Foreword

The Australian National University is committed to creativity as something extra to knowledge and talent, having an application across the arts and sciences. The exhibition Three Creative Fellows at the Drill Hall Gallery shows the University recognising the importance of creativity.

Art is a means of showing ourselves to ourselves. This truism applies to academic scholarship no less than to other areas of life. The three painters Sidney Nolan, Arthur Boyd and Narritjin Maymuru, whose works are displayed in the exhibition, have addressed the theme of creativity in different ways, and each with special fervour. That they were Creative Fellows of the Australian National University is a cause of great pride given the profound impression their paintings have had on the minds and memories of generations of Australians.

The Creative Arts Fellowships, now known as the HC Coombs Creative Arts Fellowships, began in 1964 as one of HC Coombs’ initiatives and continue today. Therefore, the exhibition also honours Nugget Coombs, who saw a future for the University in making creativity its ultimate ambition. It was his foresight and breadth of vision that led to the creative fellowships that have contributed so significantly to various facets of the arts in Australia.

The Creative Arts Fellowships have been the catalyst for a corpus of work that ranks amongst the best visual art produced in Australia. Over six decades the University has built up a collection that reflects significant developments in Australian art. It is now custodian of part of Australia’s patrimony and is committed to the ongoing development of this valuable asset.

The authors of the essays in the catalogue, Dr Mary Eagle and Professor Howard Morphy, are scholars of international standing in their fields. Dr Eagle, the curator of the exhibition, and a Research Fellow at the ANU, has written about Sidney Nolan’s and Arthur Boyd’s reflections on creativity. Professor Morphy, Acting Director of the Research School of the Humanities, has contributed a moving essay about the creation stories painted by Narritjin Maymuru.

The Drill Hall Gallery, through exhibitions such as this, in a selective program of high quality exhibitions of modern and contemporary art, links the University with the wider community locally, nationally and internationally.

Nolan’s major work in this exhibition, his Riverbend, is in the ANU Art Collection. The National Gallery of Australia, the National Museum of Australia, the Nolan Gallery, the National Gallery of Victoria and private collectors have lent key works. We gratefully acknowledge their support.

Ian Chubb AC
Vice-Chancellor
Australian National University