

The Boyd Mural “The Ascending Christ”

The commanding mural on the east wall of the Church behind the Altar is an outstanding work of art by the famous Australian artist [Arthur Boyd](#).

Arthur Merric Boyd (1920 – 1999) was part of the great dynastic Boyd family of artists, writers and sculptors. Arthur was probably the most famous of them all and is one of the greatest of Australia’s 20th century artists. He was 1995 Australian of the Year and had the unusual distinction of having an Australian Postage Stamp series in his honour while he was still living. Nowadays this is a much more common occurrence.

“*The Ascending Christ*” is a vast work measuring 5m by 8m. While giving the initial impression of being a mosaic, the mural is in fact painted in casein and tempura on a number of hardboard sections mounted together. The rich blues evoke the great Byzantine Church mosaics that used lapis lazuli gemstone and seek to evoke the mystery and beauty of heaven into which the Christ is now ascending. This mural depicts that profound mystical biblical event called The Ascension which occurred 40 days after the Resurrection of Christ Jesus. In this event, the risen Christ finally leaves behind his disciples and the earthly realm to return fully into the Kingdom of Heaven. The luminescent white ascending Christ seems has both arms outstretched as if in total embrace and blessing of the world he has come to redeem and to welcome back into the loving nurture of God. The Christ seems to hover like an empowering spiritual presence over the altar and all who are gathered in the church. “The Ascending Christ” forms an emphatic backdrop to the worship space and makes an awe-inspiring statement as you enter the church.

This current church is the third St Mary’s Church built in Morwell and was specifically designed to house the wonderful mural left in its care after the original church where the mural was placed, St John’s Yallourn, and the complete town of Yallourn, were demolished to make to make way for the Yallourn Open Cut coal mine. The Boyd Mural was valued in 1989 at \$120,000 and then in the year 2000 at \$500,000.