

## Floorplan



# Modernism

Karl Duldig, A European Modernist in Australia



Karl trained as a sculptor in Vienna in the 1920s in the methods of the Viennese Secessionists – early modernists whose motto was ‘To every age its art –to art its freedom’. He came to Australia, via Singapore, at a time of great debate about the value of ‘modern’ art. Karl was one of an influential group of European émigrés who arrived at this time. He brought both an understanding of traditional sculpture training as well as a more modern attitude which stressed experimentation, responsiveness to material, a belief in the value of freedom in art and that good art and design should encompass all aspects of life, from the smallest bowl to the grandest mural.

## Studio

The Studio holds Karl’s entire career - here you can get the best sense of his practice, how he worked and the range of styles, methods and materials which he covered in his career. You are closest to the artist in the Studio, which he designed and built in 1962.

Photograph: Karl’s works displayed in room of his family’s apartment, Vienna, 1925



### 1. Kneeling nude (c.1924) marble (centre)

This remarkable Viennese work was exhibited there in 1929. Carving directly into stone, Karl has revealed the figure. No preliminary drawings, models or maquettes were made for works such as these – a method his teacher Anton Hanak encouraged his students to use. Hanak also encouraged the use of other materials, such as steatite, and taught his students to be aware of the limitations and possibilities of the material.



### 2. Enigma (c.1924) marble (far right)

Karl found this piece of marble in Hanak’s Studio. The stone was difficult to carve with many fault lines that could fracture at any moment. This powerful image was conceived in the round and the untouched surfaces are also an important part of the sculpture.



### 3. Malay Boy (1940/1965) plaster (far wall, right)

This is the original plaster cast of a portrait head of a ball boy which Karl sculpted in Singapore in 1940. He found the culture, the people and the art he saw there inspirational. He tried new techniques and materials, and began to work more in clay as it was easily available and suited the climate.



### 4. Moses (1956) bronze (right)

The terracotta of this sculpture won the Victorian Artists’ Society Sculptor of the Year award in 1956. According to the artist’s daughter, ‘The original terracotta sculpture was the first contemporary sculpture acquired by the NGV’. It was exhibited in the Arts Festival exhibition held in Melbourne in association with the Olympic Games in 1956. The NGV also has a bronze cast acquired in 1979.



### 5. Totem (1968) wood (right of kiln)

Totem is one of a relatively small number of abstract sculptures Karl created – carved from a eucalypt branch taken from the bush. Karl has subtly shaped the wood, while leaving large areas untouched. It expresses his love of nature and movement and is one of a series in eucalypt with which he loved to work.



# Garden

The Sculpture Garden is also filled with work from all periods and many styles and techniques. Karl Duldig regarded his sculpture garden as an integral part of his working space. The sculptures were placed by him and many are still on their original plinths. Some have been added and moved over time.



## 6. Digger (c.1942) sandstone (Courtyard garden)

This piece featured on the catalogue cover of Karl's first solo exhibition in Australia in 1945. A modernist image of a soldier, it was carved by Karl while in the Army from a shallow slab of sandstone.



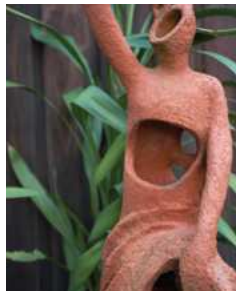
## 7. Masks (various dates) glazed and unglazed terracotta (Studio, Sunroom)

These ceramic masks can be seen on the walls of the Studio, and the house. Karl explored this subject throughout his life. The influence of other cultures, such as African art can be seen. The row under the lintel of his Studio was part of his original design for the building.



## 8. Kneeling figure (1968) terracotta (Back garden)

In this work Karl is interested to demonstrate his method of building up his large terracotta sculptures entirely hollow. Taking a favourite subject, Karl has deliberately cut out sections of the form to expose the internal spaces. The effects produced by this 'negative space' were explored by many modernist sculptors, notably Henry Moore and Barbara Hepworth. In 1955 Sun Cartoonist 'Weg' noticed the similarities with the teaching of the Viennese art teacher at Mentone Grammar!



## 9. Eclipse (1979) terracotta (Back garden)

A technically challenging piece as no wire support is used for the curved shapes. These abstract interlocking forms clearly show the artist's finger marks on the surface of the work.



## 10. Adam and Eve (1950) sandstone (Porch)

This sculpture was displayed in the Olympic Games Art Exhibition in 1956. The figures and snake are abstracted, carved from architectural mouldings salvaged from a church in Camberwell. They were painted by Karl and remnants of the original paint are still visible.



## 11. Fallen warrior (1968) Wood, cement and copper (Porch)

Originally burnished copper which has now oxidized, this is a powerful semi-abstract piece. The artist's daughter recounts that the name was given to it by Slawa Duldig (née Horowitz). The hand-beaten copper plates were nailed with copper tacks into the wooden form. It was widely exhibited in the 1970s (Como House, Alexandra Gardens, McClelland Sculpture Gallery and Mt Eliza) and remains one of the artist's most interesting works.



## Sitting room

Clearly in taste and sensibility Karl and Slawa Duldig (née Horowitz) were modernists. Their taste, as seen in their furniture and interior decoration choices was typical of the Viennese early modernism popular when they were a young married couple in the 1930s. They bought this house in 1955. Slawa chose a striking fabric from Georges for the new curtains and set out the furniture as it would have been in Vienna.



Slawa in their apartment at Enzingergasse 2, Vienna c. 1931.

## 12. Viennese Furniture

This **coffee table, chairs, stools and side table** were commissioned by Slawa before their marriage in 1931. They were manufactured by the prestigious Viennese furniture designers Sigmund Jaray to her designs. They are made of Circassian walnut. The chairs are upholstered in grey wool with horse hair filling. Some of the leather straps have been replaced. The standing lamp is also from this firm. Stylistically the furniture is reminiscent of the post-World War 1 Viennese Modernism of architect Adolf Loos.

## Dining Room

### 13. Bookcase and central light fitting

The modernist bookcase (left) also designed by Slawa and central light fitting are from the apartment Karl and Slawa lived in when first married. The architect and designer Adolf Loos had created similar pieces of furniture with integrated functions which suited the apartment of his clients in Vienna in the early 1900s.

### 14. Mask (1921) marble (stand, right of door)

This is a master work of Karl's youth, completed when he was 19 and chosen by Anton Hanak to represent the Kunstgewerbeschule (School of Arts and Crafts), where Karl studied, in an international exhibition in Munich in 1925. It is carved directly into the stone, without preliminary drawings – a departure from traditional techniques. Mask was exhibited in the NGV's 2011 exhibition, **Vienna: Art and Design**.



## Sunroom

### 15. Prophet (1953) earthenware (bench, centre)

An early piece in Karl's series of works exploring 'negative space'. Karl created a number of related works usually with some reference to the human figure. The sculpture was critically acclaimed when first exhibited.



### 16. Nofretéte

#### (c. 1970) terracotta (left of door)

A powerful, semi-abstract work based on Karl's impressions of the Egyptian head of Nefertiti in the Neues Museum, Berlin which he saw in his youth. Again, he explores space and textural qualities are emphasised.



### 17. Dawn

#### (1968 pictured, front cover) bronze (bench)

This is a small version of the Holocaust monument to Hakoah, the Jewish Soccer team, unveiled in Tel Aviv, Israel, in 1968. Karl considered the monument the most important work he created during his career. He had played for Hakoah in his youth and so the work had deep personal significance.

