

CITATION DELIVERED BY PROFESSOR G. R. SUTTON, VICE-CHANCELLOR OF THE UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG, ON THE OCCASION OF THE ADMISSION OF ARTHUR MERRIC BLOOMFIELD BOYD TO THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF CREATIVE ARTS, HONORIS CAUSA, ON 5 OCTOBER 1995.

Chancellor I present Arthur Merric Bloomfield Boyd.

Arthur Boyd was born Murrumbeena, Victoria on 24 July 1920. He was an heir of a richly gifted family and spent his early decades in the rambling old house that was both a welcoming and loving home and an artists' colony. Over 70 years later, Arthur Boyd was to speak in an interview of the need for "a place in Australia where all avenues of the creative arts can come together, work as individuals or in groups, plus be inspired by contact with others". (Janet Hawley, *Encounters with Australian Artists*, 1993). He was speaking of Bundanon but surely recalling the joys of his first home and scene of his most formative education - Murrumbeena.

After a brief stay with the National Art School in Melbourne, Arthur Boyd went to live with his grandfather on the Mornington Peninsula, painting there the first of his distinctive landscapes full of the textures of sky and water. His first exhibition opened in Melbourne in 1937 and in the following decade he became a member of an extraordinary movement in Australian art.

He joined the army in 1941 but continued to paint and draw during the war years. Amongst his companions were Sidney Nolan, John Perceval and Albert Tucker, all members of the Melbourne Contemporary Art

Society. It was a time of inspired patronage of the arts and fierce philosophical and aesthetic debate: an equivalent in energy and achievement to the first European Renaissance .

Arthur Boyd married Yvonne Lennie, a fellow art student, in 1945 and in the next 15 years produced some of his most stunning paintings, exploring Biblical and literary themes, human passions and always the strong forms of the Australian landscape. He represented Australia, with Arthur Streeton, at the Venice Biennale in 1958 and in 1960 travelled to England for the first time.

In 1962, a major retrospective exhibition of his work opened at London's Whitehall Gallery. His work in England continued to confront, in a dramatic and passionate way, the archetypal symbols of our culture. His subjects ranged from Shakespeare and to the mysticism of St Francis of Assisi.

In 1968, Arthur Boyd returned to Australia where he travelled widely and produced a series of paintings to honour the artistic achievement of his parents. Back in England in 1971, he was awarded the Britannia Australia Award for the Arts before returning again to take up a Creative Art Fellowship at the Australian National University.

On a hot day in 1972, Arthur Boyd saw for the first time the landscape of Bundanon. He was to comment later on the unique qualities of the Shoalhaven bush that seemed to speak to him with "a special music". And, running through the property at Bundanon, was the river with its "enormously grim and enormously romantic possibilities"(Janet Hawley,

*Encounters with Australian Artists*, 1993). In the dark places and the clear light of the Shoalhaven he found a natural home attuned to the darkness and light in his own art.

For the next three decades, Arthur Boyd was to divide his time between Bundanon, England and his house in Tuscany. Typically, the latter was available for visiting Australian artists. Arthur Boyd's generosity of spirit and his selfless encouragement of fellow artists was to be expressed most strongly and emotionally in his gifting of Bundanon to the nation. This gift was formally accepted by the Prime Minister in 1993.

A number of books and films have been produced to celebrate and attempt an understanding of Arthur Boyd's work. In 1992 he was admitted as a companion of the Order of Australia and a major retrospective exhibition was held at the Art Gallery of New South Wales in 1993.

In January this year, the Prime Minister proclaimed the choice of Arthur Boyd as Australian of the Year for "his contribution to Australian art and the generosity of his many gifts to the Australian people".

Chancellor, this University, located near to his beloved Bundanon and now developing its Shoalhaven campus, is honouring a fine human being and a great artist. Arthur Boyd has celebrated, in his wonderful paintings, the unique beauty of this region. He has also given his time to encourage our own students with unfailing kindness. In an interview in 1993, Arthur Boyd gave some advice that could well be taken to heart by our graduates when he said: "You've got to have faith, but you have to do something positive as well" (Janet Hawley, *Encounters with Australian*

*Artists*, 1993). Today we applaud Boyd's own faith and his positive achievement, his genius and his humility.

Critics have sometimes recognised in Arthur Boyd's art an affinity with the 19th century poet and artist, William Blake and perhaps we find the most fitting expression of Boyd's vision and achievement in Blake's famous lines:

"To see a World in a Grain of Sand  
And a Heaven in a Wild Flower  
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand  
And Eternity in an hour"

(William Blake, *Auguries of Innocence*)

Chancellor, it is my privilege and pleasure to present to you Arthur Merric Bloomfield Boyd for the award of Doctor of Creative Arts honoris causa.