Paul Klee

Other Possible Worlds

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LEON LEVY FOUNDATION

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Zentrum Paul Klee
Bern

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All objects are by Paul Klee unless otherwise noted.

Other Possible Worlds centers on Paul Klee's work from the 1930s—the last, unsettled, and paradoxically prolific decade of his life. Created amid political upheaval, exile, and illness, these paintings and drawings reflect a sociopolitical viewpoint not often associated with the artist. Placing Klee's late production within his wider body of work, this exhibition reveals the way Klee's lifelong radical individuality and imagination persisted as a form of resistance—both subtle and overt—to Nazi ideology and persecution.

Born in 1879 in Switzerland to a German father and a Swiss mother, both musicians, Klee was an accomplished violinist before turning to visual art. He was also a writer, publishing essays on modern art, color theory, and visual reality, and kept a diary that methodically assessed his personal and artistic progress. This deep engagement with language is evident in the evocative titles of his works. Klee was attuned to and claimed by various early twentieth-century avant-garde movements such as the French Surrealists, the Zurich Dadaists, and the German Expressionists. He nonetheless rejected categorization, insisting, "I am my own style," a decidedly intuitive and subjective approach that characterized much of his work and life.

During the German Weimar Republic (1919–33), Klee became a revered professor at the revolutionary Bauhaus school of art and design, first in Weimar and then in Dessau. In 1931 he resigned that position to free himself from the increasingly prescriptive demands of the school's agenda and accepted a position in Düsseldorf, where he sought to concentrate on painting. As Adolf Hitler ascended to power, however, the National Socialists deemed Klee's art subversive and degenerate and dismissed him from his post at the Düsseldorf Academy. Though Klee was not Jewish, they identified him as a "Galician Jew." Forced into exile as an immigrant in his country of birth, the artist abandoned his luxuriant chromatic style of painting as he felt the tightening grip of fascism. In 1935 he began to suffer from scleroderma, a then-fatal autoimmune disease to which he succumbed in 1940.

Yet in his final years, Klee continued to innovate with a new sense of urgency, realizing an elusive state of fulfillment. The artist was driven by a modernist impulse to unlearn inherited forms and to pursue radical openness he saw as akin to the direct, unmediated creativity of children. Klee's late works do not simply register historical catastrophe, they reject a repressive world in favor of its many other possibilities.

Mason Klein
Senior Curator Emeritus, The Jewish Museum, New York

[ALT]

[PK with frame photo blowup]

Paul Klee in his studio, Bauhaus Weimar (detail), 1924

Photograph by Felix Klee

Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern, Klee Family Donation
Image provided by Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern

[ALT]

[PK standing with easel photo blowup]

Paul Klee in his studio, Bauhaus Weimar (detail), 1926

Photograph by Felix Klee

Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern, Klee Family Donation
Image provided by Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern

[Kaplan]

All objects are by Paul Klee unless otherwise noted.

The dates of the works and the numbers that immediately follow them come from Klee's oeuvre catalogue, the systematic record he kept of his creative output.

Toward a Higher Point of View

For Klee art was a progressive project of resisting limitations and constraints of any kind, a pursuit of complete freedom. His uncategorizable artistic vision was personal yet informed by aesthetics, education, philosophy, spirituality, and other disciplines. He investigated and mined multiple perspectives, styles, and concepts, attempting to reconcile the opposites he saw around him: abstraction and representation, word and image, the graphic and the painterly, the beautiful and the grotesque. He began teaching at the Bauhaus school of art in 1921, espousing to eager disciples his systematic and diversified approach to art.

Unrelenting self-criticism, both psychological and artistic, allowed Klee to balance his critical ideas and formal innovation. Art's primary purpose was not to replicate the visible world, but to reveal hidden realities, abstract concepts, emotions, and ideas. He believed in "becoming" over "being," that the imagination was able to create possibilities in the face of oppression.

An astute observer of behavior, Klee was alarmed by a palpable decline in social and artistic values only five years into the new Weimar Republic in Germany. Established in 1919 after the end of World War I, the first constitutional republic in the country's history was unraveling. The artist indicted the community around him for supporting National Socialist ideology and the rise of fascism. In 1924, addressing his work at the opening of an exhibition, Klee presciently voiced a concern that art would not remain independent from politics. He feared that the freedom and individualism on which the Bauhaus had been founded was being replaced by a focus on technology and mass production. In 1931 Klee resigned from his professorship at the school, which the Nazis permanently closed in 1933.

[Wall Labels]
[1][2][6]

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT

Virgin in the Tree (Jungfrau im Baum), from the series Inventions (Inventionen), 1903, 2

Etching, edition of 60

Museum of Modern Art, New York, Purchase

Two Men Meet, Each Believing the Other to Be of Higher Rank (Zwei Männer, einander in höherer Stellung vermutend, begegnen sich), from the series Inventions (Inventionen), 1903, 5

Etching, edition of 30

Museum of Modern Art, New York, Gift of Mme. Paul Klee

▶ 201

The Hero with the Wing (Der Held mit dem Flügel), from the series Inventions (Inventionen) 1905, 7

Etching and drypoint, edition of 30

Museum of Modern Art, New York, Purchase

Klee was inclined toward satire and irony starting when he was in middle school; even then such satirical portraits got him into trouble. Throughout his diaries, satire is often used to ridicule conventional bourgeois life. Typically, Klee adhered to specific standards: "Satire must not be a kind of superfluous ill will, but ill will from a higher point of view. Ridiculous man, divine God." His exploration of these ideas informed a number of works from the *Inventions* (1902–5) series. In *Virgin in the Tree*, Klee's mindset was to "serve Beauty by drawing her enemies (caricature, satire)," which is aptly illustrated by the not-so-youthful, nor innocent-looking subject reclining on a gnarly tree.

In *Two Men Meet, Each Believing the Other to Be of Higher Rank*, the artist depicts the long-reigning and traditional Wilhelm II (1859–1941) of Germany and the brash and militaristic Franz Joseph (1830–1916) of Austria. Despite their political friction, the two rulers bow exaggeratedly toward one another in a mockery of monarchy.

Klee's handwritten text in the bottom corner of *The Hero with the Wing* introduces a one-winged hero who firmly believes in his destiny for flight, but lacks the means to achieve it. The artist amplifies the tragicomic element by conflating a hopeless reality with a stately pose. Rooted into the ground like a tree trunk, his broken leg furthers the hero's impossible situation but, per Klee, quixotically "does not prevent him from remaining faithful to his idea of flying."

Candide, Chapter 25: "I Have Plenty of Pictures, but I No Longer Look at Them" (Candide Cap 25: "J'ai beaucoup de tableaux mais je ne les regarde plus"), 1911, 83

Pen on paper on cardboard

Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern

To capture the narrative of *Candide*, Klee stressed theatricality in his illustrations, fully aware of its author Voltaire's fondness for the theater, especially that of marionettes. This interest informs the puppetlike people in the present example and others from the late 1910s. This calligraphic work is tinged with an expressive, mischievous spirit that is not only characteristic of Voltaire's literary style but also lends Klee's figures a staged quality.

Chosen Boy (Auserwählter Knabe), 1918, 115

Watercolor and ink on primed linen, cut and recombined on cardboard

Anonymous loan, courtesy of Mount Holyoke College Art Museum, South Hadley, Massachusetts

After the Drawing (nach der Zeichnung), 1919, 75

Watercolored lithograph

Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern, Livia Klee Donation

Klee's paintings from the 1910s integrate a heightened sense of the graphic arts and reclaim the playfulness of his childhood drawings. In *Chosen Boy* he emphasizes a child's imagination as unlimited, referenced by the filigreed lines and floating balls of color around the figure's head, and as hallowed, as seen in the stigmata on his hands. Klee often cut up and recomposed his work. Here the bottom half of the watercolor on linen was originally its top, perhaps to place the unlimited mind on an earthly plane.

Klee's emphasis on imagination can also be seen in *After the Drawing*, a watercolored lithograph of his penciled self-portrait *Absorption*. Its sensory deprivation, with eyes closed and without ears, allows the image to transcend time and space; the composition depicts an erotic fantasy based on the male and female genitalia to which the eyes, nose, and mouth allude.

Young Proletarian (Junger Proletarier), 1919, 111

Oil on cardboard

Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern, Livia Klee Donation

Harlequin on the Bridge (Arlequin auf der Brücke), 1920, 164

Oil transfer drawing and watercolor on paper mounted on silver-gray paper on cardboard

Museum Berggruen, Neue Nationalgalerie, Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz

▶ 202

Young Proletarian and *Harlequin on the Bridge* refer to two political episodes that occurred in 1919. *Young Proletarian* alludes to the short-lived Munich Revolution in which Klee participated, believing that the new communist government might be receptive to "the cause of modernism." This hope rapidly faded into disillusionment, reinforcing his doubt in a compatibility between progressive culture and political idealism.

Harlequin on the Bridge relates to the contentious debate ignited by his nomination as a professor at the Stuttgart Art Academy. Klee was denounced as a left-wing artist by some of the faculty and students, as well as in the daily press, where a journalist referred to him by a racial slur, "Paul Zion Klee!" The trope of the harlequin, as an archetype of the early modern artist's alter ego, evolved with Klee into the character of the jester or fool. Here that figure, along with the Star of David, functions to conflate the artist and the Jew as outside agitators who imagine other possible worlds as they question social and cultural norms.

[9]

Tropical Blossom (Tropische Blüte), 1920, 203

Oil and pencil on primed paper on cardboard

Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern

In *Tropical Blossom* botanical growth is a metaphor for the creative process. Klee creates an abstract motif that is both referential and metaphysical, not a direct image of a fixed nature but something transformed. For Klee art is not static, but, like nature, is always changing, in a state of "becoming."

Around the Fish (Um den Fisch), 1926, 124

Oil on canvas

Museum of Modern Art, New York, Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Fund

This detailed fish on a platter is garnished and ready to be consumed, but Klee invites contemplation of the subject beyond its proffered state, the herbs on the platter reminiscent of the animal's natural seaweed environment. He directs the viewer—beginning with an arrow and a red flag—through a constellation "around the fish," comprised of physical pictograms, symbolic ideograms, and writerly hieroglyphs, a vocabulary the artist increasingly adopted to rouse subjective interpretations. Klee references his subject through various figurative forms, whether the effect of lunar phases on tides or the stages of growth when a zygote divides into a multicellular organism. The simultaneous frontal and profile views of a face in the upper-left corner signals the difference between seeing and imagining—all part of Klee's whimsical cosmic order.

Overture (Ouvertüre), 1922, 142

Watercolor and pencil on paper divided and newly combined, bordered with watercolor, pen, and ink on cardboard

Collection of Alexander Berggruen, New York

A gifted violinist who chose to pursue art, Klee integrated Johann Sebastian Bach's music, especially fugues and counterpoint, into his art by making visual parallels to musical structure and rhythm. *Overture*'s title is connected to musical polyphony (music with two or more simultaneous components). By introducing two vowels into the work, Klee further layers the composition with language and writing, alluding to the pages of a book. Such integration of disparate themes within a single painting is typical of many works he made while teaching at the Bauhaus.

Castle Hill (Burghügel), 1929, 96

Watercolor on primed canvas

Kunsthaus Zürich, Erna and Curt Burgauer Collection, 1992

Castle Hill was made shortly after the founder of the Bauhaus, Walter Gropius, selected Hannes Meyer as Klee's replacement in 1928, signaling a change at the school toward functionalism and technology. In the painting Klee expresses concern about the school drifting away from the individual artistic ideals he and his fellow artist and friend Wassily Kandinsky had championed for decades. Perched near the peak of the hill is a blue flag, its color symbolizing the highest point of the spiritual progression of The Blue Rider movement, with whose expressionist and abstract art Klee identified.

[13]

Portrait of an Equilibrist (Artistenbildnis), 1927, 13

Oil and collage on cardboard over wood with painted plaster border

Museum of Modern Art, New York, Mrs. Simon Guggenheim Fund

This tightrope walker illustrates far more than Klee's famous notion of drawing as "taking a line for a walk." The work encapsulates the increasingly complex pressures he felt, especially at the Bauhaus, to balance the demands of teaching with his personal life and painting. With its playful yet rational nod to the functional Constructivist principles prevalent at the school, the delicate geometric pole of the acrobat functions as a metaphor for the difficult ideological debates Klee attempted to mediate.

Departure of the Ghost (Gespenster-Abgang), 1931, 147

Watercolor and pen on cotton on canvas

Private collection

By 1929 Klee was well aware of the deteriorating political climate in Germany. The Bauhaus had moved to Dessau in 1925 in response to political pressure from the growing right-wing government in Weimar, where the school's socially progressive views and austere modern aesthetic were seen as a threat to German cultural traditions. *Departure of the Ghost* marks his liberation from his decade-long teaching duties at the Bauhaus, as well as his complex psychological state at leaving an institution to which he had given so much. The painting demonstrates an unusual degree of emotion, with its flush of red around the face and heart, a sentimental but firm good-bye. The exclamation point and crescent moon may also be read as Klee's excited anticipation of the work to come. Depicting himself as composed of graphic lines akin to ropes or wires, with severed circuitry emerging from his head, Klee stands vulnerably like a fool, one of his stick figures, or a ghost of the past.

Individuality is not an elementary sort of thing, but an organism. Elementary things of different sorts coexist in it, inseparably. If one tried to separate them, the components would die. My self, for instance, is a dramatic ensemble. Here a prophetic ancestor makes his appearance. Here a brutal hero shouts. Here an alcoholic bon vivant argues with a learned professor. Here a lyric muse, chronically lovestruck, raises her eyes to heaven. Her papa steps forward, uttering pedantic protests. Here the indulgent uncle intercedes. Here the aunt babbles gossip. Here the maid giggles lasciviously. And I look upon it all with amazement, the sharpened pen in my left hand. A pregnant mother wants to join the fun. "Pshtt!" I cry, "You don't belong here. You are divisible." And she fades out.

Paul Klee

[90]

In Angel's Care (In Engelshut), 1931, 55

Watercolor and colored ink on paper, mounted on paper

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, Estate of Karl Nierendorf, by purchase

[20]

The Same Curvy Line Leads to a Variable Form (dieselbe Gekrümmte führt zu variabler Form), 1931, 19

Pen and watercolor on paper on cardboard

Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern

[Vitrine labels]
[220]

FAR LEFT, TOP

Paul and Lily Klee with their cat Bimbo I, Bern, 1935

Photograph by Fee Meisel

Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern, Klee Family Donation

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FAR LEFT, MIDDLE

Paul Klee with his cat Fripouille, Possenhofen, 1921

Paul Klee in his studio, Bauhaus Weimar, 1924

Photographs by Felix Klee

Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern, Klee Family Donation

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FAR LEFT, BOTTOM

Paul Klee in his studio, Bauhaus Weimar, 1926

Photograph by Felix Klee

Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern, Klee Family Donation

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Josef Albers

Born in 1888, Bottrop, German Empire
(now in Germany), died in 1976, New Haven

Paul Klee, Dessau XI, 1929

Gelatin silver prints mounted on cardboard

Josef and Anni Albers Foundation

Josef Albers

Born in 1888, Bottrop, German Empire
(now in Germany), died in 1976, New Haven

Klee, Guéthary (Biarritz), and Mrs. Klee VIII, 1929

Gelatin silver prints mounted on cardboard

Josef and Anni Albers Foundation

Angelus Novus, or the Angel of History

Throughout his life Klee painted and drew a variety of angels. The early ones, such as *Angelus Novus*, seem puppetlike, presumably because Klee was constantly fashioning such figures for his son, Felix.

More than any other work by Klee, *Angelus Novus* has become immortalized, called the Angel of History by the German philosopher and cultural critic Walter Benjamin, who purchased the drawing in 1921. The piece became his most precious possession and inspired his *Theses on the Philosophy of History* (1940), written shortly before he committed suicide while fleeing the Nazis. Benjamin describes the angel as

looking as though he is about to move away from something he is fixedly contemplating. His eyes are staring, his mouth is open, his wings are spread. This is how one pictures the Angel of History. His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe that keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. The storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress.

Since its literary designation as the Angel of History, the work has been transformed from a modest drawing into an iconic image, a powerful allegory for the catastrophic march of history and "progress" to which to Benjamin tragically fell victim. Its lasting influence continues to inspire debate.

Paul Klee: *Angelus Novus* Postscript

Klee, like many of his contemporaries, understood the present as not easily experienced, always secured as it was to the past or the future. In his writings, he posited that art should not only depict a static final product but also reveal its genesis through time, be forever evolving. In the catalogue for his 1920 exhibition Klee published the following statement, which became his epitaph:

I cannot be grasped in the here and now. For my dwelling place is as much among the dead as the yet unborn. Slightly closer to the heart of creation than usual. But not nearly close enough.

▶ 204 AD 902

[HURST]
[89 - WHITE ALT]

Angelus Novus, 1920, 32

Oil transfer and watercolor on paper

The Israel Museum, Jerusalem, Gift of Fania and Gershom Scholem, Jerusalem; John Herring, Marlene and Paul Herring, Jo Carole and Ronald Lauder, New York

EXHIBITION COPY ON VIEW

Angelus Novus is generously on loan from The Israel Museum, Jerusalem. Due to current conditions affecting international transport, the shipment of the original artwork has been temporarily delayed.

Idyll in the Light

Leaving Dessau behind, Klee moved to Düsseldorf to teach at the Academy of Fine Arts in April 1931. Relieved of his responsibilities at the Bauhaus, he began to relish a newfound liberty and developed a variant of pointillism. Klee's new paintings—comprised of squarish, mosaiclike dabs of paint—allowed him to extend his chromatic grids of the 1920s into airier compositions. It was as if, set free, he alighted on a new technique of spatial separation that allowed him and his work to breathe anew.

By the next year, however, much had changed, and the end of the Weimar Republic was inevitable. In the July 1932 federal elections in Germany, the National Socialist German Workers' Party established its dominance by gaining a majority in the Reichstag (parliament) for the first time. By the end of 1932, Klee began a sequence of paintings that broadcast his horror that a German fascist state was gaining momentum. Any hope of freedom during this brief idyllic period ended abruptly at the beginning of 1933 with Adolf Hitler's ascent to power. Klee produced numerous veiled works that represent his uncertain emotional state, alternatively conjuring turbulent current events and comforting memories of trips to Tunisia and Egypt.

[BLOOMBERG]
[Wall Labels]
[212]

Athlete's Head (Athleten-Kopf), 1932, 11

Watercolor, opaque watercolor, and graphite on paper mounted on cardboard

Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, The Berggruen Klee Collection, 1987

In 1936 sports were taught in Germany for a minimum of two hours every day, a number that increased to five hours by 1938. In *Athlete's Head*, Klee exaggerated and distorted the figure's features, satirizing the Nazis' superficial glorification of the heroic athlete.

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Rising Star (aufgehender Stern), 1931, 230

Oil on canvas

Foundation Beyeler, Riehen/Basel, Beyeler Collection

Clarification (Klaerung), 1932, 66

Oil on canvas

Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, The Berggruen Klee Collection, 1984

Well before Klee left his decade-long tenure at the Bauhaus, he had hinted, through numerous metaphors of departing ships, entranced fools, and colorful devils, that he wanted to be free again to paint for himself and to jest. Amid the prismatic color and lulling transparency, respectively, of *Rising Star* (at left) and *Clarification*, one can make out a blazing constellation of stars and a crescent moon, the latter a historical and cultural symbol alluding to new beginnings, life cycles, and intuition.

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205 AD 903

[38]

Fire at Full Moon (Feuer bei Vollmond), 1933, 353

Mixed media on canvas

Museum Folkwang, Essen

[87]

Late Evening Looking out at the Woods (spät Abends aus dem Wald geblickt), 1937, 34

Oil on paper with brown sizing

Saint Louis Art Museum, Museum Purchase

Reflections in the Dark (Reflexe im Dunkeln), 1932, 8

Watercolor on paper

Staatsgalerie Stuttgart, Graphische Sammlung, acquired 1965 with Lotto funds

[72]

But the Red Roof! (Aber das rote Dach!), 1935, 113

Glue tempera on jute-and-flax fabric

Philadelphia Museum of Art: The Louise and Walter Arensberg Collection

[26]

Mask of Fear (Maske Furcht), 1932, 286

Oil on burlap

Museum of Modern Art, New York, Nelson A. Rockefeller Fund

The blunt terror of this work is explicit in contrast to the underlying apprehension of *Arab Song* (on view nearby). Klee was inspired to create *Mask of Fear* by a Zuni war god carving he had seen in an ethnographic museum. Its imagery resonates with the artist's conception, expressed in his diary, of the "mask as work of art; behind it hides the man." Within months of painting *Mask of Fear*, both Klee and his art had been called "degenerate," and his paintings were removed from all the museums in Germany.

Arab Song (Arabisches Lied), 1932, 283

Oil on burlap canvas

Phillips Collection, Washington, DC

Created as the National Socialist Party rose to power, *Arab Song* is a recollection of the sights and sounds of formerly peaceful times. With its pale desert hues, lushly colored tree, and heart-shaped leaf, akin to a mirage, this work is a visual poem and poignant reminder of the artist's trips to Tunisia in 1914 and Egypt in 1929. Its raw, richly stained pink and green burlap adds a sense of materiality, of plaster and dust, further lending the painting an aura of authenticity. While *Arab Song* retreats to a calmer past, the work is also a subtle harbinger of daily dread: out of the literal veil masking the figure's identity, sand dune–like eyes stare, as alert as those of any creature of prey.

Monument in Progress (Monument in Arbeit), 1929, 88

Mixed media on paper mounted on board

Private collection

In *Monument in Progress* Klee further blurs the imaginary and the real. Not only was the Weimar Republic weakening rapidly by the end of the decade with the rise of the National Socialist movement, but also Benito Mussolini had already systematically dismantled democracy in Italy. Given the resemblance of the figure in *Monument in Progress* to that of Mussolini, Klee was mocking the dictator's love of spectacle and his desire to evoke the power of ancient Rome and his projections of imperial destiny. The year 1929 was also when Mussolini signed the Lateran Treaty, bolstering his political stature and solidifying his support from the Catholic Church by enhancing the Vatican's position in Italian society.

Stone Desert (Steinwüste), 1933, 289

Watercolor on paper laid down on the artist's mount

Pierre Lorinet Collection

In his essay, "Creative Credo," Klee writes, "A work should [not] consist solely of elements. The elements should produce forms but without losing their own identity." During this period of upheaval and disorientation when Klee's identity and reputation was being effaced, he made *Stone Desert*. Within its complex pattern of fragments, a retiring figure, its posture intimating oppression, can be discerned.

Creator II (Schöpfer II), 1930, 34

Oil transfer drawing on printing paper mounted on cardboard

Private collection

Klee produced several versions of *Creator* in different mediums, beginning in 1930 when the artist was at a symbolic juncture. During a concurrent uncertain and increasingly portentous time, he was about to leave the Bauhaus and enter a major transitional phase. The painting version of this oil transfer drawing lay idle for three years during which any hope of continued creative ascendency was erased as Nazi Germany became a reality in 1933. Klee returned and finished the painting three years later, after he had already been defamed and banished from his teaching post in Düsseldorf.

Is Europe Limping or Am I?

Just days after Adolf Hitler was appointed chancellor of Germany on January 30, 1933, the Nazi periodical *Die Rote Erde* (The Red Earth) attacked the Düsseldorf Academy of Fine Arts for its endorsement of modern art and of Klee in particular:

So now the great Klee makes his entrance, already famous as a teacher at the Bauhaus. He tells everybody he has pure Arabian blood in his veins, but he is actually a typical Galician Jew. He paints in a crazier and crazier way, he bluffs and baffles, his students goggle and gape, as a new, unheard-of art makes its appearance in the Rhineland.

In March the Gestapo searched Klee's house in Dessau for incriminating materials, carting away three baskets full of letters. In April he was summarily dismissed from his professorship at the Düsseldorf Academy. After being defamed and deemed "degenerate," his paintings were cast out of every museum in Germany. Within months, he and his family were forced into exile in Switzerland.

Klee was diagnosed with scleroderma in 1935 and suffered a gradual diminishment of dexterity in his hands, leading to new techniques and materials. In his pocket calendar at the time, Klee jotted down: "Is Europe limping or am I?"

[69]

Lonely Flower (einsame Blüte), 1934, 5

Watercolor with pen and black ink on tan paper, laid down

Columbus Museum of Art, Ohio, Gift of Howard D. and Babette L. Sirak, the Donors to the Campaign for Enduring Excellence, and the Derby Fund

[30 - RED]

Poison (Gift), 1932, 13

Watercolor and pencil on paper on cardboard

Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern

Struck from the List (von der Liste gestrichen), 1933, 424

Oil on paper on cardboard

Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern, Livia Klee Donation

After the Gestapo searched his house in Dessau, and Klee was publicly defamed and dismissed from his teaching post at the Academy of Fine Arts in Düsseldorf, the artist gradually realized he and his family would have to leave Germany and likely return to Bern. He painted *Struck from the List* to memorialize this deplorable series of events. His sadness at being "struck from the list" is evident in the work's somber color, its face replete with tears, and its stark, chiseled hardness akin to an African reliquary mask, which connects the living with the dead. The black X conveys censorship and banishment. Later, in the famous *Entartete Kunst*, or Degenerate Art, show of 1937, Klee's work was represented by seventeen pieces and compared to the art of the insane.

Europa, 1933, 7

Watercolor on paper on cardboard

Kunsthalle Bielefeld, Germany

With *Europa*, Klee acknowledged the dreadful sociopolitical world he lived in, which had become increasingly impossible to ignore. Invoking the myth of the abduction of Europa by Zeus, the work heralds that this historical moment was the end not only for European avant-garde art but for everything. Klee casts Europa as a ghostly figure at left, one leg casually crossed over the other. She seems oblivious, especially in contrast to the urgent red of the hem of her dress and the exclamation point at right. Upon closer examination, a dismembered continent emerges, struck with a cross, alluding to a Europe divided and on the cusp of World War II. A ghoulish face is made up of two eyes—one gauze-covered, the other the head of Europa—a ghastly rectangular nose, and the pathetic wisp of a mouth.

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206 AD 904

[43 - RED]

Secret Judge (Geheim Richter), 1933, 463

Colored paste on paper on cardboard

Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern, Livia Klee Donation

The Time (die Zeit), 1933, 281

Watercolor and brush on gauze soaked in plaster on plywood

Museum Berggruen, Neue Nationalgalerie, Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz

In *The Time* Klee acknowledges his mortality, using the clockface as a powerful memento mori. His placement of the clock's hands suggests a familiar stick figure, similar to the one in *Stone Desert* (1933, on view in the previous room), whose torso, formed by the upper hand, bows to time.

Your Ancestor ? (dein Ahn ?), 1933, 276

Colored paste on paper on cardboard

Private collection, Germany

In his National Socialist revolution drawings and indeed throughout works created in his final years, Klee blurred the line between the civilized and the barbaric. He treats animal and human characteristics interchangeably to express how strongly anachronistic this division between the two entities had become. *Your Ancestor ?*, with its tooth-baring, apelike human, was clearly intended to rebut the unabashed racism of Nazi eugenics, in view of its mordant title and its subject's unexpected mien, which is much more tauntingly smiling than fearsome.

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[42 - WHITE ALT]

Mask: Red Jew (Maske Roter Jude), 1933, 386

Charcoal and colors mixed with gum, applied with a blade, on paper

Private collection

Here Klee depicts a legendary creation of late medieval popular culture in Germany: a tribe of ruddy-faced, redheaded, and red-bearded Jewish warriors clad in red attire. These unique figures became a motif among both Jews and Christians, spreading in Yiddish and German. Initially conceived by Christians as one of the Ten Lost Tribes, threatening to unleash chaos, the legendary "Red Jews" evolved within Yiddish lore into protective guardians against antisemitism.

So to Speak (Sozusagen), 1933, 29

Watercolor on paper on cardboard

Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern

Imponderable (Impondérable), 1933, 36

Watercolor on paper on cardboard

Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern

The abstraction here, in contrast to the irony Klee had used earlier on, reveals his need for a more visceral, immediate way to respond to the Nazi denigration of him and of modern art. *So to Speak* and *Imponderable* were among his first large drawings, described by the artist as "impudent lines," and are accompanied by suggestive titles. Klee considered these two drawings to be "less reactive, but also sublimated or subtle in nature," an idea expressed visually through formal simplification. In *So to Speak* quotation marks contain undecipherable contents; *Imponderable*'s trident, a three-pronged spear, or fork, associated with the sea god Poseidon/Neptune, obliquely evokes kingship or general mastery over a realm.

National Socialist Revolution Drawings

Starting in 1933 Klee embarked on a cycle of political drawings in response to the National Socialist revolution. The initial group was notably abstract yet broadcasts his anger about the Nazis condemning him and modern art. In a subsequent, more figurative group, Klee wielded irony, once a means of emotional distancing, to directly critique National Socialism from multiple perspectives, including psychology, education, and philosophy.

In these drawings Klee audaciously challenges a cultlike society that celebrated pseudoscience and supposed Aryan racial superiority. He achieves this effect using various metaphors, such as a blurred animal-human divide and fruit as offspring, to emphasize diversity and imperfection that were anathema to National Socialist ideology. Many of these works also decry the Nazis' unmistakable entwinement of youth with aggressive combat or militarized games. Klee was concerned that such a child-rearing ethos and the devaluation of education would foster children's potential for imitative and violent behavior.

The National Socialist revolution drawings are located throughout the last two galleries of this exhibition.

208

[80]

The Gate to the Depth (das Tor zur Tiefe), 1936, 25

Watercolor on primed cotton on cardboard

Private collection, Switzerland, on extended loan to the Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern

God of War (Kriegs Gott), 1937, 25

Gouache and tempera on newsprint

Cleveland Museum of Art, Bequest of Lockwood Thompson

God of War is a deceptively rendered work. The brittle absorption of the gouache and tempera on newsprint conveys a sense of fragility, accentuated by the torn edges of paper and the fraught, gesticulating figures. The largely illegible printed text alludes to the Spanish Civil War (1936–39), which included the catastrophic bombing of Guernica by Hitler's air force in 1937. A sole tribal female figure, perhaps symbolically, stands still apart from the others, and on a plane parallel with God. The chaotic group's desperate commotion sharply contrasts with the monolithic God and his enigmatic smile.

Printed Sheet with Picture (Bilderbogen), 1937, 133

Oil on canvas

Phillips Collection, Washington, DC

Printed Sheet with Picture is emblematic of Klee's ever-widening embrace of disparate cultural figures and forms. The painting provides a compendium of sources that populate Klee's body of work, from ancient cave paintings to modern eyeglasses, from combs and centipedes to Stars of David. After experiencing non-Western art in the 1920s and especially toward the end of his life, Klee also repeatedly illustrated many primeval creatures and hieroglyphic symbols, including various marine life, masks, and his cherished stick figures.

Voice from the Ether: "And you will eat your fill!" (Stimme aus dem Äther: "und du wirst dich satt essen!"), 1939, 1088

Tempera and oil painting

Victoria and Albert Museum, London

Voice from the Ether, also known *as Allegory of Propaganda*, expresses the artist's explicit disgust with his country's fascist transformation. By 1939 Klee does not hold back in depicting a young German listening, his ear formed by an "SS," alluding to Hitler's paramilitary police force. The radio spews Nazi propaganda, while the starry-eyed, short haired, and salivating youth is drunk on the imagined spoils of war.

[OFFIT]
[Wall labels]
[81]

Revolution of the Viaduct (Revolution des Viaductes), 1937, 153

Oil on primed cotton

Hamburger Kunsthalle, Germany

Revolution of the Viaduct illustrates the artist's wit and his indictment of his countrymen. The human-footed arches have fallen out of line, managing to simultaneously amuse and express self-determination and nonconformism. The composition cleverly critiques Hitler's military parades and spectacles of power, unity, and discipline, supposedly driven by a fervor of national pride and communal spirit. Its independent arches break away, sporting passionate red, orange, yellow, and pink, countering the military gray-green, Brownshirts of the SA (Sturm Abeilung), the Nazi Party's paramilitary organization, and black uniforms of the SS (Schutzstaffel), Hitler's paramilitary organization.

[ALT]
[68] [208] [177] [64] [95] [102]

LEFT

Bulgy Pear (Beulen Birne), 1934, 164

Gouache on paper

Private collection, courtesy of Moeller Fine Art, New York

Suffering Fruit (leidende Frucht), 1934, 27

Watercolor, oil, and chalk on paper on cardboard

Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern, Livia Klee Donation

Fig (Feige), 1934, 46

Chalk and colored pencil on primer on watercolor on muslin on cardboard

Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern, Livia Klee Donation

CENTER

Prizewinning Apple (prämierter Apfel), 1934, 215

Oil on muslin on plywood with a reconstructed frame

Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern, Deposit from private collection, Switzerland

RIGHT

Cerulean Blue Fruit (Coelin-Frucht), 1938, 28

Colored paste on paper on cardboard

Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern

Pathetic Germination (pathetisches Keimen), 1939, 281

Colored paste on primed paper on cardboard

Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern

Klee had long used fruit to illustrate metaphors of nature and genesis, sometimes showing a fruit transparent to the core and pit, which protects its seed. Here the titles are revealing: this lackluster *Prizewinning Apple* and the misshapen *Bulgy Pear* nearby ridicule the propaganda of Aryan superiority. In *Suffering Fruit* Klee adds a closed eyelid with eyelashes, anthropomorphizing the fruit to make his point. The unnatural-looking *Cerulean Blue Fruit* and *Pathetic Germination* may well reference Nazi selective agricultural breeding, reflecting on Hitler's perverse notion of "positive eugenics" in the service of creating a pure race.

[Easel 1 labels]

[46 - RED]

Drinking Companion (Stammtischler), 1931, 280

Chalk on paper on cardboard

Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern

[47 - RED]

“He” a Dictator Too! (auch “ER” Dictator!), 1933, 339

Pencil on paper on cardboard

Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern, Livia Klee Donation

[48 - RED]

Child Murder (Kindermord), 1933, 113

Chalk on paper on cardboard

Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern

[55 - RED]

Crawling Man (Kriechender), 1933, 140

Chalk on paper on cardboard

Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern

[56 - RED]

Violence (Gewalt), 1933, 138

Chalk on paper on cardboard

Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern

[57 - RED]

Penitent on Display (Büsser zur Schau), 1933, 367

Pencil on paper on cardboard

Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern

[Easel 2 labels]
[49 - RED]

Manhunt (Menschenjagd), 1933, 115

Pencil on paper on cardboard

Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern

[50 - RED]

Emigrating (auswandern), 1933, 181

Chalk on paper on cardboard

Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern

[51 - RED]

Accusation in the Street (Anklage auf der Strasse), 1933, 85

Chalk on paper on cardboard

Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern

[52 - RED]

Difficult Children (Schwer Erziehbare), 1933, 91

Pencil on paper on cardboard

Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern

[53 - RED]

Barbarian Mercenary (Barbaren-Söldner), 1933, 145

Chalk on paper on cardboard

Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern

[54 - RED]

Fools' Party (närrisches Fest), 1933, 134

Chalk on paper on cardboard

Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern

Leap Year

I want to be as though newborn, to know nothing,… nothing at all. Ignorant of poetry, wholly uninspired.

Paul Klee

In his late art Klee was driven by a wish to unlearn his training, to know nothing. He had always held dear the free expression of children. In this period illustrations of the theme of child-rearing and youth education followed in rapid succession, with a draftsmanship as tender and light of touch as in any of Klee's drawings. In isolation in Switzerland, where he had moved with his family in 1933, he achieved a state of childlike freedom and wonderment.

Angels had first appeared in Klee's art around the end of World War I, but they proliferated in spare, meticulously wrought drawings and paintings as his sickness worsened. They provided Klee with an appropriate nonbinary entity—neither constrained nor free, neither good nor bad—occupying a liminal space as the artist did on the cusp of death and in the midst of exile.

Despite his illness and the daily prospect of war worsening, Klee was roiling with emotion, churning out work. He wrote about his creations toward the close of 1939, "I can hardly keep up with these children of mine. They run away with me." Indeed, such frenzy culminated in 1,253 works in the most productive year of his life. Before entering a sanatorium in Ticino for further treatment in May, he was transferred to a hospital in Locarno, where he died at the end of June. Remarkably, Klee notated 366 works in his personal catalogue for the year 1940, a leap year whose meaning he duly noted.

[93]

Forgetful Angel (vergesslicher Engel), 1939, 880

Pencil on paper on cardboard

Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern

[111]

Foreboding (Vorahnung), 1939, 1092

Oil on paper

Museum Folkwang, Essen

This Star Teaches Bending (dieser Stern lehrt beugen), 1940, 344

Colored paste on paper on cardboard

Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern, Livia Klee Donation

[128]

Untitled (Signs on White Background) (Ohne Titel [Zeichen auf weissem Grund]), c. 1940

Colored paste on paper

Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern, Livia Klee Donation

Glance out of Red (Blick aus Rot), 1937, 211

Pastel on cotton on colored paste on burlap with a reconstructed frame

Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern, Livia Klee Donation

In *Glance out of Red* Klee begins to fragment his elements to disrupt the overall work so that it cannot be fully registered in a glance. He wrote about the work in his notebooks: "Amazing what happens when everything is cut off. When none of the virtual forms is fully present in the picture. This produces something remarkable in the way of expression . . . so that only a part of the whole is realized. . . . This tacit extension of the pictorial space provides a kind of liberation in brackets."

Forest Witches (Wald-Hexen), 1938, 145

Oil on paper on burlap

Foundation Beyeler, Riehen/Basel, Beyeler Collection

Among the most impressive works of his final years, *Forest Witches* exemplifies Klee's late style, especially in its all-over composition of heavy, clean lines and patches of shimmering color that the artist adopted in response to the effects of scleroderma on his body. He was ever consolidating a varied lexicon of visual forms, including pictographs and other symbolic ideograms, into stunningly innovative compositions. Klee's witches stir with a mythopoetic imagination—redolent of historical Germanic culture—that punctuates many of the artist's late work. His earlier works had also related to the forest as a refuge, an escape from modern urban industrial life, as popularized by the German Romantics of the mid-nineteenth century.

[105]

Oh! These Rumors! (O! die Gerüchte!), 1939, 1015

Tempera and oil on burlap

Foundation Beyeler, Riehen/Basel, Beyeler Collection

[92] [93] [91]
[ALT]

Angel Applicant (Engel-Anwärter), 1939, 856

Chalk on primed paper on cardboard

Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern

Angel, Still Female (Engel, noch weiblich), 1939, 1016

Opaque watercolor, brush and black ink, and graphite on paper mounted on board

Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, The Berggruen Klee Collection, 1984

In his angel cycle Klee confronts the hateful, annihilating Nazi regime, often with a strong spark of humor, as in *Angel, Still Female*, speaking to those who feel unfulfilled, or not having quite arrived in *Angel Applicant*. Klee expressed this irony in the company of incomplete and imperfect figures with whom he shared his isolation and exile. Their quality of being unexceptional and wrestling with various foibles defined a universal human condition. Many of them struggle to realize a higher level, seen here in their vivid facial expressions and bodily contortion. *Angel, Still Female* looks down to see whether she still has breasts, observing the progress of her adaptation to some transitional identity.

Angelus Militans, 1940, 333

Oil and colored paste on primed burlap

Staatsgalerie Stuttgart, loaned in 1998 by the Steegman collection

Angelus Militans, often associated with the protector Saint Michael the Archangel, illustrates Klee's alternative angel style, one of gravitas and a funereal palette. Through the painting's sacred, iridescent sheen, the artist defines the broad, weighty forms of an angel's robes. The deathly aura of this angel of war—leading the fight against evil—is further accentuated by the ascendant configuration of its head, possibly shown blowing a horn.

211

Untitled (Last Still Life) (Ohne Titel [Letztes Stilleben]), 1940

Oil on canvas

Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern, Livia Klee Donation

When Klee died in 1940 at the age of sixty, this painting was left untitled and unsigned on an easel; his son Felix titled the work *Last Still Life*. During this period Klee had returned to various motifs, especially his many unresolved angels and eidola, transitional figures that struggle to resolve their former, earthly identities. At the bottom of the painting is his *Angel, Still Ugly*, the cross on his robe possibly alluding to the angel of death. The figure, however, is flushed and befuddled, his hands clasped, looking out with a faint or embarrassed grin. The clay or wood statuette at right, which has a similar facial expression, waves good-bye. The figures at upper left and the two flowers in the vase recycle Klee's motif of stick figures. Otherwise, the infinite black void, along with its glowing full moon, suggest a space-time continuum that connects everything, floating upward.

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214 AD 906

[100 - RED]

The Vase (die Vase), 1938, 122

Oil on burlap

Foundation Beyeler, Riehen/Basel, Beyeler Collection

[206]

Outbreak of Fear III (Angstausbruch III), 1939, 124

Watercolor on primed paper on cardboard

Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern

Kettledrummer (Paukenspieler), 1940, 270

Colored paste on paper on cardboard

Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern

Kettledrummer, one of the artist's last works, represents age-old soldier/musician figures who, in early Germany, were specialized, elite members of Imperial guilds. These men were closely associated with the nobility, often performing on horseback to announce royal or military presence. Klee's graphic elements here—typical of his late tendency to concurrently pare down his subject's forms and convey maximum information—impart the upward and downward movements of the mallets against the drum. The kettledrum may also be visual metaphor for death, given its role in Mozart's *Requiem in D Minor, tK. 626*, which the composer left unfinished on his deathbed. Klee heard the piece performed while he lived in Dessau.

Protected Children (geschützte Kinder), 1939, 345

Watercolor on burlap

Private collection

Klee became sensitive and irate concerning children's vulnerability in the face of exposure to Nazi ideological teachings. He rendered many of these illustrations throughout the productive year of 1939 with a corresponding tenderness and a light touch. The confused walkways of *Protected Children* warn against them becoming lost and intimates that, without adequate supervision, there is little hope for their survival. Even nature, in the form of a blustery storm, becomes an unmanageable assault, replete with a sign of the Red Cross. Klee also accentuates the tips of the children's umbrellas, evoking a mother's breasts and further underscoring the children's helplessness as they lose hold of their umbrellas, like useless shields.

▶ 213

[119]

Girl in Mourning (Mädchen in Trauer), 1939, 1130

Opaque watercolor, pastel, and charcoal on paper mounted on board

Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, The Berggruen Klee Collection, 1984

[115]

Expressions of a Face I (Gebärde eines Antlitzes I), 1939, 1176

Paste paint and oil on wrapping paper mounted on paper

Kunsthaus Zürich, Collection of Prints and Drawings, Donated by Klee-Gesellschaft Bern, 1948

[Easel 3 labels]
[149 - RED]

Half-Animal (Halbtier), 1939, 354

Pencil on paper on cardboard

Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern

[183 - RED]

Child-Eater (Chindlifrässer), 1939, 1027

Chalk and red chalk on paper on cardboard

Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern

[184 - RED]

A Bastard as Lion (ein Bastard als Löwe), 1940, 118

Pen on paper on cardboard

Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern

[185 - RED]

Ecce . . . (ecce . . .), 1940, 138

Chalk on paper on cardboard

Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern, Livia Klee Donation

[167 - RED]

Eidola: Erstwhile Philosopher (Eidola: weiland Philosoph), 1940, 101

Chalk on paper on cardboard

Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern

[168 - RED]

Eidola: Knayeros, Erstwhile Kettledrummer (Eidola: Knayeros, weiland Pauker), 1940, 102

Chalk on paper on cardboard

Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern

[157 - RED]

The Game Is Getting Out of Hand (das Spiel artet aus), 1940, 1

Pencil on paper on cardboard

Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern

[155 - RED]

Foolish Youth: War (närrische Jugend: Krieg), 1940, 161

Pen on paper on cardboard

Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern

Monument to a Tooth (Denkmal einem Zahn), 1940, 156

Chalk on paper on cardboard

Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern

The Nazi Party's grandiosity is the subject of *Monument to a Tooth*, a drawing in which Klee mocks the Nazi cult of personality epitomized by Hitler's narcissistic personality disorder. The drawing consists of two twisted classical figures standing on what appears to be a rocky mountain peak. They hold up an oval-shaped shield carrying a body, on top of which rests a giant tooth, a satirical reference to reliquaries.

[Easel 4 labels]
[148 - RED]

Don’t Shoot! (nicht schiessen!), 1939, 646

Pencil on paper on cardboard

Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern

[153 - RED]

Stick It Out! (durchhalten!), 1940, 337

Pastel on paper on cardboard

Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern

[130 - RED]

Battle Among Children (Schlacht unter Kindern), 1938, 435

Pencil on paper on cardboard

Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern, Livia Klee Donation