

The Trinity College Dublin Art Collections

Artist: Arthur Merric Bloomfield Boyd
Title: *Ordeal by Fire*
Medium: lithograph
Edition: 3 of 25
Notes: signed: Arthur Boyd

b. 1920, Murrumbeena, Melbourne, Australia d. 1999, Melbourne, Australia

Boyd was largely self-taught as an artist, having honed his skills in the company of his parents and grandparents, as well as in evening classes at the National Gallery School, Melbourne. He established himself in a variety of fields, being known not only as a painter, but as a stage designer, sculptor, potter and cartographer. He was the cousin of the architect and writer, Robin Boyd and worked in both Australia and England.

The period 1941-44 was pivotal in the development of Boyd's style. During this time, he served in the army and moved in the circles of artists associated with the Australian Contemporary Art Society. He met John Reed and formed friendships with Sidney Nolan, John Perceval, Peter Herbst, Noel Counihan and the European Expressionists Josl Bergner and Danila Vassilieff. He developed a figurative idiom drawn from Surrealism, Social Realism and Expressionism, and he acquired the immediacy and spontaneity of handling that was to be characteristic of much of his later work.

In the 1950s, Boyd's imagery moved away from that of his despairing war-time paintings toward religious mysticism. The work of Pieter Brueghel the Elder and Rembrandt was influential on this phase of his work. In biblical works such as *Susanna and the Elders* (National Gallery of Australia, Canberra) he blends humour and piety, the material and the spiritual in a manner that was to remain typical of his oeuvre.

In the 1970s and '80s, Boyd returned to landscape painting (which he had painted in his early career). Like Nolan, he was profoundly attached to the Australian landscape, complicated by its European and Aboriginal mythological associations. This theme is treated extensively in his *Bride Series* of paintings (also known as his *Allegorical Paintings*), with its white bride and aboriginal husband.

Information contained in this article is from *The Modern Art Collection Trinity College Dublin* (David Scott, 1989) and www.oxfordartonline.com.