Exhibition opening: *Paul Klee. Carpet of memory*

*Paul Klee. Carpet of memory*: climax and conclusion of the ZPK’s Orient trilogy

The exhibition *Paul Klee. Carpet of memory* (30.5.2009 - 30.8.2009) brings to a thrilling conclusion the Zentrum Paul Klee’s Orient trilogy. The focus of this particular exhibition is the oeuvre of Paul Klee and the works that emerged from his trip to Tunisia in 1914 and Egypt in 1928, and his later exploration of a host of Orient-inspired themes. The exhibition also includes early Orient-themed photographs and examines the image of the Orient that photography helped to convey.

It was Klee’s affinity for decorative art at the beginning of the 20th century that fuelled his interest in the Orient. In the course of his career, what emerged was an eclectic range of references and correspondences to the imagery and use of symbolism, but also to the chromatics of Islamic art, which the exhibition highlights by providing comparisons with oriental textiles, floor coverings, ceramics and documents.

The exhibition documents in considerable detail the trip Paul Klee and his friends Louis Moilliet and August Macke made to Tunisia in 1914, and Klee’s later journey to Egypt in the winter of 1928/29. Pride of place is ceded to a broad selection of watercolours by the three fellow-painters. Over and above the depiction of their impressions garnered during the trip itself, of particular significance is the way Klee and Moilliet went on to process those impressions as their careers progressed. While Arabic calligraphy and Ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs encouraged Klee to develop his own pictorial alphabet, it was highly ornamented oriental art that was to provide his creativity with a constant source of geometric and ornamental inspiration. And it was Arab urban architecture that prompted Paul Klee in 1914 to start developing his own ‘picture architecture’. Klee had never before come across such light and colour as he encountered in Tunisia; the experience led him to a wholly new awareness of the use of colour.

The exhibition includes a representative selection of early oriental photographs charting the beginnings of this medium. Archaeologists on scientific expeditions were quick to exploit the objective, documentary possibilities offered by photography. Hot on the heels of pictures of famous sites and edifices came photos of the inhabitants of these exotic regions, which were gradually coming under colonial rule. The rise in tourism led to a rapid increase in the activities of professional photographic studios – complete with dizzyingly high print runs of picture postcards and souvenir photographs. Early photography took its cue from painting’s tried-and-tested forms of representation and adopted its preferred motifs such as bazaars and market scenes, cafés, odalisques, desert landscapes and oases. Via the medium of the picture postcard, photography contributed significantly to the
dissemination of these motifs and the clichés of the Orient. The exhibition covers a wide spectrum, ranging from Maxime Du Camp’s first images of the Nile Valley and the works of Francis Frith, the Abdullah frères and Lehnert & Landrock, through to August Macke’s private photo album and Moilliet’s collection of postcards.

The exhibition Paul Klee. Carpet of memory runs from 30 May to 30 August 2009.
The public preview is on Friday, 29 May at 18h00.
There is still time to catch the exhibition Dream and reality. Contemporary art from the Middle Near East which runs parallel to the exhibition Paul Klee. Carpet of memory until 16 August.

Art interpretation
Creaviva children’s museum: the Creaviva’s new interactive exhibition goes by the title Temple Festival and should be seen as an aid to interpreting the Zentrum Paul Klee’s Orient exhibitions. The Creaviva’s workshops – and the open studios in the first half of the year – also address themselves to the theme of the Orient.

Audio guide: the Zentrum Paul Klee’s art interpretation activities accompanying the Orient exhibitions include a new audio guide programme in four languages.

Catalogue: publishers Hatje Cantz Verlag have brought out a richly illustrated catalogue in German and French to accompany the exhibitions In Search of the Orient. From Bellini to Klee and Paul Klee. Carpet of Memory.

Du issue 793 – In Search of the Orient: in association with the Zentrum Paul Klee, this issue of the magazine focuses on Paul Klee’s Oriental journey and the culture of the present-day Arab-Persian region.
Full details of the programme can be found in a leaflet or by visiting www.zpk.org

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