

# **Paul Klee centennial : prints and transfer drawings : [exhibition] January 8-April 3, 1979, the Museum of Modern Art, New York**

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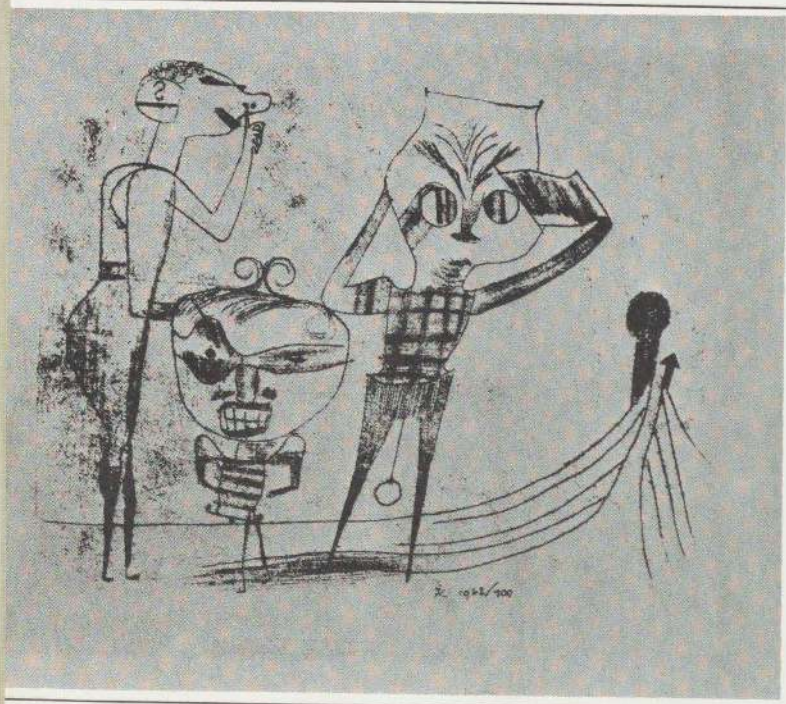
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# Paul Klee Centennial

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## PRINTS AND TRANSFER DRAWINGS

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# Paul Klee Centennial

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## PRINTS AND TRANSFER DRAWINGS

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January 8 - April 3, 1979  
The Museum of Modern Art, New York

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Front cover: Vulgar Comedy. (1922)

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## PAUL KLEE CENTENNIAL: PRINTS AND TRANSFER DRAWINGS

The graphic work of Paul Klee reveals in its diversity a complex network of interlocking themes realized through inventive working methods. His intricate visual vocabulary was evolved throughout a lifetime in which he conceived and pursued ideas relating to time, music, science, and philosophy. Klee's journey "within" -- by which he examined his own thought processes as an aid to rendering them visible -- is registered in copious notations in diaries and letters, later to take form as theoretical writings published during his decade at the Bauhaus in Weimar and Dessau.

Born to a German father and Swiss mother in 1879 near Bern, Switzerland, in the small town of Münchenbuchsee, Klee grew up amidst the tensions of two cultures in a musicians' household. Music remained a solid influence throughout his life, as seen in the rhythmic undulation of line (at times figures and abstract passages are represented by bands of parallel lines which suggest music notations) and in the serial versions of themes that appear in his work like repeated yet altered melodic passages. In a diary entry Klee stated: "In my eyes, the engravings lie before me as a complicated Opus One." In 1905 he stated: "More and more parallels between music and the graphic arts force themselves upon my consciousness."

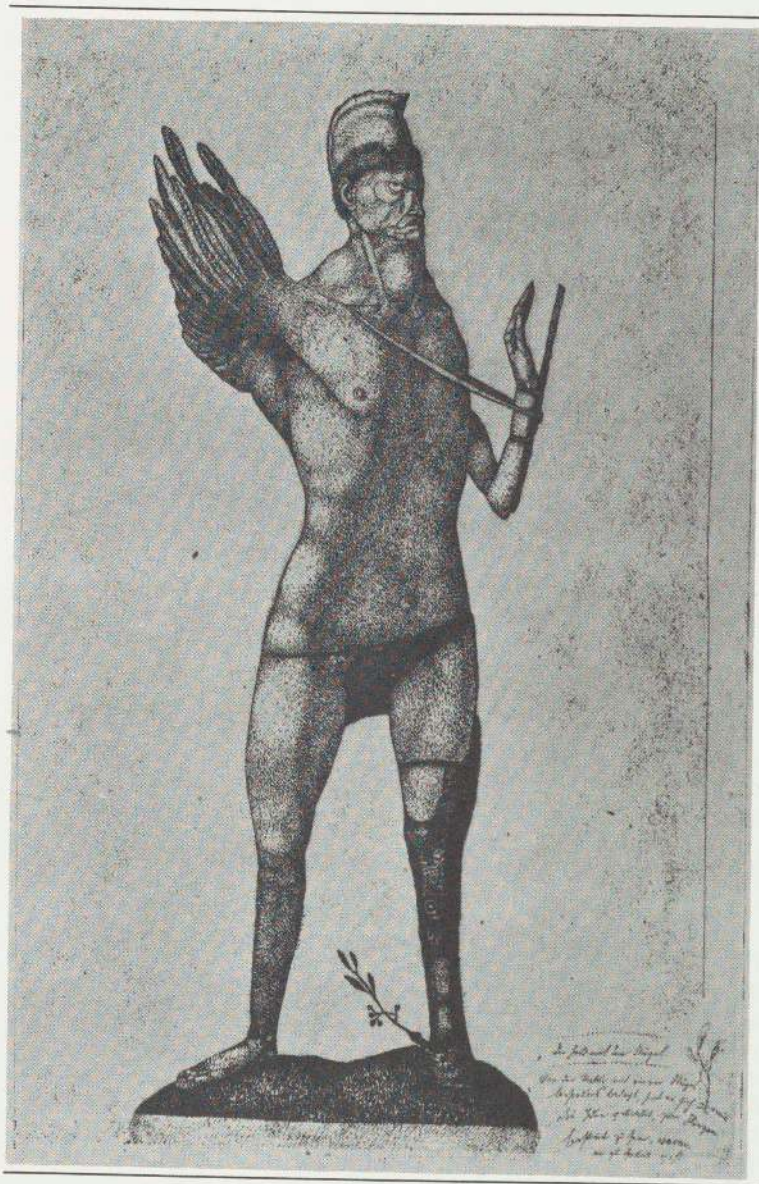
Klee first became interested in printmaking techniques during the summer of 1899 when he met Walter Ziegler, who showed him his printmaking workshop in Burghausen. In a letter to his mother he wrote: "And now comes the most important thing: I have met a well known etcher named Ziegler. He has seen my sketchbook and he immediately invited me to come see him. He wants to tell me the most important things about etching and aquatint...." Although Klee's prints represent a small percentage of his oeuvre of more than 8,000 works, his analysis of graphic processes helped to instill a taste for technical experimentation and expansion of the limits of all media. The transfer process, a form of monotype procedure

which he developed in 1919 as a means of transferring a drawing onto another piece of drawing paper or lithographic transfer paper, was born out of early graphic experimentation and a willingness to take risks. In a note written on September 1, 1902, Klee said: "Today I made a nice experiment. I covered a glass plate with a layer of asphalt; with a needle, I drew lines into it, which I was then able to copy photographically. The result resembles an engraving."

The first etchings on copper and zinc (Klee preferred working on zinc because of the quality of line it produced) reflect the influence of a tight formalist academic training at the Erwin Knirr School and the Munich Art Academy, where he worked from life models and from nature. However, his study of human anatomy gave way to the rendering of grotesque satirical images rooted partly in life and partly in the imagination. Exaggerated anatomical details are drawn and etched with the same meticulous detail as inanimate objects, as in the merging of a tree and human form in Virgin in the Tree (1903), and The Hero with the Wing (1905). He noted in 1905: "Insight: The new art does not form from objects but feelings for objects and with objects. The end of the Old Master School. The artist does not produce nature herself, but rather the law of nature." His invention of fantastic spectral figures demonstrates his admiration for the work of Francisco Goya and William Blake. The fantasy draws from life its parody of the aesthetic taste and social mores of the period.

Although Klee utilized aquatint as a means of augmenting the surface and tonal qualities of his etchings, he moved towards a sugar lift etching process as a means of creating a more dynamic, textured linear image. (In this process a mixture of sugar, water, and lithographic ink is used to draw upon a copper or zinc etching plate. Asphaltum is applied over the entire plate which is then placed in water and the sugar mixture lifts areas of the applied asphaltum.) The "lifting" of an area, whether accidental or intentional, and the false biting of the plate, as well as a subtle use of plate tone (that is, leaving a thin





The Hero with the Wing. (1905)



film of ink over the unbitten areas when wiping the plate), turned Klee's efforts away from the more tightly controlled image and surface of his earlier etchings. Examples of the surface quality rendered in the sugar lift process may be seen in Two Nudes (1907), The Drinker (1910), Height! (1928), and Prickle, the Clown (1931). Additional experimentation with the intaglio process included developing a technique of drypoint on celluloid: a softer drypoint line is created with ink feathering out from the core, as can be seen in Pergola (1910), and Railroad Station (1911). Hand-printing plates that he worked like a woodblock rather than an etching may have been an early link to Klee's later development of an oil transfer process for his drawings and prints. In a diary notation of 1907 Klee wrote about a hand-printed etching of which few proofs were pulled, "... a zinc plate worked [etched] under heavy pressure. It is an example of the style of old woodcuts. I was able to make a few prints of it by hand. It is not etched deeply enough for the press. I was able to make the print appealing by coloring [it]."

Concurrent with his experiments, Klee developed his themes through numerous versions in different media. The early physiognomical allegorical etchings were each preceded by a meticulously rendered drawing, a process he was to continue. (Never Ending, an etching of 1930, corresponds to a pencil and pen-and-ink drawing; the transfer lithograph Vulgar Comedy was preceded by a crayon drawing). Klee developed the oil-tracing transfer method in 1919, after having served two years in World War I. Glimmers of the possibilities of the transfer process are seen in an early lithograph of 1912, At the Window. There the image is drawn on the stone, over which Klee imposed texturing by means of a transfer process. In Comedy of Birds (1918), Klee's fingerprints, used as a compositional element, are clearly transferred in the lower right of the image, while the ghosts of other transferred images flicker around the central axis of the composition. In Klee's innovative method, tracing paper was transformed into a type of carbon paper by painting one side with printer's ink or oil paint. The

drawing (or model of a drawing) was placed on top and meticulously traced with a needle. Simultaneously a piece of drawing paper or lithographic transfer paper was placed under the painted surface to receive the drawing. The pressure of his hand left an impression of the weave of the paper, making visible the paper's surface qualities (Klee could intentionally rub the surface or accidentally transfer surface texture "monotypically" to the paper). The Twittering Machine (1922) was drawn by this transfer method and augmented with watercolor and pen and ink. (Klee is said to have invented a mechanical contraption he called a "twittering machine"). The Tightrope Walker (1923), a color lithograph, was also made by this method, in which the image was transferred to lithographic transfer paper and then run through the press to transfer the image to the stone. The final printed image appears in the same order as the drawing, and not as a mirror image. The edges and surface area of the tracing-paper transfer image, smaller than the overall size of the stone and sheet, add a simultaneous, "accidental," compositional note.

Klee was invited to join the faculty of the Bauhaus in 1921 as Master of Form. During his tenure he worked with students in workshops on stained glass, weaving, painting, and bookbinding. This opportunity permitted him access to the Bauhaus print workshop and to work alongside artists whose ideas were compatible, such as Lyonel Feininger (with whom he shared an interest in music) and Kandinsky (whom he met in 1911 during his involvement with Blaue Reiter activities in Munich), and with others whose ideas differed from his own, such as Walter Gropius and Oskar Schlemmer. "I welcomed the fact that forces so diversely inspired are working together at our Bauhaus," he wrote. "I approve of the conflict between them if the effect is evident in the final product. To tackle an obstacle is a good test of strength, if it is a real obstacle .... On the whole, there is no such thing as a right or a wrong; the work lives and develops through the interplay of opposing forces, just as in nature good and bad work together productively in the long run."



Curiously Klee's work remained hermetic, self-contained, detached from the direct influence of modernist tendencies, represented by expressionism, cubism, constructivism, dada or surrealism. His absorption of modernist tenets was more on a subliminal plane, such as his interest in multidimensional simultaneity of vision -- seeing aspects of an object, visible and not visible. Some of these concepts were also held by the cubists and futurists. The influence of Parisian cubist compositional mapping appears briefly in some of his lithographs, such as Destruction and Hope (1916).

Klee created his own dialectic, a universal humanism, rather than adopting that of others. He formulated his ideas slowly and committed them to paper in the form of notations and diary entries (his theoretical papers are presently housed in the Paul Klee Stiftung, Bern, Switzerland). He thrived on literature, reading Henrik Ibsen, August Strindberg, Molière, Oscar Wilde, and Aristophanes, among others. He attended symphony concerts and the opera, played violin in a string quartet and an orchestra, wrote plays with his son for their marionette theater. Direct visual experience impressed him deeply. A trip to Tunis in 1914 opened his mind and eye to color. The naive art of children and the insane intrigued him. Exotic artifacts from Oceania, Asia, and Africa found in ethnographic museums in Switzerland and Germany provided immediate visual impact, as can be witnessed in the etching Little World (1914). The humorous combined with the erotic attracted him, as in The Arrow Before the Target (1921).

Although Paul Klee's prints and transfer drawings represent aspects of the artist's multifaceted work, through them we are provided with keys to his other ideas and are able to glimpse more immediately the source of the energy which flowed through his work.

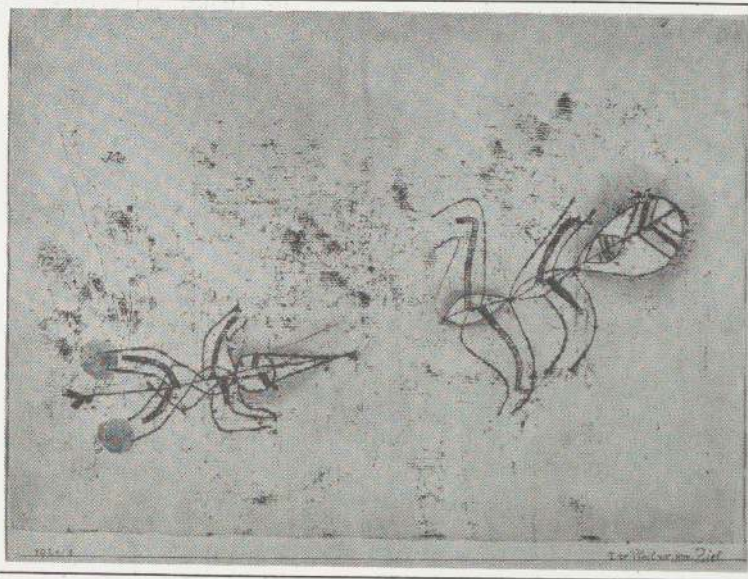
Howardena Pindell  
Associate Curator



The Museum's collection of prints and transfer drawings by Paul Klee was acquired through the generosity of many donors and the efforts of Alfred H. Barr, Jr., founding Director of the Museum, and William S. Lieberman, Director of the Department of Drawings.

Many members of the staff have contributed to this exhibition, and I am especially grateful to William S. Lieberman; Riva Castleman, Director, Department of Prints and Illustrated Books; Richard L. Palmer, Director of Exhibitions; and Tara Reddi, Curatorial Intern, Department of Prints and Illustrated Books.

The Museum of Modern Art gratefully acknowledges the support of its exhibition program by the New York State Council on the Arts.



The Arrow Before the Target. 1921

## CHECKLIST

This is a complete listing of the prints by Paul Klee in the Museum's collections. Dates enclosed in parentheses do not appear on the works themselves. Dimensions are given in inches and centimeters, height preceding width. Composition size is given for lithographs, plate size for etchings, and sheet size for drawings, unless otherwise stated. "K" followed by a number refers to the definitive catalog of Klee's graphic work by E.W. Kornfeld (see Selected Bibliography). No states are given. Works not on view are indicated with an asterisk.

1. Virgin in the Tree. 1903. Etching, 9 5/16 x 11 11/16" (23.7 x 29.7 cm). K4. Purchase.
2. Two Men Meet, Each Believing the Other of Higher Rank. (1903). Etching, 4 5/8 x 8 7/8" (11.7 x 22.6 cm). K7. Gift of Mme Paul Klee.
3. Comedian. 1904. Etching and aquatint, 6 1/16 x 6 5/8" (15.3 x 16.8 cm). K10. Purchase.
4. Crown Mania. 1904. Etching and aquatint, 6 1/4 x 6 1/4" (15.9 x 15.9 cm). K14. Purchase.
5. Perseus (Wit has triumphed over pain). 1904. Etching, 5 x 5 5/8" (12.7 x 14.3 cm). K15. Purchase.
6. The Hero with the Wing (The Hero with the Wing. By nature especially endowed with a wing, he has thus formed the idea that he is destined to fly, which causes his death). (1905). Etching, 10 x 6 1/4" (25.4 x 15.9 cm). K16. Purchase.
7. Senile Phoenix (As symbol of the insufficiency of things human in times of crisis). (1905). Etching, 10 3/8 x 7 9/16" (26.3 x 19.2 cm). K17. Purchase.

8. Head of Menace. 1905. Etching,  $7 \frac{11}{16} \times 5 \frac{3}{4}$ " (19.6 x 14.6 cm). K18. Purchase.
9. Two Nudes. 1907. Sugar lift etching,  $4 \frac{3}{4} \times 4 \frac{11}{16}$ " (12.0 x 11.9 cm). K20. Purchase.
10. The Friends. 1909. Pen and ink over monotype,  $7 \frac{5}{8} \times 9 \frac{1}{2}$ " (19.2 x 24.1 cm). Alva Gimbel Fund.
11. Drinker. (1910). Sugar lift etching,  $8 \frac{9}{16} \times 6$ " (21.7 x 15.3 cm). K21. Gift of Victor S. Riesenfeld.
12. The Pergola. 1910. Drypoint on celluloid,  $3 \frac{13}{16} \times 5 \frac{1}{8}$ " (9.7 x 13.0 cm). K25. Gift of Curt Valentin.
13. Sheep in the Fold. 1910. Etching,  $2 \frac{7}{8} \times 10 \frac{7}{16}$ " (7.4 x 26.5 cm). K30. Purchase.
14. Reading in Bed. 1910. Etching,  $5 \frac{5}{8} \times 7$ " (14.3 x 17.8). K31. Gift of Victor S. Riesenfeld.
15. Outskirts of Munich. 1910. Etching,  $7 \frac{3}{8} \times 10 \frac{7}{16}$ " (18.7 x 26.5 cm). K34. Gift of Victor S. Riesenfeld.
16. Railroad Station. 1911. Drypoint on celluloid,  $5 \frac{3}{4} \times 7 \frac{3}{4}$ " (14.6 x 19.7 cm). K37. Purchase.
17. River View. (1912). Lithograph,  $7 \frac{3}{4} \times 11 \frac{1}{4}$ " (19.7 x 28.6 cm). K42. Purchase.
18. Street Children. 1912. Lithograph,  $2 \frac{7}{8} \times 4 \frac{11}{16}$ " (7.2 x 11.9 cm). K47. Purchase.
19. Man on Stilts. 1912. Lithograph,  $3 \frac{5}{8} \times 3 \frac{11}{16}$ " (9.2 x 9.4 cm). K48. Hillman Periodicals Fund.
20. At the Window (Shall I throw myself out? Do I wish to conceal myself in a corner?). 1912. Lithograph,  $5 \frac{1}{4} \times 4$ " (13.2 x 10.1 cm). K53. Purchase.



21. Garden of Passion. (1913). Etching, 3 3/4 x 5 3/4" (9.5 x 14.7 cm). K56. Purchase.
22. Little World. (1914). Etching, 5 5/8 x 3 3/4" (14.3 x 9.6 cm). K61. Purchase.
23. Death for an Ideal from Zeit-Echo. Munich, Graphik Verlag, (1914-1915). Lithograph, 6 5/16 x 3 3/8" (16.0 x 8.6 cm). K63. Transferred from the Museum Library.
24. City Landscape. 1915. Etching, 6 1/4 x 4 1/2" (15.9 x 11.5 cm). K64. Gift of Victor S. Riesenfeld.
25. Little Castle in the Air. (1915). Etching, 3 1/2 x 8 3/8" (8.9 x 21.2 cm). K65. Purchase.
26. Destruction and Hope. 1916. Lithograph with watercolor additions, 18 3/8 x 13" (46.7 x 33.1 cm). K68. Purchase.
27. Comedy of Birds. 1918. Lithograph, 16 5/8 x 8" (42.3 x 20.3 cm). K69. Purchase.
28. Three Heads. 1919. Lithograph, 4 3/4 x 5 7/8" (12.1 x 14.8 cm). K70. Purchase.
29. Forest from Münchner Blatter für Dichtung und Graphik. Munich, Georg Müller Verlag, (1919). Lithograph, 6 5/8 x 5" (16.9 x 12.6 cm). K72. Gift of Mrs. Bertha M. Slattery.
30. Insects from Münchner Blatter für Dichtung und Graphik. Munich, Georg Müller Verlag, (1919). Lithograph with watercolor additions, 8 1/4 x 6" (20.9 x 15.3 cm). K74. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Walter Bareiss.
31. Blowing Out a Candle from Das Kestnerbuch. Hanover, Heinrich Böhme Verlag, (1919). Lithograph, 6 1/4 x 5 1/16" (15.9 x 12.8 cm). K75. Gift of Victor S. Riesenfeld.

32. The End of the Last Act of a Drama. 1920. Watercolor on transfer drawing, 8 1/8 x 11 3/8" (20.6 x 28.8 cm). Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Allan Roos.
33. Christian Sectarian. (1920). Watercolor on transfer drawing, 10 1/8 x 6 5/8" (25.7 x 16.9 cm). James Thrall Soby Fund.
34. Giant Aphis. (1920). Lithograph, 5 3/8 x 2 1/4" (13.7 x 5.7 cm). K77. Purchase.
35. Flower Stand. (1920). Lithograph with watercolor additions, 7 1/2 x 5 3/8" (19.0 x 13.6 cm). K78. Purchase.
36. Fulfillment Angel. (1920). Lithograph, 7 3/4 x 5 11/16" (19.6 x 14.4 cm). K79. Purchase.
37. Fulfillment Angel from Die Freude. Oberfranken, Wilhelm Uhde, (1920). Lithograph with watercolor additions, 7 7/8 x 5 3/4" (20.0 x 14.6 cm). K79. Frank Crowninshield Fund.
38. The Angler. 1921. Watercolor, pen and ink on transfer drawing, 18 7/8 x 12 3/8" (47.6 x 31.2 cm). John S. Newberry Collection.
39. The Arrow Before the Target. 1921. Watercolor on transfer drawing, 8 3/4 x 12 3/8" (22.2 x 31.3 cm). John S. Newberry Collection.
40. Queen of Hearts from Der Ararat. Munich, Goltz Verlag, (1921). Transfer lithograph, 10 1/16 x 6 7/8" (25.6 x 17.6 cm). K80. Gift of Karl Nierendorf.
41. Saint of the Inner Light. 1921. Transfer lithograph, 11 1/4 x 6 1/4" (28.6 x 15.8 cm). K81. Purchase.
42. Saint of the Inner Light from Erste Mappe: Meister des Staatlichen Bauhauses in Weimar. 1921. Transfer lithograph, printed in color, 12 1/4 x 6 7/8" (31.1 x 17.4 cm). K81. Gift of Karl Nierendorf.

43. In the Spirit of Hoffman. 1921. Transfer lithograph, 11 3/8 x 8 3/4" (28.9 x 22.2 cm). K82. Purchase.
44. In the Spirit of Hoffman from Erste Mappe: Meister des Staatlichen Bauhauses in Weimar. 1921. Transfer lithograph, printed in color, 12 1/2 x 9" (31.8 x 22.8 cm). K82. Purchase.
45. Steamer for Lugano. (1922). Transfer lithograph, 8 x 11 3/8" (20.3 x 28.9 cm). K83. Purchase.
46. Buffoonery. (1922). Transfer lithograph, 7 5/8 x 6 1/2" (19.3 x 16.6 cm). K84. Gift of M. Knoedler and Co., Inc.
47. Scherzo with Thirteen. 1922. Watercolor, pen, brush, ink on transfer drawing, 8 3/4 x 11 7/8" (22.3 x 30.2 cm). Purchase.
48. Twittering Machine. 1922. Watercolor, pen, ink on transfer drawing, 25 1/4 x 19" (63.8 x 48.1 cm). Purchase.
49. Urn Collection. (1922). Watercolor on transfer drawing, 10 7/8 x 8 1/2" (27.6 x 21.6 cm). Katherine S. Dreier Bequest.
50. Vulgar Comedy. (1922). Transfer lithograph, 9 1/4 x 11 1/4" (23.5 x 28.5 cm). K85. Gift of Victor S. Riesenfeld.
51. The Witch with the Comb from the portfolio Künstlerspende für das Deutsche Buchmuseum. Leipzig, (1922). Lithograph, 12 1/4 x 8 3/8" (31.1 x 21.3 cm). K86. Purchase.
52. Postcard for Bauhaus Lantern Party. (1922). Transfer lithograph with watercolor additions, 3 5/8 x 5 5/8" (9.3 x 14.3 cm). K87. Purchase.
53. The Serious Side, postcard for Bauhaus exhibition. (1923). Transfer lithograph, printed in color, 5 5/8 x 2 7/8" (14.3 x 7.4 cm). K88. Purchase.



54. The Funny Side, postcard for Bauhaus exhibition. (1923). Transfer lithograph, printed in color, 3 7/8 x 5 11/16" (9.8 x 14.4 cm). K89. Purchase.
55. Castle in the Water. (1923). Transfer lithograph, 8 x 9 9/16" (20.2 x 24.4 cm). K90. Gift of Victor S. Riesenfeld.
56. Flight. (1923). Transfer lithograph, 10 1/4 x 6 1/8" (26.0 x 15.5 cm). K91. Gift of Victor S. Riesenfeld.
57. \*The One in Love. 1923. Lithograph, 10 3/8 x 7 1/2" (26.3 x 19.0 cm). K94. Purchase.
58. The One in Love from Meistermappe des Staatlichen Bauhauses in Weimar. (1923). Transfer lithograph, printed in color, 10 13/16 x 7 1/2" (27.4 x 19.1 cm). K94. Larry Aldrich Fund.
59. Tightrope Walker from Mappe der Gegenwart. Munich, R. Piper and Co., 1923. Transfer lithograph, printed in color, 17 1/8 x 10 5/8" (43.6 x 27.0 cm). K95. Given anonymously.
60. Ass from Monatshefte für Bücherfreunde und Graphiksammler. Leipzig, H. Loubier, (1925). Lithograph, 9 3/8 x 5 3/4" (23.9 x 14.8 cm). K97. Purchase.
61. Bearded Man. 1925. Transfer lithograph, 8 5/8 x 6" (21.9 x 15.3 cm). K98. Hillman Periodicals Fund.
62. Singer of the Light Opera. (1925). Transfer lithograph, 16 1/4 x 11 3/16" (41.2 x 28.4 cm). K99. Gift of Mrs. Donald B. Straus.
63. \*Slavery. 1925. Gouache on transfer drawing, 10 x 14" (25.4 x 35.6 cm). Gift of Abby Aldrich Rockefeller.
64. Height! 1928. Sugar lift etching, 9 1/16 x 9 1/16" (23.0 x 23.0 cm). K100. Purchase.

65. Underbrush. 1928. Etching, 5 3/4 x 3 7/8" (14.6 x 9.7 cm). K102. Purchase.
66. Juggler in April. 1928. Etching, 7 1/2 x 7 3/4" (19.1 x 19.6 cm). K103. Purchase.
67. Old Man Figuring. (1929). Etching, 11 3/4 x 9 3/8" (29.8 x 23.8 cm). K104. Purchase.
68. Never Ending. 1930. Sugar lift etching and aquatint, 7 x 5 3/8" (17.8 x 13.7 cm). K106. Purchase.
69. Untitled from L'Homme approximatif by Tristan Tzara. Paris, Fourcade, 1931. Etching and drypoint, 7 x 5 1/2" (17.8 x 13.9 cm). K107. Purchase.
70. Prickle, the Clown. 1931. Sugar lift etching and aquatint, 11 9/16 x 9 7/16" (29.3 x 24.0 cm). K108. Gift of Victor S. Riesenfeld.
71. Why Does He Run? (1932). Etching, 9 3/8 x 11 13/16" (23.8 x 30.0 cm). K109. Purchase.
72. Plate VI from Potsdamer Platz, oder die Nächte des neuen Messias by Curt Corrinth. Munich, Georg Müller, Verlag, (1918-1919). Photo lithograph after a drawing, page size: 8 x 5 1/4" (20.3 x 13.4 cm). KA113. Purchase.

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