

# Exhibition guide



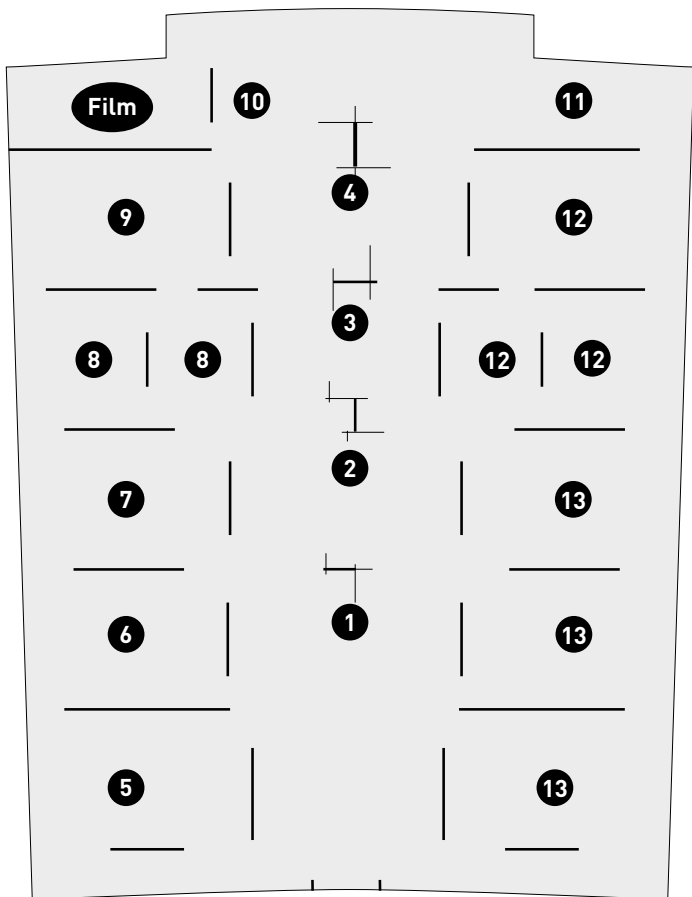
Founded by  
Maurice E. and Martha Müller  
and the heirs of Paul Klee

Zentrum Paul Klee  
Bern

## Paul Klee. I Want to Know Nothing

08.05. – 29.08.21

# Floorplan



# Introduction

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Europe was wrought with political and economic crises that brought about social and cultural upheavals. These changes were also manifest in the arts, which broke with the prevailing political, social, and aesthetic norms. As a budding artist, Paul Klee radically questioned what had been taught at European art academies to that time. He set out in search of forms of artistic expression that did not conform to the prevailing Western conceptions of art. The circles around the Blue Rider, the Dadas, and the Surrealists, with whom Klee associated in the 1910s and 1920s, also began to collect and study children's drawings, artworks by people with psychiatric disorders, and art from non-European and prehistoric cultures. In publications and exhibitions, they juxtaposed these objects of artistic production with their own work.

Klee realized as early as 1902 that he would not discover a new artistic path at the Munich Art Academy and instead searched for alternative creative sources during a period of independent study in Bern. He noted in his diary: "I want to be as though newborn, to know nothing of Europe, nothing at all. Ignorant of poetry, wholly uninspired; to be almost primitive." In his childhood drawings, Klee discovered a form of expression that was reduced to the essential, which he then tried to achieve in his art. Along with his travels south, he sought inspiration in objects, such as a Congolese figurine or spears from the South Seas, as well as in illustrations in books and magazines. His private collection may be divided into four themes: childhood, Art Brut, world arts and prehistory. In this exhibition, four sections reveal these aspects of the artist's archive, placing the materials within a historical framework. As catalogues and journals attest, during Klee's lifetime, his works were displayed

together with children's drawings, works created by those diagnosed with psychiatric disorders, non-European art, and prehistoric artifacts in exhibitions in Germany, Paris, New York, and later in London. Furthermore, art critics made both positive and negative comparisons between his work and these forms of expression. Colonialist and racist terms no longer in use today appear in these statements.

Above all, avant-garde artists like Klee were intrigued by anything that did not conform to Western norms. This fascination with the "Other" and the resultant development of new, abstracted pictorial worlds must be understood within the broader context of a colonialist and racist Zeitgeist. The European avant-garde emphasized that it deliberately chose a simplified, "primitive" pictorial language. Yet it denied that children, individuals with psychiatric disorders, prehistoric cultures, and Indigenous peoples were capable of such conscious decisions. Using Klee's works and materials from the archive, this exhibition critically examines modernism's ideological paradigm. In particular, it illuminates conceptions of the so-called "primordial origins of art" from that period and, along with them, the Western construct of primitivism. This exhibition provides insight into current research on the subject and, in doing so, raises new questions for the future.

This exhibition is dedicated to Alexander Klee (1940–2021).

“For there are still primordial origins of art, as you would rather find them in an ethnographic museum or at home in the nursery (don’t laugh, reader), children can do it, too, and this is not at all devastating for the most recent tendencies [in art], but there is positive wisdom in this fact. The more helpless these children are, the more instructive art they offer; for already here there is corruption: if children begin to absorb developed works of art or even to emulate them. Parallel phenomena are the drawings of the insane, and thus madness is no appropriate invective either. In truth, all of this is to be taken much more seriously than the art museums, if the art of today is to be reformed. That’s how far we must go back in order not to simply become old-fashioned.”

Paul Klee, in *Die Alpen. Monatsschrift für Schweizerische und allgemeine Kultur* (1912)

The exhibition combines two sections – documentation modules and artworks – to provide an overview of Paul Klee's engagement with sources, such as children's drawings, Art Brut, prehistoric art, and non-European art.

Documentation pertaining to these four themes is displayed at exhibition's centre. For the first time, research findings on Klee's endeavours have been brought together with these respective sources. Statements by Klee, books from his library, postcards, and journals paint a picture of the artist's intensive study of these sources. Commentary by the press and his contemporaries as well as materials from past exhibitions shed further light on the relationship between his work and these four themes.

Works from the Zentrum Paul Klee's collection are exhibited around this central documentation module. The museum holds over 4000 works by Klee and works by friends of the artist. This exhibition presents approximately 170 works by Klee. In accordance with Klee's working method and thought, they are not strictly assigned to each of the four sources. Indeed, he continually developed his style over the 40 years of his artistic career, always searching for new inspiration in sources ranging from the work of his artist friends and aspects of modernist styles like Cubism and Constructivism to architectonic structures, landscapes, and nature in general. Klee was especially fascinated by the four sources presented here. Klee bought all of these together to create a highly unique style.

## **A Time of Upheaval**

At the beginning of the twentieth century, European society was marked by numerous changes and upheavals, which ultimately culminated in World War I. These changes permeated everyday life, art, science, and politics: The theory of relativity, psychoanalysis, and evolutionary theory upended the foundation of human existence; technological achievements like X-rays and the microscope opened up a view onto internal structures, the elementary building blocks of life; physicists discovered the atom; in the visual arts, the advent of film and photography made it possible to create exact reproductions and represent movement in entirely new ways. Yet these achievements did not offer any answers. Instead, they brought about uncertainty and raised questions such as: What meaning do human beings still have? What distinguishes human existence? During this period, many artists recognized that their academic training was not the solution. It was no longer enough to paint portraits or landscapes. In order to address these societal changes, they strove to develop contemporary forms of artistic expression. Over the following years, this led not only to abstract painting but also to atonal music and the modern novel.

## **A New Pictorial Language**

For many artists, the idea of the “primordial origins of art” played a central role in this search for new forms of expression. If the present did not offer any answers, then perhaps an original, archaic art that was disassociated from specific time periods and lay outside of European art traditions could do so. These early sources encompassed children’s drawings and Art Brut, as well as prehistoric and non-European art. The artists assumed that these

arts were autodidactic, or self-taught. Moreover, many artists discovered a primordial and timeless quality in the pictorial languages of these arts, which they thought were universal and distilled to the essential. From the present standpoint, it is clear that the idea of a “primordial” origin of art is an illusion. Nevertheless, it surfaces time and again: During the Renaissance, for example, the ancient world was considered to be source of the arts.

## **Problematizing the Idea of Origins in Art**

Today, the idea of a timeless and intuitive art is problematic. Many researchers and artists like Klee assumed that the artistic production of Indigenous peoples, prehistoric cultures, children, and individuals with psychiatric disorders were produced instinctively. By contrast, Klee emphasized that he made artistic decisions with great deliberation. This attitude was founded upon a colonialist and racist notion that was deeply engrained in European society, namely that these forms of visual culture represented the earliest stages of artistic expression. According to this line of thought, it was only in European culture that true works of art were created. While artists like Klee certainly appreciated prehistoric rock painting, African sculpture, children’s drawings, and works by those with psychiatric disorders, they showed little interest in the individuals who created them. Nor did they consider the context in which these works were made.

## Paul Klee and His Sources

The works on view exemplify Klee's engagement with these sources. The artist deliberately sought proximity to different aspects of each one. For example, it was the spontaneous creativity and the immediacy of children's drawings that interested him. Works of Art Brut revealed an inner life that stood apart from societal norms. Prehistoric art, such as rock painting or incised drawings on stone, showed Klee a timeless world of forms rendered in minimal lines. Lastly, he was drawn to the apparent rawness and economy of means that is often found in non-European art. Klee attempted to derive foundational principles of design and composition from his study of these art forms. What is more, this close observation allowed him to develop a highly individual style characterized by an extreme reduction of stylistic means and the most intense, direct form of expression possible.

“From the ideal to the archetype! Presumptuous is the artist who does not follow this road through to the end. But chosen are those artists who to this day penetrate the region of that secret place where primeval power nurtures all evolution. There, where the central organ of all temporal and spatial mobility – call it brain or heart of creation – activates every function; who is the artist who would not dwell there? In the womb of nature, at the source of creation, where the secret key to all lies guarded.”

Paul Klee, *Jena Lecture* (1924)

# 1 Childhood

Disappointed by his training at the art academy in Munich and his educational trip to Italy, Paul Klee returned to his parents' house in Bern in 1902, where he embarked upon a course of independent study. There he rediscovered his childhood drawings, which inspired him. Two years later, Klee became convinced that he could only achieve an art "in the new sense" by using lines like those drawn by children. Initially, Klee's own drawings and those of his son Felix, who was born in 1907, were important points of departure in his search for the so-called "primordial origins of art." In 1911, he expressed this concretely in an article in the Swiss journal *Die Alpen*. Around that time, he also found like-minded colleagues among the artists of the Blue Rider in Munich, including Wassily Kandinsky, Franz Marc, and Gabriele Münter. In their search for new forms of artistic expression, they too collected children's drawings. Nevertheless, it was not until 1923 that Klee first exhibited one of his childhood drawings – *Man,?, Chair, Hare* from 1884 – alongside later works.

During the 1920s, children's drawings found their way into galleries and art museums, especially in German-speaking countries – as well as at the Bauhaus in Dessau, where Klee taught. In one of his Bauhaus lectures, Klee expressed the idea that the origins of art could also be found in drawings by children. He believed that he could tap into the creative power of the child through the use of automatic line. Even during his lifetime, Klee's "childlike style" generated controversy. Although proponents of academic art criticized his work, Klee was admired in avant-garde circles.

## 2 Art Brut

Paul Klee's letters and library testify to his engagement with the art of individuals in psychiatric hospitals and prisons. Klee and the avant-garde read the publications of Hans Prinzhorn, Walter Morgenthaler, and Auguste Marie with special interest. In the context of Surrealism, the Paris galleries organized exhibitions that featured Klee's work and art by those with psychiatric disorders. Fellow artists and critics alike drew comparisons – both positive and negative – between the two. Whereas the avant-garde emphasized the parallels between Klee's work and a modern conception of art, conservative forces, such as the National Socialists, believed it confirmed the “degeneracy” of modern art. The term “art of the insane,” which was then in use among medical experts, including Walter Morgenthaler and Hans Prinzhorn, as well as the avant-garde, is outdated. In 1945, the French artist Jean Dubuffet coined the term used in this exhibition: Art Brut (literally “raw art”). Dubuffet used it as an umbrella term for artworks made by those who were self-taught or practiced outside of an institutional framework. The term also encompasses work by people who produce art far outside the usual standards of social norms and in ostensible accordance with an inner drive. Dubuffet's goal was to integrate these artworks into the prevailing system of Western art. However, it is important to note that every inclusion leads to new exclusions. To date, all of these designations emphasize the idea of an art at the fringes of normalcy and must, therefore, be questioned.

### 3 World Arts

In the search for new forms of artistic expression, the European avant-garde collected and studied the work of non-European societies, among others. This is reflected in both the style of Paul Klee's works as well as the language of his titles. Additionally, Klee owned numerous books about art from all continents. From the mid-twentieth century, the term "Weltkunst" (world arts) was used in German-speaking countries to refer to non-European art, although it did not take individual or regional specificity into account. Klee's diary entries and letters attest to his engagement with the idea of the "primordial origins of art" and, in this respect, with the construct of primitivism. As early as 1902, he expressed his desire to move toward a primal state. In 1909, he further articulated it as "primitivity," in the sense of the reduction of means as "the ultimate professional awareness." "Primitive" is an ambivalent quality that Klee, as well as the artists associated with the Blue Rider, the Dadas, and the Surrealists, believed was embodied by non-European art. The term "primitive" refers to the Eurocentric concept of a general stage of human development: namely the first, the earliest. The European avant-garde engaged with Indigenous art in isolation from its spheres of influence and origin, setting forth exoticising notions of the "other." To this day, these ideas are tainted by racism – and not only in the field of art history. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the term "primitive art" encompassed all art that was produced outside of Europe or taught in Western art academies. Klee formulated his statements on primitivism and "primitive art" long before there was any critical reappraisal of the subject's inherent ambivalence and complexity.

## 4 Prehistory

Prehistoric art was an important source of inspiration for the avant-garde, because they considered it to be timeless. It could not be incorporated into the history of European art and, as such, served as a compelling point of departure for new forms of expression. Klee longed to be “as if newborn.” Today, ideas about the origins of art are problematic because of their association with purity, innocence, and instinctiveness. In contrast to the art of so-called “civilized” states, the arts of prehistoric and non-European cultures were regarded as “primitive.” Even then, intellectuals criticized such evolutionist theories. At the forefront stood the German ethnologist Leo Frobenius, whose research on the history and art of Africa played an important role for Klee. At the same time, Frobenius negotiated successfully with the National Socialists, who financed his expeditions to document prehistoric rock art.

Klee’s high regard for the artistic production of civilizations without writing and till then considered anonymous from a Western point of view is particularly noteworthy. Klee primarily expressed his amazement at the excavations of prehistoric sites in his letters and postcards. His library also included publications on prehistoric art. During Klee’s lifetime, critics recognized a similarity between prehistoric imagery and his work, but they did not always regard it as progressive. Overall, the artist’s interest in prehistoric art goes hand in hand with his development of timeless forms and symbols, as well as the primacy of line in his oeuvre as a whole.

“I say it often, but it is sometimes not taken seriously enough, that worlds have opened and are opening themselves to us, [worlds] that also belong to nature, but into which not all people look, and perhaps really only the children, the insane, the primitives. I mean for example the realm of the unborn and the dead, the realm of that which can come, may come, but must not come to pass, a world in-between. [...] I call it an in-between world, because I sense it between the worlds that are outwardly perceptible to our senses and [I] can inwardly absorb it in such a way that I can project them outward in correspondences. This is what the children, the insane, the primitives can still see or can see again. And what they see and create is to me the most precious affirmation. Because we all see the same thing, although from different sides.”

Paul Klee quoted after Lothar Schreyer (1956)

Faces, facial expressions, and masks appear throughout Klee's oeuvre. Early on, he drew figures with grotesque faces and exaggerated expressions in his schoolbooks. The transition from face to mask was fluid. Masks are among the oldest forms of cultural production and may be found in cultures around the world, where they have different functions. Masks disguise and distort; they are grotesque and satirical; with their help, one slips into different roles. Klee's interest spanned the full diversity of masks: He was familiar with African masks that served ritualistic purposes as well as masks from the theatre, such as Japanese Noh. Early on, he saw masks from non-European societies in the Bern Historical Museum's ethnographic collection. His library included books about world arts from every region.

Klee's masks reveal more about human nature and character than they conceal. As early as 1901, he observed in his diary: "Some will not recognize the truthfulness of my mirror. Let them remember that I am not here to reflect the surface (this can be done with a photographic plate), but must penetrate inside. My mirror probes down to the heart. I write words on the forehead and around the corners of the mouth. My human faces are truer than the real ones."

In 1927, Klee made several pen and ink drawings of the imaginary city of “Beride,” which are characterized by a linear framework resembling the lines of a musical score. Like musical notes, small geometric fields are filled in with black. This creates abstract patterns that are distributed throughout the pictorial space. These structures are equally reminiscent of preparatory drawings for woven textiles. At the end of the 1920s, Klee taught in the weaving workshop at the Bauhaus, where he could see such patterns. There, the engagement with textiles and weavings from non-Western societies was prioritized above all. Among other tasks, Klee was responsible for teaching design to weaving students. Two years later, his “Beride” drawings were printed in a Bauhaus brochure on weaving.

Klee's sphere of reference extended beyond the art of his time and European art history more generally. He also explored the most varied techniques and handicrafts: mosaics, incised drawings, and textiles. He was interested in their techniques and design principles, such as the decorative arrangement of colourful patterns and forms on a surface. These patterns could be developed from linear structures or fields of geometric colour. While Klee sometimes used such patterns to create specific objects or forms, he also allowed certain compositions to remain wholly abstract. For instance, he experimented with the intricately divided structure of mosaics.

Klee knew ancient and early medieval mosaics from his travels and from reproductions: In elaborate works, he constructed images from tiny, geometric shapes of colour, as if he were placing small stones next to one another.

Klee attempted to translate the technique of petroglyphs – drawings etched in stone – in a series of works in which he used an object to scratch a drawing into a thick layer of coloured paste. In the process, the pigment piled up at the edges of the lines, allowing Klee to achieve a truly singular effect.

In his works, Klee went beyond the surface, delving into foundational structures and principles. At the same time, he sought to convey the inner lives – the psyches – of the figures he depicted. He thereby created fantasy worlds that reveal human states of mind.

Psychoanalysis, spiritism, and even the art of individuals with psychiatric disorders validated his view of these inner worlds. Klee was always critical in his approach toward new theories and opinions. During his time in Munich, between 1906 and 1921, the city became a center of spiritism. As a hub of German research on the occult, it harboured spiritualist and occultist circles. Munich was also home to Rudolf Steiner, who promoted theosophical and anthroposophical teachings in his numerous lectures. Although Klee's wife, Lily Klee, and his artist friends, including Wassily Kandinsky and Gabriele Münter, were intensely involved with theories propagating a mystical world view, Klee kept his distance. This detached attitude comes through in satirical works.

During his time at the Bauhaus in the 1920s, Klee experimented with ornamental line drawings. In a full series of works, he drew parallel lines or bands. In some, he made a strict pattern of parallel horizontal lines resembling the staves of musical scores, which he then used as a basis for developing architecture, figures, and patterns. In their ornamentality and extreme simplification, the drawings evoke memories of non-European art, such as ornamental murals or the carpet designs of North African societies that he encountered, for example, during his journey to Tunisia.

Klee was fascinated by prehistoric art, especially in the form of petroglyphs (incised drawings and carvings on stones or rocks) and rock painting. At the Museum of Prehistory and Early History in Carnac, Brittany, in 1928, he saw menhirs and everyday objects. In his library, there are publications by the German ethnologist Leo Frobenius and the French priest and archaeologist Henri Breuil, where Klee could see images of rock and cave paintings from different cultures. The engraved lines and paintings of prehistoric artworks are abstract ornaments or simplified representations of humans, animals, and objects. Klee was particularly intrigued by the extreme reduction of creative means. Only the essential is made visible. Yet he also paid attention to the wealth of motifs focusing on the everyday life of the respective culture. In these motifs, Klee recognized a universality and timelessness that became increasingly important in his oeuvre.

Animals of all kinds serve as motifs in every phase of Klee's work. He drew them with spontaneous, highly simplified lines, so that they resemble children's drawings or prehistoric art. Klee's animals are lovable, grotesque-comical creatures or little monsters that are not to be taken too seriously. Their idiosyncrasies and quirks mockingly allude to human behaviours. They show emotions and are subject to moods, they are cheerful or playful, but can also be disgruntled or sad. With the help of his depictions of animals, Klee holds a mirror before us, using satire to reveal the animalistic, libidinous side of human nature.

Klee was a skilled and accomplished draftsman from an early age. Throughout his artistic career, line remained a central compositional element. He discovered a certain quality of line in children's drawings as well as in prehistoric artworks and art from different regions of the world, which spoke to his interest in reducing line to a few strokes. As early as 1908, he wrote in his diary: "Reduction: One wants to say more than nature and one makes the impossible mistake of wanting to say it with more means than she, instead of fewer." His late work is a testament to the idea of reducing everything to the essential, thereby creating a universal visual language. It has a timeless character and cross-cultural significance. In Klee's work, line takes on every possible form, its quality also inspired by hieroglyphics, runes, cave drawings, or the patterns of textiles.

He used the abstract line in the form of a straight dash, zigzag line, cross, bow, or circle; he plays with line as a sign, symbol, number, or letter. The boundary between abstract form and meaningful sign is fluid in Klee's oeuvre.

In 1911, Klee put some of his own childhood drawings at the beginning of the oeuvre catalogue in which he recorded his works until the end of his life. The drawings by his son were equally important to him. His interest in children's drawings stemmed from the creativity, spontaneity, and immediacy of the imagery. But he was more specifically concerned with certain forms of expression found in children's drawings: the high degree of simplification and the lack of correct spatial perspective. Klee used them as inspiration for his own principles of design and composition. During his time at the Bauhaus in the 1920s, he even referenced his own childhood drawings in certain pieces. In his late work at the end of the 1930s, his interest in children's drawings is particularly apparent. Klee reduced his visual language down to bold lines and flat, expressive colours. For this purpose, he preferred using coloured paste, so that his works resembled finger paintings.

In addition to the art of children, Klee studied their nature: children's play and quarrels; their behaviour in groups and the family unit. For him, children served as a mirror of fundamental human behaviour. Klee's hand puppets, which he created between 1916 and 1925 as toys for his son Felix, also bear witness to his interest in the childlike.

"It is interesting to look back at the path culture has taken. How it has moved through China, India, Babylon, Media, Egypt, Israel, and Phoenicia, Southern Europe with Greece, Macedonia (Alexander the Great), twice Rome (antiquity and Catholicism), and Spain (with its colony in America). How the cultural centres then shifted northward to Paris and especially London (both now already in decline) and how it is now dawning in Germany and Russia (which is still far behind). The history of culture has already advanced so far northward that it probably must seek a new path. Perhaps the younger North America is capable of outlasting our occidental culture, and distant Japan is on the same course as it begins to rise. From here on, however, one can only proceed with great imagination, which would finally lead one to a Black culture, by saying to oneself: These peoples mean the same for Europe as the Gauls and Germanic tribes did for Rome. Analogously, the colonies would have to grow over the head of the motherland, but this line of thought becomes too fanciful. Anyhow, the Black race is fresh and beautiful, even if we are nobler."

Letter from Paul Klee to Lily Stumpf (1902)

---

"For I was there where the beginning lies. I was with my adored Madame Monad, which means, so to speak, being fruitful."

Paul Klee, *Diaries* (1906)

# Chronology

- 1879 December 18:** Paul Klee is born in Münchenbuchsee near Bern. The family moves to Bern the following year. His German-born father Hans Wilhelm works as a music teacher and his mother Ida, born Frick, is a trained singer. Mathilde, his older sister by four years, later becomes a language teacher.
- 1883** Klee receives his first introduction to drawing from his grandmother Anna Catharina Rosina Frick. He writes about it in his diary in 1919: “My first childhood drawings were illustrations of fantastic ideas and narratives. No thought of any model in nature. Flowers, animals, children, watering cans, horses, wagons, sleds, and garden pavilions were recurring themes. Broadside with French verses provided one source of inspiration. I remember *Azor et Mimi* and *Cadet Roussel* best.”
- 1898–** Klee studies art in Munich at Heinrich Knirr’s private  
**1901** drawing school and at the art academy with Franz von Stuck.
- 1899** He meets Karoline Stumpf, known as Lily.
- 1901– March 1901:** Klee breaks off his studies at the Munich academy  
**1902** and returns to Bern.  
**October 1901–May 1902:** Klee takes an educational journey through Italy with his study companion, the sculptor Hermann Haller. Both the academic art training in Munich and the classical art in Italy unleash a “great perplexity.” Back at his parents’ house in Bern, he continues to search for his own form of artistic expression over the following years.

- 1902    October 3:** In a letter to Lily Stumpf, Klee writes about a childhood drawing that he rediscovered in the attic of his parents' house in Bern.
- 1905**    Beginning in the summer, he makes several reverse glass paintings for a children's book that went unrealized, including *Girl with doll* (1905, 17) and *Paul and Fritz* (1905, 19).
- 1906    April 14:** During a short trip to Berlin, Klee visits the Museum of Ethnology.  
**September 15:** Klee marries Lily Stumpf, and the couple moves to Munich.
- 1907    November 30:** Their son Felix is born. Klee cares for the child while his wife earns a living for the family by teaching piano lessons.
- 1911    February:** Klee begins to maintain a catalogue raisonné of his art "from childhood on," which includes a selection of the drawings he himself made as a child.  
**August 31 – September 24:** Klee exhibits 25 drawings at the Museum of Fine Arts Bern. A reviewer in the *Berner Tageblatt* finds "the [artist's mode of] expression no more apt than 'drawings from the notebook of little Moritz.'" He is alluding to the children's book *Max and Moritz* by Wilhelm Busch.  
**October:** Klee meets Wassily Kandinsky, who lives just a few doors down from him in Munich. Through Kandinsky, Klee comes into contact with the artists of the Blue Rider: Alfred Kubin, Gabriele Münter, Franz Marc, Heinrich Campendonk, Albert Bloch, Marianne von Werefkin, and Alexej von Jawlensky.

**December 18 – January 1912:** *The First Exhibition of the Editors of the Blue Rider* is held at the Moderne Galerie Heinrich Thannhauser in Munich.

**1912 January:** Hans Bloesch, one of Klee's boyhood friends, publishes an article about the artist's work in *Die Alpen*: "Without a trace of logical, deductive reasoning, Klee reproduces the impressions as a child receives them, but is incapable of holding onto." In the same volume, Klee wrote about *The First Exhibition of the Editors of the Blue Rider*. He emphasized the importance of the "primal beginnings of art," namely the work of children, and those who were at that time called "insane" and "primitive."

**February 12 – March 18:** Klee participates in *The Second Exhibition of the Editors of the Blue Rider Black-and-White*, which is held in Hans Goltz's bookshop and art gallery.

**May:** *The Blue Rider*, an almanac edited by Wassily Kandinsky and Franz Marc, is published by Piper in Munich, with a reproduction of Klee's work *Stonecutters II (Tinted)* (1910, 74). According to Marc, the book addressed "the latest movement in painting in France, Germany, and Russia, and shows its fine interweaving with the Gothic and the primitives, with Africa and the great Orient, with the highly expressive, primal [forms of] folk art and children's art." ("Almanac Subscription Prospectus")

**1913 January:** Klee begins to collect drawings and watercolours by Felix.

**September 20 – December 1:** Klee contributes 22 works to the Berlin exhibition *First German Autumn Salon* at the Sturm-Galerie. The organizer, Herwarth Walden, prints controversial press statements about the exhibition on a flyer: "*Leipziger Tageblatt*:"

Paul Klee exhibits drawings schooled in the profundity of children's drawings. [...] *Hamburger Nachrichten*: It is in truth crude mischief, this plethora of ridiculousness, of stupid scribbles. – You would think they had come from the painting gallery of an insane asylum. [...] *Berliner Börsencourier*: Paul Klee is the one who started the rumor about the Max and Moritz drawings." Later, a selection of these comments is published in *Der Sturm*.

**1914 April:** Klee travels to Tunisia with August Macke and Louis Moilliet. From Tunis, they take trips to Sidi Bou Saïd, Carthage, Hammamet, Saint Germain (today Ezzahra), and Kairouan. At the market, he acquires souvenirs, such as a dagger, leather pillows, an amulet, and old coins. He also purchases folk art drawings of architecture that would later inspire his own compositions.

After Klee's return from Tunisia, the World War I breaks out. Wassily Kandinsky returns to Russia; his friends August Macke and Franz Marc are killed in battle.

**1916 March 11:** Klee is conscripted into the German army as a reservist. He does not have to fight on the front and can continue to develop his artistic practice.

**1917 April 9–30:** Klee contributes four works to the *Sturm Exhibition, II Series* at the Galerie Dada in Zurich. Marco Janco had originally developed the motif for the event "Le Chant Nègre," which took place in spring 1916 at the Cabaret Voltaire in Zurich. It reflects the significance of African and Oceanic art, music, and poetry for the Dada movement.

**May 4–29:** Klee participates in the *Exhibition of Graphics, Embroidery, Relief* at the Galerie Dada, Zurich. Children's drawings and African sculptures are shown in the exhibition, among other things.

**Christmas:** Klee receives Carl Einstein's book *N\*\*\*\* Sculpture* as a gift from his wife.

**1918 January/February:** In his diary, Klee notes: "Everything falls away and works come into being as if on their own accord. My hand has become the obedient instrument of a remote will."

**Fall:** Klee writes "Graphic Art," the initial version of his first foundational essay on art theory for Kasimir Edschmid's anthology *Creative Confession*. In it, Klee compares his artistic practice to children's play.

**Christmas:** Klee is granted a leave of absence from military service and is finally discharged on February 4, 1919.

**1919 April:** Klee is active in the cultural politics of the Bavarian Soviet Republic, which is soon dissolved. He goes to Bern until the political situation calms down.

**Summer:** Inspired by his son Felix's watercolour, *City of Tents with a Blue River and Black Zigzag Shaped Clouds*, Klee creates the oil painting *Villa R* (1919, 153) and *Untitled (City of Tents in the Mountains)* (1920, 182); the latter is on view in this exhibition.

**November:** Max Ernst includes two drawings by Klee in the first Dada exhibition of the Gruppe D at the Kölner Kunstverein in Cologne. The catalogue, *Bulletin D*, lists avant-garde works along with children's drawings, art by those with psychiatric conditions, African sculptures, pebbles, umbrellas, flowerpots, and piano hammers.

- 1920 January/February:** In a review of the exhibition *Paul Klee, Wolf Röhrich: Paintings, Drawings, Graphic Work* at the Galerie Fritz Gurlitt in Berlin, Klee's drawings are favourably compared to children's drawings: "In Klee there is nothing of artistry, nothing at all, but probably a great deal of art. One imagines this person as a child with blue eyes and blonde hair, for his little sheets of paper are so childlike from within and children's art is often so free and full of light."
- Early July:** In a letter to Helena Tutein, Oskar Schlemmer writes about Hans Prinzhorn's lecture in Stuttgart: "On Sunday evening at the Hildebrandts, great company. Dr. Prinzhorn, a Heidelberg psychiatrist and former art historian, gave a lecture about drawings by the insane, very interesting visual material, quite surprising similarities to the moderns; Klee, for example, who saw the stuff and was thrilled."
- October 29:** Klee is appointed to the State Bauhaus in Weimar.
- 1921 From January 10:** Klee begins teaching at the Bauhaus.
- March:** Wilhelm Hausenstein's book *Kairouan: Or How Paul Klee Became a Painter* is published. It includes a comparison between a "drawing by a Dayak from Borneo" and Klee's work.
- June 14:** In a review of the *Great Berlin Art Exhibition*, writer Hans Siemsen asks, "Is Klee a genius child or a childlike genius?"
- Late September:** Klee and his family move to Weimar.
- 1922** Klee meets the art educator Hans-Friedrich Geist, who would attend his courses at the Bauhaus as a guest student from 1930.

**April 8:** Presumably, Klee hears Prinzhorn's lecture at the Weimar Bauhaus. Walter Gropius wrote to Lily Hildebrandt that same evening: "I have just come from Dr. Prinzhorn's lecture at the Bauhaus. The pictures that he shows are really quite amazing and he also seems to be a fine person."

**May:** Prinzhorn's book *Artistry of the Mentally Ill:*

*A Contribution to the Psychology and Psychopathology of Configuration* is released. Alfred Kubin publishes "The Art of the Insane" in the art journal *Kunstblatt*. In the article, Kubin recounts his visit to the Prinzhorn Collection in Heidelberg: "Small paintings, the paint applied as a thick paste, mostly white, black, and green, the interiors of various apartments, collisions of terrestrial bodies, a marvelously grotesque Kaiser Wilhelm. These things are somewhat reminiscent of Paul Klee and would certainly have interested him."

**December 24:** Willi Rosenberg submits his dissertation, which was entitled *Modern Art and Schizophrenia: With Special Consideration of Paul Klee*, at the Friedrich Schiller University of Jena.

**1923 April 9:** Carl Einstein is in Weimar. He writes a dedication to Klee in the copy of *N\*\*\*\* Sculpture* that Lily Klee gave to him for Christmas in 1917. Nine days later, on April 18, he gave Klee a copy of his 1921 book, *African Sculpture*. The geologist Wilhelm Paulcke compares cave paintings to Klee's work in *Stone Age Art and Modern Art: A Comparison*.

**1924 January 26:** On the occasion of his exhibition at the Kunstverein in Jena, Klee delivers a lecture about his work and refers to "the legend of the childishness" of his drawings.

**October 15:** André Breton's first *Manifesto of Surrealism* is published. A list of Surrealist artists in a footnote includes Klee, along with Max Ernst, André Masson, Giorgio de Chirico, Man Ray, and Francis Picabia.

**Winter (?):** Using materials at hand and the bricolage technique, Klee crafts the figure *Untitled (White-Haired Inuit)* for Felix's puppet theatre. In Eckart von Sydow's book *The Art of Primitive Peoples and Prehistoric Times*, there is a reproduction of a Kwikpagmiut (a Yupik tribe in Alaska) dance mask with two framing stripes that bears resemblance to Klee's mask.

Paul Ferdinand Schmidt defends Klee in the article "The Art of Our Days" with the following words: "They wanted to finish off Paul Klee with the reference to 'schizophrenia.' But when it comes out that schizophrenic art can be taken just as seriously as the work of so-called normal people, what is left of that arrogant objection to 'insanity?'"

**1925 April 1:** Following hostilities from the right-wing populist Thuringian state, the Weimar Bauhaus closes its doors with plans to move to Dessau, where courses resume in a new school building in 1926.

**April 15:** Three works by Klee are included in the third number of the journal *La Révolution surréaliste*, including *Castle of the Faithful* (1924, 133). In the same issue, "Lettre aux Médecins-chefs des Asiles de fous" by Antonin Artaud, Robert Desnos, and Théodore Fraenkel is published.

**October 21 – November 14:** A review published about Klee's first solo exhibition in France, *Paul Klee: 39 aquarelles*, at the Galerie Vavin-Raspail in Paris compares the artist's works to non-European art.

**November 29:** On the occasion of the Klee exhibition at the Kunsthalle Bern, Walter Morgenthaler publishes an article about Klee in the supplement to *Der Bund*: "And finally, one is asked again and again, whether this is not distinctly pathological art, if Klee is not sick? His images certainly exhibit a great number of schizophrenic features. If we delve deeper, we probably cannot rule out an illness from the present works, but it is even harder to diagnose one. For: It not only has to do with the forms alone, but also just as much or even more so with the intentions behind them, the manner of creation, and the artist's opinion about his works."

**1926 March 26:** In Paris, the Galerie surréaliste on Rue Jacques Callot 16 opens with an exhibition of paintings and objects by Man Ray as well as pieces from the South Seas collections of Louis Aragon, André Breton, Paul Éluard, and others. Klee's name repeatedly appears in the gallery's advertisements until its closure in December 1928.

**July 10:** Klee and his family move to Dessau.

**October:** The journal *Cahiers d'Art* publishes Robert Desnos's article "Surréalisme," in which the author's discussion of Klee refers indirectly to Hélène Smith, the painter and medium from Geneva: "Klee has lived on the planet Mars. Ever since, he has lived in the memory of that strange world. How did he make this journey, how did he return? We know nothing of it. Some say that he could teach the blind to paint, and others, that he himself is a Martian."

- 1927 March 16 – 31:** The Galerie Vavin-Raspail in Paris organizes the exhibition *Paul Klee: 23 aquarelles*.
- December 1927 – January 1928:** In the exhibition *Les Imageries des fous*, the Galerie Vavin-Raspail displays works collected by the psychiatrist August Marie.
- 1928 Summer:** During the summer holiday in Brittany, Paul and Lily Klee visit prehistoric sites at Carnac, Quiberon, and the island of Belle-Île.
- December 17 – January 17, 1929:** Klee takes a study trip to Egypt. Among other things, he visits the historic sites at Luxor and Aswan.
- 1929: February 1 – 15:** Klee's third solo exhibition in Paris is held at the Galerie Georges Bernheim et Cie. A critic describes his works as "mystical-ecstatic phantasmagoria and hallucinations."
- March 2:** Ernst Ludwig Kirchner writes in a letter to Hansgeorg Knoblauch: "Klee works with pure line, the primal means of drawing, as I also do, our ancestors in this respect are the cave peoples, who made marvellous things with it. The so-called painterly drawing with light and shade has forgotten the actual means of drawing, only we have rediscovered it and developed its language with our nerves and the forms of the modern age."
- March 15:** Hans Prinzhorn's essay "A propos de l'art des Aliens" is published in the Belgian journal *Variétés*. It marks Prinzhorn's first mention of Klee.
- June/July:** Two exhibitions of children's art take place at the Bauhaus in Dessau.

**Fall:** Leo Forbenius's essay "L'Art de la Silhouette" appears in number 8–9 of Christian Zervos's journal *Cahiers d'Art*, with an illustration of a copy of a rock painting from Zimbabwe. In 1920, the German ethnologist founded the Research Institute for Cultural Morphology, where he kept copies of cave paintings made by his team during numerous excursions beginning in 1904. The same issue features a "gallery" of portraits of avant-garde artists, with Klee at the centre.

**1930 January:** Under the title "Children on Klee," Hans-Friedrich Geist publishes children's spontaneous reactions to reproductions of works by Klee in *Das Kunstblatt*, unleashing controversial reactions.

**March 13–April 2:** In the catalogue to the first monographic Klee exhibition at New York's Museum of Modern Art, the director Alfred H. Barr compares Klee's art to children's drawings and the "ornament of primitive peoples."

**1931 March 29:** In a conversation, Klee shows the writer Rudolf Bach an illustration of incised rock drawings in Tanum, Sweden, from the newly published first volume of *Propyläen-Weltgeschichte*, referring to them as "age-old human memories."

**April 1:** Klee terminates his employment contract with the Bauhaus in Dessau.

**July 1:** Klee takes up a professorship at the Düsseldorf Art Academy.

**Fall:** The third, heavily revised edition of Carl Einstein's *Art of the Twentieth Century* is released. With reference to Klee, Einstein propagates "the mythical powers of the child": "It is precisely these forces that drive the artist who attempts the autonomous formation of objects. In this, we mean the beginning of the sometimes infantile or primitive character of the new object formation."

**1932** Under the rubric "Transformation and Regeneration" in his painting class at the Düsseldorf Art Academy, Klee explains the genesis of his pictorial world: "Within the will to abstraction, something arises here that has nothing to do with reality. The lure of the marvelous is found on the way to hallucination. We transcend something in this realm, a frontier of reality. It is not imitation or depiction, but rather transformation and reimagination."

**1933 April 21:** Following hostilities from the National Socialists, Klee is suspended from his professorship at the Düsseldorf Art Academy without notice, with the unwarranted justification that, "as a Jew and as a teacher" he is "considered impossible and dispensable." (Julius Paul Junghanns, interim director, "Report on the Current Conditions at the Düsseldorf State Art Academy," April 6, 1933)

**Christmas:** Klee immigrates with his wife to Bern.

**1935 August:** Klee shows the first symptoms of a serious disease, which is posthumously diagnosed as scleroderma.

- 1936 June 11 – July 4:** André Breton opens the *International Surrealist Exhibition* at the New Burlington Galleries in London, with works by 58 artists from 14 countries. Klee is represented by 15 works. The exhibition is complemented by artefacts from Oceania, Africa, and the Americas as well as children's drawings and artworks by psychiatric patients.
- December 7 – January 17, 1937:** Alfred H. Barr presents the exhibition *Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism* at the New York Museum of Modern Art, which includes Klee's works as well as those created by children, the "mentally ill," and so-called "primitive" societies.
- 1937 April 28 – May 30:** Alfred H. Barr organizes the exhibition *Prehistoric Rock Pictures from Europe and Africa* at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, which includes copies of the rock paintings Leo Frobenius had his assistants produce on expeditions. In parallel, he displays works by Klee, André Masson, Joan Miró, and Hans Arp, among others.
- July 19 – November 30:** In Munich, the first station of the National Socialist exhibition *Degenerate Art* includes 17 confiscated works by Klee. The exhibition guide juxtaposes a color lithograph by Klee with the work of a "schizophrenic."
- 1938** Robert J. Goldwater's comprehensive study *Primitivism in Modern Painting* is published. The author discusses Klee under the heading "The Child Cult," analysing the similarities and differences between Klee's works and the art of children.

**1940    June 29:** Klee dies in Locarno-Muralto, six days before his application for naturalization in Switzerland is approved. His grave lies in the Schosshalden cemetery, in the direct vicinity of the Zentrum Paul Klee.

Osamu Okuda

# Catalogue

## **Paul Klee. Ich will nichts wissen / Paul Klee. Entre-mondes**

Mit Beiträgen von/Avec des contributions de  
Christophe Boulanger, Sébastien Delot, Fabienne Eggelhöfer,  
Jeanne-Bathilde Lacourt, Morad Montazami, Osamu Okuda,  
Grégoire Prangé, Maria Stavrinaki, Livia Wermuth

147 Farabbildungen/147 images en couleur  
208 Seiten/208 pages, Verlag/Edition: Flammarion  
CHF 39.–

# Führungen und Begleitprogramm

Platzzahl beschränkt.  
Programmänderungen und  
Einschränkungen vorbehalten  
(siehe zpk.org)

Samstags 15:00

Sonntags 13:30

## Öffentliche Führungen

Dienstags 12:30 – 13:00

## Kunst am Mittag

## Fremdsprachige Führungen

Französisch, Englisch,  
Italienisch (siehe zpk.org)

Mittwoch **12. Mai 2021** 14:00

## Einführung für Lehrpersonen

Mit Dominik Imhof, Leiter Kunst-  
vermittlung Zentrum Paul Klee

Donnerstag **27. Mai 2021** 18:00

## Freunde ZPK

Führung für die Mitglieder der  
«Freunde ZPK» mit Chefkura-  
torin Fabienne Eggelhöfer sowie  
Expertinnen und Experten des  
Hauses

Sonntag **30. Mai 2021** 15:00

## Krisis und Mythenproduktion. Paul Klee im Kontext der Grund- lagenkrise europäischen Wissens vor dem Faschismus

Führung im Gespräch mit  
Anselm Franke, Leiter Bildende  
Kunst und Film, Haus der  
Kulturen der Welt, Berlin, und  
Nina Zimmer, Direktorin  
Kunstmuseum Bern und  
Zentrum Paul Klee

Sonntag **06. Juni 2021** 11:00

## Prähistorische Felskunst: Entdeckungen der Vorzeit

Führung im Gespräch mit  
Richard Kuba, wissenschaftlicher  
Mitarbeiter, Frobenius-Institut  
der Goethe-Universität Frankfurt  
und Fabienne Eggelhöfer, Chef-  
kuratorin Zentrum Paul Klee  
Besuchen Sie auch die  
Ausstellung «Kunst der Vorzeit.  
Felsbilder aus den Frobenius-  
Expeditionen» bis 11. Juli im  
Museum Rietberg, Zürich.

Sonntag **13. Juni 2021** 15:00

**L'Art Brut: Un art libre  
et affranchi des normes  
culturelles**

Führung im Gespräch zum  
Begriff Art Brut mit Sarah  
Lombardi, Direktorin Collection  
de l'Art Brut, Lausanne, und  
Fabienne Eggelhöfer,  
Chefkuratorin Zentrum Paul  
Klee.

In französischer Sprache

Sonntag **11. Juli 2021** 11:00

**Was wird heute über Paul Klee  
gezwitschert?**

Fabienne Eggelhöfer, Osamu  
Okuda und Walther Fuchs im  
Gespräch anlässlich der 10.  
Ausgabe des Online-Journals  
für internationale Klee-Studien:  
[zwitscher-maschine.org](http://zwitscher-maschine.org)

Samstag **14. August 2021** 13:00

**Sinn-Reich**

Eine alle Sinne ansprechende  
Führung für Gäste mit und ohne  
Behinderung. Mit Gebärden-  
dolmetscherin und induktiver  
Höranlage

Samstag **21. August 2021** 13:30

**Was hat Paul Klee mit  
Kolonialismus zu tun?**

Führung im Gespräch mit  
Estefania Cuero, Doktorandin zu  
Menschenrechten und Expertin  
zu Diversität und Intersektio-  
nalität, und Livia Wermuth,  
Ausstellungsassistentin Zentrum  
Paul Klee

Sonntag **22. August 2021** 11:00

**Frédéric Zwicker liest  
aus Radost**

Ein Roadtrip mitten ins Leben:  
Die Wege zweier Männer, einer  
mit und einer ohne diagnosti-  
zierte psychische Krankheit,  
verflechten sich. Moderation  
Nina Zimmer, Direktorin Kunst-  
museum Bern und Zentrum  
Paul Klee. Mit musikalischer  
Begleitung von Knuts Koffer

Samstag **28. August 2021** 13:30

**Wörter und Bilder unserer  
Kindheit**

Führung im Gespräch zur Sprach-  
und Bildentwicklung bei Kindern,  
mit Barbara Bechtler, Kinder-  
psychologin, und Livia Wermuth,  
Ausstellungsassistentin Zentrum  
Paul Klee

# Kunstvermittlung für Familien

21.05. – 15.08.21

## **Interaktive Ausstellung**

### **«Kleines Universum»**

Kreativer Brückenschlag von  
den Ateliers des Kindermuseum  
Creaviva in die Ausstellungen  
des Zentrum Paul Klee

Dienstag bis Freitag

14:00/16:00

Samstag und Sonntag

12:00/14:00/16:00

## **Offenes Atelier im**

### **Kindermuseum Creaviva**

Stündige Workshops zu einem  
monatlich wechselnden Thema  
in Verbindung mit den Aus-  
stellungen im Zentrum Paul Klee

Sonntags 10:15 – 11:30

## **Familienmorgen**

In der Ausstellung und im Atelier  
des Kindermuseum Creaviva, für  
die ganze Familie

Samstags 09:30 – 11:45

## **Kinderforum**

Kunst am Samstag für Kinder  
ab 7 Jahren zum Thema «Welten  
erkunden»

The exhibition is a cooperation with



With the support of



**Kanton Bern**  
**Canton de Berne**

The Zentrum Paul Klee is open to all and offers inclusive events.



## Zentrum Paul Klee

Monument im Fruchtländ 3

3006 Bern

Tel +41 (0)31 359 01 01

[info@zpk.org](mailto:info@zpk.org)

[www.zpk.org](http://www.zpk.org)

## Opening hours

Tuesday – Sunday 10:00 – 17:00

Find us on



**Zentrum Paul Klee**  
**Bern**

Founded by  
Maurice E. and Martha Müller  
and the heirs of Paul Klee