

Cover Star Klee



PRESS KIT

7.6.–14.9.2025


Zentrum
Paul Klee

Gegründet von:

Maurice E. & Martha Müller
sowie den Erben Paul Klee

Mit Unterstützung von:



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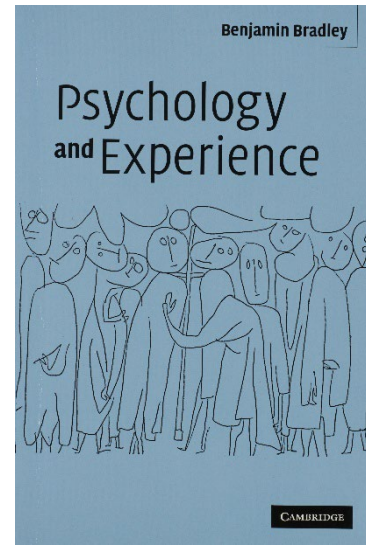
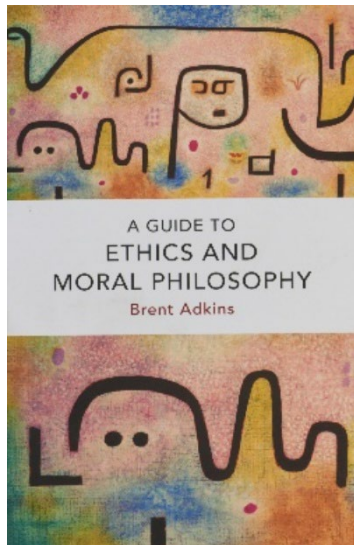


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Fokus. Cover Star Klee

7.6.-14.9.2025

Why do so many 20th-century books – hundreds, if not thousands – about philosophy, psychotherapy or critical theory have Paul Klee's art on the cover? Within the context of the dynamic permanent exhibition *Kosmos Klee. The Collection*, between 7 June and 14 September 2025 the Zentrum Paul Klee will devote itself to this question. Featuring just over 150 books and 27 original drawings and paintings from the collection of the Zentrum Paul Klee, the Fokus exhibition honours the fascinating influence of Klee's work on the 20th-century imagination.

The works of Paul Klee enjoy lasting popularity among authors and publishers within the field of the human sciences in the 20th century. They adorn the covers of books from the spheres of philosophy, sociology and theology, as well as psychology and psychotherapy. Paul Klee has established himself as the painter par excellence for philosophers, thinkers and theorists. His works bring to life the verbal world of abstract thought, and visualize concepts such as 'reason', 'revelation' or 'risk' which are difficult to imagine in pictorial terms. The Fokus exhibition juxtaposes selected book covers with their originals from the collection of the Zentrum Paul Klee, and invites the viewer to judge a book by its cover.

The books with works by Klee on their covers include treatises by well-known representatives of the Frankfurt School such as Theodor Adorno and Walter Benjamin. Klee's visual language reflects central experiences of modern philosophy, and associates with concepts of critical theory. Klee's works also seem to be particularly popular for the covers of psychological and psychotherapeutic textbooks. Their high level of openness encourages a wide range of possible interpretations.

The Fokus exhibition has been assembled by guest curator Dieter Roelstraete. It is based on his book *Kleine Welt*, published in 2020. Dieter Roelstraete is curator at the Neubauer Collegium for Culture and Society at the University of Chicago. His curatorial interests lie in the relationship between art and politics, art as a form of knowledge, art as intellectual work and the conception of exhibitions as a form of writing. In the preface to his book Dieter Roelstraete explains how he came to this subject:

'This project [...] is rooted in a twofold observation that recurs every time I pack and unpack my library. First, why do authors and/or publishers in the field of twentieth-century philosophy and capital-T Theory so often turn to Paul Klee – indeed, often even the same Paul Klee painting, over and over again – to adorn the covers of their books? [...] What precisely, powers this force? Why Klee?'

Dieter Roelstraete, from the preface to his book *Kleine Welt*, p. 5–6

Curators of the current display

Dieter Roelstraete

With the support of

Kanton Bern, Bundesamt für Kultur BAK, Bürgergemeinde

Media tour

We cordially invite you to an individual media tour **with chief curator Fabienne Eggelhöfer** at the Zentrum Paul Klee.

To arrange your appointment please contact press@zpk.org.

Digital Guide

There is a freely accessible Digital Guide to accompany the Fokus exhibition *Cover Star Klee*. It can be accessed via QR code or guide.zpk.org/en/fokus-cover-star-klee

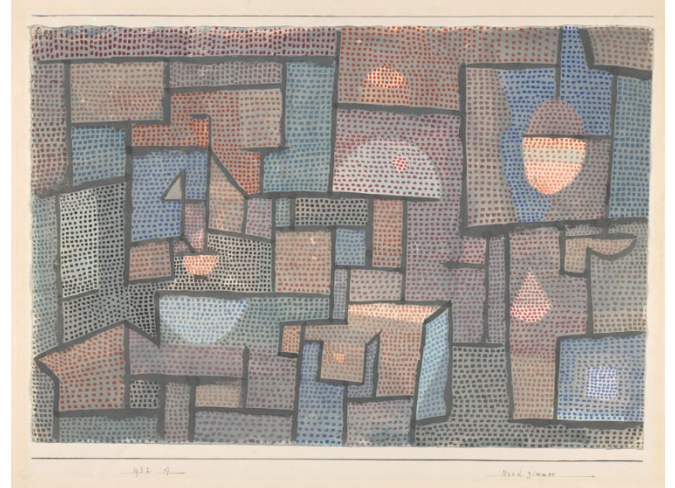




20 years of the Zentrum Paul Klee!

The Zentrum Paul Klee and the Creaviva are celebrating their 20th anniversary in 2025. We look back and into the future and celebrate together with our visitors and neighbours, with founders, sponsors and supporters, event customers and experts, music aficionados, art and literature lovers, companions and a programme full of highlights. Find out more: zpk.org/20.

All visitors born in 2005 can visit the exhibitions free of charge all year round.



Welcome to Kosmos Klee!

The dynamic permanent exhibition devoted to Paul Klee invites visitors to immerse themselves in the life and work of this important modern artist. With some 80 changing works from the collection, *Kosmos Klee* offers a chronological survey of Klee's artistic career. Biographical and archival material provide an insight into his life and time. In addition, the 'focus room' offers a space for smaller exhibitions devoted to individual aspects of Klee's work, or contributions to the artist's global reception.

The collection

The Zentrum Paul Klee is the world's most important centre for research into Paul Klee's life and work, and has one of the most significant collections of the artist's drawings, watercolours and paintings. Paul Klee was primarily a draughtsman, which is why 80% of the collection of the Zentrum Paul Klee consists of works on paper, matching the collected works. Because of the fragility of the works as well as the large size and diversity of the collection, only parts of it can be displayed at once. Klee enjoyed experimenting, not only in terms of content and form but also technically, using light-sensitive paints, inks and papers. For that reason the works need periods of rest between periods on display.

Kosmos Klee

With *Kosmos Klee. The Collection* the Zentrum Paul Klee offers visitors the opportunity to immerse themselves in Paul Klee's life and work, as well as in the unique collection of the institution. Some 80 rotating and chronologically organised works provide an overview of Klee's artistic development, from the highly detailed early works via tendencies towards abstraction and the discovery of colour, to the reduced pictorial language of the later work.

Each decade of Klee's artistic career is identified by a colour in the exhibition, allowing visitors to find their way intuitively around the space. Brief introductory texts, biographical photographs and films give deeper insights into the different phases of the work and Paul Klee's engagement with the people around him.

Aside from his works, the Zentrum Klee also preserves the artist's archive. In the dynamic permanent exhibition, different treasures from the archive are presented, revealing the various aspects of Paul Klee's life. His love of music is reflected in his record collection and the scores that Klee, a gifted violinist, played from. Klee's favourite music can be heard as part of a podcast in the exhibition. Parts of the artist's collection of natural materials, including shells, stones and pages from herbariums, display Klee's close relationship with nature and natural processes. Other objects include his watercolour box, his schoolbooks, scribbled over with drawings, as well as letters.

Fokus

One part of some 100 m² in area of the permanent exhibition is reserved for the series *Fokus*. Smaller exhibitions focus on particular aspects of Klee's work, present works of artists with surprising references to Klee and follow the global Klee reception. The current presentation is dedicated to the popularity of Klee's works as book covers within the field of the human sciences in the 20th century.

Unpacking Klee

Since June 2024, new episodes of the short film series *Unpacking Klee* are being released regularly and shown in the exhibition and on the Zentrum Paul Klee's YouTube channel. 10 sequences guide the viewer through the depot of the Zentrum Paul Klee, which holds not only art works but also the world's most comprehensive Paul Klee archive. It includes diaries, passports, the correspondence, photographs, musical notes, records, a violin and a grand piano, a collection of natural materials, books, studio utensils and more. Behind the scenes treasures are unpacked to show what the objects tell us about Paul Klee's life and work.

youtube.com/ZentrumPaulKlee

1. Shells
2. Paul Klee's passports
3. Studio utensils for the coloured paste technique
4. Hand puppets
5. Children's drawings
6. Catalogues of the artist's œuvre
7. Studio utensils for the spraying technique
8. Photographs of cats
9. Music
10. Schoolbooks

Digital Guide

The exhibition is accompanied by a digital guide offering thematic tours of the exhibition with changing emphases, a biographical overview and a study of historical and historico-cultural events and themes that were important to Klee's work.



Digitorial® on Paul Klee's travels

The Digitorial® presents five of Paul Klee's most important journeys and illustrates his artistic development from bewildered student to one of the most important artists of the modern period. The five chapters are dedicated to the artist's first journey to Italy in 1901, his 1912 journey to Paris where he visited Robert Delauney, among others, the now legendary study tour to Tunisia with Louis Moilliet and August Macke, one of Klee's trips to the south to recover from his teaching activity at the Bauhaus, and the 1928 journey to Egypt that was made possible by the Klee Society.

mappingklee.zpk.org/en/



Press images *Fokus. Cover Star Klee*

Download press images:

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01

Hannah Arendt

Was ist Politik?

Piper Verlag, 2003

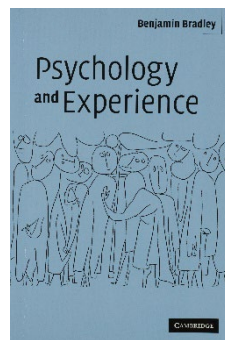
Paul Klee

gewägt wägend [Daringly Balanced], 1930, 144

Watercolour and pen on paper on cardboard

31 × 24,5/23,5 cm

Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern



02

Benjamin Bradley

Psychology and Experience

Cambridge University Press, 2005

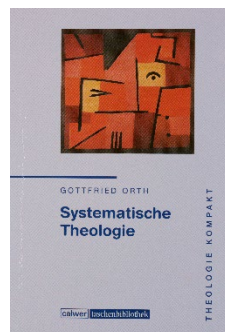
Paul Klee

Bruderschaft [Brotherhood], 1939, 952

Pencil on paper on cardboard

21 × 29,5 cm

Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern



03

Gottfried Orth

Systematische Theologie

calwer Verlag, 2002

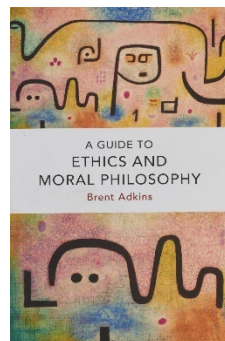
Paul Klee

Blick aus Rot [Glance Out of Red], 1937, 211

Pastel on cotton on coloured paste in burlap; reconstructed frame

47 × 50 cm

Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern, donation of Livia Klee



04

Brent Adkins

A Guide to Ethics and Moral Philosophy

Edinburgh University Press, 2017

Paul Klee

Insula dulcamara, 1938, 481

Oil and coloured paste on paper on burlap

88 × 176 cm

Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern



05

Book covers illustrated with works by Paul Klee

Press images *Kosmos Klee. The Collection*

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01

Paul and Lily Klee with the cat Bimbo,
Kistlerweg 6, Bern, 1935
Photo: Fee Meisel



02

Paul Klee

Ohne Titel (Villa am Langensee) [Untitled
(Villa at the Langensee)], 1896
Watercolour on paper
9,9 × 15 cm
Private collection, Switzerland, deposit at
the Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern



03

Paul Klee

Ohne Titel (Rückenakt) [Nude from
Behind], 1902
Pencil on paper on cardboard
32,5 × 28,5 cm
Private collection, Switzerland, deposit at
the Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern



04

Paul Klee

In den Häusern v. St. Germain [In the
Houses of St. Germain], 1914, 110
Watercolour on paper on cardboard
15,5 × 15,9/16,3 cm
Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern, donation of
Livia Klee

Download press images:

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05

Paul Klee

Tunesische Scizze [Tunisian Sketch], 1914, 212

Watercolour and pencil on paper on cardboard

17,9 × 12,2 cm

Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern, donation of Livia Klee



06

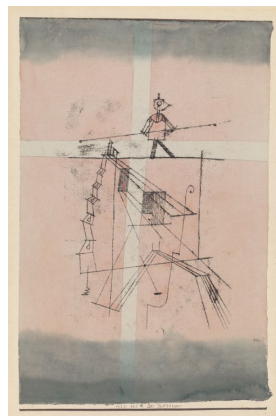
Paul Klee

Ohne Titel (Fabrikanlage) [Untitled (Factory Plant)], 1922

Watercolour and pencil on paper on cardboard

10 × 8,9 cm

Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern, donation of Livia Klee



07

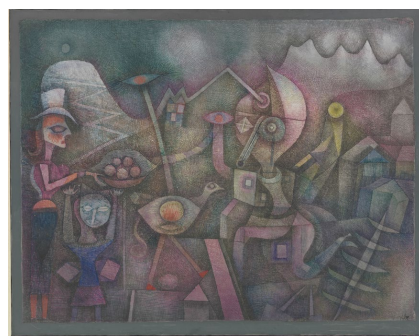
Paul Klee

Seiltänzer [Tightrope Walker], 1923, 138

Lithograph

43,2 × 26,8 cm

Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern



08

Paul Klee

Karneval im Gebirge [Carnival in the Mountains], 1924, 114

Watercolour on primed paper on cardboard

24 × 31,3 cm

Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern

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09

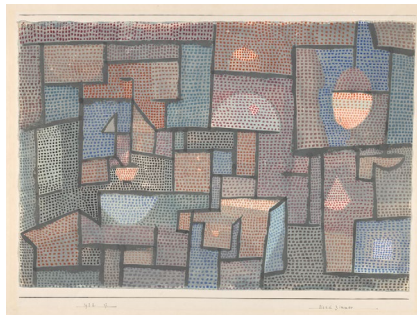
Paul Klee

Fische im Kreis [Fishes in a Circle], 1926, 140

Oil and tempera on primed muslin on cardboard

42 × 43 cm

Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern, donation of Livia Klee



10

Paul Klee

Nordzimmer [North Room], 1932, 17

Watercolour on paper on cardboard

37 × 55 cm

Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern



11

Paul Klee

Doppelgesicht [Double face], 1933, 383

Coloured paste and pencil on paper on cardboard

33 × 21 cm

Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern, donation of Livia Klee



12

Paul Klee

spätes Glühen [Late Glowing], 1934, 29

Pastel on damask on cardboard

26,8 × 32,5/34,3 cm

Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern, donation of Livia Klee

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Exhibition view *Kosmos Klee. The Collection*, Zentrum Paul Klee, 2024, photo: Rolf Siegenthaler, © Zentrum Paul Klee



14

Exhibition view *Kosmos Klee. The Collection*, Zentrum Paul Klee, 2024, photo: Rolf Siegenthaler, © Zentrum Paul Klee



15

Exhibition view *Kosmos Klee. The Collection*, Zentrum Paul Klee, 2024, photo: Rolf Siegenthaler, © Zentrum Paul Klee



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Exhibition view *Kosmos Klee. The Collection*, Zentrum Paul Klee, 2024, photo: Rolf Siegenthaler, © Zentrum Paul Klee



17

Exhibition view *Kosmos Klee. The Collection*, Zentrum Paul Klee, 2024, photo: Rolf Siegenthaler, © Zentrum Paul Klee



18

Exhibition view *Kosmos Klee. The Collection*, Zentrum Paul Klee, 2024, photo: Christine Strub, © Zentrum Paul Klee

Biography

1879

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

1898

After finishing his secondary education and wavering between music and painting for a long time, he decides to study art and goes to Munich where he attends Heinrich Knirr's private drawing school.

1899

Klee meets his future wife, the pianist Lily Stumpf (1876–1946).

1900

After five months, he breaks off his studies at the Munich Academy in Franz von Stuck's painting class.

1901

In July, Klee returns to his parents in Bern.

1901/1902

He undertakes a six-month educational trip through Italy with the sculptor Hermann Haller and experiences a creative crisis in view of the art of antiquity and the Renaissance.

1902–1906

He retreats to his parents' house to study on his own and creates his first reverse glass paintings and etchings.

1906

After marrying Lily Stumpf on 15 September in Bern, the couple move to Munich.

1907

On 30 September, their son Felix is born.

1911

Klee meets the artists of the *Blauer Reiter*: August Macke, Gabriele Münter, Wassily Kandinsky, Marianne von Werefkin, Alexej Jawlensky and later Franz Marc.

1912

17 works of Klee are part of the second *Blauer Reiter* exhibition in Munich. In April, he travels to Paris, where he sees Cubist works for the first time and visits Robert and Sonia Delaunay.

1914

In April, Klee travels to Tunisia with August Macke and Louis Moilliet. There, he deepens the impulses towards abstraction and colour design which he received in Paris.

1916

On 11 March, Klee is called up to the army and, after infantry training, performs his military service with the aviation unit in Schleissheim near Munich and in Gersthofen. He is able to continue his artistic work.

1916–1918

Through his exhibitions in the Berlin gallery *Der Sturm*, he becomes a cult figure of young art in Germany.

1920

Hans Goltz, who represented Klee in his gallery, organises a first retrospective of 362 works in Munich. The first Klee monographs are published. In October, Klee is appointed to the Bauhaus in Weimar by Walter Gropius.

1921

On 13 May, Klee moves from Munich to Weimar and starts teaching.

1923

The Berlin National Gallery organises Klee's first museum exhibition in Germany in the Kronprinzen-Palais.

1924

Art dealer Galka Scheyer founds the artist group *Die Blaue Vier* with Wassily Kandinsky, Lyonel Feininger, Alexej Jawlensky and Paul Klee and tries to make the artists known in the U.S.

1925

The Bauhaus moves to Dessau.

Klee takes part in the first surrealist group exhibition *La peinture surréaliste* in Paris together with Max Ernst, Joan Miró, Pablo Picasso and other artists.

1926

Klee and his family move to Dessau, where they live in one of the two-family houses built by Gropius for Bauhaus masters with Wassily and Nina Kandinsky.

1928

Klee undertakes a journey through Egypt. The hieroglyphs and the Nile landscape in particular leave their mark on his work.

1929

Several exhibitions are organised to celebrate Klee's 50th birthday, including in Berlin, Dresden and Paris as well as at the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

1931

Klee leaves the Bauhaus and takes up a professorship at the Düsseldorf Academy of Art.

1933

Under pressure from the National Socialists, Klee is dismissed from his teaching position. At the end of the year, he leaves Germany with his wife and returns to his hometown of Bern.

1935

Klee shows the first signs of scleroderma.

1936

His poor state of health makes Klee's artistic work much more difficult.

1937

Klee's art is labelled "degenerate" by the National Socialists and 102 of his works are confiscated from German museums. 15 of them are part of the exhibition *Entartete Kunst*.

1939

Despite his poor state of health, Klee's productivity reaches a peak. He creates 1253 works in just one year.

1940

On 29 June, Paul Klee dies in Locarno-Muralto. His application for naturalisation, which had been pending until then, is approved on 5 July.

Current and upcoming exhibitions at the Zentrum Paul Klee

Le Corbusier. The Order of Things

until 22.6.2025

Rose Wylie. Flick and Float

19.7.–5.10.2025

Anni Albers. Constructing Textiles

7.11.2025–22.2.2026

Kosmos Klee. The Collection

Fokus. Gego (Gertrud Goldschmidt)

19.9.2025–18.1.2026

Opening hours

Tuesday–Sunday

10:00–27:00

Monday closed

Contact

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Accreditation for media representatives



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