest of the Kings of Babylon who captured and then later destroyed Jerusalem. Nebuchadnezzar was born about 630 B.C. and died around 562 B.C. at age 68. He was the most powerful monarch of his dynasty and is best known for the magnificence of his capital, Babylon. During Nebuchadnezzar's time, Babylon was the largest city in the world, with the Euphrates River flowing through it. The name of the city came to symbolise the entire empire.

Nebuchadnezzar was a successful ruler who engaged in many military campaigns. Best known through biblical accounts in the Old Testament Book of Daniel, he is said to have become carried away with his power to the point of thinking himself God-like. Punished for his pride and arrogance, Nebuchadnezzar was cast into the wilderness for seven years, undergoing many trials and tribulations. Arthur Boyd often drew inspiration from the Bible and ancient mythology. Sometimes he placed these themes in the midst of the Australian landscape. In this series, Arthur was responding to the suffering and madness around him. The story of Nebuchadnezzar gave rise to a series of powerful and disturbing paintings, perhaps the most charged and challenging of Boyd's work, commenting on the Vietnam War. In this series, which he worked on from the mid-1960s to early 1970s (revisited in the 1990s), Boyd equates Nebuchadnezzar with America wading into the Vietnam War. The series is permeated with intense anger at the urgent political issues posed by Vietnam, while simultaneously grappling with many of the psychological themes with which Boyd struggled throughout his career.



I'd like to feel that through my work there is a possibility of making a contribution to a social progression or enlightenment. It would be nice if the creative effort or impulse was connected with a conscious contribution to society, a sort of duty of service.

—Arthur Boyd



Arthur returned to Australia in October 1971 to take up a three-month Creative Art Fellowship at the Australian National University in Canberra. In December he and Yvonne were invited by art dealer Frank McDonald to spend Christmas at his property Bundanon in southern New South Wales. Here, for the first time in many years, the artist set up his canvas and began en plein air painting, in the open, and in withering heat, Arthur watched his paint melt into the sand.

He remained there inspired for several weeks, on the cusp of another dawn, a possibility of being refreshed, re-immersing himself once more in pure landscape painting.

Discussion

6.1 Discuss the link between the figures and the landscape in *Lovers on fire in a boat with kite*.

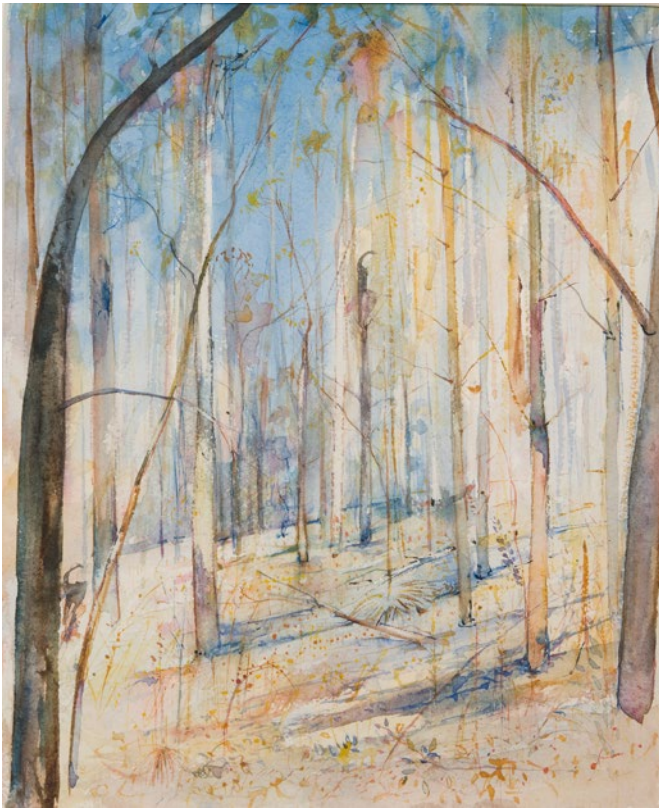
6.2 Compare the depiction of the figures in the landscape in *Lovers on fire in a boat with kite* with *Figure and beast head*.

6.3 One of these paintings was painted in Australia and the other in England. In your opinion, which is which and why do you think this?

6.4 Man digging and crows reveals significant influence of Arthur's mother Doris Boyd. Describe three links between their styles.

6.5 Find the artwork in *Landscape of the soul* which is influenced by both Doris Boyd and Van Gogh.

The two frail, naked bodies, harassed from the bush by an avenging angel in radiant yellow cloak in The expulsion remind us also of the trauma of Arthur and his wife-to-be Yvonne secretly liaising in the bush in 1942 at Bendigo whilst he was meant to be in Army camp, and later sprung by the authorities for stealing blankets.
–Barry Pearce



Theme 4: Shoalhaven years

After his stay at Bundanon over the summer of 1971-72, Arthur returned to England in March with the dazzling Shoalhaven light fixed firmly in his mind.

In 1971-72 at Bundanon, he had asked his host to look out for a property in the area that he and Yvonne could purchase. The following year they bought Riversdale, a run-down farm nestled in a valley right next to the Shoalhaven River.

From their large living room, they could see the sky turn mauve then indigo behind the huddled blackness across the water, and on a clear night the bright stars that slowly multiplied as the evening deepened. In high summer the air could be so fiercely hot that light carved out the shapes of rocks like a burning scalpel. Arthur witnessed the serious flood of 1974, after endless days of rain, and the river heaved its great brown mass towards the sea.

In 1979 Arthur and Yvonne bought nearby Bundanon, expanding further the variety of landscape at his disposal, infused with themes of Christ, the Prodigal Son, Pushkin's fairy tales, Narcissus and Cuchulain the mythical Irish warrior, to name a few, capitalising on the dramatic possibilities of shadows from rocks and trees appearing hard 'like black holes'.

Arthur made many pure landscape paintings of the Shoalhaven, a few of almost mural-size dimension, but some of the most beautiful are small in scale.

Discussion

- 7.1 What do you think pure landscape means?
- 7.2 List the works from *Landscape of the Soul*, Shoalhaven years, that you consider to be pure landscapes.

Activity

The Shoalhaven was a very special place for Arthur Boyd. You would have a place that has special meaning in your life (at school or at home)?

Develop three sketches of this place, which you can later use in a plein air painting.

Discussion

Refer to *Hanging rocks with Bathers and Mars*:

- 8.1 Describe the images in each of the foreground, middle ground and background.
- 8.2 Describe the use of space in this composition and the balance created by the figures and landscape elements
- 8.3 How does this artwork combine the past and present?
- 8.4 This artwork combines elements of the imagined, remembered and real. Describe one example for each of the three elements.



The scale of everything was so different: the scale of the Shoalhaven was enormous compared to the softness and gentleness of Port Phillip Bay especially around the Rosebud area, and also the harshness of the light... not so much the harshness but the clarity. At times it was intense the shadows became almost black.

–Arthur Boyd



In both life and art Arthur Boyd evoked a social conscience and concern for the world. Boyd's art arose from an active witnessing of life, and a concern for the world in the face of history. Humankind's recklessness is foretold in the burning book observed by Mars in *Hanging rocks with bathers and Mars*, 1985. Both humans and gods appear detached from their environment, guarding as well as actively despoiling a world understood as a resource.

The landscape in this painting shows signs of regrowth after fire and finds a resemblance between the form in the distance and a nuclear power plant located close to Boyd's Suffolk studio in England. Arthur was aware of the changing character of the Australian landscape across recorded history, prior to human impact.

In many works, Arthur makes use of allegorical themes to make comments on universal concepts of love, vanity, racism, poverty, war and death. He was also interested in using his paintings to investigate metamorphosis, often using his repeated symbols such as man or landscape to convey a transformation into something else such as animal or mythical creature or the transformation from life to death, often not representing one or the other but lingering in between.

In *Pulpit rock, kite and skull*, Arthur depicts the story of Flame; the daughter of a previous owner of Bundanon had a chestnut horse of that name. During a time of flood Flame

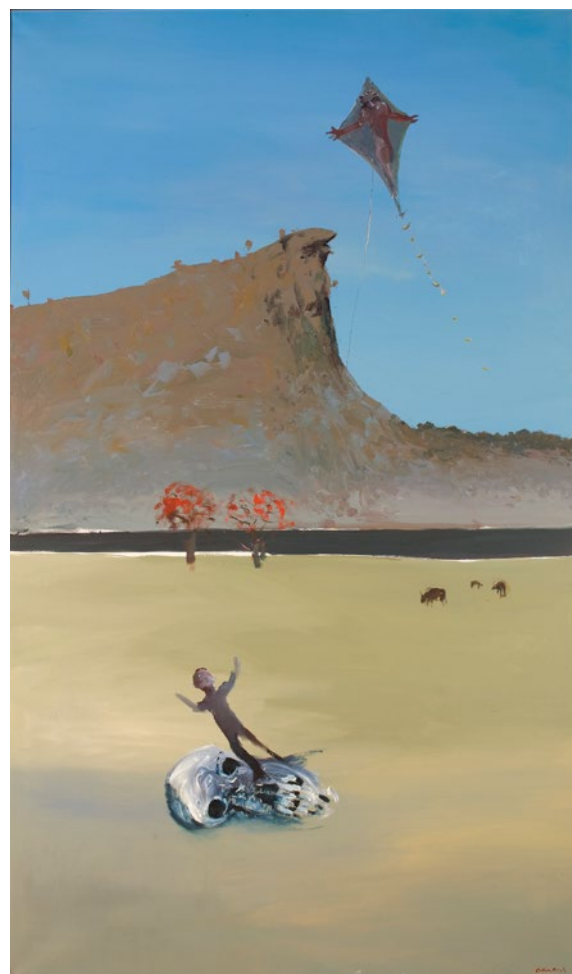


became trapped in some barbed wire and died from a heart attack. The horse was then buried under a coral tree in the paddocks. On hearing this story Arthur set about finding Flame and dug up the skeleton. Flame's skull now hangs above the door of the studio and became a recurring image in Arthur's work.

At last Arthur committed himself permanently to the beckoning Shoalhaven. And that in the end was closest to what his quest had been all about since Murrumbidgee. Never entirely one thing or another but, some kind of grand, complex coalescence, a synthesis between a sense of place and its creative potential for himself, his family and the people of Australia.

Discussion

9.1 In discussion point 2.3 you were asked to discuss the type of subject matter that Arthur based his landscapes on during the early stages of his career. Let's return to the same question for his Shoalhaven years, what subject matter did Arthur base his landscapes on during this period?





Appropriation: father & son

Arthur was interested in rediscovering the works of his father and highlights their shared interest in metamorphosis; however, represented in different forms. Arthur was not very explicit about it at the time, but it turned out that he saw the Chaldean King of Babylon: Nebuchadnezzar, as the alter-ego of Merric. Arthur often appropriated the imagery of his father Merric, one example is the trees for *Nebuchadnezzar in a clearing*, painted a decade after Merric's death in 1959, in which an unhappy figure and its landscape seem organically connected.

Discussion

10.1 Many artists reinterpret artworks by other artists and use aspects of these in their own works. It is a technique called appropriation. Looking at Merric Boyd, *Tree*, 1949 and Arthur Boyd, *Nebuchadnezzar in a clearing*, 1969, discuss whether Arthur's reference to his father and use of his father's imagery in his *Nebuchadnezzar in a clearing* painting is appropriation.



Perhaps the most interesting drawing by Merric in this exhibition however is the one which bears an uncanny resemblance to the painting by his son *Landscape (Bacchus Marsh)*, 1943, inspired by a composition by Buvelot young Arthur saw hanging in the National Gallery of Victoria: (This painting is not in the exhibition).

It remains to be seen, pending the date of Merric's drawing, which artist influenced who, but it seems likely to be Merric responding to his son's interpretation. What is more certain is that Buvelot's heavier tonal contrasts began to appeal to Arthur at this time more than the sun-drenched pastoral and bush paintings of Streeton and Roberts.

There was a framed water-colour of Buvelot's which impressed me very much. It was of Bacchus Marsh where I had been on painting excursions in the mid-30s. ...I repainted my earlier impressions of Bacchus Marsh which developed into the backgrounds of the Hunter pictures.
—Arthur Boyd



Top: Arthur Boyd, *Landscape (Bacchus Marsh)*, 1943, oil on canvas
Below: Merric Boyd, *Trees and post-and-rail fence*, c1940s, pencil on paper.



In another example, Arthur pays tribute to Merric in *Reflected Kangaroo*, 1976, an elongated kangaroo, appropriated from a drawing by Merric, flings itself desperately, rocket-like towards the inadequate shelter of a lone sapling, terror in its eye, fur blackened from fire, a creature doomed in time and space.

After returning from England in 1974, Arthur Boyd journeyed back to Australia to view the property he purchased at Riversdale and the construction of his house the following year. This plan had been interrupted by severe flooding of the Shoalhaven River. It was at this time Boyd returned to painting the natural Australian landscape in an attempt to recapture his sense of place once more.

Activity

8.1 Can you list other artists that use appropriation in their work?

8.2 Choose one of the works in *Landscape of the Soul*, how could you appropriate the work you have chosen?

Sketch out some ideas.

8.3 What artists do you admire? How could you appropriate one of their artworks?

My father's drawings always seemed to depict nature in an anthropomorphic way. Tree trunks were also animals; animals were like people... This metamorphosis has become a constant theme in my work ...images that seem to be an extension of the kinds of figures I had seen my father model and draw.
—Arthur Boyd



Top: Arthur Boyd, *Reflected kangaroo*, 1976, oil on canvas.

Below: Merric Boyd, *Kangaroo in landscape*, date unknown, pencil on paper.

Reflections

Reflected kangaroo, 1976, is a great example of the repeated use of reflection in Arthur's works throughout his entire artistic career.

The reflection of the river is part of Boyd's mythology, his unspoken connection to the Shoalhaven River during the period in which he painted *Reflected kangaroo*, however throughout his life he has used reflection as a method to show his deep connection to place; place as something that provides growth and regeneration. For Arthur reflection represented the real and the imagined, the representation of reality verses the dream world. He also uses reflection as a symbol for evoking connotations of admiration, vanity and even death.

The use of reflection can be seen in the early letters he sent to his mother during the time he lived with his grandfather on the Mornington Peninsular in his teen years.

Activity

List the different artworks which use reflection and describe the use of reflection in their composition.



Top: Arthur Boyd, *Peter's fish and crucifixion*, 1993, oil on canvas.

Below: Extract from one of Arthur's letters to this mother



Role of the Curator

The role of the curator is to establish the theme for a new exhibition, usually within an arts institution or gallery. Once a theme has been decided on or an artist or artists have been chosen, the curator selects the works (this may include painting, sculpture, installation, performance etc) that will be seen. One of the final roles of the curator is to decide where the artworks will be positioned within the gallery space. The final hang is crucial to the viewers understanding of the themes established for the exhibition. In *Landscape of the soul*, the paintings have been thoughtfully and effectively grouped by curator Barry Pearce.

Activity

If you could curate an exhibition, would you choose one artist to focus on or would you create a theme for many different artists.

Consider:

- What would your theme be?
- Who would your artist/s be?
- List the artworks you would like to include in your exhibition.

He's telling us what he feels about the landscape, as well as what he sees, and this makes for an interesting complex mix.

—Barry Pearce



Discussion

There are several groupings in *Landscape of the Soul*, walk around the gallery and choose one grouping. Write down the reasons why you think the paintings have been grouped effectively by the curator. Discuss with the rest of your class.

Definitions

Allegory: a work in which the characters and events are to be understood as representing other things and symbolically expressing a deeper, often spiritual, moral, or political meaning.

Anthropomorphic: the attribution of a human form, human characteristics, or human behaviour to nonhuman things, such as animals in children's stories.

Appropriation: using pre-existing images to create new meaning.

Avant garde: new and experimental ideas.

En plein air: the act of painting outdoors, it allows artists to work using natural light. Many of the European and Australian Impressionist artists painted en plein air.

Expressionists: a modernist movement, originating in Germany at the beginning of the 20th century. One trait of the expressionists was to represent the world solely from a subjective perspective.

Haptic: relating to the sense of touch.

Heidelberg School: an Australian art movement in the late 19th Century, members would paint en plein air in Heidelberg, an

area on the outskirts of Melbourne.

Impressionism: a movement of art where the artists were interested in capturing the changing light, often working en plein air.

Lean: containing little fat or oils.

Materiality: the quality of being composed of matter.

Metamorphosis: the change of a living form to another completely different living form.

Mars: in Roman mythology, the god of war and the father of Romulus, the founder of Rome.

Nebuchadnezzar: Nebuchadnezzar was a King of Babylon (605–561BC). In an Old Testament story God punished and banished Nebuchadnezzar to the wilderness for seven years to lead the life of an animal.

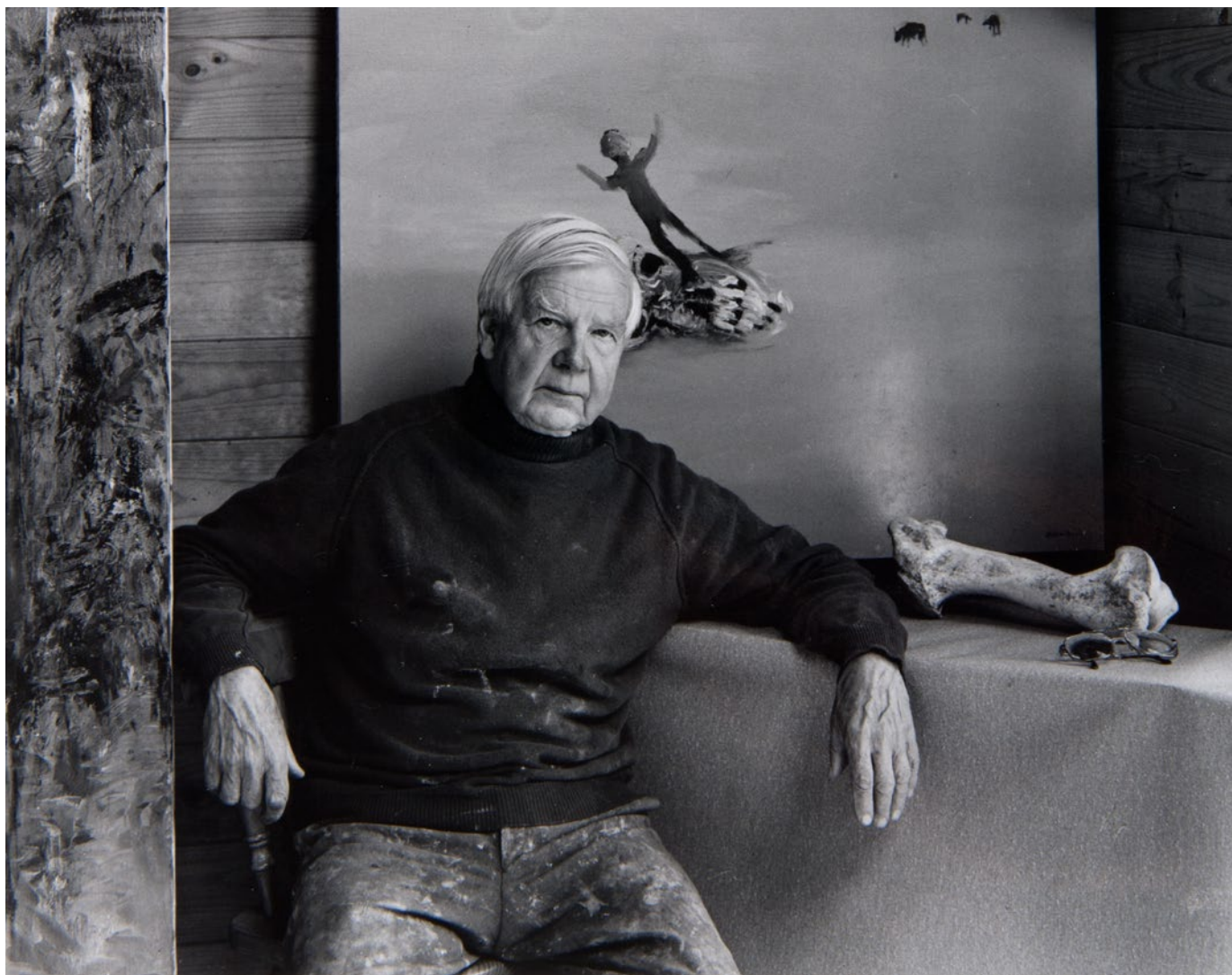
Nebuchadnezzar demonstrated great arrogance by presuming to create an empire of his own, without the aid of God.

Subjective: based on or influenced by personal feelings, tastes or opinions

Underpainting: paint subsequently overlaid with another layer or with a finishing coat.



Arthur Boyd painting at Bundanon, c1993.



Bundanon Trust

Arthur and Yvonne Boyd's 1993 gift of the Bundanon properties and collections has given Australia a unique cultural and environmental asset. The gift was borne out of Arthur Boyd's often stated belief that 'you can't own a landscape' and the deeply felt wish that others might also draw inspiration from Bundanon. The Bundanon properties are located on 1,100 hectares of bush and agricultural land overlooking the Shoalhaven River in New South Wales. Bundanon Trust supports arts practice and engagement with the arts through its residency, education, exhibition and performance programs. The Trust is a platform for scientific research and a range of environmental projects.

In preserving the natural and cultural heritage of its site, Bundanon Trust promotes the value of the environmental empathy and engagement in personal, social and community life.

bundanon.com.au

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All works are from the Bundanon Trust collection unless otherwise stated.