



Press Release
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Zentrum Paul Klee
Bern

To the editors

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Exhibition opening
Klee and Cobra – a child's play
25. 5. until 4. 9. 2011

The Zentrum Paul Klee opens the temporary exhibition Klee and Cobra – a child's play on 25th May 2011. Pictures by Klee will be compared with pictures by the Cobra group of artists. Mutual ground is the enthusiasm for the pictorial expression of children.

Bringing *Cobra* together in combination with Klee is not immediately obvious. At first glance contrasts are clearly visible: Here the sensitive, ironical artist poet Paul Klee, there the *Cobra* painters, who after the catastrophe of World War II confronted reality unconditionally through the directness of their art. Also Klee and the *Cobra* artists had no contact with each other, since by the time the artist group was founded in 1948, Paul Klee (1879–1940) had already died.

The connections lie in the fascination for children's art and the regard of the *Cobra* artists for Klee. Paul Klee's research into the pictorial world of children is closely linked to his childhood drawings, which he rediscovered in 1902, and the birth of his son Felix in 1907. Klee was fascinated by the authentic expression, the innocence and immediacy of these picture worlds. Through the acquaintance of Wassily Kandinsky and Gabriele Münter, he was further occupied with children's drawings.

Cobra influenced by children's drawings and Klee

The *Cobra* Group was founded on 8th November 1948 in Paris by Asger Jorn (1914–1973), Corneille (Corneille Guillaume Beverloo, 1922–2010), Constant Nieuwenhuys (1920–2005), Christian Dotremont (1922–1979), Joseph Noiret (born 1927) and Karel Appel (1921–2006). In 1949 the Belgian painter Pierre Alechinsky (born 1927) joins the group.

Cobra was a revolt against contemporary society and the ruling power. At the same time the artists were seeking to break away from existing art movements. The child, not yet a part of society, becomes the model.

Already before the founding of *Cobra*, Paul Klee's work was an important source of inspiration for young artists in Denmark. Starting with Vilhelm Bjerke Petersen, who during the years 1930/31 was registered at the Bauhaus, Klee's works and his pictorial concepts were guiding principles for the later *Cobra* artists Carl-Henning Pedersen, Ejler Bille and Asger Jorn.

An exhibition referring to children's art

The exhibition shows the differences and also similarities in the artists' occupation with children's art. The various ways the artists access this theme and how they make use of it is one central theme, another is the reception of Klee's art by the *Cobra* artists.

Klee and Cobra – a child's play has come about as a cooperation between the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art in Humlebæk (DK) and the Cobra Museum of Modern Art in Amstelveen (NL). After being shown in the ZPK, the exhibition will continue in Humlebæk (30. 9. 2011 until 8. 1. 2012) and then finally be shown in Amstelveen (26.1. until 22.4. 2012).

Further information can be obtained from:

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Picture material can be found under the link:

<http://presse.zpk.org>

(Benutzer [user name]: presse / Password: paulklee).

The exhibition

Children in the field of vision

Paul Klee looks at children with the eye of the artist. He shows the shielding of childhood in portrayals of mother and child and equally the child's concentration, childish high spirits and the need to move, play and be serious, curious and reserved. The pictures are evidence of the search for the link between the inner world of the child and its externalisation in the appearance of the picture.

Cobra was not only a cry for a radical break with existing art movements, but also a protest against the dominant mechanisms of society. In the unbounded energy of the child, the *Cobra* artists see the ultimate embodiment of an unrestrained form of life.

An imaginary bestiary

Animals of various kinds are among Paul Klee's motifs in all phases of his work. He collects animals and half-breeds or mythical creatures in amusing menageries and integrates them as actors into scenic contexts. In the spontaneous, formally undemanding style of their execution and depiction, they are reminiscent of children's drawings.

Consciously naive childlike forms and stylised animal figures such as birds, dogs and horses, but also mythical animal fantasies and fairytale mythical creatures belong to the characteristic motif circle of the *Cobra* artists. In the search for a personal form of expression and an original picture language, the animals serve as symbols and are employed to depict human characteristics or to bear different meanings.

High spirits

In Paul Klee's work, acrobats, circus artists, jugglers and dancers symbolise the child who through play examines the world fundamentally. In the same way as the child imitates the world of adults, the artist discovers the world anew through the playful imitation of creative forces. He leaves the path of conventional perception.

Also the *Cobra* group artists often use the symbolism of the circus and art of balancing. The circus becomes a direct source of inspiration.

Battle amongst children

Klee's view of childhood is characterised by a marked interest in the background and complexity of childlike behaviour. Against the background of the historic events of the 1930's, Klee's preoccupation with the pictures from childhood opens visions of the abyss.

Despite the unparalleled optimism of the group members, the development of *Cobra* was inseparable from the horrors of World War II. Various members of the group examined violence and aggression and illustrated the dark and oppressive sides of human nature.

Masks and faces

In his work method, Paul Klee approached human physiognomy almost obsessively, deforming and distorting it into grotesque masks or manifestations. The horror of the unfathomable does not affect us directly, since it seems interrupted by the irony of the pictorial and linguistic joke.

The picture language, which above all the Danes bring to the communal artistic work of *Cobra*, uses the picture of the mask as the bearer of complex varied messages and mythical ideas. As a result the mask also for further *Cobra* members, becomes the expression and symbol of a direct and spontaneous art.

Klee and Cobra – a child's play In the Zentrum Paul Klee

Private viewing: Tuesday, 24th May 2011, 18 hours

Exhibition: From 25th May until 4th September 2011

Curators: Michael Baumgartner, Zentrum Paul Klee

Entry tickets: CHF 18/16/8

Open times: Tues – Sun, 10-17 hours

Further information: www.zpk.org



Exhibition catalogue

Published by Zentrum Paul Klee.

With essays by Michael Baumgartner, Kirsten Degel, Jonathan Fineberg, Hanne Lundgren Nielsen, Osamu Okuda, Willemijn Stokvis, Katja Weitering.

Paper bound museum edition, 224 pages, with 269 illustrations, of which 246 in colour. CHF 46.00

Interactive exhibition

Stories in boxes

Childrens' Museum Creaviva

Private view: Tuesday, 24th May 2011, 17 hours

Exhibition: 25th May until 13th August 2011

Entrance: free

Opening times: Tues–Sun, 10–17 hours

Accompanying programme

«Word games» – Two days of stories for children

Fitting to the year's motto «Child», the Zentrum Paul Klee and the Childrens' Museum Creaviva are presenting a cultural accompanying programme for small and not so small people with big eyes and open ears, who enjoy fantastical creations. On Saturday, 4th and Sunday, 5th June 2011 under the title «Word games» the first of three weekends takes place: Readings, tours, spoken word-performance, writing and painting workshops, childrens concert, audio-book and reading stations with popcorn and candy floss.

Saturday, 4th June, 13 until 17 hours

13:00 Ingrid & Dieter Schubert

Illustration workshop (from 5 years)

14:30 | 16:00 Marcus Pfister

Painting workshop (from 5 years)

13:30 | 15:30 Beat Sterchi with Michael Pfeuti

Spoken word with musical accompaniment (from 7 years)

14:00 | 15:00 Lukas Hartmann

Reading/Story time (from 6 years)

16:00 Ensemble Paul Klee

Childrens concert «The little mermaid » after Hans Christian Andersen (from 5 years)

13:00 until 17:00 Open workshop in the Childrens' Museum Creaviva, audio-book stations, reading corner, popcorn and candy floss

Sunday, 5th June, 10 until 17 hours

11:00 Lorenz Pauli

Painted and told stories (from 5 years)

12:30 Kutti MC with Simon B.

Freestyle-Rap performance (from 9 years)

13:00 Matto Kämpf

Writing workshop (from 9 years)

15:00 Michaela Wendt

Stories to pictures (from 10 years)

10:00 until 17:00 Open workshop in the Childrens' Museum Creaviva, audio-book stations, reading corner, popcorn and candy floss

«What came first?»

A discussion with children in the first grade about questions of beginnings and origins with the children's philosopher Eva Zoller Morf.

Sunday, 19th June, 10.30 hours

Workshop Children's Museum Creaviva

Literary tours

«With the eye of the child »

The artist group *Cobra* as well as Paul Klee let themselves be inspired by the picture worlds of children. Using selected childhood memories from well-known artists and poets, immerse yourselves in the pictures.

Michaela Wendt reads to works in the exhibition *Klee and Cobra – a child's play*: For adults.

Wednesday, 6th July, 13 hours | Sunday, 31st July, 15 hours |

Wednesday, 17th August, 13 hours | Sunday, 28th August, 15 hours

To note for the future

On 28th August , 20th November, 10:30 hours, Workshops in Childrens' Museum Creaviva: Philosophical discussion for children, children philosophize with Eva Zoller Morf, Philosophy instructor. Further information on: www.creaviva-zpk.org/philo

Sat 8th and Sun 9th October: Film festival «FilmGames» – Two days of short films for children and families

Sat 22nd and Sun 23rd October: Theatre festival «TheatreGames» – Two days of theatre for children and families