

Art: Robert Klippel

By John McDonald

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Lived: Birchgrove, Sydney. **Age:** 1920-2001. **Represented by:** Annette Larkin Fine Art, Sydney; no Melbourne gallery.

His thing: Abstract sculptures and works on paper, many small in scale.



No Title (No. 1135) (1985), by Robert Klippel, 36 wax bronze sculptures.

Our take: Bob Klippel is widely regarded as Australia's foremost sculptor. A disciple of Modernism, the bulk of his work is completely abstract, yet he began as a maker of model ships. This grounding proved fundamental to his sculpture, which includes a huge variety of miniature pieces. The National Gallery of Australia owns 2500 works, most of them small. Only Arthur Boyd is better represented.

In *Poetically Microscopic*, Annette Larkin works with the Klippel estate to present a series of tiny bronzes and mixed-media sculptures, along with 12 works on paper. Those who visited the artist in his Birchgrove house and studio were accustomed to the sight of many hundreds of small collages and sculptures lying around in various stages of completion. Klippel would prowl all day, adjusting and changing details until he was satisfied.

The result is a virtual universe of micro-artefacts combining organic and geometric forms, different colours, materials and patterns. The smaller items in this show are as colourful and playful as anything by Alexander Calder. The major piece is a collection of 36 small, constructed sculptures cast in bronze. It's an entire exhibition on a tabletop.

Can I afford it? The 36-piece ensemble, known as *No Title (No. 1135)* (1985, pictured), is the most expensive inclusion in the show, selling for \$220,000 (dimensions variable, the tallest is 9.6cm). This is still a long way from Klippel's record price of \$558,580, paid for a similar work, *Opus 361 (Eighteen Miniature Constructions)*, at auction in 2006.

The least expensive pieces are two framed works on paper, *AKD 526* (4.5cm x 5.3cm, 1991) and *AKD 523* (4.7cm x 5.1cm, 1986). These small paintings are only \$2000, which means that even collectors of slender means can afford something by one of the nation's most renowned artists.

Where can I have a quiz? Annette Larkin Fine Art, Suite 4, 8 Soudan Lane, Paddington, Sydney, until December 1; annettelarkin.com

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