

People, their expressions, movements, interactions and activities were a source of endless inspiration for Karl Duldig.

Grounded in the observations of his immediate surroundings, his art can be read as a map of his journey to, and experiences in, Australia. For Duldig, every situation created boundless opportunities for his work, whether it was in a local café, an exotic setting such as colonial Singapore or within the barbed wire confines of an internment camp.

Duldig's rigorous training in Vienna ensured that, as an artist arriving in Australia, he was equipped with a sound knowledge and experience in the practice of a range of sculptural techniques as well as first hand exposure to many masterpieces from Western art practice. This strong sense of European tradition was critical to the recurring historical, mythological and religious themes in his work, such as the Madonna and Child, St George and the Dragon and the Trojan Horse.

Yet, his work was also driven by personal experiences and the circumstances by which he journeyed into new and unfamiliar territories. The points of connection to his environment were simple, everyday moments. He was captivated by the tilt of a head, the shift towards a half-kneeling pose, the bond between mother and child or the embrace of two lovers. Such insights into the human spirit and the study of the movement and the activity of those around him resulted in a prolific outpouring of work. Significantly, Duldig returned to particular themes, in a variety of media and formats, over several decades.

In Vienna, Duldig's early years of training focused on portrait busts, masks and figurative sculptures in soapstone and marble, such as *Head with Curls* [cat 4]. In Australia, his work continued to reference European subjects and to follow Anton Hanak's method of carving directly into stone without preliminary drawings or models. However, his art was charged with a new character, inspired by the necessity to adapt to a different environment and instinctively explore whatever materials were available to him. The loss of freedom he and his family experienced during their internment in Tatura (1940-42) profoundly affected his practice. He was forced, for example, to draw on toilet paper and envelopes, and to carve sculptures, such as *Fragment* [cat 10], with an axe from firewood.

In an environment largely devoid of cultural stimulation, Duldig sought inspiration from the activities of those around him. The pen and ink drawing *Ring a Ring a Rosie* [cat 50], shows child internees playing cheerfully around Duldig's life-size carving of a *Mother and Child* sculpture. Engrossed in their game, the children are oblivious to the barbed wire perimeter fence separating them from freedom. Although this was the first time the artist focused on the *caritas* subject, it became a predominant theme. Whilst serving in the Australian army a short time later, a small sculpture *Mother and Child* [cat 9], carved initially in a potato, also featured this subject.

During a short but artistically stimulating period in Singapore (1939-40), Duldig adopted the use of clay as an end medium for sculpture. His skill in handling this material was extended in Australia

where he completed monumental ceramic bas-reliefs and other life-size terracotta figures. By contrast a lighthearted, sometimes quirky and spontaneous, element to his art is evident in many small-scale terracotta and glazed sculptures, such as *St George and the Dragon* [cat 19].

After the war, Duldig and his wife Slawa, (also an artist of note) launched a business in hand made pottery, in order to supplement their income from teaching art. Duldig sourced local clays from Campbellfield and, in addition to producing functional coffee cups and ramekins, he made small, decorative one-off dishes and bowls [cats 11-18]. For these he found inspiration in Australian native flora, adapting the flowering gum motif in the context of traditional European folk designs.

During the 1950s and 1960's, Duldig's work evolved according to his growing interest in abstraction. A pivotal work from this period, *Moses* [cat 24], demonstrates his ability to use clay (terracotta) to recreate a traditional subject in a distinctive form. The strong sense of monumentality conveyed in this work was recognised by his peers in 1956, who voted him Victorian Sculptor of the Year. *Knight* [cat 30], carved in wood and first exhibited in the Mildura Sculpture Triennial in 1964, embraces cubist and abstract principles far removed from his early European work, whilst the *Tyrolean Madonna* [cat 27] expresses a new vision of the *caritas* subject. Experimenting further, he explored voids and the idea of creating form through space – a concept he pursued in a number of 1950's masks [cats 20-23] and later in *Nofretête* [cat 34]. Open to new cultural influences he embraced Australian sporting and historical icons in *When the Big Men Fly* [cat 25] and *Ned Kelly* [cat 33]. Duldig's innovative approach, in which he explored modernist forms and methods, was also informed by a range of other influences including Egyptian and Greek art, indigenous and islander imagery, and European folk traditions.

Hanak's guiding principle that the artist should be aware of the unique qualities of each material and work within its limitations was foremost in his mind when he created a series of figures in beeswax. This new material inspired him to model *Kicking Out and Dancing Figures* [cats 36-38]. Instinctively, he used the qualities of the wax to create slender, effervescent figures, in stark contrast to the sculptures executed in the more traditional mediums of stone, wood or clay.

During the last decade of his life Duldig devoted his energy to reworking early small maquettes into a larger format. His fascination with the kneeling female figure, *Aphrodite* [cat 5], first modeled in Vienna in 1930, was re-invented in *Koré* [cat 37]. The warmth and affection conveyed in the 1922 reclining group *Young Love* [cat 3], appears again in the intimate small sculpture, *Two Standing Figures* [cat 46]. Modeled spontaneously from very wet clay in a minimal and impressionistic manner, it re-affirms his creative spirit in yet another, final, guise.

Louisa Scott
August 2006

- 1. Rella**
c.1922, bronze (1999),
42.0 x 24.0 x 25.5 cm, Inv. No. 1433.
- 2. Crouched Figure**
c.1923, steatite,
18.0 x 15.0 x 10.0 cm, Inv. No. 206.
- 3. Young Love**
c.1924, bronze (1983),
20.5 x 51.5 x 18.0 cm, Inv. No. 720.
- 4. Head with Curls**
c.1924, marble,
52.9 x 28.0 x 31.1 cm, Inv. No. 695.
- 5. Aphrodite**
c.1930, bronze (1983),
26.5 x 13.4 x 11.8 cm, Inv. No. 265.
- 6. Malay Boy**
1939, bronze (1960s),
30.6 x 17.7 x 21.9 cm, Inv. No. 283.
- 7. Slawa**
1940, bronze (1976),
33.8 x 25.0 x 21.5 cm, Inv. No. 231.
- 8. Crouching**
1942, bronze (1992),
16.5 x 8.2 x 6.0 cm, Inv. No. 93.
- 9. Mother and Child**
1942, bronze (1992),
20.0 x 6.7 x 7.8 cm, Inv. No. 95.
- 10. Fragment**
1942, red gum,
41.0 x 27.0 x 27.0 cm.
- 11. Bowl**
c.1948, glazed earthenware,
5.8 x 17.1 (diam.) cm, Inv. No. 1359.
- 12. Bowl**
c.1948, glazed earthenware,
4.6 x 12.5 (diam.) cm, Inv. No. 1360.
- 13. Dish**
c.1948, glazed earthenware,
3.8 x 9.1 (diam.) cm, Inv. No. 1378.
- 14. Dish**
c.1948, glazed earthenware,
3.6 x 11.2 (diam.) cm, Inv. No. 1380.
- 15. Bowl**
c.1948, glazed earthenware,
3.4 x 12.4 (diam.) cm, Inv. No. 1383.
- 16. Bowl**
c.1948, glazed earthenware,
4.5 x 8.7 (diam.) cm, Inv. No. 1385.
- 17. Platter**
c.1950, glazed earthenware,
0.8 x 12.2 (diam.) cm, Inv. No. 1376.
- 18. Bowl**
c.1950, glazed earthenware,
3.5 x 13.0 (diam.) cm, Inv. No. 1377.
- 19. St. George and the Dragon**
c.1955, glazed earthenware,
12.5 x 7.5 x 14.5 cm, Inv. No. 45.
- 20. Mask (The Key)**
c.1955, terracotta and pigments,
21.0 x 13.5 x 10.1 cm, Inv. No. 391.

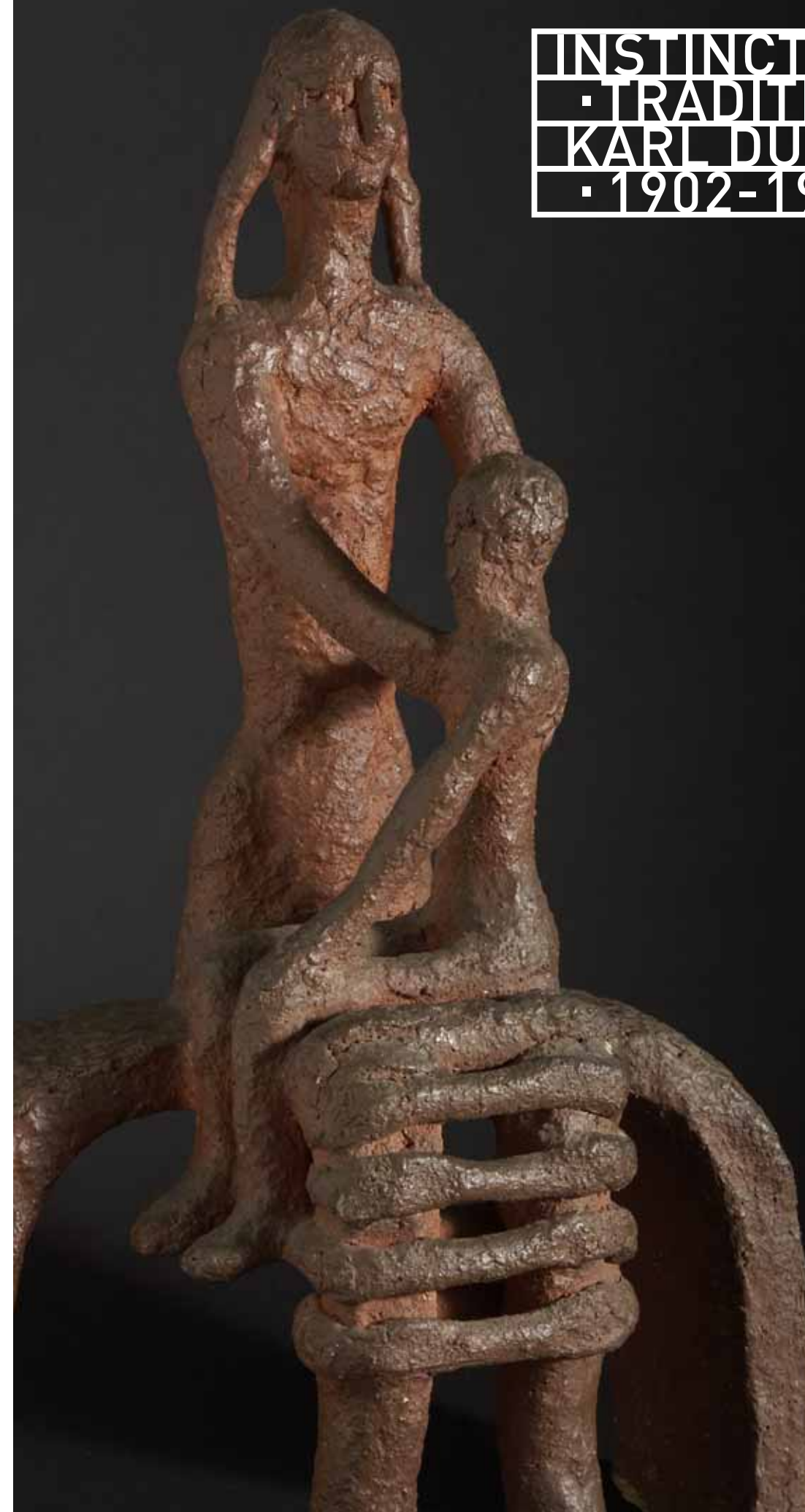
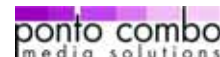
- 21. Mask (The Machine)**
c.1955, earthenware,
19.0 x 13.8 x 9.6 cm, Inv. No. 395.
- 22. Mask**
c.1955, earthenware and pigments,
17.0 x 11.5 x 6.7 cm, Inv. No. 566.
- 23. Mask**
c.1955, terracotta and pigments,
19.8 x 11.5 x 7.0 cm, Inv. No. 392.
- 24. Moses**
1956, bronze (1979),
103.5 x 43.5 x 30.0 cm, Inv. No. 1309.
- 25. When the Big Men Fly**
1958, bronze (1978),
41.6 x 23.0 x 20.0 cm, Inv. No. 264.
- 26. The Family**
c.1960, earthenware,
29.0 x 14.0 x 14.0 cm, Inv. No. 284.
- 27. Tyrolean Madonna**
c.1960, earthenware and salt glaze,
73.0 x 42.0 x 26.5 cm.
- 28. Awakening**
1962, bronze [c.1968],
73.0 x 19.0 x 21.0 cm Inv. No. 280.
- 29. Knight**
1963, wood,
48.0 x 17.4 x 16.0 cm.
- 30. Mother and Child**
c.1965, terracotta and salt glaze,
55.0 x 33.0 x 27.5 cm, Inv. No. 334.
- 31. Together (No. 2)**
c.1965, bronze (1970),
24.3 x 17.2 x 14.7 cm, Inv. No. 26
- 32. Playing with Baby**
1965, bronze (1970),
21.0 x 47.0 x 10.5 cm, Inv. No. 325.
- 33. Copper Figure (Ned Kelly)**
c.1970, copper,
27.5 x 15.0 x 11.0 cm, Inv. No. 861.
- 34. Nofretête**
c.1970, bronze (2002),
56.4 x 19.2 x 23.6 cm, Inv. No. 1445.
- 35. Tango**
1976, bronze,
24.0 x 14.9 x 5.5 cm, Inv. No. 256.
- 36. Kicking Out**
1976, bronze,
33.8 x 7.3 x 17.8 cm, Inv. No. 259.
- 37. Dancing Figure (1)**
1976, bronze,
34.8 x 15.0 x 13.3 cm, Inv. No. 262.
- 38. Dancing Figure**
1976, bronze,
34.5 x 10.0 x 11.0 cm, Inv. No. 268.
- 39. Koré**
1976, bronze (1978),
80.0 x 33.0 x 39.0 cm, Inv. No. 1183.
- 40. Figure**
c.1978, marble and alabaster,
43.0 x 7.5 x 8.0 cm, Inv. No. 235.

- 41. Trojan Horse**
c.1978, glazed terracotta,
26.4 x 33.0 x 10.3 cm, Inv. No. 449.
- 42. Mother and Children**
1979, terracotta,
67.5 x 30.3 x 18.9 cm, Inv. No. 270.
- 43. Girl with Pony**
c.1979, terracotta,
56.3 x 47.0 x 22.5 cm, Inv. No. 1182.
- 44. Bowl with Five Children**
c.1979, glazed terracotta,
16.7 x 27.8 x 26.5 cm, Inv. No. 1446.
- 45. Brummet's Café**
c.1980, terracotta,
23.0 x 28.0 x 16.0 cm, Inv. No. 311.
- 46. Two Standing Figures**
c.1980, terracotta,
29.0 x 10.2 x 11.5 cm, Inv. No. 776.
- 47. Self-Portrait**
c.1932, pencil,
28.0 x 21.2 cm, Inv. No. 3583.
- 48. Malay Boy**
1940, pen and ink,
16.3 x 14.8 cm, Inv. No. 3007.
- 49. Ring-a-Ring-a-Rosie**
1941, pen and ink,
30.3 x 21.0 cm, Inv. No. 3026.
- 50. Self-Portrait**
1941, pen and ink,
30.3 x 21.2 cm, Inv. No. 3622.
- 51. Cassandra**
c.1965, woodcut, brush and ink,
44.4 x 18.0 cm, Inv. No. 3232.
- 52. Cellist**
c.1965, pencil,
16.9 x 12.7 cm, Inv. No. 3643.
- 53. St. George and the Dragon**
c.1969, pigments and glue,
29.0 x 39.5 cm, Inv. No. 3052.
- 54. Girl with Dog**
1972, watercolour,
31.4 x 22.4 cm, Inv. No. 3031.
- 55. Pieter**
1974, pen and ink,
20.5 x 14.5 cm, Inv. No. 3652.
- 56. Self-Portrait**
c.1976, pen and ink,
27.8 x 19.2 cm, Inv. No. 3651.
- 57. Head of a Girl**
1985, charcoal,
56.0 x 37.0 cm, Inv. No. 3178.

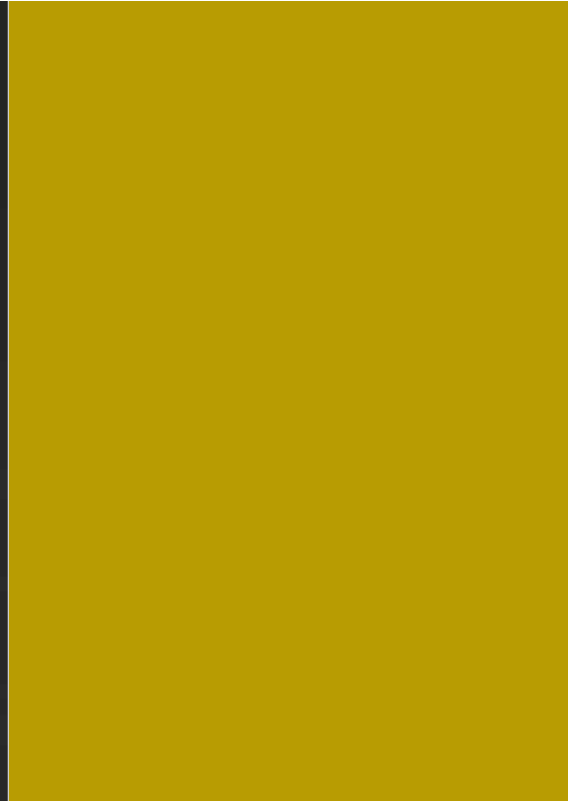
The Duldig Studio gratefully acknowledges the loan of *Fragment* [cat 10], Newcastle Region Art Gallery; *Tyrolean Madonna* [cat 27], private collection and *Knight* [cat 29], private collection. All other displayed works are held in The Duldig Studio collection.

For further information regarding public talks and education programs please visit www.duldig.org.au or phone (03) 9855 3358

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INSTINCT AND
TRADITION
KARL DULDIG
1902-1986



 Karl Duldig (1902-1986) belonged to the generation of European artists who arrived in Australia during World War II and who greatly enriched Australian artistic practice. In the early 1920s he studied under Anton Hanak, a highly regarded sculptor, at the School of Applied Arts in Vienna. He furthered his studies at the Academy of Fine Arts before graduating from the Academy's prestigious Master Class in 1933.

Duldig, his wife Slawa, also a noted artist, and daughter Eva fled to Switzerland after the annexation of Austria by Germany in 1938. From there they obtained visas for Singapore where they established a successful art school. At the same time Karl secured significant private commissions, including life-size portrait sculptures for Aw Boon Haw, the Tiger Balm millionaire.

This short, but artistically stimulating, period of their lives ended in 1940 when the colonial authorities deported them to Australia. The Duldigs arrived in Sydney in September of that year. Classified as 'enemy aliens' they were interned at Tatura, Victoria.

Karl was released to join the Second AIF 8th Employment Company in 1942. Discharged on medical grounds, he worked initially at Sunshine Potteries and then at Victory Publicity as a lithographer. In 1944 he was appointed Senior Art Master at Mentone Grammar School, a position he held for twenty-three years.

For more than four decades in Melbourne, Karl Duldig was active as an exhibiting artist, teacher and mentor. In 1956 his peers voted him Victorian Sculptor of the Year and his work is held in numerous collections, including the National Gallery of Victoria. He was a passionate advocate for sculpture in public places and his final commission, the *Raoul Wallenberg Monument* (Kew Junction), was unveiled in 1985.

