



romberg

1913–1992

Frederick Romberg: an architectural survey

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Since its beginning the RMIT Design Archives has actively sought methods of engaging contemporary design practitioners in contributing to its innovative approaches to collecting and research.

The Romberg Collection, deposited in 2008, documents the practice of eminent Melbourne architect Frederick Romberg. It has been over ten years since the first and last exposition on Romberg's output was held at RMIT Gallery. That exhibition and subsequent publication, *Frederick Romberg: The Architecture of Migration 1936-1975*, continue to serve as the most complete public record of his work to date.¹

Frederick Romberg: an architectural survey is a collaborative interdisciplinary project that has approached the Romberg Collection with the intention of examining not only his architectural output, but the many ways in which the collection might be seen to work and have implications for contemporary discourse on design. It has sought from the nuances of a collection - the frayed edges, the insistent folds - an active archive.

Four pieces from the collection form the focus of the Romberg project: a poignant tin box that contains Romberg's student portfolio which he brought with him on his journey to Australia; a presentation photograph album of his early work; a red cloth album documenting a return journey to Europe; and a large green scrapbook that collages the work from Romberg's career and clearly exhibits the hand of the architect in its creation.

One outcome of the project, this special issue of the *RMIT Design Archives Journal*, is presented as a collection of posters that can be read together or separately. It does not draw conclusions; it simply implies that the messy resolve of a life can be brought together on one page. Essays drawn from Romberg's own account of his life and work and his travel scholarship paper, 'Australian Journey 1938', address his early life as an architecture student in Zurich, his passage to Australia from Europe, early architectural practice in Melbourne, and, an impression of his home here. The essays are accompanied by detailed three-dimensional examinations of selected buildings.

The second output of 'Frederick Romberg: an architectural survey' is a film by Keith Deverell who has also sought the framework for his project from among the printed material, scrapbooks, photograph albums, correspondence, plans, office records and personal papers that form the Romberg Collection. The artefacts produced by the project will in turn be brought into the RMIT Design Archives, constituting a collection within a collection. This collaboration will serve as evidence of the extraordinary life of an archive.

Project members:

Kaye Ashton: project management
 Stephen Banham: graphic identity
 Keith Deverell: film
 Harriet Edquist: architectural historian
 Michael Spooner: architectural visualisation and essays
 Letó Melanie Tsolakis: architectural visualisation

Michael Spooner, GUEST EDITOR

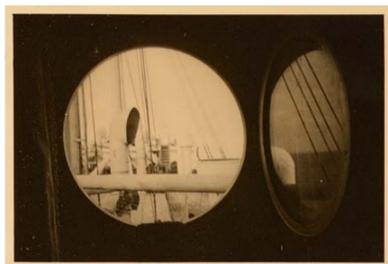
1. Harriet Edquist (ed), *Frederick Romberg. The Architecture of Migration 1936-1975*, Melbourne: RMIT University Press, 2000

Front image: Frederick Romberg (1937) on his BMW motorbike which was transported to Melbourne in 1938



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Above: Albums from Romberg Collection, RMIT Design Archives. Frederick Romberg monogram.



Top Left: View through porthole of Romberg's cabin aboard the Mosel.

Above: The passengers of the Mosel (From left to right, standing) Mr Hamburger, Mrs & Mr Lieblich, Miss Graetz, Miss Roehricht, Mr Falkenstein, Mr Rubensohn, Dr Stratmann, Mrs & Miss Falkenstein, Mr Riess. (From left to right, on deckchairs) Frederick Romberg, Schnucki Lieblich, Mr & Mrs Arnholz, Mrs Rubensohn, Mrs Riess. Romberg took this photo with a self-release on his Leica camera.

Bottom Left: The good ship Mosel, Norddeutscher Lloyd, Bremen, 1938.



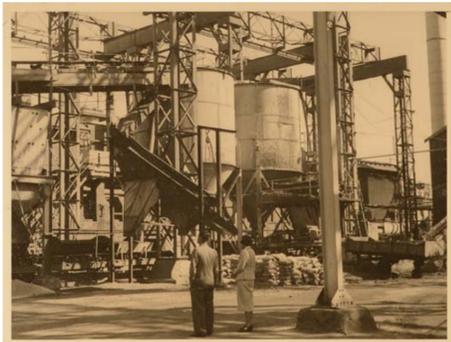
Top and Middle: Unlike his master, the captain's dog, Fix, was friends with all passengers, be they Dr Stratmann or Herr Rubensohn.

Right: Deck tennis contestants: Schnucki Lieblich, Herr Hamburger, Frederick Romberg and Dr Stratmann.



Above: Frederick Romberg, pencil sketch of Eise Ribbeling, 1934.

Right: Johanna, Eise & Dr Hans Ribbeling, Harburg, 1946.



Top Left: Stormy and cold in the Southern Hemisphere.

Top Right: Spencer Gulf, South Australia, September 1938.

Bottom Left: Schnucki Lieblich and Herr Hamburger inspecting the lead smelter at Port Pirie, South Australia, September 1938.

Bottom Right: On the wharf at Port Pirie, Schnucki Lieblich is about to set foot on Australian soil, September 1938.



Top: Beauty treatment administered by Herr Riess for Dr Stratmann who is about to rejoin his family in Adelaide, 1938.

Middle: The captain of the Mosel addressing ship's company at the 'Crossing of the Line' ceremony.

Bottom: Deck tennis contestants: Schnucki Lieblich, Herr Hamburger, Frederick Romberg and Dr Stratmann.

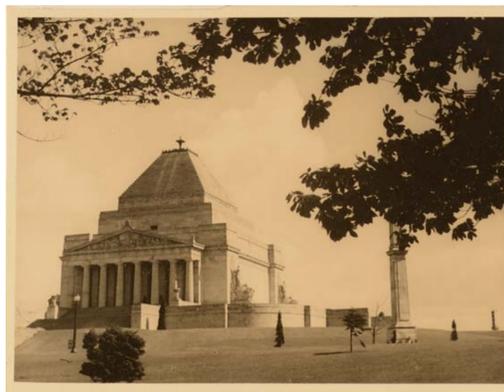


Left Panel: Verena Romberg with children at Romberg House, Heidelberg, c1954.

Above: View from the Shrine of Remembrance to the city, Melbourne, September 1938.

Top Right: The Shrine of Remembrance, Melbourne, September 1938.

Bottom Right: View of Sydney Harbour Bridge, Sydney, 1938.



This page: Captions accompanying personal photographs transcribed from Frederick Romberg, 'Before Gromby: an architectural history', 1966.



Above: Frederick Romberg, c1954

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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