

Lille métropole
musée d'art moderne
d'art contemporain
et d'art brut



PAUL KLEE, BETWEEN TWO WORLDS

EXHIBITION
5 FEBRUARY > 16 MAY 2021



Paul Klee, *Abendliche Figur* (Evening Figure), 1935, gouache and graphite pencil on paper, 48.5 x 31.2 cm, LaM, Villeneuve d'Ascq. Geneviève and Jean Masurel Donation. Photo: Philip Bernard

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In early 2021, the LaM will be hosting an exhibition devoted to the work of Paul Klee (1879-1940). Represented in the Museum's permanent collection by three works from Roger Dutilleul and Jean Masurel's collection, Klee is one of the few essential artists in our modern collection who have yet to be the subject of a monographic exhibition. To rectify this, the Museum will be looking at his body of work from a fresh angle, highlighting his interest in the question of "art's origins".

Through an itinerary organised into four major chapters, the exhibition will be focusing on the way in which children's drawings, prehistoric art, non-Western art and what is often referred to as "the art of the insane" led Klee to rethink his art and, in particular after the traumatism of the First World War, situate it "between two worlds": between search for origins and allegiance to modernity.

Co-produced with the Zentrum Paul Klee in Berne, where it will be on show from 28 May to 12 September 2021, and bringing together no fewer than 120 works, the *Paul Klee, between two worlds* exhibition creates unexpected dialogues between works from different periods of the artist's creative life and a series of objects and documents from his personal collection.

FROM ONE WORLD TO ANOTHER

Klee was born near Berne in 1879 and died in Locarno in 1940. As a young man, it took him a while to decide between painting, writing and music, but he finally went to Munich as a student of visual arts, spent some time in Italy, and visited Paris twice, in 1905 and 1912. Enlivened by several breakaway artistic movements, Munich was to remain his home base up until the War. It was there that he met Wassily Kandinsky and members of *Der Blaue Reiter* (The Blue Rider), a group of artists who, among other things, were interested in popular art and children's drawings. A trip to Tunisia in 1914 strengthened his resolve: "Colour and I are one. I am a painter".

Despite this assertion, which went alongside long years of introspection, Klee, who was plagued by perpetual doubt, always situated himself in an intermediate world, halfway between figuration and abstraction, painting and music, East and West, practice and theory, yesterday and today. Not seeking to reproduce the visible but rather to give form to the invisible, he developed his approach in his journals and in his teaching. In 1920, he joined the staff of the Bauhaus, the school of applied arts founded in Weimar by the architect Walter Gropius. In the years that followed, he came to the notice of the French surrealists, who, in Antonin Artaud's words, saw him as a "mental painter". Shortly before his death, his works attracted the attention of Roger Dutilleul and Jean Masurel, who were at the origin of the LaM's modern art collection.

PRIMITIVE STAMMERINGS

Like many other avant-garde artists, Klee sought new forms of pictorial expression. In 1902, following his stay in Italy, he came to the realisation that the arts of Antiquity and the Renaissance were

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Replica of the *Clown with Large Ears* glove puppet, no date, 48 x 16 x 7 cm. Zentrum Paul Klee, Berne. Photo: DR.



Paul Klee, *Vor dem Frost / Before the Frost*, 1938, paste paint on paper on cardboard, 53.5 x 34.4 cm. Hermann and Margrit Rumpf Collection, Kunstmuseum, Berne. Photo: DR

not compatible with his artistic goals. In order to escape the dead end of academic canons and be able to create something new, he had to identify the "original source" from which (as it was then supposed) all forms of art had sprung: "I would like to be as though new-born, knowing nothing of Europe, absolutely nothing; ignorant of writers and fashions, to be almost primitive", he noted in his journal.

In a text written in 1912 for an exhibition by *Der Blaue Reiter*, he came to the defence of "the primitive stammerings of an art such as you are more likely to find in ethnographic museums or at home, in your children's bedrooms". He also called to mind the art of "the insane", which found favour in his eyes and which he took "extremely seriously, a great deal more so than any picture gallery, as these days it's a matter of reforming art". Klee called upon multiple sources in order to redefine art as a means of "gathering and passing on what rises from the depths".

OVERLAPPING SOURCES

The exhibition's itinerary highlights the four pathways that Klee chose in order to explore these "depths": asylum art, children's drawings, non-Western art and prehistoric art. Without seeking to assign a specific formal source to each work, it opens up a wide spectrum of associations for visitors, leaving them free to draw parallels between one gallery and another and elaborate their own interpretations. Several periods will be broached from the angle of the artist's search for origins: the context of *Der Blaue Reiter* in Munich, of Dada in Zurich and of surrealism in Paris, the years of teaching at the Bauhaus, and finally his enthusiastic reception in the United States in the 1930s.

Alongside the *Paul Klee, between two worlds* exhibition, the LaM will be presenting a selection of works by Giorgio Griffa, an Italian artist born in Turin in 1936 whose brightly coloured minimalist works on paper and free-form canvas show strong formal and poetic affinities with those by Paul Klee, whom the artist has always cited as an influence.

CURATORSHIP

SEBASTIEN DELOT, Director/Curator, LaM

FABIENNE EGGELHÖFER, Head Curator, Zentrum Paul Klee, Berne

JEANNE-BATHILDE LACOURT, Curator of Modern Art, LaM

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Paul Klee, *Erd-Hexen / Sorcières de la terre*, 1938, oil and watercolour on paper on cardboard, 48,5 x 1,2 cm. Zentrum Paul Klee, Berne. Photo : DR

The exhibition *Paul Klee, between two worlds* is co-organised by the LaM and the Zentrum Paul Klee, Berne.



With the support of the Fondation Crédit Mutuel Nord Europe, exhibition sponsor



The Paul Klee, between two worlds exhibition is co-produced with the Zentrum Paul Klee (Berne). The event is accompanied by a catalogue published by Flammarion in German and French (with texts by Fabienne Eggelhöfer, Osamu Okuda, Sébastien Delot, Jeanne-Bathilde Lacourt, Savine Faupin, Christophe Boulanger, Maria Stavrinaki and Morad Montazami).

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PRACTICAL INFO

The LaM is open Tuesday to Sunday, from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Admission: €10 / €7 / free on the 1st Sunday of the month and upon presentation of the C'Art

Info: +33 (0)3 20 19 68 68/51 – www.musee-lam.fr

Getting to the LaM:

- by public transport with Ilévia: metro line 1, Pont de Bois station + Liane 6 direction Villeneuve d'Ascq Contrescarpe L.A.M. stop, or Bus line 32 direction Wasquehal Jean-Paul Sartre, L.A.M stop, or metro line 2, Fort de Mons station + Liane 6 direction Villeneuve d'Ascq Contrescarpe L.A.M. stop.

- by road: 20 minutes from Lille Flandres railway station, Paris-Gand motorway (A1/A22/N227), exit 5 or 6 Flers / Château / Musée d'art moderne.