Media release
5 July 2016

Exhibition | Kindermuseum Creaviva | Accompanying programme

Exhibition
Paul Klee. I am a Painter
7 July — 30 October 2016
ZENTRUM PAUL KLEE, BERN, SWITZERLAND

‘Colour possesses me. (...) I am a painter’, wrote Klee in a diary entry from 1914. How did the artist evolve from drawing graphic artist into a painter? ‘Paul Klee. I am a painter’, the summer exhibition at Zentrum Paul Klee, displays a thrilling and experimental artistic journey, from his early attempts in oil painting to the great paintings of his final years. Visitors to the exhibition are also invited to pick up a brush themselves. The Kindermuseum Creaviva has set up a studio within the exhibition and ZPK curators provide insights into Klee’s painting techniques.

The exhibition enables visitors to retrace the wide arc of Klee’s exciting transition from drawing to painting. His art is rendered palpable not only through his drawings and paintings, but also through the many objects he left behind in his studio, including brushes, paints and pigments, and many original, hand-made bowls, cups and other utensils. In the ‘Brush, pigments and palette’ workshop, Zentrum Paul Klee conservators share Klee’s methods for preparing his colours and painting materials.

In addition, the exhibition encourages visitors to become artists themselves. The Kindermuseum Creaviva has set up a specially equipped studio within the exhibition hall for the creation of personal masterpieces.

Painting is an ‘oil-reeking brush goddess’

Klee was extremely critical of his own early forays into painting. In his diary, he characterised the art of painting as an ‘öliereichende Pinselgöttin’ (‘oil-reeking brush goddess’), whom he only embraced because, after all, she was his ‘wife’ as he noted. Klee’s exquisite series of reverse glass paintings, created from 1905 until 1912, bears witness to the experimental and unconventional manner in which the artist evolved into a painter despite leaving the ‘oil-reeking brush goddess’ behind. The first part of the exhibition explores Klee’s first attempts at colour in a selection of rarely displayed oil paintings and reverse glass paintings.

Klee’s ‘Breakthrough to Colour’

If he had not experienced Kandinsky’s oil paintings and their expressive colours, Klee may never have made his ‘Durchbruch zur Farbe’ (‘Breakthrough to Colour’). His newly liberated palette enabled him not only to create the bright and colourful images that reflect his visit to Tunisia, but also abstract colour compositions that owe their vibrant presence to masterfully arranged colour contrasts. The evolution of
Klee’s watercolours comes alive in two exhibition galleries where his works before and after 1920 are on display. The technical variety in Klee’s watercolours and his other painting techniques are described in vivid screen presentations specifically created for this exhibition by conservators of Zentrum Paul Klee.

**A visionary of artistic media**

During his ten years at the Bauhaus in Weimar and Dessau, Klee pulled out all the stops available to him as a painter, creating everything from apparently ascetic abstract compositions and canvases that play with geometrical shapes, through to inventive – and often fantastically surrealistic – images. A visionary artist in terms of imagery, Klee also made innovative use of his media. Not only did he produce unconventional blends of paints and pigments, he also used all manner of textile supports, to which he applied primers whose main ingredients were gesso, chalk or even sand.

The presentation of works in the exhibition ‘Paul Klee. I am a Painter’ renders palpable the material aspects of his art through his drawings and paintings. One gallery is dedicated exclusively to works painted on unusual textile supports including cotton, silk and damask. Another focuses on the use of complex primers and textures in Klee’s paintings, and a third concentrates on paintings completed using coloured paste. A fourth gallery is dedicated to two specific aspects of Klee’s oeuvre, i.e. pictures he cut up, and works where he painted on both sides of the canvas.

**Late works**

Bearing witness to a fundamental shift in Klee’s imagery, the third part of the exhibition features many of his later works and traces the various aspects of his evolution into a mature artist. They show how Klee reviewed his earlier works, going back to ‘square one’ and starting afresh. Having transcended all formal and systematic boundaries, he embraced the challenge of having to surrender control.

**Opening:** Wednesday, 06 July 2016, 18:00

**Curator:** Dr. Michael Baumgartner, Director of Art and Collection

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**Colour. Colour. Colour.**

Some of us have always had a clear sense of colour. Others spend a lifetime searching for it. Paul Klee discovered his on a trip to Tunisia. Discovering one’s calling, one’s destiny, and being able to live it fully is one of the greatest gifts that life can bestow.

German artist Anselm Feuerbach once said, ‘You need four things to be a good painter: a soft heart, a fine eye, a light hand and freshly washed brushes.’

At Creaviva, we will take care of the brushes. And visitors will provide their heart, eyes and hands. To give you an opportunity to develop your skills, the Kindermuseum Creaviva offers a variety of events and workshops from 7 July 2016:

- For 16 weeks, the Kindermuseum Creaviva’s interactive exhibition will be transformed into a giant artist’s studio with the pure joy of painting at its heart.
- In the open studios, we will explore topics and techniques from Klee’s hugely varied œuvre three times a day – at 12:00 noon, 2PM and 4PM.
- In a specially equipped studio set up in the large ZPK exhibition hall, we invite the public to get creative. Create in the exhibition: daily, from 10AM until 4:30PM.
  Painting in the exhibition: Thursdays to Sundays, from 2 until 4:30PM.

The three series of events will be complemented by workshops for groups of schoolchildren and adults designed to bridge the gap to the exhibition, ‘Paul Klee. I am a Painter’, at Zentrum Paul Klee from 7 July until 30 October 2016.

And, who knows, perhaps you will experience the same realisation made by Paul Klee during his trip to Tunisia in the spring of 1914: ‘Colour possesses me. It will always possess me, I know that. Colour and I are one. I am a Painter.’

For more information, please visit [www.creaviva.org](http://www.creaviva.org)
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Accompanying programme

EVERY SAT | 3PM & SUN | 1:30PM
GUIDED TOURS

EVERY TUESDAY | 12:30-1PM
ART AT LUNCHTIME

SUN | 10 July—30 October 2016 | 10:30-11:45AM
FAMILY MORNING
I AM A PAINTER
Family event in the exhibition, ‘Paul Klee. I am a Painter’, and the Kindermuseum Creaviva workshop.
A COOP INITIATIVE

DO | 18/08 | 25/08 | 08/09 | 22/09 | 06/10 | 20/10
16:00
WORKSHOP
BRUSH, PIGMENTS AND PALETTE

WED | 24 August 16 | 1:30-3PM
GUIDED TOUR FOR TEACHERS (IN FRENCH)

WED | 24 August 2016 | 2-3:30PM
GUIDED TOUR FOR TEACHERS (IN GERMAN)

SUN | 28 August 2016 | 3-4PM
INCLUSIVE TOUR
Inclusive tour appealing to all the senses, for visitors with and without disabilities. With sign-language interpreter and audio induction loop.

SUN | 01 September 2016 | 6PM
TOUR FOR FRIENDS OF THE ZPK
Guided tour of the exhibition, ‘Paul Klee. I am a Painter’, with curator Michael Baumgartner.
For Friends of the ZPK only.

SAT | 03 September 2016 | 2-5PM
TOUR ‘PATHS TO KLEE’
Experience the life and works of Paul Klee during a walk from Zentrum Paul Klee to Bern’s historic city centre. You will also learn about the city’s development over the course of 800 years, and see remarkable buildings and places of interest.
SUN | 02 October 2016 | 3-4PM
GUIDED TOUR FOR THE BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED
With detailed descriptions and/or tactile objects.

EVERY SAT | until 24 September 2016 | 1-2PM
TOUR OF FRUCHTLAND
Explore our project FRUCHTLAND, our focal point related to Nature, Culture and Agriculture, as well as Paul Klee’s works, the ZPK’s bees, and agricultural management around the ZPK.
Admission to exhibition

For guided tours in English, French and Italian, please visit www.zpk.org