Lecture summary:

Acclaimed artist Arthur Boyd (1920–1999) was a master in a range of media but most widely recognised for the extraordinary allegorical paintings that he produced in series across the course of his long career. This lecture focuses on how Boyd developed his distinctive and deeply personal symbolic language, exploring the evolution and meaning of specific motifs and how he applied and extended these in key sequences of paintings to create images of universal and lasting relevance. While Boyd’s work is stylistically diverse, his iconography is remarkably consistent, allowing us to identify what inspired and drove him, and made him one of the most important Australian artists of the twentieth century.

Slide list:

1. (Title image) Arthur Boyd, *Wedding Group* 1957-8, oil and tempera on composition board, 130 x 160 cm, private collection, Melbourne.

2. (Clockwise from left) Arthur Boyd, *Self Portrait in Red Shirt* 1937, oil on canvas on cardboard, 51.5 x 45.4 cm, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, The Arthur Boyd Gift 1975; Merric Boyd with Arthur and Lucy at Open Country, Murrumbeena (detail) c.1922, photographer unknown, Bundanon Trust Archive, NSW; Doris Boyd with her children 1929, photographer unknown, Bundanon Trust Archive, NSW.


5. (Clockwise from left) Arthur Boyd *The Orchard* 1943, oil on cotton gauze on cardboard, 63.4 x 75.4 cm, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, The Arthur Boyd Gift 1975; *The Hammock* 1944, oil on cotton gauze on cardboard, 63.3 x 75.4 cm, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, The Arthur Boyd Gift 1975; *Figures on a Hammock below Flying Figure with Beast and Child* 1942, reed pen and...
ink on paper, 26 x 36.7 cm, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, purchased 1964; Arthur Boyd and Yvonne Lennie, Bendigo, 1942, photographer unknown, Bundanon Trust Archive, NSW.


7. (Clockwise from top left) Arthur Boyd, *Butterfly Hunter* 1943, oil on cotton gauze on cardboard, 63.4 x 75.1 cm, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, The Arthur Boyd Gift 1975; *Figure in Factory Chimney with Beast* 1942, reed pen and ink on paper, 25.9 x 36.4 cm, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, purchased 1964; *The Cemetery I* 1944, oil on cardboard, 63.3 x 75.4 cm, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, The Arthur Boyd Gift 1975; Merric Boyd, earthenware vase 1931, private collection.


9. (Left) Arthur Boyd, *The Mining Town (Casting the Money Lenders from the Temple)* c.1946, oil and tempera on composition board, 87.4 x 109.4 cm, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, purchased 1974; (Right) Pieter Brueghel the Elder, *The Tower of Babel*, oil on panel, 114 x 155 cm, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna.

10. (Clockwise from left) Arthur Boyd, *Boat Builders, Eden* 1948; Pieter Brueghel the Elder, *Landscape with the Fall of Icarus* c.1558, oil on canvas mounted on wood, 73.5 x 112 cm, Royal Museum of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels; Pieter Brueghel the Elder, *The Gloomy Day* 1565, oil on wood, 118 x 163 cm, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna.

11. (Left) Arthur Boyd, *The Goat Girl* 1953-4, oil, tempera and resin on composition board, 90 x 121.5 cm, private collection; (Right) Russell Drysdale, *Station Blacks, Cape York* 1953, oil on composition board, 60.5 x 72.5 cm, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, purchased 1954.


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14. (Clockwise from left) Arthur Boyd, *Bride Running Away* 1957, oil and tempera on composition board, 91.5 x 121.5 cm, private collection; Arthur Boyd, *Mother and Child* 1954, glazed ceramic, 61 x 46 x 22 cm, University of Western Australia, Perth, Tom Collins Bequest Fund 1955; Brassai, plasters of *Bust of Woman* and *Head of Woman*, Boisgeloup, December 1932, Musee Picasso, Paris.

15. (Clockwise from left) Arthur Boyd, *Wedding Group* 1957-8, oil and tempera on composition board, 130 x 160 cm, private collection, Melbourne; Marc Chagall, *The Bay of Angels* 1962, lithograph, 76.2 x 55.8 cm, Musee Chagall, Nice; Arthur Boyd, *Persecuted Lovers* 1957-8, oil and tempera on composition board, 137.2 x 182.9 cm, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, A.R. Ragless Bequest Fund 1964.


17. (Clockwise from top left) Arthur Boyd, *Bride with Lover (Bride Turning into a Windmill)* 1960, oil and tempera on composition board, 121.9 x 152.4 cm, private collection; Arthur Boyd, *Bride Drinking from a Pool* 1960, oil on canvas, 153 x 183.2 cm, TarraWarra Museum of Art, Victoria, gift of Eva and Marc Besen, 2001; Arthur Boyd, *Figure in Landscape (Nude Figure Washing in a Creek III)* 1961, oil and tempera on hardboard, 160 x 183 cm, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney; Arthur Boyd, *Nude Figure Washing* 1961, charcoal on paper under polyvinyl on composition board, 154.5 x 197 cm, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, The Arthur Boyd Gift 1975; Piero di Cosimo, *The Death of Procris* c.1495, oil on poplar, 65.4 x 184.2 cm, National Gallery, London.


21. (Clockwise from top left) Arthur Boyd, *Paintings in the Studio: Figure Supporting Back Legs’ and ‘Interior with Black Rabbit’* 1973-4, oil on canvas, 313.5 x 433.2 cm, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, The Arthur Boyd Gift, 1975; Sidney Nolan, *Constable Fitzpatrick and Kate Kelly* 1946, enamel paint on composition board, 90 x 121.2 cm, National Gallery of Australia, gift of Sunday Reed 1977; Arthur Boyd, *Chained Figure and Bent Tree* 1973, oil on canvas, 152.4 x 122 cm, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, The Arthur Boyd Gift 1975; Arthur Boyd, *Woman Holding Back Legs of Dog with Tree* c.1942, reed pen and ink on paper, 26 x 29 cm, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, purchased with the assistance of the Australian Contemporary Art Acquisition Programme of the Visual Arts Boards of the Australia Council 1975.

22. (Left) Arthur Boyd, *The Australian Scapegoat* 1987, oil on canvas, 275 x 426.5 cm, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, gift of the artist, 1994; (Right) Holman Hunt, *The Scapegoat* 1854-6, oil on canvas, 86 x 140 cm, Lady Lever Art Gallery, Port Sunlight, United Kingdom.


References: