

Media release

## Paul Klee – The Abstract Dimension

October 1, 2017 to January 21, 2018

From October 1, 2017, to January 21, 2018, the Fondation Beyeler will be presenting a major exhibition of the work of Paul Klee, one of the most important painters of the twentieth century. The exhibition undertakes the first-ever detailed exploration of Klee's relationship to abstraction, one of the central achievements of modern art.

Paul Klee was one of the many European artists who took up the challenge of abstraction. Throughout his oeuvre, from his early beginnings to his late period, we find examples of the renunciation of the figurative and the emergence of abstract pictorial worlds. Nature, architecture, music and written signs are the main recurring themes. The exhibition, comprising 110 works from twelve countries, brings this hitherto neglected aspect of Klee's work into focus.

The exhibition is organized as a retrospective, presenting the groups of works that illustrate the main stages in Klee's development as a painter. It begins, in the first of the seven rooms, with Klee's apprenticeship as a painter in Munich in the 1910s, followed by the celebrated journey to Tunisia in 1914, and continues through World War I, and the Bauhaus decade from 1921 to 1931, with the well-known "chessboard" pictures, the layered watercolors, and works that respond to the experiments of the 1930s with geometric abstraction. The next section features a selection of the pictures painted after Klee's travels in Italy and Egypt in the later 1920s and early 1930s. Finally, the exhibition examines the "sign" pictures of Klee's late period, and the prefiguration, in his conception of painting, of developments in the art of the postwar era.

For this major exhibition, the Fondation Beyeler has obtained the loan of valuable works from no less than thirty-five internationally renowned museums and public collections, including the Metropolitan Museum and Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Centre Pompidou, Paris; the Albertina, Vienna; the Berggruen Collection, Berlin; the Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Düsseldorf; the Rosengart Collection, Lucerne; the Kunstmuseum Basel; and the Zentrum Paul Klee in Bern. The exhibition also contains fifty-two works from private collections in Europe and overseas that are rarely, if ever, accessible to the public. Thirteen paintings are from the Zentrum Paul Klee, and ten works are from the Fondation Beyeler's own collection.

Among the highlights of the exhibition are the "chessboard" pictures *Blossoming Tree*, 1925, 119, from the National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo, and *Flowering*, 1934, 199, from the Kunstmuseum Winterthur, and the group of layered watercolors. Further outstanding works include the "striated" composition *Fire in the Evening*, 1929, 95, from the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Pointillist painting *Clarification*, 1932, 66, from the Metropolitan Museum, New York; and the rarely exhibited *At Anchor*, 1932, 22.

With a total of twenty works, Klee is the best-represented artist after Pablo Picasso in the Beyeler collection. Klee held a special significance for Ernst Beyeler, who regarded him as one of the most important artists of the twentieth century. One of the first exhibitions at the Galerie Beyeler in Bäumleingasse, held in 1952, was devoted to Paul Klee, and was followed by further shows illuminating various aspects of Klee's oeuvre. In all, some 570 works by Klee passed through Beyeler's hands. Beyeler's chief passion as a collector was for Klee's late work, which he valued especially "for its quality of color and expressive power." Over the years, he managed to assemble a collection of

exceptionally high quality, including key works such as *Rising Star*, 1931, 230, and *Signs in Yellow*, 1937, 210, both of which will be on display in the exhibition.

Dr. Anna Szech, the exhibition's curator, explains: "It was surprising and exciting to discover a new aspect in Klee's work, which is otherwise so thoroughly researched. Focusing on Klee's largely unacknowledged contribution to abstraction, we show that he deserves a prominent place in the history of twentieth-century abstract painting, in addition to his other achievements as an artist."

Sam Keller, Director of the Fondation Beyeler, adds: "Next to Picasso, Paul Klee is the best-represented artist in the collection. As the Fondation Beyeler celebrates its twentieth anniversary, I am pleased that we have been able to honor this crucial modern artist with a comprehensive exhibition of a kind that has never been seen before."

The catalogue accompanying the exhibition deserves particular mention. Contributions from the art historians and Klee specialists Fabienne Eggelhöfer and Regine Prange are flanked by essays by guest authors from other professional fields who have kindly agreed to share with us their thoughts on Klee in connection with their own areas of expertise. The Greek-Russian conductor Teodor Currentzis discusses Klee's ideas about music; the American artist Jenny Holzer investigates the signs in Klee's pictures; and the Swiss architect Peter Zumthor writes about the architectural elements in Klee's work.

**The exhibition "Paul Klee—The Abstract Dimension" is generously supported by:**

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**Fondation Beyeler opening hours: 10 am – 6 pm daily, Wednesdays until 8 pm**

## Exhibition concept

Paul Klee – The Abstract Dimension

October 1, 2017 – January 21, 2018

Paul Klee is considered one of the most original and influential artists of European Modernism. During his lifetime he already won wide recognition, with many solo and group exhibitions, whose number has continued to grow since his death. His work is still shown across the world today, in exhibitions illuminating various aspects of his art.

One aspect, surprisingly, has received scant attention—Klee’s relationship to abstraction, which until now has never been the subject of a major exhibition. In the first half of the twentieth century, the renunciation of the figurative and the emergence of abstract visual worlds became a central achievement of modern painting, shaping the ideas of many European artists. Protagonists of classic Modernism, such as Wassily Kandinsky, Robert Delaunay, Kazimir Malevich, and Piet Mondrian, offered artistic solutions to the question of a new reality in painting. Paul Klee also took up this challenge. Throughout his oeuvre, comprising nearly 10 000 pictures, from his early beginnings to the works of his late period, one can observe fascinating examples of the creation of abstract pictorial worlds and of processes of abstraction in painting. While many of his fellow artists took a radical approach to the subject and positively alarmed the public with their nonfigurative works, Paul Klee endeavored to build bridges with his abstract pictures. In many cases, he retains figurative elements or provides scope for reading and interpretation through the titles of the works. This may well be one of the reasons why he is so widely appreciated as an artist. “Abstraction. The cool Romanticism of this style without pathos is unheard of,” Klee wrote in 1915. A further comment from the same year appears more relevant today than ever, with an application to modern existence *tout court*: “The more horrible this world (as today, for instance), the more abstract our art, whereas a happy world brings forth an art of the here and now.”

The key elements in Klee’s abstract pictures have a central importance for his work as a whole: nature, architecture, music, and written signs. From these fields of reflection and reference, which were relevant to European art from its earliest beginnings, Klee managed to distill the essence of painting. Line and color, the constitutive elements of his own art, unfold in an extraordinary abundance, with a seemingly endless range of possibilities for realization. The brightly colored abstraction of the magical landscapes of Hammamet and Kairouan, created during the Tunisian journey of 1914, is succeeded by the ‘explosive’ compositions of the wartime period, showing garden scenes with flashes of lightning. The color field painting of the Bauhaus years evokes trees in blossom, and the dark signs in the paintings of the late 1930s recall plants or written characters. Klee’s sign pictures reveal his interest in the creative processes of nature and art and can be understood as a reference to his other passion—for language and writing, complementing his activities as a visual artist. In the Bauhaus period, the associations with European and Arab architecture in the early watercolors are radically reduced, to the basic elements found in the brightly colored stripe paintings of the early 1930s, which conjured the buildings of ancient Egypt. As an accomplished musician, Klee found it easy to create rhythmically nuanced abstract compositions. The spherical trees in his garden pictures from the 1920s are ‘planted’ in rows resembling notes in a musical score. Musical sounds and melodies are literally audible in many works, such as *Fugue in Red*, 1921, 69, *Overture*, 1922, 142, *Harmony of the Northern Flora*, 1924, 74, and *Harmony of Southern Flora*, 1927, 227.

The selection of semi-figurative and entirely abstract pictures makes it possible to explore the work of this multifaceted artist from new perspectives, seeking a deeper understanding of his relationship with abstraction. Interesting connections also emerge between Klee and various other artists of his own time and of subsequent generations. Klee appears bolder, more open and innovative, and more influential than ever.

With 110 works, taken from every phase of Paul Klee's oeuvre after 1912, the exhibition has the character of a retrospective. It brings together valuable loans from numerous institutions and private collections in Europe and overseas. The works provide insights into the decisive stages of Klee's artistic development, from the productive exchanges of the years before World War I with his contemporaries in Paris and Munich, the celebrated journey to Tunisia in 1914 and the subsequent period of military service, to the Bauhaus decade from 1921 to 1931 and his travels in Egypt and Italy, and culminating in the visually sumptuous late works of the 1930s.

In addition to familiar main works, the exhibition includes a number of rarely seen pictures that show Paul Klee in a surprising light.

Curator: Dr. Anna Szech

### **Anna Szech**

Dr. Anna Szech (born in 1975 in St. Petersburg, Russia) studied art history, eastern Slavic languages and psychology at the University of Hamburg, before going on to gain her PhD at the University of Basel. Included among her areas of specialisation are European classical modern art and Russian art, in particular that of the Russian Avantgarde. From 2011 to 2013, Anna Szech was engaged at the Museum Tinguely as research assistant for the project *"Wladimir Tatlin. New Art for a New World"*. She has been with the Fondation Beyeler since 2013, where, as assistant curator, she collaborated in the exhibitions *"Paul Gauguin"* and *"In Search of 0,10 - The Last Futurist Exhibition of Painting"*. From 2014 to 2015, she was project director of the exhibition *"Paul Klee. Kein Tag ohne Linie"* held at the National Pushkin Museum Moscow. The first ever retrospective of the artist in Russia was organised as a collaborative project between the Fondation Beyeler and the Zentrum Paul Klee in Bern. As associate curator since 2016, she is a member of the curatorial team at Fondation Beyeler.

## Exhibition itinerary “Paul Klee: The Abstract Dimension”

The exhibition comprises seven rooms, presenting in chronological order the groups of works in which Klee’s engagement with abstraction can be experienced and studied. These groups of works, structured according to stylistic elements or motifs, also illustrate the main stages of Klee’s biography and his general development as an artist.

The exhibition begins with Paul Klee’s apprenticeship as a painter in Munich in the 1910s. Klee moved to Munich shortly after coming of age, and remained there, with interruptions, until 1921. This phase of his life had a formative influence on his development as an artist. He was accepted into the fashionable Munich art world, and befriended Wassily Kandinsky and other artists. Klee also undertook several journeys that had a decisive impact on his art. In 1905 and 1912 he visited Paris, where he was strongly impressed by the work of avantgarde painters such as Paul Cézanne, Henri Matisse, Pablo Picasso, and Robert Delaunay. The ideas developed by these artists—for example, the liberation of color from content and the Cubist dissolution of the physical environment into abstract geometric forms—were taken up by Klee and translated into his own, highly individual terms, in watercolors such as *The Yellow House*, 1914, 26, from the Merzbacher Kunststiftung; *Opened Mountain*, 1914, 95 (private collection); or *With the Red X*, 1914, 136, from the Museum of Modern Art, New York.

During the journey to Tunisia that he undertook in 1914 with his artist friends Louis Moilliet and August Macke, Klee found a new confidence in dealing with color and light. Painting in color on paper and canvas now became an essential part of his oeuvre. “Color possesses me,” he wrote in his diary: “I don’t have to pursue it. It will possess me always, I know it. That is the meaning of this happy hour: Color and I are one. I am a painter.” The highlights from this period include the watercolor *Before the Gates of Kairouan*, 1914, 216, painted during the stay in Tunisia, which is now in the Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern; *Abstraction of a Motif from Hamammet*, 1914, 49, painted in Munich after the journey and presented by Klee to his friend Franz Marc, from the Sammlung Forberg in the Albertina, Vienna; and *With the Brown Triangle*, 1915, 39, from the Kunstmuseum Bern. *Kairouan, Before the Gates (After a Sketch of 1914)*, 1921, 4, from a private collection in Riehen, is shown here for the first time in several decades. (The style used for the titles of works conforms to that used in the index of the catalogue raisonné.)

The next room features works painted during World War I. The war was a decisive turning point in Klee’s life. He was deeply affected by the death in action of his friends Franz Marc, in 1914, and August Macke in 1916. In a statement from this period, Klee drew a parallel between abstract painting and a particular political situation: “The more horrible this world (as today, for instance), the more abstract our art.” Although he rejected the war, he was called up in 1916, as a German national, for military service. His stay in the army lasted until 1918, but he was spared from duty at the front and could devote his free time to painting. Klee’s painting of this period is rarely abstract in the full sense. His wartime works include numerous depictions of nature and architecture, with clearly recognizable motifs, such as gardens, houses or churches, which can be interpreted as places of refuge that Klee creates for himself. Among the especially impressive pictures from these years are the watercolor *The Chapel*, 1917, 127, from the collection of the Fondation Beyeler, and the small-format *Celestial Blossoms above the Yellow House (The Chosen House)*, 1917, 74, from the Berggruen Collection, Berlin. The material used for the latter work directly refers to the war: Klee was stationed at a training school for pilots in Bavaria and painted a number of pictures on fuselage fabric.

The following room, the largest in the exhibition, is divided into three sections, concerned with Klee’s time at the Bauhaus in Weimar and Dessau, with his experiments in geometric abstraction, and with his travels in Italy and Egypt in the late 1920s and early 1930s.

In the 1920s Klee succeeded in positioning himself as one of the most influential artists of his time. He was invited to join the teaching staff of the Bauhaus, where he was active from 1921 until 1931. The selection of pictures from this period in the present exhibition, chosen from the several hundred works created during the Bauhaus years, chiefly illustrates the process of exploring color. The focus is on the so-called square pictures—abstract paintings displaying a more or less strictly geometric pattern of colored squares and rectangles—and the semifigurative and abstract “layered” watercolors in which Klee uses a particular technique of applying the paint. In view of their sensitivity to light, the layered watercolors are shown in a separate room. In all these works, the artist accords absolute preeminence to color as an artistic means. Speaking, in this context, of “the richly blossoming harmony of color,” he moves playfully between the seemingly incommensurate worlds of abstraction and figuration. The outstanding works in this section of the exhibition include the oil painting *Blossoming Tree*, 1925, 119, from the National Museum of Modern Art in Tokyo, and its larger-format counterpart, *Flowerings*, 1934, 199, now in the collection of the Kunstmuseum Winterthur. Three of the best-known and most popular layered watercolors are *Polyphonic Currents*, 1929, 238, from the Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Düsseldorf, and, from private collections, *Fugue in Red*, 1921, 60, and *Aquarium*, 1921, 99.

Many artists of the 1920s—notably those associated with the Bauhaus, the Russian Constructivists and the Dutch group De Stijl, with Theo van Doesburg and Piet Mondrian, propagated a rigorous conception of geometric abstraction. Klee responded to these developments with a series of works that extended up to the late 1930s. His original contribution to this debate is impressively illustrated by *The Red and the Black*, 1938, 319, from the Von der Heydt-Museum, Wuppertal; *Braced Surfaces*, 1930, 125, from the Staatsgalerie Stuttgart; and *Fire at Full Moon*, 1933, 353, from the Museum Folkwang, Essen.

Travel had an enormous importance for Klee’s art, as we know from the celebrated journey to Tunisia in 1914. His encounters with the art and culture of foreign countries provided a rich source of inspiration. The impressions gained from his travels of the late 1920s and early 1930s in Egypt and Italy gave rise to two series of remarkable works: the “striated” pictures and the Pointillist paintings. In the winter of 1928/29 Klee stayed for a month in Alexandria, Cairo, Luxor, and Assuan. The observed reality of these cities and the surrounding landscapes is translated into colorful, linear abstraction, luminously exemplified by the paintings *Fire in the Evening*, 1929, 95, from the Museum of Modern Art, New York, and *View into the Fertile Country*, 1932, 189, from the Städel Museum, Frankfurt am Main.

The early Christian, Byzantine mosaics that Klee saw and admired in Italy, above all in Ravenna, Palermo, and Monreale, inspired the specific painting technique employed in works such as the large-format *Clarification*, 1932, 66, from the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; *At Anchor*, 1932, 22 (private collection); and *Classical Coast*, 1931, 285, from the Berggruen Collection, Berlin.

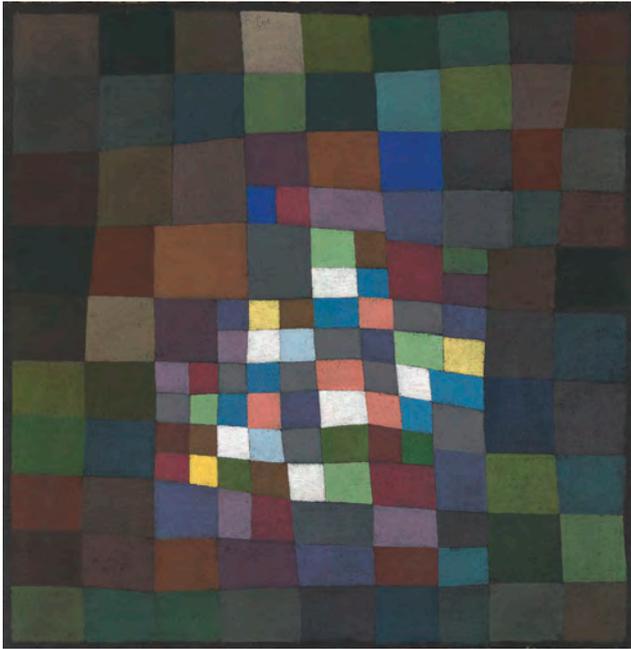
The extremely fragile and precious square paintings and striated pictures, and the mosaic-like Pointillist paintings are rarely shown together and in series. They form the pinnacle of our exhibition.

The last three rooms in the exhibition are devoted to Klee’s late work. In December 1933, the artist moved back to Switzerland. He had accepted a post as professor at the Düsseldorf Academy of Fine Arts in 1930, but was suspended by the Nazis in April 1933 and subsequently dismissed. His own art was declared “degenerate”.

For this exhibition, the so-called sign pictures were selected from the almost two thousand works created in the final phase of Klee’s oeuvre. The sign pictures exemplify the processes of abstraction at the end of his artistic career. They are juxtaposed here with a series of works that prophetically anticipate the art of the postwar era. For many artistic processes in the Western world, World War II marked an absolute low point. Paul Klee died in 1940, in Switzerland. However, his works from the 1930s already foreshadow many elements of the conception of painting that dominated art after 1945

in Europe and the United States. The gestural quality of the picture surface in works such as *Storm through the Plain*, 1930, 54, from the Centre Pompidou, Paris; *Mountain Ridge*, 1930, 53; or *Grave Message*, 1938, 119 (private collections), calls to mind the painting style of Abstract Expressionism.

In Klee's late pictures, writing and signs also take on an immense stylistic importance. The abstract signs in these works are taken from plants, or letters and numbers, and also borrow from writing systems based on graphic symbols, such as Egyptian hieroglyphs, cuneiform script and Oriental calligraphy. With his depictions of human figures or faces that are largely abstract, yet clearly recognizable, Klee marks, consciously or unconsciously, the threshold to a future type of abstract painting from which the human figure—one of the most important themes of all in European art—was eliminated. Striking examples are supplied by Ernst Beyeler's favorite picture, *Untitled [Captive, Figure of This World/Next World]*, ca. 1940; *Iudus Martis*, 1938, 141, from the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam; or *Park near Lu*, 1938, 129, from the Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern.



01 Paul Klee  
**Blühendes, 1934, 199**  
*Flowering*  
 Oil on priming on canvas on stretcher, 81.5 × 80 cm  
 Kunstmuseum Winterthur, Bequest of Dr. Emil and Clara Friedrich-Jezler, 1973  
 Photo: © Schweizerisches Institut für Kunstwissenschaft, Zürich, Philipp Hitz



02 Paul Klee  
**Park bei Lu., 1938, 129**  
*Park near Lu.*  
 Oil and colored paste on newsprint on burlap, 100 × 70 cm  
 Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern



03 Paul Klee  
**Kairuan, vor dem Tor, 1914, 72**  
*Kairouan, Before the Gate*  
 Watercolor and pencil on paper on cardboard, 13.5 × 22 cm  
 Moderna Museet, Stockholm



04 Paul Klee  
**Im Stil von Kairouan, ins Gemässigte übertragen, 1914, 211**  
*In the Kairouan Style, Transposed in a Moderate Way*  
 Watercolor and pencil on paper, marginal stripe with pen at the bottom, on cardboard, 12.3 × 19.5 cm  
 Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern



05 Paul Klee  
**mit dem braunen Dreieck, 1915, 39**  
*With the Brown Triangle*  
 Watercolor on paper on cardboard, 20 × 23 cm  
 Kunstmuseum Bern



06 Paul Klee  
**Spiel der Kräfte einer Lechlandschaft, 1917, 102**  
*Interplay of Forces of a Lech-River Landscape*  
 Watercolor on chalk priming on canvas and newsprint on cardboard, 16.4 × 24.3 cm  
 Galerie Rosengart, Lucerne



07 Paul Klee  
**Himmelsblüten über dem Gelben Haus (Das auserwählte Haus), 1917, 74**  
*Celestial Blossoms above the Yellow House (The Chosen House)*  
 Watercolor and gouache on chalk priming on linen on paper, bordered with watercolor, on cardboard, 23 x 15 cm  
 Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Nationalgalerie, Museum Berggruen  
 © bpk / Nationalgalerie, SMB, Museum Berggruen / Jens Ziehe



08 Paul Klee  
**Die Kapelle, 1917, 127**  
*The Chapel*  
 Watercolor and white tempera on paper on cardboard, 29.2 x 15.4 cm  
 Fondation Beyeler, Riehen/Basel, Beyeler Collection  
 Photo: Peter Schibli



09 Paul Klee  
**Städtische Komposition mit gelben Fenstern, 1919, 267**  
*Urban Composition with Yellow Windows*  
 Watercolor on paper on cardboard, 29.5 x 22.3 cm  
 Ulmer Museum, Ulm



10 Paul Klee  
**Architektur in rot und grün, 1921, 47**  
*Architecture in Red and Green*  
 Watercolor and pencil on paper, top and bottom paper strips added, on cardboard, 14.7 x 26.2 cm  
 Private collection, Switzerland



11 Paul Klee  
**Fuge in rot, 1921, 69**  
*Fugue in Red*  
 Watercolor and pencil on paper, left and right paper strips added, on cardboard, 24.4 x 31.5 cm  
 Private collection, Switzerland, on permanent loan to the Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern



12 Paul Klee  
**Polyphone Strömungen, 1929, 238**  
*Polyphonic Currents*  
 Watercolor and pen on paper on cardboard, 43.9 x 28.9 cm  
 bpk / Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Düsseldorf



13 Paul Klee  
**Vor dem Blitz, 1923, 150**  
*Before the Lightning*  
 Watercolor and pencil on paper, 28 x 31.5 cm  
 Fondation Beyeler, Riehen/Basel, Beyeler Collection  
 Photo: Peter Schibli



14 Paul Klee  
**Feuer abends, 1929, 95**  
*Fire in the Evening*  
 Oil on cardboard; original frame strips, 33.8 x 33.3 cm  
 The Museum of Modern Art, New York, Mr. and Mrs. Joachim Jean Aberbach Fund, 1970  
 © 2016. Digital image, The Museum of Modern Art, New York/Scala, Florence



15 Paul Klee  
**Blick in das Fruchmland, 1932, 189**  
*View into the Fertile Country*  
 Oil on cardboard, 48.5 x 34.5 cm  
 Städel Museum, Frankfurt am Main  
 © Städel Museum - U. Edelmann - ARTOTHEK



16 Paul Klee  
**Boote in der Überflutung, 1937, 222**  
*Boats in the Flood Waters*  
Colored paste on paper on cardboard, 49.5 × 32.5 cm  
Fondation Beyeler, Riehen/Basel, Beyeler Collection  
Photo: Robert Bayer



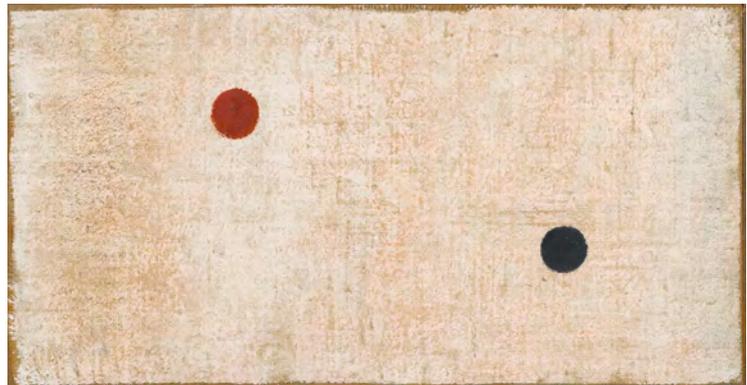
17 Paul Klee  
**Zeichen in Gelb, 1937, 210**  
*Signs in Yellow*  
Pastel on cotton on colored paste on burlap on stretcher;  
original frame strips, 83.5 × 50.3 cm  
Fondation Beyeler, Riehen/Basel, Beyeler Collection  
Photo: Robert Bayer



18 Paul Klee  
**Die Vase, 1938, 122**  
*The Vase*  
Colored paste on burlap on burlap on stretcher,  
88 × 54.5 cm  
Fondation Beyeler, Riehen/Basel, Beyeler Collection  
Photo: Peter Schibli



19 Paul Klee  
**Ludus Martis, 1938, 141**  
Oil and colored paste on cotton on plywood, 43 × 37.5/38.5 cm  
Collection Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam,  
c/o Pictoright Amsterdam 2004



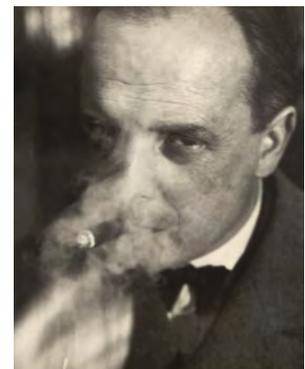
20 Paul Klee  
**Le rouge et le noir, 1938, 319**  
*The Red and the Black*  
Oil and watercolor on plaster priming on burlap on wood; original frame strips, 32.5 × 63 cm  
Von der Heydt-Museum Wuppertal  
Photo: Antje Zeis-Loi, Medienzentrum



21 Paul Klee with his cat, Fripouille,  
**Possenhofen, 1921**  
Photograph by Felix Klee  
Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern, Gift of the Klee family  
© Klee-Nachlassverwaltung, Bern



22 Paul Klee in his studio,  
**Kistlerweg 6, Bern, April 1938**  
Photograph by Felix Klee  
Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern, Gift of the Klee family  
© Klee-Nachlassverwaltung, Bern



23 Paul Klee, Dessau, 1929  
Photograph by Josef Albers  
© 2017 The Josef and Anni Albers Foundation,  
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## Biography

1879

Paul Klee is born in Münchenbuchsee near Bern on December 18, the second child of Hans Klee (1849–1940) and Ida Klee, née Frick (1855–1921). His sister Mathilde (1876–1953) was born three years earlier. His father is a music teacher at the Staatliches Lehrerseminar, a training college for teachers in Hofwil near Bern; his mother is a trained singer.

1880

The family moves to Bern.

1898

Klee starts keeping a diary; the first entry is dated April 24. Klee leaves high school, the Städtische Literarschule, with a university entrance qualification. Just one month later, on October 13, he moves into an apartment in Munich, where he attends the private drawing school run by Heinrich Knirr. Starting in the fall of 1900 he will also attend Franz von Stuck's painting class at the Munich Academy.

1899

Klee meets the pianist Lily (Karoline) Stumpf (1876–1946) at a musical soirée, his future wife.

1901

Klee leaves von Stuck's class. On October 22 he and the Bernese sculptor Hermann Haller set off on a six-month study trip to Italy. Klee travels from Genoa and Livorno to Rome, where he rents a room. Overwhelmed by the sheer abundance of Classical art in Rome, he experiences his first major crisis as an artist.

1902

Klee becomes engaged to Lily Stumpf. He returns to Bern and, unable to live from what he earns as an artist, he will continue living with his parents for the next four years. His most important source of income during this period are his engagements as a violinist with the Bernische Musikgesellschaft.

1905

Klee spends two weeks in Paris with Hans Bloesch and Louis Moilliet, two friends of his youth from Bern.

1906

In April Klee travels to Berlin for two weeks. On September 15 he marries Lily Stumpf in Bern. Two weeks later the couple moves to Munich.

1907

Felix (†1990), the only child of Paul and Lily Klee, is born on November 30.

1910

Klee's first solo exhibition takes place in July. Comprising fifty-six works, it is shown first at the Kunstmuseum Bern, then at Kunsthaus Zürich and the Kunsthandlung zum Hohen Haus in Winterthur, and finally at the Kunsthalle Basel.

1911

In February Klee begins to compile a handwritten catalogue of his works, listing everything he has produced to date. His punctilious record-keeping will continue until shortly before his death. That autumn, through the good offices of his friend Louis Moilliet, he meets fellow artist Wassily Kandinsky and so becomes acquainted with Der Blaue Reiter (The Blue Rider) and its aims. His critiques of exhibitions and cultural events in Munich are published in the Swiss monthly *Die Alpen* (The Alps), edited by his friend Hans Bloesch.

1912

Franz Marc and Wassily Kandinsky invite Klee to take part in the second exhibition of Der Blaue Reiter at Hans Goltz's bookstore in Munich, where seventeen of his works are shown. On a second visit to Paris in April of that year, Klee visits the artists Robert Delaunay, Henri Le Fauconnier, and Karl Hofer at their studios.

1914

At Easter Klee sets off for Tunisia together with his artist friends August Macke and Louis Moilliet. His journey takes him from Marseille to Tunis, St. Germain, Hammamet, and Kairouan. On his return, he has a joint exhibition with Marc Chagall at Herwarth Walden's Galerie Der Sturm in Berlin. That October his Tunisian watercolors feature in an exhibition of the Münchener Neue Secession, of which he is a cofounder. Outbreak of World War I. Macke falls at Perthes-lès-Hurlus in the Champagne on September 26.

1915

In Munich Klee has a chance meeting with the poet Rainer Maria Rilke. He spends the summer in Bern and on his way back to Munich stops at Goldach, a Swiss municipality on Lake Constance, to visit Kandinsky, who as a Russian national had to leave Germany at the outbreak of war.

1916

Klee's friend Franz Marc is killed at the front near Verdun on March 4. Still reeling from the news, Klee himself is conscripted as a reservist in the German army less than a week later. He is sent first to a recruiting depot in Landshut, but on July 20 is transferred to the second reservist infantry regiment in Munich. In August he is assigned to an air corps maintenance company based at Schleissheim near Munich.

1917

In January Klee is transferred to the Royal Bavarian Flying School V in Gersthofen, where he serves as a clerk to the treasurer. His joint exhibition with Georg Muche at the Galerie Der Sturm in February is a commercial success.

1918

Klee is sent on leave until his demobilization in February 1919. He stops keeping a diary and never goes back to it. But in the years to follow, Klee does rework and edit his diaries, turning them into his autobiography.

1919

Having been demobilized in February, Klee rents a studio in Schloss Suresnes on Werneckstrasse in Munich. When Bavaria briefly becomes a Soviet-style republic of workers' councils, Klee joins Munich's artists' council as well as an action committee for revolutionary artists. Oskar Schlemmer and Willi Baumeister try in vain to have Klee appointed to the faculty of the Stuttgart Art Academy. On October 1 Klee signs a general agency agreement with Hans Goltz, proprietor of the Galerie Neue Kunst in Munich.

1920

In May and June Goltz stages a retrospective of 362 works, making it the largest Klee exhibition seen to date. On October 29 Walter Gropius appoints Klee to be a teacher at the Bauhaus in Weimar. Klee's first serious theoretical essay is published in Kasimir Edschmid's anthology *Schöpferische Konfession* (Creative Confession). Leopold Zahn and Hans von Wedderkop publish the first monographs on Klee.

1921

On May 13 Klee launches his academic teaching career with a course in "practical composition" at the Bauhaus in Weimar. As a form master, he is also responsible for the bookbinders' workshop.

1922

Klee takes over from Johannes Itten as head of the gold, silver, and copper workshop, but exchanges it for Oskar Schlemmer's glass-painting workshop that same autumn.

1924

Klee's first exhibition in the United States is hosted by Katherine S. Dreier at the Société Anonyme in New York from January 7 to February 7. On Emmy (Galka) Scheyer's initiative, a new artists' group called Die Blaue Vier is founded on March 31. "The Blue Four" are Klee, Lyonel Feininger, Wassily Kandinsky, and Alexej Jawlensky, who as a group will exhibit mainly in the US. Klee and his wife spend September and October in Italy, mainly Sicily. Caving in to massive political pressure, the Bauhaus management announces on December 26 that it will close in April of the following year.

1925

In March the municipal council in Dessau decides to take over the Bauhaus from Weimar. Klee terminates his agency agreement with Hans Goltz and thereafter intensifies his ties to Alfred Flechtheim, who runs galleries in both Berlin and Düsseldorf. The Galerie Vavin-Raspail in Paris stages Klee's first show in France from October 21 to November 11. In November, some of his pictures are shown at the first Surrealist exhibition at the Galerie Pierre in Paris.

1926

Klee and his family move to Dessau on July 10, and there live alongside Wassily and Nina Kandinsky in one of the three duplexes built by Gropius to house Bauhaus faculty.

1927

Starting in April, Klee teaches the Bauhaus's Free Workshop Painting, also known as the Free Painting class. From October, he teaches design for weavers.

1928

On December 17 Klee sets off on a fourweek trip to Egypt.

1929

Klee enters into negotiations with the Staatliche Kunstakademie Düsseldorf for a professorship at that institution. He is now at the height of his success and counts among Germany's most internationally acclaimed artists. The Nationalgalerie and Galerie Alfred Flechtheim in Berlin organize major exhibitions of his work in honor of the artist's fiftieth birthday.

1930

Klee receives confirmation of his appointment at the Düsseldorf Academy. A reduced version of the Galerie Flechtheim exhibition is shown at the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

1931

Klee takes up his professorship at the Düsseldorf Academy on July 1. He rents a room in Düsseldorf, but will retain his apartment in Dessau until April 1933. In the summer he and Lily again travel to Sicily.

1933

The Nazis seize power throughout Germany. In mid-March Klee's apartment in Dessau is searched and on April 21 the Düsseldorf Academy suspends him without notice. He will be officially dismissed only following the passage of the law on the "Restoration of a Professional Civil Service" as per January 1, 1934. Klee signs an exclusive agreement with the art dealer Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler, proprietor of the Galerie Simon in Paris, on October 24. On December 23, two days after his wife, he emigrates to Switzerland and there moves into his parents' house in Bern.

1934

In January Paul and Lily Klee move into a small apartment at Kollerweg 6, moving again on June 1 into a three-room apartment at Kistlerweg 6. Will Grohmann's monograph *Paul Klee: Handzeichnungen 1921–1930*, is published in November in Potsdam. It will be seized by the Nazis in April of the following year.

1935

The first signs of serious illness become apparent. Klee retrospective at the Kunst halle Bern.

1936

Klee is so debilitated that he has to suspend work for about six months, and is scarcely able to work properly even after that. His annual output dwindles to a mere twenty-five works, the lowest it has ever been. The disease afflicting him turns out to be progressive scleroderma.

1937

Kandinsky visits Klee in Bern. Klee's condition stabilizes and he is able to work more intensively again. The exhibition *Entartete Kunst* (Degenerate Art) opens in Munich on July 19 and by the time it closes in 1941 will have been shown (albeit on a smaller scale) in twelve other cities, too. Seventeen works by Klee are included in the Munich edition. The Nazis seize 102 works by Klee from public collections all over Germany and sell most of them to buyers abroad. On November 27 Klee receives a visit from Pablo Picasso. With 264 works in 1937, Klee is now almost as productive as he was before his illness.

1938

J. B. Neumann and two other German émigré art dealers, Karl Nierendorf and Curt Valentin, organize shows of Klee's works on a regular basis in New York and other cities in the US.

1939

In April Georges Braque twice visits Klee in Bern. Klee applies for Swiss citizenship on April 24, though no decision on the matter will be made during his lifetime. With 1,253 registered works, most of them drawings, 1939 will be the most prolific year of his entire career.

1940

In May Klee begins a spa treatment in Ticino in southern Switzerland. While there, his health suddenly deteriorates, and he dies on June 29 in the Clinica Sant'Agnese in Locarno-Muralto.

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This biography was generously supplied by the Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern.

## Quotations

»Colour possesses me. I don't have to pursue it. It will possess me always, I know it. That is the meaning of this happy hour: Colour and I are one. I am a painter.«

Paul Klee, 1914

»The more horrible this world (as today, for instance), the more abstract our art, whereas a happy world brings forth an art of the here and now.«

Paul Klee, 1915

“Abstraction. The cool Romanticism of this style without pathos is unheard of.”

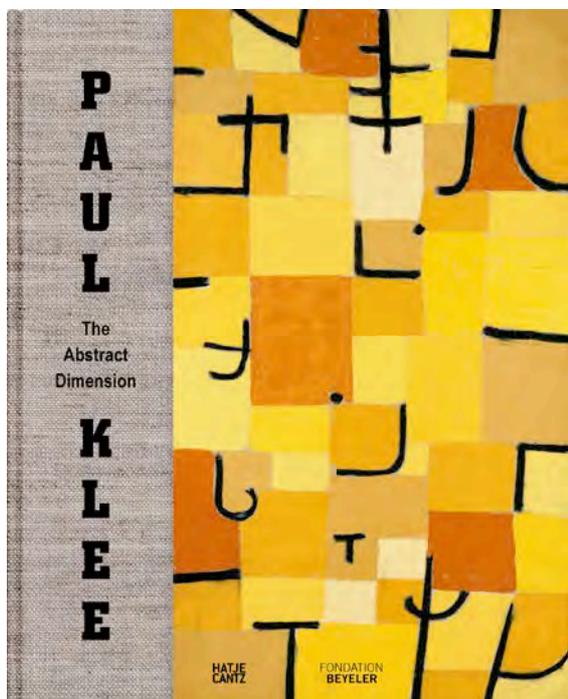
Paul Klee, 1915

»Art does not reproduce the visible; rather, it makes visible.«

Paul Klee, 1920

# Paul Klee

## The Abstract Dimension



Ed. Anna Szech for the Fondation Beyeler, Riehen/Basel  
Texts by Teodor Currentzis, Fabienne Eggelhöfer, Jenny Holzer, Regine Prange, Anna Szech, and Peter Zumthor, graphic design by Uwe Koch

English  
2017. 200 pp., 161 ills.  
Hardcover, 24.50 x 30.50 cm  
CHF/EUR 62.50

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/ For the first time: The Abstract Klee

Paul Klee (1879–1940) is one of the most influential painters of European modernism. With an oeuvre comprising nearly ten thousand works, numerous solo and group exhibitions of his work have been mounted well beyond his lifetime. To this very day, the intense interest in his work has not waned. And yet there has never been an exhibition that has extensively examined Klee’s relationship to abstraction. The show at the Fondation Beyeler—along with the accompanying catalogue, which is “underscored” by insightful texts from well-known authors—is closing this gap.

Four groups of themes—nature, architecture, painting, and graphic characters—make up the golden thread through Klee’s body of work whose formal repertoire repeatedly oscillates between the semi-representational and the absolute abstract, and which are examined here in separate chapters. Thus one not only gains in-depth insight into Klee’s involvement with abstraction—new references to his contemporaries, as well as to artists of later generations, are unveiled. (German edition ISBN 978-3-7757-4330-3)



**HATJE  
CANTZ**

## Events on the Exhibition “Paul Klee – The Abstract Dimension”

1<sup>st</sup> October 2017 – 21<sup>st</sup> January 2018

### Family Tour

**Sundays, 1.10.2017, 5.11.2017, 11 a.m.- 12 noon and 3.12.2017, 11 a.m.-12 noon**

Tour through the exhibition «Paul Klee» for children aged six to ten accompanied by their guardians.

No advance reservation.

Entrance fee: children under the age of ten CHF 7.- / adults regular entrance fee.

### Art at Noon

**Wednesdays, 4.10.2017, 12.30 p.m. – 1p.m., 25.10.2017, 8.11.2017, 22.11.2017, 20.12.2017, and 6.12.2017, 12.30 p.m. – 1 p.m.**

Contemplating Paul Klee's *Kairouan, Before the Gates (After a Sketch of 1914)*, 1921

Limited participation. No advance reservation.

Entrance fee: regular admission fee + CHF 7.-

### Young Atelier

**Wednesdays, 4.10.2017, 1.11.2017 and 6.12.2017, 5 p.m. – 6.30 p.m.**

A brief interactive tour in dialogue form through the museum followed by a lengthier practical segment in the atelier. Theme: «Fabric Collages – Experiments in Painting in the style of Paul Klee». Limited participation. Advance reservation is required: reservation deadline 1<sup>st</sup> October.

Entrance fee: age fifteen to twenty-five 15 CHF 10.- / age twenty-five and over CHF 20.-

### Monday Tour

**Mondays, 9.10.2017, 30.10.2017, 13.11.2017, 27.11.2017, 11.12.2017, 2 p.m. – 3 p.m.**

Thematic tour: Paul Klee – Signs and Symbols. Limited participation. No advance reservation.

Entrance fee: entrance fee + CHF 7.-

### Children's Workshop

**Wednesdays, 11.10.2017, 3 p.m.- 5.30 p.m., 8.11.2017, 3 p.m.- 5.30 p.m., 13.12.2017, 3 p.m. – 5.30 p.m.**

Guided tour through the exhibition «Paul Klee» followed by a lively realisation in the atelier. For children from ages six to ten. Limited participation. Advanced reservation required: reservation deadline 8<sup>th</sup> October.

Entrance fee: CHF 10.- incl. materials

### Workshop for Adults

**Wednesdays, 11.10.2017 and 22.11.2017, 6 p.m. – 8.30 p.m.**

Tour through the exhibition «Paul Klee» followed by practical realisation in the atelier.

Limited participation. Reservation required: reservation deadline 8<sup>th</sup> October.

Entrance fee: entrance fee + CHF 20.-

### Guided Tour by Curators

**Wednesday, 11.10.2017 and 29.11.2017, 6.30 p.m. – 8 p.m.**

Tour through the exhibition «Paul Klee» held by Dr. Anna Szech

Entrance fee: CHF 35.- / Art Club, Young Art Club; friends CHF 10.-

### **Public Tour in English**

**Sunday, 15.10.2017, 3 p.m.- 4 p.m.; 10.12.2017 and 19.11.2017, 3 p.m. – 4 p.m.**

Tour through the exhibition «Paul Klee».

No advance reservation. Limited participation.

Entrance fee: entrance fee + CHF 7.-

### **Introduction for Teachers**

**Tuesday, 17.10.2017, 4.15 p.m. – 5.45 p.m.**

Introduction to the exhibition «Paul Klee»

Entrance fee: CHF 10.-

### **A Reading by Hannelore Hoger**

**Friday, 20.10.2017, 6.30 p.m. – 8 p.m.**

Hannelore Hoger will read from Robert Walser's texts on fine art.

Moderated by Reto Sorg.

An event organised by the Robert Walser-Gesellschaft Bern, kindly patronised by Fondation Beyeler.

Entrance fee: CHF 35.- / members RWG, YOUNG ART CLUB, ART CLUB and FRIENDS CHF 20.-

Admission to the Museum is included in the entrance fee.

### **Paul Klee Family Day**

**Sunday, 22.10.2017, 10 a.m. – 6 p.m.**

A day of art for the whole family. Short, thematically structured tour of the exhibition «Paul Klee» focussing on the key themes of nature, architecture, music and drawing. An inspiring museum game and diverse workshops invite participants to experiment.

Entrance fee: free for children and youth below the age of twenty-five.

Adults: regular entrance fee.

### **Introduction for Teachers**

**Tuesday, 25.10.2017, 6 p.m. – 7.30 p.m.**

Introduction to the Exhibition «Paul Klee»

Entrance fee: CHF 10.-

### **Visite guidée publique en français**

**Dimanche, 29.10.2017, 3 – 4 heures après-midi, dimanche, 17.12.2017, 3 – 4 heures après-midi, dimanche, 26.11.2017, 3 –4 heures après-midi**

Visite guidée dans l'exposition «Paul Klee»

Frais d'entrée: frais d'entrée + CHF 7.-

### **A Walk with Nils Althaus**

**Saturday, 4.11.2017, 4 p.m. – 4.40 p.m.**

Bern actor, cabaret artist and song-writer, Nils Althaus, approaches the enigmatic art of Paul Klee with many unexpected twists and turns, and poses questions we no longer dare ask ourselves:, such as «Would I also have been able to do that?» or «How long must I continue to work before I can also afford a Klee?». This is a walk during which, all of a sudden, visitors themselves also become part of a story – a story in which nothing ends as it began. Language: High German

Entrance fee: CHF 35.- / YOUNG ART CLUB, ART CLUB and FRIENDS CHF 10.-

Admission to the museum is included in the entrance fee.

### **Visita guidata pubblica in italiano**

**Domenica, 5.11.2017, 14-15 ora**

Visita della mostra consecrata a «Paul Klee»

Prezzo: Ingresso + CHF 7.-

### **Art Breakfast**

**Sunday, 12.11.2017, 9 a.m. – 12 noon**

Delicious breakfast buffet in the Berower Park restaurant from 9 a.m., followed by a tour through the exhibition «Paul Klee» starting around 11 a.m.

Entrance fee: CHF 59.- / ART CLUB CHF 40.-

### **A Walk with Nils Althaus**

**Wednesday, 15.11.2017, 7 p.m. – 7.40 p.m.**

Bern actor, cabaret artist and song-writer Nils Althaus approaches the enigmatic art of Paul Klee with many unexpected twists and turns, and poses questions we no longer dare ask ourselves: «Would I also have been able to do that?» or «How long must I continue to work before I can also afford a Klee?».

This is a walk during which, all of a sudden, visitors themselves also become part of a story – one in which nothing ends as it began. Language: High German

Entrance fee: CHF 35.- / YOUNG ART CLUB, ART CLUB and FRIENDS CHF 10.-

Admission to the museum is included in the entrance fee.

### **Tour for the Deaf**

**Thursday, 23.11.2017, 4.30 p.m. – 5.30 p.m.**

An interpreter translates the commentaries on those among the art works comprising the exhibition «Paul Klee» in sign-language. In this way, a dialogue emerges directly between the pictures and the viewers.

Entrance fee: CHF 7.-

### **The Abstract Dimension: The Music He Loved and the Music He Influenced**

In two concerts, pianist Mikhaïl Rudy reflects on Paul Klee's relationship to music and guides his audience from Bach's polyphony through to other musicians, such as Ludovico Einaudi, who were themselves influenced by Paul Klee's works.

**Saturday, 25.11.2017, 5 p.m. – 6 p.m.**

#### **Classic Revisited**

Piano concert by Mikhaïl Rudy with electronic modifications and live remix by Nicolas Becker and Djengo Hartlap. Among other things, pieces by John Cage, Arvo Pärt, Ludovico Einaudi will be performed.

**Sunday, 26.11.2017, 11 a.m. – noon**

#### **Matinée**

Piano concert by Mikhaïl Rudy including pieces, among others, by Johann Sebastian Bach, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Richard Wagner.

Entrance fee: CHF 40.- / YOUNG ART CLUB, ART CLUB und FREUNDE CHF 20.-

Museum admission is included in the entrance fee.

### **Tours for Visually Impaired Visitors**

**Wednesday, 29.11.2017, 9 a.m. – 12 noon**

Works in the exhibition «Paul Klee» will be carefully translated in a pictorial narrative. Limited participation. Reservations required.

Entrance fee: CHF 7.-

## Open Studio

Friday, 1.12.2017, Saturday 2.12.2017, Sunday, 3.12.2017, 2 p.m. – 6 p.m.

Friday, 8.12.2017, Saturday, 9.12.2017, Sunday, 10.12.2017, 2 p.m. – 6 p.m.

Friday, 15.12.2017, Saturday, 16.12.2017, Sunday, 17.12.2017, 2 p.m. – 6 p.m.

Friday, 22.12.2017, Saturday, 23.12.2017, Sunday, 24.12.2017, 2 p.m. – 6 p.m.

Fondation Beyeler will open its ateliers during Advent: the ateliers are open from Friday to Sunday to anyone who enjoys art and design. The diverse range of pictures presented is oriented on the current exhibition «Paul Klee».

Admission is free: advance reservation is not required.

## Art Education

### Public Tours and Events

For the daily programme, see: [www.fondationbeyeler.ch/programm/programm](http://www.fondationbeyeler.ch/programm/programm)

### Private Tours for Groups

For information and registration: Tel. +41 (0)61 645 97 20, [fuehrungen@fondationbeyeler.ch](mailto:fuehrungen@fondationbeyeler.ch)

### Offers for Schools

Information and registration, see: [www.fondationbeyeler.ch/vermittlung/schulen](http://www.fondationbeyeler.ch/vermittlung/schulen)

**Online ticket reservations for admission and events, see: [www.fondationbeyeler.ch](http://www.fondationbeyeler.ch)**

Or advance reservation at the museum ticket desk.

## Service

### Opening Hours:

Daily from 10 a.m. – 6 p.m., Wednesdays till 8 p.m.

### Entrance Fee for Exhibition:

Adults CHF 25.-

All persons under the age of 25, and Art Club members, free admission

Students under the age of 30 CHF 12.-

Groups of 20 persons upwards (with advance reservation) and IV with identity card CHF 20.-

### Additional Information:

Silke Kellner-Mergenthaler

Head of Communications

Tel: + 41 (0)61 645 97 21, [presse@fondationbeyeler.ch](mailto:presse@fondationbeyeler.ch), [www.fondationbeyeler.ch](http://www.fondationbeyeler.ch)

Fondation Beyeler, Beyeler Museum AG, Baselstrasse 77, CH-4125 Riehen

**Fondation Beyeler Opening Hours: daily from 10 a.m.– 6 p.m., Wednesdays till 8 p.m.**

# FONDATION BEYELER

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