Exhibition Guide

Cosmos Klee

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Introduction

The Zentrum Paul Klee holds about 4,000 of the approximately 10,000 works that Paul Klee created during his lifetime. Since most of these works are extremely fragile, we present rotating exhibitions of our collection. This also allows us to keep introducing the public to new aspects of Klee’s work.

For “Cosmos Klee”, we have gathered a group of Klee’s most famous paintings. In addition, a display of the artist’s unconventional painting tools sheds light on the techniques he used to create them. The iPads provide more information about the sensitivity of these painting materials and why the works cannot travel or be displayed permanently.

Line plays a central role in Klee’s visual language. Nonetheless, a few works in his oeuvre are surprisingly painterly, with thick impasto surfaces. Klee left these paintings out of his handwritten oeuvre catalogue. We hang them here alongside forgeries that were sent to us for authentication.

The exhibition is not chronological, which allows visitors to choose their path through the galleries. Each section is dedicated to a specific theme.

We hope you enjoy your stroll through “Cosmos Klee”!
1 Hand Puppets

Between 1916 and 1925, Paul Klee made approximately 50 hand puppets for his son Felix. Today, the 30 remaining puppets are all in the collection of the Zentrum Paul Klee. The artist also built a puppet theatre so his son could entertain friends with plays. Klee painted the heads, which were made from plaster or chalk mixture, with delicate details, which in contrast to puppets in the tradition of Punch invite close viewing. Additionally, the material traces of Klee’s process, such as the imprint of the gauze with which he formed the puppets’ heads, remain visible. In addition to repurposing fabric scraps for the puppets’ robes, Klee also used typical household items like a matchbox (Genie of the Matchbox) and a ceramic socket (Electrical Spook). From 1921 on, he began drawing from the context of the Bauhaus, resulting in more ambitious and complex characters in terms of both form and content.

2 Colored Paste

Beginning in the 1920’s, Klee began using paste as a ground layer on his supports. From 1930, he began experimenting with mixing paint into paste, enriching and transforming the hues of watercolor, pastel and oil paints. The works that followed are characterized by heavily applied, viscous colored paste, which Klee likely created by mixing dry pigments into the paste. To apply the colored paste, Klee often used a knife as if it were a spatula. In many of these works, the proportion of paste to color was so large that it took a long time to dry and thus could be reworked later. The artist then used tools like knives and wooden needles or his fingers to distribute the color on the surface,
which then became concentrated around the edges of the thick impasto marks. In this way, Klee created compelling painterly surfaces that are starkly different from those painted with a brush. In his late work, Klee once again worked in thick, boldly saturated colored paste, but this time he used a brush to create his characteristic colored paste drawings.

3 Reverse Glass Paintings

Klee was among the few of his contemporaries to engage intensely with reverse glass painting. Between 1905 and 1916 he made 64 reverse glass paintings. This extraordinary group of work encompasses a wide range of subjects, from landscapes, animals and portraits to satirical themes. Klee even revisited some of his childhood drawings. He also experimented with glass as a support for his pictures, testing and combining different techniques. For instance, he painted and drew directly on the surface of the glass and then painted over his compositions with white. However, he also tried the opposite technique, which involved painting the entire surface first and using different tools to score a design into it. Then he would apply color to the etched areas. In addition to the combination of drawing and painterly gestures, Klee was particularly interested in tonality and contrast in the black and white compositions. The Zentrum Paul Klee owns 42 of the reverse glass paintings. These extremely fragile works have been extensively restored and reframed to reflect Klee’s intentions.
4 Early Oil Paintings

In October 1898, shortly after completing secondary school, Klee moved to Munich to study art. Since he had had little experience drawing the human figure at that point, he was denied entrance to the academy and instead attended Heinrich Knirr’s private school. It was with the painter Walter Ziegler that he picked up a paintbrush to try oil painting for the first time. For the most part, he painted on cardboard or on canvas mounted to cardboard. His relatively somber style recalls that of the Dachau Art Colony and the painting of Adolf Hölzel. In 1900, Klee was accepted to study with Franz von Stuck, the star of the Munich art scene, at the academy. Later, the artist dismissed his studies in Munich as a “painterly-academic fiasco.” Back in Bern, Klee painted a folding screen on commission for one Mrs. Wächter. The five-panel, Jugendstil-inspired room divider depicts the Aare landscape (on show until September 30). In retrospect, he also scorned this “stodgy folding screen” as merely decorative. Overall, he was not yet assured in the medium of oil painting and remained “at the very beginning, or before the beginning,” as he put it in his diary.

5 Oil Transfer Drawings

In 1919, Klee developed an experimental form of tracing that combined painting, drawing and printmaking. Klee began his oil tracings by covering a piece of paper with oil paint, the painted side of which he then laid atop another blank sheet. He would then lay a sketch he had already prepared on top of the two sheets, and proceed to trace it with a pointed tool. Wherever Klee applied pressure, the oil paint would be transferred to the blank sheet. However, if he laid his hand on the paper, that
would also leave a mark, which resulted in the irregular forms and shadows that characterize these works. Thus, each tracing is unique. Klee also augmented the water-resistant oil paint with watercolor. Works designated as “original transfer drawings” and “oil paint drawing” in the oeuvre catalogue primarily originated between 1919 and 1925. These works sold well because they were so colorful.

6 Goddesses

Klee developed many ideas for his works from the legends and sagas of classical mythology, and often chose to portray these deities with human characteristics. For instance, Pomona, the Roman goddess of fruit trees, is also described as a virginal tree nymph. In *Pomona, Overripe*, Klee plays on the goddess’s maturity, depicting her in dark fall tones. *Fama*, goddess of fame and rumor, gains strength from running. In Klee’s work, her attribute of speed is represented by a wheel. Like the goddesses, Klee also depicted other women as otherworldly figures with decidedly earthly qualities. Thus, the surreal *La belle jardinière (a Biedermeier Ghost)* wears a crinoline skirt that harks back to the Biedermeier period. In *Love Song at New Moon* a mysterious female figure is almost entirely being dissolved by the moonlight. In the title Klee playfully refers to the heart-shaped shadow cast by the figure.
7 Angels

In his multi-layered imagery, Klee brought together the spheres of reality and abstraction. In this manner, he offered glimpses into a parallel universe where hybrid creatures dwell. The motif of the angel, that humanlike, winged creature of the heavens, first preoccupied Klee in 1920. From 1938, he produced a series of more than 40 additional depictions of angels. Upright, pointed wings are the predominant formal characteristic of these strikingly simplified figures, which are composed of vigorously drawn lines. Klee superimposed human and celestial beings, using titles to characterize his angels as immature, ugly or oblivious. In this intermediate realm as conceived by Klee, a fully angelic state has not yet been achieved. His angels are often understood in the context of his biography: in 1935 he became gravely ill. The artist’s increasing physical weakness led him to see himself as a traveler crossing over from life into death.

8 Nature

Paul Klee began to study nature early on. He understood that art is not about copying the outer appearance of plants, for instance, but rather to emulate the organic processes of creation. The laws of nature formed the underpinnings of his art, and he strove to create in a manner as vital as nature itself. In Still Life with Crucifers, he conveyed the dynamic of growing plants by means of propeller-like blossoms. In other works, such as Growth on Stone, he expressed the vibrancy of nature through delicate, almost vibrating strokes. Klee’s art often emphasizes the innermost structures of plants that ultimately determine their form. Fascinated by the images seen through the microscope,
he represented cell-like forms and explored the theme of cell division. In addition to observing animals at the zoo, Klee went to the aquarium for inspiration. He was particularly interested in fish because unlike humans, they are free from the pull of gravity and can move through the water with absolute freedom.

9  **Scratch Technique**

The surfaces of Klee’s works are often relief-like and are seldom smooth. Traces of the support – that is, the textiles Klee painted upon – remain clearly visible. The texture of the coarse jute, used by Klee, is especially prominent. Klee would often paint multiple layers on the support, thereby creating a sculptural effect on the flat surface. For instance, he applied a ground like gesso and then layers of watercolor, oils or colored paste. These surface textures harbor the traces of various tools, such as palette knives, spatulas, stamps and paintbrushes. He scored the pigmented layers, burnished, ground and scratched the color away, or augmented it with materials like sand. In some works, he simulated weathering in order to create the effect of ageing on a carpet, for instance.

**Cinema**

Michaël Gaumnitz’s documentary film *The Silence of the Angel* of 2005 describes Paul Klee’s lifelong engagement with the effects of form and color and demonstrates how the artist overcame the stark divide between figurative and abstract painting.

Duration: approx. 52 minutes
10 Late Work

National Socialist persecution led Paul Klee and his wife Lily to flee to Bern on Christmas of 1933. Back in his hometown, but isolated from his friends and with the knowledge that the avant-garde was under threat, Klee had an artistic crisis. Then he came down with an illness that impaired his work in waves. Nevertheless, from 1936 until his death in 1940, Klee experienced a particularly creative and productive phase. With the aid of different techniques and materials, he masterfully synthesized painting and drawing. In *Insulua dulcamara*, the largest of Klee’s works in terms of surface area, delicate colors evoking blooming plants contrast with hard black lines. The Latin title alludes to the opposition between sweet (dulcis) and bitter (amarus). As in other late works, Klee suggests the ambivalence of life and its inherent connection to death.

11 Unregistered Works and Forgeries

The spectrum from an artist’s original work to reproductions and known forgeries is broad. In addition, copies were used for different purposes in earlier eras than they are today. Whereas copying was a significant aspect of academic training and pupils and studio assistants often collaborated with the master artist on major works, in modern art the concept of an original work of art is far narrower. Nevertheless, a work is only referred to as a forgery when it is presented as an original by Paul Klee but was in fact created by another hand.

The Zentrum Paul Klee is the only institution in the world that is authorized to produce expert reports and provide certificates
of authenticity for Klee’s works. It therefore houses an archive documenting a myriad of imitations, copies and fakes. These include copies of existing works, compositions in Klee’s style and even pictures with forgeries of the artist’s signature that could not be farther from the artist’s style. Alongside technical and stylistic analysis, provenance research plays a significant role in authentication. Klee’s handwritten oeuvre catalogue, in which he listed and numbered his works by year, along with their titles and techniques, is another important source for identifying works. However, there are also works in the Zentrum Paul Klee’s collection that the artist did not include in his catalogue. This may be because he did not consider them to be finished, or that they served as experiments for new techniques or forms.

12 Figure Groups

In addition to the angels, Klee produced an extensive series of drawings of figure groups during his late period. Simplified bodies rendered in lines drawn with oil crayon, these ghostly figures all have empty saucer-like eyes. Unlike the angel series, Klee did not depict individual figures within the compositions. Rather, each exists only as an appendage of the group. The compositions extend beyond the picture plane, amplifying the effect of a large, diffuse crowd. Heads looking and tilted in different directions convey that these creatures are aimlessly drifting apart. In later compositions, Klee established more defined relationships between individual figures and used compositional devices and titles to suggest narratives. For example, in a series of groups of children, Klee portrayed a quarrel, an accident and a game that has gotten out of hand.
Considered in relationship to the contemporary political situation, these seemingly harmless incidents among groups of children take on a menacing tone.

13 **Textile Picture Carriers**

Klee used an unusually wide range of supports for his drawings and paintings, including different kinds of paper, cardboard and wood as well as a variety of textiles like canvas, jute, silk, cotton, muslin in the form of a handkerchief, shirt cloth, damask, airplane canvas, fine cotton shirting and gauze. The artist then affixed the fabric to a second, larger support comprised either of a rigid material or another piece of fabric that was stretched over a frame. In some instances, he left these layered supports unprimed, painting directly upon them. Klee experimented with different surface qualities: thick, thin, burnished smooth, impasto and scratched in a manner that resembles sgraffito. With or without a primer, the structure of the fabric itself often served as a basis for his compositions.

14 **Spray Technique**

Klee had employed his spray technique sporadically before 1920, but it only became an important mode of composition in 1925 while he was at the Bauhaus. For Klee, this method further enriched his repertoire. He saturated a brush with watercolor, and rubbed it over a sieve to distribute a superfine spray of color onto the picture plane. In order to create contours and interesting textures, he also used fine mesh and perforated metal. On the one hand, the artist used this technique to create cloudy,
atmospheric backgrounds for his drawings. On the other, he combined it with stencils, which he used to create multi-layered transparent figures and forms. Klee’s Bauhaus colleague László Moholy-Nagy’s photograms likely provided inspiration as well. In the darkroom, Moholy-Nagy had laid stencils and other objects directly onto photo paper, thereby developing his own pictorial genre. For his part, Klee also liked to apply this technique to papers and textiles primed with light or dark paint.

15 Watercolors

Klee used many of his techniques in unconventional and experimental ways. This also holds true for his watercolors. In his early period, he reduced watercolors to gradations of gray tones. Not yet confident in his handling of color, he first wanted to master chiaroscuro, the use of light and dark. It was not until 1910 that Klee began using the full spectrum of watercolors. As in Japanese ink painting, he applied the colors in transparent layers next to and especially on top of each other. He also added diluted pigment to wet watercolor paper. Klee created some of his most famous watercolors during and after his journey to Tunisia in 1914. During his time at the Bauhaus in the 1920s, he became a true master of the medium. In the works from this period, transparent layers of watercolor create subtle nuances and progressions from light to dark and warm to cold.
16 Models

In 1927, Klee began to address planimetric composition in his lectures. Shortly thereafter, he became preoccupied with stereometric composition as well. He was then able to successfully transfer these concepts to his own work. In 1931, Klee created multiple series of drawings of geometric constructions, which he carefully mounted on cardboard and recorded in his oeuvre catalogue. A series of models, which he built from rods, rubber bands and thread served as the starting points for these works. Each of these has a designated number, to which Klee occasionally added a letter in superscript. He altered the models by stringing or overlapping new threads, and in some of the drawings, the artist combined different models. The artist created as many as fifteen variations of a single model, playing with forms by mirroring, projecting, distorting or rotating them.
The Studios of Paul Klee

Before the spring of 1919, Klee had primarily used private spaces as his studios, a room at his parents’ home in Bern and the kitchen of his apartment on Ainmillerstrasse in Munich, and the bedrooms and offices in the military barracks at Landshut and Gersthofen.

It was only after his return to civilian life that Klee began working in actual studios: first at “Suresnes” Castle in Munich from 1919 to 1921, then at the Bauhaus in Weimar from 1921 to 1926, at one of the masters’ houses built by Walter Gropius in Dessau from 1926 to 1931, at the Düsseldorf Academy from 1931 to 1933 and, finally, after his emigration to Switzerland the living room in his three-room apartment at Kistlerweg 6 in Bern.
Biography

1879  Paul Klee is born in Münchenbuchsee near Bern on December 18 to the music teacher Hans Wilhelm Klee (1849–1940) and the trained singer Ida Maria Frick (1855–1921).

1898  He finishes his secondary education with a Matura. After wondering whether to become a musician or a painter he decides to go to Munich where he attends the private drawing school run by Heinrich Knirr.

1899  Klee meets his future wife, the pianist Lily Stumpf (1876–1946) at a musical soirée.

1900  At the Munich Academy he studies painting under Franz von Stuck.

1901/1902  Klee and the Bern sculptor Hermann Haller leave for a six-month period educational journey to Italy. The overwhelming richness of Rome’s classical art plunges Klee into an artistic crisis.

1902–1906  To find himself and to mature he withdraws at his parents’ home in Bern, where he makes his first reverse glass paintings and etchings.

1906  On September 15, he marries Lily Stumpf in Bern. Two weeks later, the couple moves to Munich.

1907  Felix, the son and only child of Paul and Lily Klee, is born on November 30.
1908  Exhibition at the Munich and Berlin Secession.

1910  Participation in a group exhibition with fifty-six works at the Kunstmuseum Bern, moving on to Zurich, Winterthur, and Basel.

1911  Klee starts with the illustration of Voltaire’s *Candide*.

1912  Participation in the second *Blue Rider* exhibition in Munich with seventeen works. In April, he travels to Paris and visits the artists Robert and Sonia Delaunay.

1913  Klee exhibits in Berlin at the *First German Autumn Salon* in the gallery *Der Sturm* of Herwarth Walden.

1914  In April Klee travels to Tunisia with his artist friends August Macke and Louis Moilliet. The impulses to abstraction and treatment of colour that Klee received in Paris are confirmed and further plumbed during this journey. Klee belongs to the founding members of the *Neue Münchener Secession*.

1916  On March 11, he is drafted into the German army as a soldier. After his training in the infantry he is transferred to the maintenance company of the air corps in Schleissheim near Munich and afterwards to Gersthofen. In spite of his service at the army he continues his artistic work.

1916–1918  He becomes a cult figure of the new artscene in Germany due to his exhibitions at the Berlin gallery *Der Sturm*.
1920  Klee’s artdealer Hans Goltz organizes a first retrospective in Munich with 362 artworks. On October 29, Walter Gropius calls Klee to the Bauhaus in Weimar.

1921  On May 13, Klee commences his academic teaching career at the Bauhaus and moves with his family from Munich to Weimar.

1923  The first exhibition in a German museum takes place in Berlin at the Nationalgalerie in the Kronprinzen-Palais.

1924  First solo exhibition in New York. The artists group *The Blue Four* with Wassily Kandinsky, Lyonel Feininger, Alexej Jawlensky and Paul Klee is founded by the artdealer Galka Scheyer.

1925  The Bauhaus moves to Dessau. Participation of Klee at the first Surrealist exhibition *La peinture surréaliste* in Paris together with Max Ernst, Joan Miró, Pablo Picasso and others.

1926  Klee and his family move to Dessau. There they live with Wassily and Nina Kandinsky in one of the three duplexes built by Gropius for Bauhaus master craftsmen.

1928  Trip to Egypt.

1929  To Klee’s fiftieth birthday several exhibitions take place such as in Berlin, Dresden, New York or Paris.
1931  Klee takes up a professorship at the Düsseldorf Academy on July 1.

1933  Klee is suspended from his position as a professor by the National Socialists. At the end of the year 1933 he emigrates to Switzerland initially living in his parental home in Bern.

1935  Klee falls ill, first with bronchitis followed by a pneumonia. In November the illness is diagnosed as measles. But actually it is a not detected scleroderma.

1936  Due to his poor health his output for the year is just twenty-five works – an all-time low.

1937  The National Socialists defame Klee’s art as “degenerated” and seize 102 of his works in German museums. Fifteen of them are presented at the exhibition Degenerated Art.

1939  Despite of his bad health the year 1939 with 1,253 registered works is Klee’s most productive year ever.

1940  On June 29 Paul Klee dies in Locarno-Muralto.
The Collection of the Zentrum Paul Klee. Conceptual and Conservatory Notes on the Presentation of the Works

Rotating selection from the vast range of works
There are a good 4,000 works by Paul Klee stored in the art depository of the Zentrum Paul Klee – the world’s most important collection of paintings, water colors and drawings by this artist. The extremely comprehensive and diverse collection of works makes it impossible to display the entire range at the same time. The special sensitivity of the work by Klee also prevents the Zentrum from staging a classic exhibition of the collection, with the same works on display all the time. Instead, the Zentrum Paul Klee presents its own in-house collection of works in the form of a rotating selection of approx. 120 to 150 works which is changed on a regular basis, each selection being displayed under an alternating theme.
“Periods of rest” for conservation purposes
The fragile condition of Paul Klee’s paintings is attributable to the artist’s particular method of working. He was not only content-related and formal in his approach, but also very keen on technical experimentation and used extremely light sensitive colors, paints and papers. If they were to be overexposed to light – despite the subdued lighting in the exhibition rooms and the protective glazing used – the colors would gradually fade or change and the papers become brown or brittle. That is the reason why the works on show are changed every couple of months and then placed in the depository to “recover”. Only by having these “periods of rest” can we ensure that the works of art are preserved undamaged and that people can continue to enjoy them in their beautiful original form for many years to come.
Führungen und Begleitprogramm

Samstags 15:00
Sonntags 13:30
Öffentliche Führungen

Dienstags 12:30 –13:00
Kunst am Mittag

Fremdsprachige Führungen siehe www.zpk.org

Audioguide
In Deutsch, Französisch, Italienisch und Englisch erhältlich

Mittwoch 20. Juni 2018 14:00 –15:30
Einführung für Lehrpersonen
Einführung in die Ausstellungen «Etel Adnan» und «Kosmos Klee»
Mit Dominik Imhof, Leiter Kunstvermittlung ZPK

Sonntags 15:00
Schauplatz
Führungen zu ausgewählten Themen der Ausstellung mit
unseren Restauratorinnen, Vermittlerinnen und Vermittlern
Weitere Infos www.zpk.org

Samstag 18. August 2018 13:00
Sinn-Reich
Eine alle Sinne ansprechende inklusive Führung für Gäste
mit und ohne Behinderung. Mit Gebärdendolmetscherin und
induktiver Höranlage

Donnerstag 13. September 2018 18:00
Freunde ZPK
Rundgang durch die Ausstellung, ausschliesslich für Freunde ZPK
Sonntag 30. September 2018 15:00
Fälschung, Nachahmung oder Kopie?
Rolf T. Hallauer, Koordinator Illegaler Kulturgüterhandel und Transfer des Eidgenössischen Justiz- und Polizeidepartements EJPD, über den Handel mit Fälschungen, Nachahmungen und Kopien von Werken Paul Klees

Kunstvermittlung für Familien

03.06. – 24.06.2018, 07.10. – 28.10.2018
Sonntags 10:30 – 11:45
Familienmorgen
In der Ausstellung und im Atelier des Kindermuseum Creaviva für die ganze Familie

Täglich ausser montags 12:00 / 14:00 / 16:00
Offenes Atelier im Kindermuseum Creaviva
Workshop zu einem monatlich wechselnden Thema in Verbindung zu den Ausstellungen im ZPK

Samstags 09:30 – 12:00
Junge Kunst im Zentrum
Das Kinderforum im Kindermuseum Creaviva, Kurs für Kinder ab 7 Jahren

Fruchtlan

Natur Kultur Agrikultur 2018

Änderungen vorbehalten
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