



TARRAWARRA
MUSEUM
OF ART

ASSEMBLED: The Art of Robert Klippel
installation view, TarraWarra Museum of Art, 2019
Photo: Andrew Curtis
© Andrew Klippel. Courtesy of The Robert Klippel Estate,
represented by Annette Larkin Fine Art, Sydney and Galerie
Gmurzynska, Zurich / Copyright Agency, 2019

Teacher's Notes

Assembled: The Art of Robert Klippel

Curated by Kirsty Grant
TarraWarra Museum of Art
23 November, 2019 – 16 February, 2020

Curriculum Links

This Education Resource is designed to compliment the exhibition **ASSEMBLED: The Art of Robert Klippel**, and focus student visits to TarraWarra Museum of Art. It can provide stimulus for discussion in the classroom with material that can be adapted for all levels and abilities.

The Education Resource for **ASSEMBLED: The Art of Robert Klippel** includes teacher's notes, a short artist biography, images for discussion and two sections which provide an opportunity to link to the Victorian Curriculum for VCE Art and Studio Arts.

The exhibition **ASSEMBLED: The Art of Robert Klippel** supports the Victorian Government education initiatives, Explore and Express Ideas, Visual Arts Practices, Present and Perform, and Respond and Interpret, as well as general capabilities including Critical and Creative Thinking, Ethical, Intercultural, and Personal and Social Capabilities.

ASSEMBLED: The Art of Robert Klippel supports the VCE Art and Studio Arts curriculum with a focus on Introducing the Analytical Frameworks, Discussing Art, and Art Industry Contexts.

Introduction

ASSEMBLED: The Art of Robert Klippel presents more than one hundred works by one of Australia's most significant twentieth century sculptors, Robert Klippel (1920–2001), a tireless inventor who experimented with unusual materials, techniques and scale.

The exhibition highlights three major aspects of Klippel's six decade-long career: the Surrealist-inspired sculptures and drawings made in London and Paris during the late 1940s; the 'assemblage' works including his so-called 'junk sculptures' of the 1960s and 70s; and his late timber works that often used brightly coloured machine pattern-parts.

Seeking to find what he described as the 'interrelationship between the cogwheel and the bud', Klippel drew upon a deep understanding of nature and the man-made world of machines to develop a distinctive three-dimensional language. He worked intuitively, combining rhythm, movement, weight, volume, proportion, tension, balance and texture in a dynamic dialogue to create a unique body of abstract sculpture.

Klippel's major statement using junk metal, *No. 247 Metal construction* (1965–68), comprises thousands of found typewriter parts. Regarded as a masterpiece within Klippel's oeuvre and within twentieth century Australian sculpture, it brilliantly displays his ability to convey a sense of the natural world using materials that are entirely man-made.

Another key work in the exhibition, *Nos 1037–1126 Eighty-seven small polychromed tin sculptures* (1995), consists of more than eighty small sculptures that exemplify Klippel's constant experimentation and innovation. Working with an array of everyday materials including champagne bottle caps and wires, plastic toys and tea strainers, he assembled a field of tiny forms, none of which measure more than fifteen centimetres in height, painting each element in bright colours, so that it appears like a miniature adventure playground.

Curated by Kirsty Grant and organised by TarraWarra Museum of Art, *ASSEMBLED: The Art of Robert Klippel* brings together works from private collections as well as major public institutions including the National Gallery of Australia, Art Gallery of New South Wales and National Gallery of Victoria.

Artist Biography

Robert Klippel was born in Potts Point, Sydney, in 1920 into a family of textile traders. After completing a wool-classing course in 1937, he worked in a woollen mill before joining the navy at the outbreak of World War Two. After several years of active service, Klippel's skill and passion for model making – something he had been doing since the age of six – saw him stationed in Sydney at the Gunnery Instruction Centre where he carved and built detailed models of aircraft used for identification training.

During his tenure at the Gunnery, Klippel spent time in Potts Point and Kings Cross and began to socialise with local artists and writers. He made a decision to study sculpture at East Sydney Technical College between 1944–46, realising as early as 1945 that 'sculpture must be revolutionised without the figure'. With financial support from his parents, he spent time living in London and studying life-drawing at the Slade School of Art, before moving Paris in 1948 where he met André Breton and other artists associated with the Surrealist movement.

Klippel returned to Sydney in mid-1950 and worked for his family while undertaking classes in oxy and arc-welding, silver soldering and panel-beating in an effort to refine his technical skills in sculpture. Leaving for New York in 1957, he took up a teaching post at the Minneapolis School of Art and held a solo exhibition at Parma Gallery, New York, in 1958. This would be the first of many successful exhibitions in America. While in New York, Klippel became a member of 'The Club', a highly influential artist group founded by Jackson Pollock and Willem de Kooning.

Klippel's first solo exhibition in Australia was held at Clune Galleries, Sydney, in 1962. Sixteen of the nineteen junk metal sculptures he shipped home from America for the exhibition were sold. Klippel returned to Australia in 1963, teaching for a number of years at Mary White School, the National Art School and in the Architecture department at UNSW. He returned to America in 1966 to take up a visiting professorship at the Minneapolis School of Art.

Returning to Sydney, Klippel lived in a large house with very little space dedicated to domestic life, with each room instead being devoted to a particular material or process. There were rooms for plastic, wood, metal, paper, cardboard, bronze, casting, assemblage, collage and drawing. Materials and objects were found or scrounged over many years and Klippel would work on a number of artworks at the same time, moving seamlessly between different media and different processes.

Hailed as Australia's most significant sculptor, Robert Klippel died in June 2001, having produced over 1200 sculptures and many more drawings and collages in his lifetime.



Robert Klippel, *Nos 1037-1126 Eighty-seven small polychromed tin sculptures* 1995
polychromed tin and wire
various dimensions

Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney
Gift of Andrew Klippel 2002

© Andrew Klippel. Courtesy of The Robert Klippel Estate, represented by Annette Larkin Fine Art, Sydney and Galerie Gmurzynska, Zurich / Copyright Agency, 2019