

Press release  
13 March, 2014



Zentrum Paul Klee  
Bern

To the editors

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## EXHIBITION OPENING

The journey to Tunisia. Klee, Macke, Moilliet  
14/03 — 22/06/14

**April 2014 is the hundredth anniversary of the legendary journey to Tunisia by the three artist friends Paul Klee, August Macke and Louis Moilliet. The Zentrum Paul Klee is taking the date as an opportunity to devote a comprehensive exhibition featuring over 140 works to this crucial event in modern art. The works produced on the journey or inspired by it are brought together – for the first time in almost thirty years – in the Zentrum Paul Klee.**

The two-week journey to Tunisia by the three painter friends in April 1914 is one of the key art-historical events of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It is bathed in an aura of the foreign and the exotic, in the glow of light and colours – in the fascination of artistic inspiration and self-realisation. This applies particularly to August Macke and Paul Klee, whose artistic work in Tunisia is seen even today as a turning-point in their creative work.

In Tunisia Klee and Macke engaged in a fascinating pictorial «competition» that inspired them to reach supreme artistic accomplishments. And Louis Moilliet, who painted only a little on the journey, found astonishing pictorial solutions. Seduced by the special North African light, the three artists created paintings of unmistakable luminosity.

The starting-point for the myth of the journey to Tunisia lies on the one hand in the unique painterly presence of the watercolours produced on the journey, and on the other the now famous diary entry of Paul Klee in which he transformed his stay in the desert town of Kairouan into an artistic awakening: «I now abandon work. It penetrates so deeply and so gently into me, I feel it and it gives me confidence in myself without effort. Colour possesses me. That is the meaning of this happy hour: Colour and I are one. I am a painter.»

In the exhibition, the watercolours of Klee, Macke and Moilliet produced in Tunisia or inspired by the journey are shown following the route of their journey: starting with their first stops, the city of Tunis, via St Germain and Sidi Bou Said to Hammamet, to the climax of the journey, the desert town of Kairouan. Even today, the works produced under the southern light that the artists brought back from their journey have an incomparable power of colour, and have lost none of their fascination.

While the journey to Tunisia was the high point in Macke's oeuvre and his working life, which came to a sudden end with his tragic death on the western front in September 1914, for Klee his artistic experience in Tunisia became a lasting and exciting engagement. The exhibition examines this creative after-effect of the journey to Tunisia in Klee's oeuvre, as well as the further preoccupation with the subject on the part of Louis Moilliet, who travelled repeatedly to the Maghreb over the years that followed.

Never before have been so many works by the three artists, either produced on the journey or referring to it, been seen in one exhibition. The ambitious goal of reuniting as many as possible of the watercolours by Klee, Macke and Moilliet, scattered around the world, could only be achieved by the Zentrum Paul Klee's strong roots in the international art world and its long, trusting relationship with collectors and museums all over the world.

The exhibition is curated by Dr. Michael Baumgartner.

**The opening will take place on Thursday, 13 March, 2014 at 6.00 p.m.**

The exhibition highlight of 2014 is accompanied by a varied programme of concerts, conversations and other events. Further information on the exhibition and the complete accompanying programme can be found at: [www.dietunisreise.ch](http://www.dietunisreise.ch).

The exhibition is supported by the Paul Klee-Stiftung of the Burgergemeinde Bern.

Cooperations: The Zentrum Paul Klee newly launches «Familienmorgen» in cooperation with the Kindermuseum Creaviva and Coop. Due to the exhibition the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation DEZA holds an intercultural series of events.

Patrons: Didier Burkhalter, President of the Swiss Confederation; Bernhard Pulver, Member of the Cantonal Government; Alexander Tschäppät, Mayor of the City of Bern.

**For further information please contact:**

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Zentrum Paul Klee is publishing a catalogue to coincide with the exhibition.

Text of Michael Baumgartner, Roger Benjamin, Erich Franz, Ernst-Gerhard Güse, Ursula Heiderich, Christine Hopfengart, Anna Schafroth. Published by Hatje Cantz Verlag in German, English and French.

336 pages, 287 illustrations, 21 x 27 cm, bound, CHF 39.-, contains images of watercolours, sketch-books, diary entries, photographs and other documents from the famous journey.

Selection of lenders: Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Phillips Collection, Washington D.C., Baltimore Museum of Art, Baltimore, MD, Norton Simon Museum of Art, Pasadena, CA, Moderna Museet, Stockholm, Museo Thyssen, Madrid, Albertina, Wien, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, Staatliche Museen, Berlin, Sammlung Berggrün, Berlin, Museum Folkwang, Essen, Kunstsammlung Nordrhein Westfalen K20, Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus, München, Kunstmuseum Basel, Kunstmuseum Bern, Kunsthaus Zürich