

Exhibition Tour

White gums and ramoxes: Ceramics by Merric and Arthur Boyd from the Bundanon Trust Collection will tour to six states and territories.

Venues include:

Drill Hall Gallery, Australian National University, Canberra
20 Aug 2009–27 Sept 2009

Gold Coast City Art Gallery
19 Dec 2009–31 Jan 2010

Toowoomba Regional Art Gallery
12 Feb 2010–28 Mar 2010

Wollongong City Art Gallery
12 June 2010–29 August 2010

Hamilton Art Gallery
7 Sept 2010–30 Oct 2010

Mornington Peninsula Regional Gallery
10 Nov 2010–13 Feb 2011

Bathurst Regional Gallery
18 Mar 2011–1 May 2011

Flinders University Gallery, Adelaide
13 May 2011–8 July 2011

Carnegie Gallery, Hobart
Aug 2011–Sept 2011

Burnie Regional Art Gallery
28 Oct 2011–11 Dec 2011

Newcastle Region Art Gallery
18 Dec 2011–15 Feb 2012

Manly Art Gallery and Museum
8 June 2012–15 July 2012

Project Team

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Conservation:	Anne Cummins (ceramics); David Stein (paintings); Tony Ameneiro and Rose Peel (works on paper)
Framing:	Ross Peck; June Andersen
Education Guide:	Mary Preece, Education Manager, Bundanon Trust

Education Programs at Bundanon Trust

Our education programs are inspired by the cultural, environmental and architectural heritage of the Bundanon Trust properties. We integrate exploration of the artistic heritage of Arthur Boyd and his family with response to landscape and immersion in the natural environment. Residential and day programs are available in a range of disciplines including visual arts, and design. Schools can book residential or day visits for children from K–12. Residential programs enable participants to gain a full appreciation of the unique location and facilities of both properties with accommodation at the Boyd Education Centre, Riversdale.

Through our Outreach programs, Bundanon develops ongoing relationships with a wide range of local community organisations, creating partnerships which strengthen community identity and local culture. We offer positive learning experiences for local schools, disadvantaged youth, the disabled and adult education through engagement with the arts. The Adopt a Schools program provides disadvantaged schools with the opportunity to attend a residential program.

For information about Bundanon's education programs contact:
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Image captions: school groups at Bundanon, top to bottom: on the lawn in front of the Homestead; artists in residence explain their creative process; experiencing Arthur Boyd's studio at Bundanon with an Education Officer.

BUNDANON TRUST

White gums and ramoxes

Ceramics by Merric & Arthur Boyd from the Bundanon Trust Collection

Education guide



Synopsis of Exhibition

This exhibition presents the ceramic work of potter Merric Boyd (1888–1959) and that of his son, artist Arthur Boyd (1920–1999). It takes its title from two characteristic motifs in the work of the artists: Merric was preoccupied with interpretations of trees, while Arthur’s ‘ramox’ is typical of his interest in metamorphosed and hybrid figures. These works are selected solely from the Bundanon Trust Collection; they are part of Arthur and Yvonne Boyd’s gift to the nation.

The exhibition includes Merric Boyd’s distinctive moulded, carved and painted pots and figures, alongside examples of his drawings on related themes of trees, local environment, birds and animals—and his family. Merric Boyd is considered to be a primary figure in the story of Australian studio ceramics, he developed expressive ceramic forms in an Art Nouveau style, and held the first solo exhibition of studio pottery in Australia, in 1912.

The exhibition also looks at Arthur Boyd’s ceramics, especially his ceramic tile paintings and sculpture that broke new ground in Australia from the 1940s, as well as etchings and paintings that directly acknowledge the influence of his father on the content of, and approach to, his wider work. This is seen through direct reference in an important series of paintings and etchings from the 1960s and 70s. Examples are also given of Arthur’s reference in later paintings to the motifs in his father’s work.

Ceramics

The exhibition includes ceramic works by both Merric Boyd and Arthur Boyd. Following an early interest in modelling and sculpture, Merric taught himself how to throw, glaze and fire his work through experimentation. His interest in pottery techniques was also influenced by his study at potteries in England shortly after World War I. Merric’s practice as a studio potter was quite unusual for its time, when pottery was generally produced commercially. His studio, set up at the family property *Open Country* was the focus for production. Merric was an inventive potter who frequently prepared his own materials. Works in the exhibition include vases, jugs and figurines. He applied koalas and possums to the handles and rims of his pots, embedding them in the swirling twigs and branches of the tree. Some of these were also decorated by Merric’s wife Doris Boyd, also an artist. Merric applied shallow relief and incised decoration using Australian flora and fauna, including recurring use of the white gum motif.

Arthur Boyd grew up at *Open Country* immersed in the artistic life of the family. Like his father, Arthur explored ceramics as a medium throughout his life. Arthur produced pottery at *Open Country* during and after World War II with colleagues, including sets of tea cups, plates and tea pots. Bowls and platters were ceramic forms Arthur returned to at different points in his life. From the 1950s, ceramic tiles were produced using themes similar to his drawings, prints and paintings. The large hand-formed sculptures of the 1950s are evidence of Arthur’s technical virtuosity. The painterly qualities of the hand-painted tiles are interesting when viewed against larger oil paintings. The ramox motif appears frequently on ceramics produced by Arthur throughout his career.

While the ceramics of father (Merric Boyd, 1888–1959) and son (Arthur Boyd, 1920–1999) are very different, many of the same attitudes and approaches to art influenced both. As members of a notably creative family, both had exceptional talent and originality as artists. It was expected of the children of both Merric’s and Arthur’s generations that they would explore creative ideas, and have compassion and respect for others.

Grace Cochrane, Catalogue Essay, *Whitegums and Ramoxes* 2009, p6

Drawing and Painting

The exhibition displays examples from Merric’s sketch books of a lifelong drawing practice in pencil and watercolour. His interest in rural life and nature is evident in these works. Family life was also a source of subject matter. Merric represented his children and later his grandchildren in sketches and also drew family pets. The exhibition highlights the use of drawing as an aid to design of the ceramics work particularly in the ceramic works with white gum decoration. *Landscape*, date unknown is a rare example of a large panoramic work based on tree forms.

The paintings of Arthur in this exhibition directly acknowledge the influence of his father on the content of, and approach to, his wider work. This is seen through direct reference in an important series of paintings on ‘The Potter’ in the 1960s and 70s, which integrated memories of the family with the anguish of his father’s illness and old age into the broader themes of his paintings. Examples are also given of Arthur’s reference in later paintings to the motifs in his father’s work. The large painting *Trees, 1979–80* is a direct reference to the forms of his father Merric’s iconic white gums, depicted on *Jug with trees*, 1942.



Arthur Boyd, *Trees*, 1979–80, oil on canvas

Printmaking

The series of etchings indicate Arthur’s reference to the role of his father in his life. These works produced in the late 1960s show Merric at work at his pottery wheel and working alongside his wife Doris. This series of works use printmaking techniques such as sugar lift, aquatint, etching and drypoint. These works also repeat images often referred to in earlier works by Arthur including the lovers and a lion. The theme and iconography of pairs of lovers was also seen in *The Bride* series.



Arthur Boyd, *Ram with lovers and sleeping potter*, 1968–69, etching

Introduction to Education Guide

This education guide explores the themes of the exhibition *White gums and ramoxes* in language common to the study of visual arts and design throughout Australia. The guide is designed to complement the exhibition catalogue and to provide support material and suggested activities for teachers visiting the exhibition with their students.

Guides 1, 2 and 3 are suitable for art and design students in years 10, 11 and 12 and focus on the roles of specialists within the exhibition production and design team. Students can explore the roles of the production staff, the curator, the photographers and the designer of the exhibition. Guides 4, 5 and 6 are suitable for visual arts students in years 7 to 10. These are practical classroom activities allowing students to link their own arts practice with themes from the exhibition. Guides 7 and 8 are for students in years K–6 and are practical classroom activities allowing students to explore the subject matter and themes of *White gums and ramoxes*. A Children’s discovery trail is provided for primary school groups and for families visiting the exhibition with young children.



Arthur Boyd, *Lidded bowl with ramoxes*, 1948, ceramic (detail)



Merric Boyd, *Vase with trees*, buff earthenware, 1940

List of Guides

- 1 Exhibition production Year 10, 11, 12 Art & Design
- 2 Exhibition curation Year 10, 11, 12 Art & Design
- 3 Exhibition design and photography Year 10, 11, 12 Art & Design
- 4 Ceramics: Slab pots with embossed texture 7 to 10 Visual Art
- 5 Printmaking: White gums and monoprints 7 to 10 Visual Art
- 6 Drawing: Still life with jug and white gums 7 to 10 Visual Art
- 7 A frieze of trees K–6 The Arts
- 8 Create a creature K–6 The Arts
- 9 Children’s discovery trail activity sheet

Curriculum Links

Starting points for discussion of the exhibition:

- Exploration of the personal and artistic relationship between Merric and Arthur Boyd using the subject matter of Arthur Boyd’s prints and paintings.
- Examine the influence of the expressive approach of Merric in his studio ceramics on Arthur in the development of style and techniques in his painting, print and ceramics work.
- Arthur describes his interest in rediscovering the works of his father and highlights the interest in *metamorphosis*. With reference to this quote, explore the development of metamorphosis in works by Arthur Boyd.

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. The butterfly or dragonfly who is half-man, or the dog-like figures with human heads are images that seem to be an extension of the kinds of figures I had seen my father model and draw. Arthur Boyd

- Many artists reinterpret artworks by other artists and use aspects of these in their own works. It is a technique called *appropriation*, sometimes used by contemporary artists. Discuss whether Arthur’s reference to his father and use of his father’s artworks in his own works is appropriation.
- Merric’s use of native animals in his ceramics works has a different purpose to that of Arthur’s use of his mythical animal the Ramox in his platters. Compare the use of Arthur’s image of the ramox in a ceramic platter, with Merric’s use of a native animal such as the Koala in one of his vases.
- Compare the painterly qualities evident in Arthur Boyd’s ceramic tiles with the qualities evident in his oil paintings.
- Research one of Rembrandt’s paintings of Susannah. Compare this with Arthur Boyd’s representations of Susannah. How has Arthur Boyd reinterpreted this biblical story?
- Discuss the use of symbols in a representation of the human figure in Arthur Boyd’s paintings and prints.
- Research other examples of families with artists in two or more generations, such as the Boyd family. What are the influences evident from one generation to the next?



Arthur Boyd, *Susannah running near a creek with cave*, oil on canvas, c 1972

Exhibition Support

Exhibition curators will be giving gallery floor talks at each venue. Bundanon education staff will be available to conduct seminars and/or workshops either at schools or at some of the venues. Please contact each gallery or Bundanon Trust for further information.

Main image: Merric Boyd, Figure of Arthur Boyd aged three years, 1923;

Top–Bottom: Merric Boyd, *Truth*, date unknown; Arthur Boyd, *Plate, Angel and ramox*, 1948; Merric Boyd, *Jug with trees*, 1942