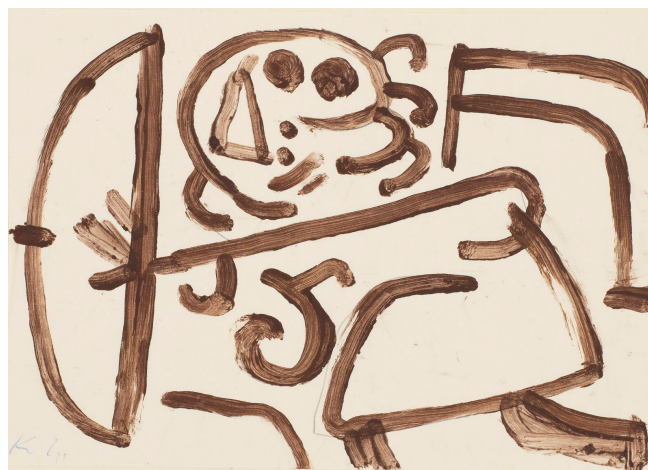


Paul Klee *Late Klee*

6 March–18 April, 2020
24 Grafton Street
London

Walkthrough led by Dr. Fabienne Eggelhöfer,
Zentrum Paul Klee: 5 March, 5–6 PM
Opening reception: 5 March, 6–8 PM



Paul Klee, *Regen- und Sturmangriff (Rain and storm attack)* (detail), 1939. © Klee Family, Courtesy David Zwirner, Photography: Kerry McFate

David Zwirner is pleased to present *Late Klee*, the second solo exhibition of Paul Klee's work since announcing an exclusive collaboration with the Klee Family. On view at the London location, the exhibition will explore the diverse visual and formal styles of Paul Klee's art from the early 1930s until the artist's death, in 1940.

In 1931, Klee left the Bauhaus, where he had taught and worked for a decade, to serve as a professor at the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf. Toward the end of 1933, in response to the suppression of avant-garde art practices by the newly empowered Nazi party, Klee left Germany, where he had primarily lived since 1906, and returned to his native city of Bern, Switzerland, residing there for the remainder of his life. From 1935 onward, Klee continually struggled with illness, which at times impacted his ability to work. During this period, against the backdrop of immense sociopolitical turmoil and the outbreak of World War II, Klee worked with a vigour and inventiveness that at times rivalled even the most productive periods from his youth. As Matthias Bärmann notes, "Klee seems to have derived a paradoxical vitality from the conscious, profound process of coming to terms with disease and the approach of death, a vitality that significantly transformed his art," adding that: "Out of the physical and emotional suffering of his exile he took his art through a final metamorphosis, achieved one last pinnacle. Like only Matisse and Picasso among modern artists, Klee created a late work of singular rank."¹

Though his art was suppressed in Germany during the 1930s and 1940s, Klee found a growing audience for his work in the United States and the United Kingdom. Several exhibitions of Klee's work in London from this time also included significant presentations of his work from the 1930s. This included shows at The Mayor Gallery in 1934 and 1935, and the London Gallery in 1939. Klee was prominently featured at the *Exhibition of Twentieth Century German Art* at the New Burlington Galleries, London, in 1938, which served as a powerful counterpoint to the Nazi *Degenerate Art* exhibition touring Germany and Austria in the late 1930s and early 1940s. After Klee's death, a significant exhibition of paintings and watercolours was also held in London at the Leicester Galleries in 1941, and the Tate Gallery hosted a major travelling retrospective in 1945–1946.

The works on view in *Late Klee* highlight the diversity of Klee's visual practice during the last decade of his life. The play of line is evident in a series of graphic works that are often highly diaristic and personal. His skill as a colourist is presented through entirely abstract compositions as well as figurative pieces depicting mask-like faces. Klee's ability to interrelate his subject and visual style was unparalleled and further enhanced by his choice of titles, which are at

¹ Matthias Bärmann, "As if it concerned myself: Emigration, Illness and Creative Process in Paul Klee's Last Years," in *Paul Klee: Fulfillment in the Late Work*. Exh. cat. (Basel: Fondation Beyeler, 2003), pp. 13, 15.

times witty and humorous and at other times somber and piercing. In *Folter (Torture)*, 1938, a face and body are recognisable within a composition of twisting geometric lines overlaying reds, oranges, and yellows. *Schema eines Kampfes (Diagram of a Fight)*, 1939, is composed of bright colours that frame dark graphic lines, creating a strong dynamic contrast that animates the composition. Ranging in subject matter and style, the works all testify to Klee's visual ingenuity and his restless drive to experiment with his forms and materials, which included adhesives, grease, oil, chalk, and watercolour, resulting in surfaces that are not only visually striking, but also highly tactile and original. Klee's visual ingenuity informed subsequent generations of artists after World War II including Anni Albers, Jean Dubuffet, Mark Tobey, and Richard Tuttle, among countless others.

Complementing the selection of works by Klee will be an exhibition in The Upper Room of the gallery featuring studies by Bridget Riley, who credits Klee with influencing her own development as an abstract artist. Riley also co-curated *Paul Klee: The Nature of Creation*, a major exhibition of Klee's work at the Hayward Gallery, London, in 2002.

Paul Klee 1939, an exhibition catalogue for the gallery's inaugural exhibition of Klee's work at David Zwirner, New York, in 2019, will also be available this fall, from David Zwirner Books.

Paul Klee (1879–1940) was born as a German citizen in Münchenbuchsee near Bern, Switzerland, in 1879. In 1921, he was appointed to the faculty of the Bauhaus by Walter Gropius, the founder and first director of the school, where he taught and worked as a "form master" from 1921 to 1925, while the school was in Weimar, and as a professor from 1926 to 1931, when the school was located in Dessau.

In 1935, Klee's work was the subject of major retrospectives at the Kunsthalle Bern and the Kunsthalle Basel. In 1940, shortly before he passed away, Klee had a solo exhibition of new work at the Kunsthaus Zürich. In 1941, a traveling memorial exhibition was organised by The Museum of Modern Art, New York, and toured additional venues across the United States, including the San Francisco Museum of Art.

Klee's work has been the subject of major retrospectives and traveling solo exhibitions at institutions worldwide. Among major exhibitions of his work during the past decade are *The EY Exhibition: Paul Klee – Making Visible* at Tate Modern from 2013 to 2014; the Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, held *Paul Klee: Irony at Work* in 2016; Fondation Beyeler, Basel, hosted the retrospective *Paul Klee: The Abstract Dimension* from 2017 to 2018; Pinakothek der Moderne, Munich, featured *Paul Klee: Construction of Mystery* in 2018; and Museo delle culture (MUDEC), Milan, presented *Paul Klee: Alle origini dell'arte (Paul Klee: At the origins of art)* from 2018 to 2019. In 2019 *Paul Klee: Equilíbrio Instável* debuted at Centro Cultural Banco do Brasil, São Paulo, and traveled to Centro Cultural do Brasil, Rio de Janeiro, and Centro Cultural do Brasil, Belo Horizonte.

In 1947, after the death of Paul Klee's widow, four prominent collectors in Bern established the Paul Klee Foundation, which was housed in the Kunstmuseum Bern until 2004. On the occasion of a large donation of works from the Klee Family, the foundation was absorbed into a new museum dedicated to the artist. In 2005, the Zentrum Paul Klee opened as an independent institution and research center with a building designed by Renzo Piano. Klee's work is in the permanent collections of countless major museums around the world.

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