Media Release

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Kindermuseum Creaviva

Exhibition

Paul Klee and the Surrealists
18 November 2016 – 12 March 2017
ZENTRUM PAUL KLEE, BERN, SWITZERLAND

‘Paul Klee and the Surrealists’ provides the first opportunity ever to explore some of the fascinating and surprising relationships between Paul Klee and Surrealist artists. The show features more than 250 loans from major international museums. On display will be several chief works by Salvador Dalí, Giorgio de Chirico, Max Ernst, Alberto Giacometti as well as René Magritte, Joan Miró and Man Ray.

Klee’s oeuvre is a ‘perfect museum of dreams, the only museum devoid of dust.’
René Crevel, 1930

‘Klee was the turning point in my life. It was under his influence that my art was liberated.’
Joan Miró, 1982

In 1920s and 1930s Paris, a great many authors, artists and publishers were inspired by Paul Klee. They either wrote and published articles and books about him, or corresponded with him. The list reads like an excerpt from the *Who is Who* of Surrealism. The fact that Klee, a German citizen, became a beacon to Surrealists after World War I is as surprising as Klee being among the best-selling visual artists in late 1920s Paris.

The Surrealist movement sprang up in France and found its expression in literature and the visual arts: painting, photography and film. Surrealists endeavoured to create liberated, revolutionary and
autonomous works inspired by dreams, surreal events and the unconscious. They recognised a congenial precursor in visual magician, Paul Klee.

**Paul Klee as seen by Surrealists**

In the early years of Surrealism, it were poets and other literary figures who upheld Klee as an exemplar of Surrealistic painting – a genre, however, that had yet to be invented. In the May 1992 edition of the journal *Littérature*, edited by Louis Aragon, André Breton and Philippe Soupault, Aragon published this note about Klee: ‘It is in Weimar that a plant flowers which resembles the tooth of a sorceress.’ In 1923, Antonin Artaud described Klee as a ‘peintre mental’, while Robert Desnos is said to have ascribed to him the ability to ‘teach the blind to draw’. The visit of Surrealist painters, André Masson and Joan Miró, to the first Klee exhibition held in Paris in 1925 would prove to be their artistic initiation.

Paul Klee’s imagination was seen to have no limits. He cultivated his image as an unworldly artist, a notion beautifully expressed in his statement, ‘I cannot be grasped in the here and now’. Nevertheless, this was not an one-way relationship. In his turn, Klee received significant impulses from the Surrealists and, despite his rejection of their attempts of appropriation, was in fact a kindred spirit.

**Themes of the Exhibition**

Both in the exhibition, ‘Paul Klee and the Surrealists’, and in the accompanying catalogue, Zentrum Paul Klee endeavours to explore and present the relationships between Klee and Surrealist artists, and to reawaken the artistic potential of Surrealism almost a century on. Many of the Surrealist chief works are on display in the Swiss capital city for the very first time. Among them are Giorgio de Chirico’s ‘(Premonitory) Portrait of Guillaume Apollinaire’ – ‘Ritratto (premonitore) di Guillaume Apollinaire’, ‘The spectral cow’ – ‘La vache spectrale’ by Salvador Dalí, and ‘Table’, a sculpture by Alberto Giacometti.

Seven thematic sections trace various aspects in the relationship between Klee and the Surrealists, from ‘écriture automatique’ – Klee’s term being ‘psychic automatism’ – to the mystery of objects, by way of dreams, surrealist masks and portraits, and space in its surreal or imaginary manifestations. These thematic encounters culminate in three focal areas: firstly, eros and sexuality, which is closely associated with the fragmentation and instrumentalisation of the human body, followed, thirdly, by the magical and imaginary realms of plants and animals in the ‘histoire naturelle’, the natural history that provided so many points of contact between Klee and his Surrealist colleagues, especially Max Ernst.

**Cooperation with Centre Pompidou**

The exhibition would have been impossible to realise without the generous cooperation of the Centre Pompidou in Paris, not least in the form of a loan of over sixty of their works of art. Moreover, we gratefully acknowledge loans from other major international museums, including the Museum of Modern Art New York and the Guggenheim Museum New York City, the Menil Collection Houston and the Philadelphia Museum of Modern Art, the Pinakothek der Moderne in Munich, the Kunstmuseum Basel, Fondation Beyeler Riehen/Basel and the Kunsthaus Zürich. Several significant private collectors also generously loaned their works to us.

**Opening Event:** 18 November 2016, 6pm

**Curator:** Dr. Michael Baumgartner, deputy director Kunstmuseum Bern – Zentrum Paul Klee

The exhibition has been staged with the generous support of:
Kanton Bern, Burgergemeinde Bern, Kultur Kanton Bern/Swisslos

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Paul Klee und die Surrealisten

Edited by Michael Baumgartner and Nina Zimmer, Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern

Published by Hatje Cantz

With contributions by Michael Baumgartner, Kai-Inga Dost Guitemie Maldonado, Osamu Okuda, Jürgen Pech, Sophie Petit-Emptaz, Hans-Peter Wittwer.

400 pages, with c.380 colour plates.

Supplemented by a collection of original texts, mostly in French, including Klee’s extensive correspondence with Surrealists, as well as writings by illustrious contemporaries such as Georges Bataille, Robert Desnos, Marcel Duchamp and Paul Éluard.

We will be happy to send you a copy of the catalogue; a published review or other contribution would be much appreciated.

For a media copy of the catalogue, please e-mail press@zpk.org.
ACCOMPANYING PROGRAMME

MUSIC

Ensemble Paul Klee and Alex Porter, magician
‘Magical, Diabolic, Bizarre’
Saturday, 19 November 2016, 5pm

Master Concert with Francesco Tristano, piano
‘Goldberg City Variations’
Sunday, 20 November 2016, 5pm

Master Concert with Mikhail Rudy, piano
Brigitte Fossey, reader (in German)
‘Merci, Paul Klee’
Sunday, 12 March 2017, 5pm

FILM

Classic Surrealist films and film programme on Marquis de Sade
8 January – 12 March 2017
Cinema REX presents films by Luis Buñuel, Man Ray, Philip Kaufman, Roman Polanski and others
www.rexbern.ch

ART EDUCATION

Art at Lunchtime
Guided tours in German
Tuesdays, 12:30 – 1pm

Guided Tours
Public guided tours in German
Saturdays, 3pm; Sundays, 1:30pm
For information about guided tours in English, French and Italian, please see www.zpk.org

Family Mornings
20 November 2016 – 12 March 2017
Sundays, 10:30 – 11:45am
Family mornings in the galleries of Zentrum Paul Klee and the Creaviva Studios
In partnership with Coop
Guided Tour
for schoolteachers (in French)
Mercredi, le 23 novembre 2016, 13:30 – 15h

Guided Tour
for schoolteachers (in German)
Wednesday, 23 November 2016, 2 – 3:30pm

Advent, Advent, ...
03 – 23 December 2016, 12:30 – 12:50pm
at Zentrum Paul Klee: Tuesdays, Thursdays, Saturdays;
at Kunstmuseum Bern: Wednesdays, Fridays, Sundays:
Staff members of Zentrum Paul Klee and Kunstmuseum Bern present 20 works of art by Paul Klee and his colleagues. In cooperation with the Department of Art Education, Kunstmuseum Bern

Guided Literary Tours
Dream Diaries
Michaela Wendt reads literary writings that relate to artworks on display (in German)
Sunday, 4 December 2016, 3pm
Wednesday, 18 January 2017, 1:30pm
Sunday, 5 February 2017, 3pm
Sunday, 26 February 2017, 3pm

Art and Religion in Dialogue
Beat Allemand, Reformed Church, in conversation with Dominik Imhof, Zentrum Paul Klee
Sunday, 11 December 2016, 3pm (in German)

Guided Tour
Focus on inclusiveness
A guided tour that involves all five senses. For visitors with and without impairments. With a sign-language interpreter and audio induction-loop system (in German)
Sunday, 22 January 2017, 3pm

Guided Tour
for the blind and visually impaired people
Guided tour including extensive visual descriptions and/or tactile objects (in German)
Sunday, 12 February 2017, 3pm
Interactive Creaviva Exhibition
‘fast Traum’– ‘almost dream’
18 November 2016 – 12 March 2017

Dreams reside beyond our reality. They consist of hopes, fantasies, fears, wishes and desires. They can be gentle or wild, blissful or disturbing, cheerfully bright or dark. Dreams are the key to amazing rooms and spaces within ourselves.

The interactive exhibition, ‘fast Traum’– ‘almost dream’, provides a bridge, as it were, from the studios of Creaviva, the children's museum, to the exhibition, Paul Klee and the Surrealists, in other galleries at Zentrum Paul Klee.

The installations presented here focus on selected original works that are on display in the main exhibition. Visitors of all ages are invited and encouraged to creatively engage, either in a realistic manner or by taking a more surrealistic approach, with some aspects of the strange worlds depicted in the originals.

Opening Event:
Thursday, 17 November 2016, 5pm, Creaviva

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