

The Museum of Modern Art

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THREE MASTERS OF THE BAUHAUS: LYONEL FEININGER, VASILY KANDINSKY, AND PAUL KLEE

January 27 - May 17, 1994

An exhibition of printed work by three modern masters who taught at the Bauhaus during the 1920s is on view at The Museum of Modern Art from January 27 to May 17, 1994. Organized by Wendy Weitman, associate curator, Department of Prints and Illustrated Books, **THREE MASTERS OF THE BAUHAUS: LYONEL FEININGER, VASILY KANDINSKY, AND PAUL KLEE** comprises approximately seventy-five prints and illustrated books, mostly produced at the Bauhaus and drawn entirely from the Museum's collection. The exhibition also includes strong examples of the artists' earlier prints, many of them rarely seen.

The Bauhaus, an innovative art school that flourished in Germany during the short-lived Weimar Republic, was founded on the theory that the distinction between "fine" and "applied" art was artificial. Artists headed various craft workshops and gave no formal instruction in painting or sculpture. Feininger was appointed head of the Bauhaus printmaking workshop in 1919; Klee joined the faculty in 1920; and Kandinsky arrived in 1922. All had been involved in printmaking before their arrival at the school, but the communal environment and technical resources of the Bauhaus, as well as its utopian, craft-oriented atmosphere, facilitated their creative efforts in these mediums.

THREE MASTERS OF THE BAUHAUS: LYONEL FEININGER, VASILY KANDINSKY, AND PAUL KLEE features Kandinsky's masterpiece print portfolio, *Kleine Welten*

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(*Small Worlds*) (1922). With six color and six black-and-white prints -- four each in lithography, woodcut, and intaglio -- the portfolio exemplifies the artist's hard-edged, methodical abstraction. Klee's fantastical color lithographs, such as *Tightrope Walker* (1923), with their imaginatively conceived figures, afford an affinity with some of Feininger's lesser-known figurative prints, with their often humorous, distorted characters.

As a printmaker, Feininger was known primarily for his powerful black-and-white woodcuts of nautical or architectural scenes. The most famous of these, *Cathedral* (1919), which was used as a cover of a Bauhaus pamphlet, is shown with its corresponding woodblock. *Cathedral* reflects the aura of medievalism that pervaded the school, whose academic system harkens back to the training employed by the Late Gothic craft guilds.

THREE MASTERS OF THE BAUHAUS: LYONEL FEININGER, VASILY KANDINSKY, AND PAUL KLEE serves as a small-scale retrospective for each of the artists, providing an in-depth view of their graphic work.

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