In commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the birth of Robert Klein (1918-2018), this conference will bring together scholars to reconsider the published and unpublished works of one of the most erudite and inventive art historians of the twentieth century. At stake is the question of defining Klein’s historiographical, critical, and theoretical positioning, as well as his contribution to the history of art and philosophy.

To date, no sustained study has yet been dedicated to Klein and his work, in part due to his tragic death in Florence in 1967, and the subsequent disappearance of a large part of his manuscripts (including his work on ars and technè from Plato to Giordano Bruno, his thesis on the aesthetics of technè in the sixteenth century, his study of the so-called Mantegna Tarocchi, and an essay on responsibility). The rediscovery of Klein’s unpublished papers, donated to the library of the INHA in 2013, document his contribution to the redefinition of the discipline of art history and invite a reconsideration of his work. As the recent publication of his thesis L’esthétique de la technè (INHA, 2017) has shown, Klein undertook in particular to rethink Renaissance art and its history, bringing to bear the Aristotelian notion of technè and offering a vision of Renaissance artistic production quite different from the Neoplatonic ideals to which it is often linked. This conference will shed more light on these investigations as well as on the intellectual journey of an important art historian and philosopher of the past century.
THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 8
(Villa I Tatti)

INTRODUCTION

10:00 Welcome coffee
10:45 Alina Payne (Villa I Tatti/Harvard University)
Welcome and introduction

SESSION 1: KLEIN IN HISTORY
Chair: Carlo Ginzburg (UCLA)

11:00 Henri Zerner (Harvard University)
Some remarks on the man Robert Klein
11:30 Jérémie Koering (Centre André Chastel/ Sorbonne Université)
Robert Klein, intellectual wanderings
12:00 Alessandra Russo (Columbia University)
Universal ingenium. The artist’s new world in the 16th century

12:30 Discussion
13:00 Buffet lunch

SESSION 2: AT THE CROSSROADS
Chair: Alina Payne (Villa I Tatti/Harvard University)

14:30 Maria Loh (CUNY, Hunter College)
The author as spirito peregrino
15:00 Yve-Alain Bois (Institute for Advanced Study)
Klein’s response to modern art
15:30 Discussion
16:00 Antonella Fenech (Centre André Chastel/ Sorbonne Université)
Klein e i Tarocchi di Mantegna
16:30 Sabine Guermouche (EHESS)
Robert Klein and the “Warburgian” legacy

17:00 Discussion
17:30 Tea

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 9
(Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz)

SESSION 3: KLEIN AND IMAGES
Chair: Ingrid Greenfield (Villa I Tatti)

16:00 Antonella Fenech (Centre André Chastel/ Sorbonne Université)
Klein e i Tarocchi di Mantegna
16:30 Sabine Guermouche (EHESS)
Robert Klein and the “Warburgian” legacy

17:00 Discussion

SESSION 4: ON MANNERISM AND ART THEORY OF THE CINQUECENTO
Chair: Fabian Jonietz (KHI)

10:15 Massimiliano Rossi (Università di Salerno)
Decline of the Arts and Apogee of Criticism: Late Sixteenth-Century Italian Treatises in Klein’s Thought
10:45 Coffee

SESSION 5: KLEIN, PHILOSOPHY AND ETHICS
Chair: Nicholas Terpstra
(University of Toronto/Villa I Tatti)

11:00 Patricia Falguières (EHESS)
Klein’s Lomazzo
11:30 Marco Ruffini (Sapienza Università di Roma)
Robert Klein e il problema del gusto
12:00 Discussion
13:00 Cold buffet lunch for presenters

SESSION 6: ART THEORY AND POLITICS
Chair: Carlo Severi (EHESS)

15:45 Carlo Ginzburg (UCLA)
Technê and its Implications: A Political approach to Paragone
16:15 Alessandro Nova (KHI)
Stile e iconografia: Robert Klein e il Sogno di Raffaello di Marcantonio Raimondi
16:45 Discussion and Conclusion