

The Museum of Modern Art

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PAUL KLEE CENTENNIAL: PRINTS AND TRANSFER DRAWINGS

In celebration of the centennial of the birth of Paul Klee, The Museum of Modern Art is presenting an exhibition of approximately 70 of this modern master's prints and transfer drawings. On view in the Museum's third-floor Sachs Galleries from January 8 through April 3, PAUL KLEE CENTENNIAL: PRINTS AND TRANSFER DRAWINGS includes etchings and lithographs as well as works made by the transfer-drawing process pioneered by Klee in 1919. The exhibition is being directed by Howardena Pindell, Associate Curator of Prints and Illustrated Books.

"The graphic work of Paul Klee reveals in its diversity a complex network of interlocking themes realized through inventive working methods," notes Ms. Pindell in the brochure accompanying the exhibition.* "His intricate visual vocabulary was evolved throughout a lifetime in which he conceived and pursued ideas relating to time, music, science, and philosophy." Ms. Pindell goes on to observe that "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 the expansion of the limits of all media."

In Klee's first etchings on copper and zinc--Virgin in the Tree (1903) and The Hero with the Wing (1905) are two examples of this period--grotesque satirical images rooted partly in life and partly in imagination are rendered with meticulous detail. These fantastic inventions reflect the influence of Goya and William Blake, both much admired by Klee. Following these early works, Klee soon began to utilize the sugar lift etching process as a means

of creating a more dynamic, textured linear image and a less tightly controlled surface. The surface quality afforded by the sugar lift process may be seen in Two Nudes (1907), The Drinker (1910), Height! (1928), and Prickle, the Clown (1931). In addition, Klee experimented with the intaglio process by utilizing a technique of drypoint on celluloid. In Pergola (1910) and Railroad Station (1911) a softer drypoint line has been created in which ink feathers out from the core.

Klee developed the oil-tracing transfer method of drawing in 1919. Ms. Pindell explains the technique: "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) would be placed on top and meticulously traced with a needle. Simultaneously a piece of drawing paper or lithographic transfer paper would be 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) and The Tightrope Walker (1923), both in the exhibition, were executed by this method.

Paul Klee's art, though it absorbed modernist tenets, remained peculiarly idiosyncratic, expressive of his wide interests. "Klee created his own dialectic, a universal humanism," Ms. Pindell writes. "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."

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*For further information, please contact Luisa Kreisberg, Director (212) 956-2648 or Bruce Wolmer (212) 956-7298, Department of Public Information, The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, New York, New York 10019. Advance brochure text and photographs available on request.