

Fantastic prints : Paul Sachs Gallery, February 6-May 6, 1997

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index of participating artists.

Five Etchings by Paul Klee

1761
pt. 2

Virgin in the Tree. July, 1903. Etching, $9\frac{5}{16} \times 11\frac{1}{16}$ " (23.7 x 29.7 cm). Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Fund

Two Men Meet, Each Believing the Other of Higher Rank. September, 1903. Etching, $4\frac{5}{8} \times 8\frac{7}{8}$ " (11.7 x 22.6 cm). Gift of Mme. Paul Klee

The Hero with the Wing. January, 1905. Etching, $10 \times 6\frac{1}{4}$ " (25.4 x 15.9 cm). Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Fund

Menacing Head. March, 1905. Etching, $7\frac{1}{16} \times 5\frac{3}{4}$ " (19.6 x 14.6 cm). Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Fund

Senile Phoenix. March, 1905. Etching, $10\frac{3}{8} \times 7\frac{9}{16}$ " (26.3 x 19.2 cm). Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Fund

These five prints are from *Inventions*, a series of twelve etchings that Swiss-born artist Paul Klee (1879–1940) executed between 1903 and 1905. He regarded the prints in the series as his first significant, original works of art. Their imagery reflects Klee's academic training at the Munich Art Academy in 1898, where he worked from life models and from nature. With this series, however, his study of human anatomy gave way to the rendering of grotesque satirical figures rooted partly in life and partly in the imagination. As 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."

These meticulous line etchings, full of bizarre details, are the products of obsessive fantasy and

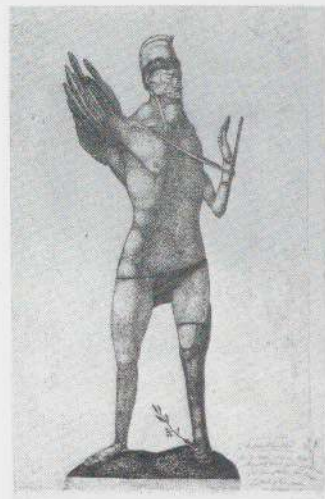
a bitingly cynical view of the world.

Like many young artists of the time, Klee felt alienated from his middle-class cultural and social milieu. His eccentric images parody the aesthetic tastes and social mores of the

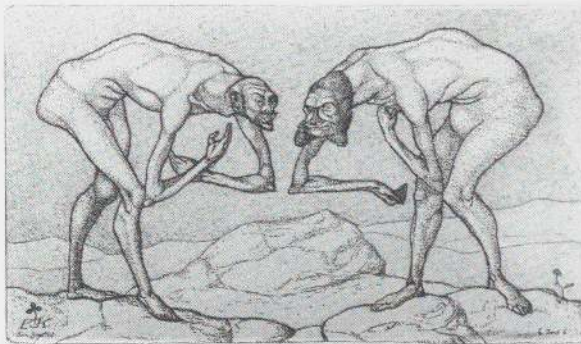
period. His invention of fantastic figures also reflects an admiration for the work of Francisco Goya, Honoré Daumier, and James Ensor.

Two Men Meet, Each Believing the Other of Higher Rank (1903), which shows two monstrously distorted and bent figures approaching each other, mocks the servility of the average citizen and the ritualistic hierarchy of society. The classical archetype of the male form is also manipulated to ironic effect in

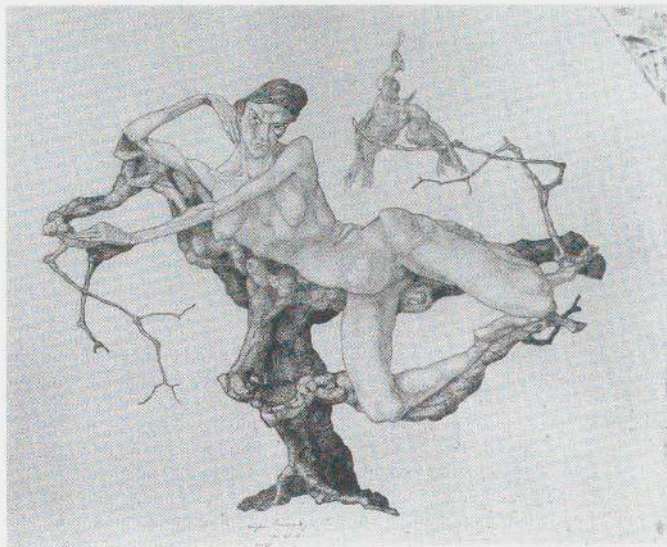
The Hero with the Wing (1905). As Klee described it, "The man, born with only one wing, in contrast with divine creatures, makes incessant efforts to fly. In doing so, he breaks his arms and legs, but persists under the banner of his idea. The contrast between his statue-



The Hero with the Wing. January, 1905.



Two Men Meet, Each Believing the Other of Higher Rank. September, 1903.



Virgin in the Tree. July, 1903.

like, solemn attitude and his already ruined state needed especially to be captured, as an emblem of the tragicomic." In *Virgin in the Tree* (1903), a female figure with exaggerated anatomical attributes is integrated with a dead, gnarled tree to create a repulsive and disturbing image. Klee wrote in his diaries from the period that "the lady wants to be something special through virginity, but doesn't cut an attractive figure. Critique of bourgeois society."

Klee was dissatisfied with his innate impulse toward satire and strove to overcome it, believing that the mastery of formal issues, especially color, was more important. Although his work did evolve stylistically and thematically in later periods and through various mediums, he nevertheless continued to emphasize the intimate, introspective aspects of art making. In particular, the linear fluidity and meticulous detail that could be achieved through etching resulted in works that trace the fantastic and incisive nature of his thought processes. Altogether Klee made more than one hundred prints, including many lithographs from an especially active period of printmaking at the Bauhaus, the German school of architecture and design where he taught from 1920 through 1931. His ongoing involvement

with printmaking, together with his natural inclination toward technical experimentation, inspired him to take inventive approaches to his work in all mediums.

Starr Figura
Assistant Curator

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