

Arthur Boyd's *Pulpit Rock with Fire and Black Cockatoo*, c.1985, is a finely detailed study of one of his favourite motifs, the sedimentary rock formation that dominates the view from the artist's property Bundanon, which borders the Shoalhaven River in southern New South Wales. As with the area's original indigenous inhabitants who imbued Pulpit Rock with spiritual significance, Boyd was inevitably drawn to the promontory, returning time and time again to paint it with as much intensity and variation as Paul Cézanne brought to his own studies of Mont Sainte-Victoire in southern France. Boyd produced scores of paintings, drawings and prints featuring multiple viewpoints of Pulpit Rock, augmenting them with mythological themes, memories of his family, birds, intruding water skiers and more, but at their core was one essential element – he loved the area and his works reflect this.

Boyd's connection began with a chance encounter during the blazing summer of 1971-1972. Having lived in England for fourteen years, he returned to take up the position of Creative Arts Fellow at the Australian National University in Canberra. Invited to visit Bundanon, then a colleague's home, Boyd experienced a dramatic re-encounter with the stark contrasts of the Australian bush and the clarity of its light, one which was to have a profound influence on his future work. In 1974, Boyd and his wife Yvonne purchased the nearby property Riversdale, and in 1979, Bundanon was purchased too. Though linked, there are different moods to each site for: *(t)he river runs close to the house at Riversdale, giving entrancing views from every room. At Bundanon, the river is elusive, not visible from the house, but the changing light on Pulpit Rock gives weight and mystery to every hour.*

Interestingly, Boyd has reversed the aspect of the outcrop but the foreground of flat paddocks and the river is the same as seen from the homestead. Originally inspired by similar reversals in print-making, Boyd repeated this gesture in other key works such as *Skull on a Winter's Morning with Mist and Flame Trees*, 1981 and *Pulpit Rock and Black Cockatoos*, 1993. In 1991, Arthur and Yvonne Boyd gave the family's combined Shoalhaven properties to the people of Australia in a bold gesture designed to preserve this unique landscape. This gift continues to enrich the nation through the talents of legions of artists and writers who have subsequently spent residencies at Bundanon, deep in the heart of Boyd country.

Although not specifically titled in the catalogue, it is likely that *Pulpit Rock with Fire and Black Cockatoo* was exhibited at Sydney's Holdsworth Galleries in 1985 in an exhibition anchored around Boyd's images of the Shoalhaven region. Dame Kiri Te Kanawa's own connections to Australia are strong having been a regular visitor during her illustrious career, performing in venues as diverse as the Sydney Opera House and amidst the red sand of the outback. In paintings such as this, her affinity with the country is evident, as is her generosity, having loaned this classic Arthur Boyd image to the Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki for many years.

Andrew Gaynor



7 **ARTHUR MERRIC BLOOMFIELD BOYD** Australian 1920 -1999
Pulpit Rock with Fire and Black Cockatoo, c. 1985
 Oil on board 90 x 120
 Signed

\$160,000 - 230,000

Provenance:
 Holdsworth Galleries, NSW, label affixed verso
 Dame Kiri Te Kanawa Collection
 Long Term Loan, Auckland Art Gallery, Toi o Tāmaki
 label affixed verso

Exhibited:
Arthur Boyd, Holdsworth Galleries, Sydney, 4 - 22 May, 1985