

Press kit

Fokus Klee's versos

1940/NO.87

37

Kunstmuseum Bern
Künstler: Paul Klee
Titel: Glas-Fassade, 1940, 289 (K 8)
Inv. Nr.: B.39
Besitzer: Paul-Klee-Stiftung, Kunstmuseum Bern

Do Not Tape
PLEXIGLAS

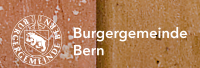
9.5.2026– 23.8.2026



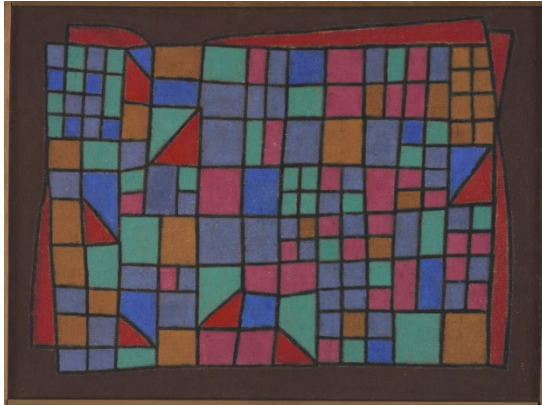
Founded by
Maurice E. & Martha Müller
and the heirs of Paul Klee

With the support of
Kanton Bern
Canton de Berne

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Paul Klee, Untitled (Verso of Glass Facade) (detail), 1940, oil on primed canvas, 71.3 x 95.7 cm, Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern



Fokus. Klee's versos

9.5.-23.8.2026

Often, in his painting and drawing, Paul Klee used both sides of his picture supports such as paper, cardboard or canvas. Over the many years of her research project, the curator Marie Kakinuma identified drawings, watercolours or paintings on the verso of 600 of a total of 9600 works by the artist. With reference to 19 examples, the presentation *Fokus. Klee's versos*, within the permanent exhibition *Kosmos Klee*, reveals the variety of the recto and verso compositions within Klee's oeuvre.

Fascinating origin stories of Klee's works come to light. The examples shown testify to continuing working processes, reused materials or chance posthumous discoveries. Here the nature of the support plays a major part. In the case of non-transparent supports such as canvas or cardboard, in some instances the verso depictions have only been revealed by restoration or scientific examination.

On the verso of Klee's *Glass Façade* (1940), the Kunstmuseum Bern uncovered a hitherto unknown representation as the result of restoration work in the 1990s. The *Glass Façade* is one of the major works from Klee's late period, and one of the few large-format paintings from that time. For decades the verso of the work had been covered by a pinkish-brown overpainting which became brittle over time and flaked off. It has now been restored. On the verso we can see a figure with wings ending in points which recalls Klee's angel paintings, as well as a girl standing on her head. On the stretcher Klee notes in pencil: 'Girl dies and becomes'. It was only the ravage of time that exposed the hidden painting.

Klee did not explicitly define a recto and verso on all his two-sided works. In his lifetime, for example, Klee did not include *Child and Kite* or *Flower and Snake* (both around 1940) in his catalogue raisonné, even though both sides of the paintings have been fully worked.

Klee died shortly after the completion of the paintings. The depiction of the child with the envelope-like body and the paper kite, popular today, was only posthumously declared to be the recto by his son and executor Felix Klee. On the less well-known reverse there is a composition of red, blue and green coloured clouds on a structured white ground. A yellow flower and a delicate snaking line give the delicate side of the painting its title.

For Klee two-sided composition was also part of an open, continuing process. In the case of transparent supports such as thin paper, the versos sometimes show through, leaving faint traces on the recto that are barely visible to the naked eye. As a result the two sides of the painting merge seamlessly into a whole in terms of both form and content. Drawings on the verso that show through on the other side have been rendered more easily visible through infrared photography.

Klee deliberately used the working of the verso in around twenty of his characteristically reduced drawings from the last years of his artistic career. To make a background for his drawings, from delicate pink to purple, he mixed coloured paste with caput mortuum – an intensely coloured iron oxide – and painted the whole surface of the verso with that.

Curator

Marie Kakinuma

Exhibition tour *Kosmos Klee. The Collection*

Sunday, 17 May 2026, 15:00

With the support of

Kanton Bern, Bundesamt für Kultur BAK, Museumsstiftung der Burgergemeinde Bern

Digital Guide

There is a freely accessible Digital Guide to accompany the exhibition *Fokus. Klee's versos*. It can be accessed via QR code or guide.zpk.org/en/fokus-klees-rueckseiten.





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. 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 painting utensils, 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 variety of the recto and verso compositions within Klee's oeuvre.

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 oeuvre
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/

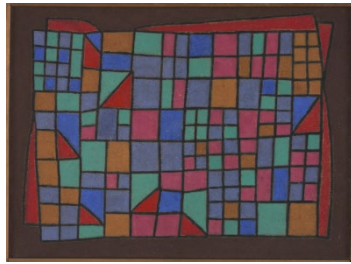


Press images *Fokus.Klee's versos*

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01

Paul Klee

Glass Façade, 1940, 288

Wax paint on burlap on canvas

71,3 × 95,7 cm

Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern

Image credits: Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern, Image archive



02

Paul Klee

Untitled [Verso of Glass Façade], 1940

Oil on primed canvas

71,3 × 95,7 cm

Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern

Image credits: Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern, Image archive



03

Paul Klee

Untitled (Child and Kite), around 1940

Coloured paste on cardboard

33,5 × 42,5 cm

Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern, donation Livia Klee

Image credits: Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern, Image archive



04

Paul Klee

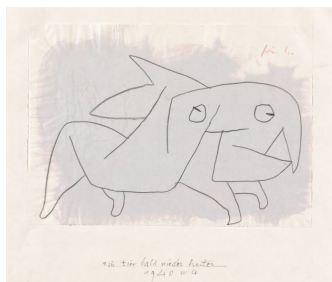
Untitled (Flower and Snake) [Verso of Child and Kite], 1940

Watercolour and coloured paste on primed cardboard

33,5 × 42,5 cm

Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern, donation Livia Klee

Image credits: Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern, Image archive



05

Paul Klee

An Animal, Soon Cheerful Again, 1940, 64

Chalk on paper on cardboard

20,9 × 29,5 cm

Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern

Image credits: Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern, Image archive

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 (Ziege und Kühe) [Untitled (Goat and Cows)], 1896

Watercolour and pencil on paper
9,6 × 13,4 cm

Private collection, Switzerland,
deposit at the Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern
Image credits: Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern,
Image archive



03

Paul Klee

Ohne Titel (Aarelandschaft) [Untitled (Aare Landscape)], 1900

Oil on canvas; folding screen, in five parts
144,5 × 48 cm

Private collection, Switzerland,
deposit at the Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern
Image credits: Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern,
Image archive



04

Paul Klee

Landschaftliches Hieroglyph mit Betonung des Himmelblau [Landscape Hieroglyph with Emphasis on Sky-Blue], 1917, 104

Watercolour on primed linen on cardboard

16,5 × 17 cm

Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern,
donation Livia Klee

Image credits: Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern,
Image archive

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05

Paul Klee

Häuser am Meer [Houses by the Sea], 1920, 134

Watercolour on paper on cardboard
24 × 32 cm

Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern, private loan
Image credits: Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern,
Image archive



06

Paul Klee

Die Büchse der Pandora [Pandora's Box], 1920, 155

Pen and watercolour on paper on cardboard
27,8 × 19 cm

Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern,
Museumsstiftung für Kunst der
Burggemeinde Bern
Image credits: Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern,
Image archive



07

Paul Klee

Landschaft bei E. (in Bayern) [Landscape near E. (in Bavaria)], 1921, 182

Oil and pen on paper on cardboard
49,8 × 35,2 cm

Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern
Image credits: Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern,
Image archive



08

Paul Klee

Kleines Haus [Small House], 1928, 28

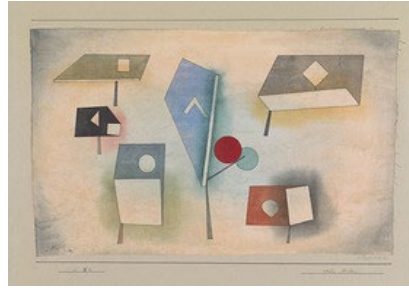
Oil and watercolour on cardboard;
reconstructed frame
41 × 36,5 cm

Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern,
donation Livia Klee
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09

Paul Klee

sechs Arten [Six Kinds], 1930, 134
Pen and watercolour on cotton on
cardboard

29,8 × 48,8 cm

Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern,
Museumsstiftung für Kunst der
Burggemeinde Bern

Image credits: Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern,
Image archive



10

Paul Klee

durch ein Fenster [Through a Window],
1932, 184

Oil on gauze on cardboard

30 × 51,5 cm

Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern,
donation Livia Klee

Image credits: Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern,
Image archive



11

Paul Klee

Ohne Titel (Zweierlei Augenmass)
[Untitled (Dual Eye-Measurements)],
ca. 1938

Coloured paste and watercolour on
paper on cardboard

44,4 × 59,2 cm

Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern

Image credits: Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern,
Image archive



12

Paul Klee

Wander-Artist (ein Plakat) [Itinerant Artist
(a Poster)], 1940, 273

Coloured paste on paper on cardboard
31 × 29,2 cm

Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern, private loan

Image credits: Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern,
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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
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Exhibition view *Kosmos Klee. The Collection*, Zentrum Paul Klee, 2024, photo: Rolf Siegenthaler
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Exhibition view *Kosmos Klee. The Collection*, Zentrum Paul Klee, 2024, photo: Rolf Siegenthaler
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Exhibition view *Kosmos Klee. The Collection*, Zentrum Paul Klee, 2024, photo: Rolf Siegenthaler
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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 387 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 134 of his works are confiscated from German museums. 17 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

Schwitters. On the Fringes of the Avant-Garde

until 21.6.2026

Anne Loch. Painting: So what?

18.7.-20.9.2026

Roberto Burle Marx. Modernismo tropical

17.10.2026–7.2.2027

Kosmos Klee. The Collection

Fokus. Florence Henri (1893–1982)

29.8.2026–10.1.2027

Opening hours

Tuesday–Sunday

10:00–27:00

Monday closed

Contact

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Accreditation for media representatives



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Please fill in the digital accreditation form which you can either access via zpk.org/en/ueber-uns/medien/akkreditierung or by screening the QR-Code before your visit.