



**By Jeff Davis**

I recently had the opportunity to visit the sculpture studio of [Debbie Korbel](#) which is located within the massive 44,000 square foot [Hawthorne Arts Complex](#). Debbie is one of about 60+ artists (painters, sculptors, ceramicist, photographers, resin and fiber artists) that maintain a working studio at the art mega-space.

Entering her 400 square foot studio you will get a good glimpse into what goes on in her mind—there is an “organized explosion” of colors, textures, shapes and thought-provoking ideas. Sculpture, both cast and assemblage, in various stages of completion cover the floors, walls, worktables and pedestals. The works range in size from 6 inches square to well over 6 feet (wingspan and/or height). The artist’s assemblage sculpture involves the collection of found objects that are repurposed in the creation of new composite sculptures.

The assemblages are put together by drilling, screwing, welding, tying, and/or cementing the components over the course of weeks or months. At times Korbel has a preconceived idea about what she wants to create, however, her work can also be driven by song lyrics, one of her poems or an existing reference. The process is iterative and involves repeated arrangement, deconstruction and reassembly of the sculpture over weeks or months to balance her concept with the physical representation of that idea in a finished sculpture.

“Metamorphosis,” an anthropomorphized butterfly, pictured below, is about passion and the emotions of love evolving and changing over time. The face is sculpted and cast in resin. The wings were created from such disparate elements as moose antlers, fan spokes, a section from a wine rack, radiator cooling fins and driftwood which are highlighted with paint in rich iridescent hues. Her color palate and balance are exquisite, the pigments flow from one into another with ease. The “butterfly man’s” eyes are set back and are red with longing for someone. The lyrics on his right wing read: “I see your lips moving but I can’t hear a sound,” “I am lost in the cathedral of your eyes.” His glass red heart is cracked inside of his burnt wooden chest cavity. It looks like he flew too close to love and has been scarred.



*Metamorphosis: Moose antlers, rake, fan, radiator components, wood, plastic, ceramic, steel, wire and other found materials, 82” x 65”.*  
– Courtesy photo / Jeff Davis + Debbie Korbel

The components for the sculptures come from a number of sources including: scrap and junk yards, construction sites, beach walks while on vacation and of course friends and family that continually source and text her objects of interest. “Once you are known for collecting these types of objects the materials begin to flow toward the studio like moths towards a flame.”

Korbel’s cast resin and bronze works have similar themes involving emotions, humor and a number of everyday taboo subjects; things that everyone thinks about but are afraid at times to discuss (sex, body image, body parts, sexual orientation). The majority of the works involve some degree of humor. “The Kiss” depicts a conjoined woman with two heads staring lovingly into each other’s eyes and at the same time caressing “their” body. The work was originally sculpted in clay and then cast in bronze. It deals with fantasy, sensuality, sexuality and one’s body; and of course, one of the most basic of human desires, to love and be loved. She realizes her artistic sensibilities may not be “mainstream” but is always grateful to find her audience. She is thrilled to be able to include Steven Tyler (Aerosmith) as one of her collectors. He purchased “The Kiss” and was interviewed by Harvey Levin on his TV show [“Objectified”](#) August 2018.



“The Kiss”, Bronze, oil paint, wire, 37”H x 13”W’ x 13”D, Work in Progress

Debbie's workmanship, technique and craftsmanship are apparent in all her work. Her integration of found objects, sculpture and painting work together brilliantly. Although she never obtained formal art school training, she was "so very fortunate to be mentored by a brilliant sculptor, George Lafayette." Korbel said she is always striving to improve her technique but clearly, she also possesses an inherent talent and creativity.

The title for her sculpture, "Happiness is a Warm Gun," is a humorous reference not only to the male anatomy but to the song with the same name on the Beatles White Album. The sculpture features a male troll/goblin/court jester that is clearly more than pleased with his gun appendage (a six shooter?). He appears physically delighted and oblivious to the world around him.



"Happiness is a Warm Gun", Resin and oil paint, 48"H x 18" W x 16" D

Korbel often incorporates text and poetry into a number of her works. Her writing background includes: screenplays, children's books, *The Tracy Ullman Show* and is currently a music lyricist as well. Several of Korbel's larger works are currently on display at [Church Boutique](#), "the most beautifully curated store in the world" according to Korbel. Church is located in West Hollywood, near the intersection of Melrose Ave. and La Cienega Boulevard. She also has many smaller graphic sculptures in her studio that will make you laugh out loud and say "Whoa!" I would add photos but I'm sure I'd be censored – you MUST see them in person. If you are moved by her work and want to see more feel free to contact her via her website.

## Captions:

1. Metamorphosis: Moose antlers, rake, fan, radiator components, wood, plastic, ceramic, steel, wire and other found materials, 82" x 65".
2. The Kiss: Bronze, oil paint, wire, 37"H x 13" W' x 13" D, Work in Process
3. Happiness is a Warm Gun: Resin and oil paint, 48"H x 18"W x 16"D

Photo Credits: Jeff Davis + Debbie Korbel

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