

# Paul Klee

The Bauhaus Years

Works from 1918-1932

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Curated by Olivier Berggruen

Dickinson New York



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## Foreword

We are delighted to be presenting our first exhibition of the work of Paul Klee. Klee's delicate works are not always accessible, and this is a rare opportunity to see a high-caliber group showing the full range of his experimentation during a central period in his production.

The exhibition has received enormous support from a number of people. I must highlight our immense gratitude to our lenders, whose generosity has been overwhelming.

I would also like to thank Dr. Michael Baumgartner of the Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern, and Dr. Stefan Frey. They have both been central to this project, and their involvement has been crucial to its success.

Finally I must thank our curator. Olivier's pedigree in the field of Klee is well known. Indeed, this is his fifth exhibition on an artist with whom the name Berggruen is synonymous, and we are extremely privileged that he agreed to mastermind this show. Once again, he has graciously shared his insight throughout our collaboration, and his scholarship and company has been rewarding.

Olivier was determined that this project should add something to the field of Klee scholarship. This beautiful catalogue is a wonderful testament to that achievement.

We would especially like to thank the following people:

Richard Armstrong; Michael Baumgartner; Bettina Berggruen; Susan Davidson; Peter Fischer; Heidi Frautschi; Stefan Frey; Carmen Giménez; Diana Howard; Sam Keller; Adriana Kertzer; Anne-Marie and Alexander Klee Collection; Klee-Nachlassverwaltung, Bern; Rémi Labrusse; Perrine Le Blan; Marco Lorenzetti; Daniel and Laetitia Malingue; Sabine Rewald; Andres Santo-Domingo; Timothy Stranding; Karole Vail; Aroldo Zevi; Elisabetta Zevi; Susanna Zevi; The Clarice Lispector Estate

Hugo Nathan  
President  
Dickinson—New York

# Transparent Images

Olivier Berggruen

*If I take too long looking at "Paysage aux oiseaux jaunes," by Klee, I will never be able to turn back. Courage and cowardice are a game one plays at every moment. It scares the perhaps incurable vision and that is perhaps that of freedom. The habit of looking through prison gates, the comfort of holding with both hands the bars, meanwhile the eye. The prison is safety, the bars support for the hands. So I recognize that freedom is only for the very few. Again courage and cowardice play each other: my courage, entirely possible, scares me. For I know that my courage is possible. I begin to think that among the insane there are those who are not insane. And that possibility, that is truly realized, is not to be understood. And as the person tries to explain, she will be losing courage, she will be asking; "Paysage aux oiseaux jaunes" does not ask. At least I calculate what would be freedom. And that is what makes the security of the bars intolerable; the comfort of this prison hits me in the face. All I have put up with—to not be free . . . <sup>1</sup>*

The sense of dread that enveloped Clarice Lispector when she saw Paul Klee's painting may not be shared by us; we may see a rather poetic and whimsical vision of a tropical forest on a full-moon night. The artist who finds infinity in small spaces and magic in the most likely places (according to Ben Okri), does not seem threatening at first glance. Yet Lispector's words speak of emotional anguish.

The Brazilian novelist was living a rather secluded life in provincial Bern, where her husband was posted as a diplomat. In a letter to her sister Tania, she described Switzerland as "cemetery of sensations."<sup>2</sup> Emotional resonance was to be found in other realms—and at the end of the Second World War—in Klee's visual fancies.



Fig 1. Paul Klee. Landschaft mit gelben Vögeln (Landscape with Yellow Birds). 1923

pen and ink on paper laid down on cardboard  
35.5 x 44 cm (14 x 17 1/4 inches)

Lispector was stunned by the Swiss artist's ability to offer transparent images of the "soul." Here, the inner life of the artist is given a clear outward pictorial expression—the soul is laid bare. All is exposed, and seemingly private mental images are given an immediacy echoing the Surrealist dream of creating visual equivalents to our mental states.

Although the image of *Landscape with Yellow Birds* (1923) is framed conventionally and presented in a formal manner, it is brought into the observer's field of vision with unusual, pervasive directness. It follows a conventional organization of the image field as a rectangle, but the distance between the observer and the painted image is diminished; it speaks directly to our consciousness, and in this manner a certain degree of immediacy—an unmediated quality of feeling—is achieved.

During his tenure at the Bauhaus, Klee devoted himself to picture theory—with a preoccupation with the interaction of colors—and at the same time created fantastic spaces reminiscent of, yet pre-dating, the Surrealists' experiments. His shapes seem to float in an undetermined space, as in a dream (the interior gaze of the Surrealists). It seems as if the painter has seized upon the invisible secret relations that are unleashed by memory. Tonal, chromatic progressions are obtained through fine oppositions of colored, often rectangular planes. Surface effects, obtained through the quasi-artisanal application of paint, let the light vibrate. A sense of transparency in the application of successive paint layers contributes to beautiful textural effects, as in *Ouverture* (1922).

Klee's works are also imbued with an organic, spontaneous quality that affirms his kinship with nature. The artist never ceased proclaiming his desire to be at one with the natural world. To his students at the Bauhaus he said, "The artist is a human being, himself nature and a part in the realm of nature."<sup>3</sup> For Klee, the feeling of being at one with nature was born out of the "discovery of unsuspected relations from one element to another."<sup>3</sup> One may recall that he had assembled a collection of natural specimens—herbs, leaves, flowers, algae, moss, butterflies, stones and crystals—and studied their colors, shapes and structures. He also dissected various plants and fruits to learn about their internal structure, delving beyond exterior appearances. The vein of a leaf, the grooves in a piece of bark, a snail's shell: this vast dictionary of forms was reproduced endlessly; it provided a model for artistic creation, to be manipulated through growth, repetition or extension.

Klee's desire to be in tune with the realm of nature coincided with his quest for greater innocence. Here he echoed the preoccupation of the Romantics with how painting could free itself from the weight of constricting traditions. By the end of the eighteenth century, Jacques-Louis David had deplored the conventions of artistic education as responsible, in his view, for the decline of the arts, while Joshua Reynolds proclaimed that it was necessary to relearn the craft of painting, away from all stifling rules. For his part, Philipp Otto Runge declared that in order to succeed, we had to become like children again.

Could the artist, by turning his back on academic rules, reach a state of innocence and purity that would give an unmediated image of the world? Was not a language stripped of its conventions the most direct way of embracing the realm of nature? Above all else, the work of art had to be evocative and emotionally resonant. According to this aesthetic stance, intuition was crucial to artistic practice, and one had to strive to communicate ideas and feelings derived from nature using the simplest of forms <*Die Flut schwemmt Städte* (1927).

Klee's art is intent on exploring the correspondence between the interior landscape of the soul and the desire to create a plausible image of nature. Klee offers us pictures of reality that probe more deeply than the ordinary gaze. His paintings display signs that stand out among a multitude of other more mundane signs that we experience on a daily basis. The painter's images soak into our consciousness, and we are not likely to forget their radiance.

Notes:

1. Clarice Lispector, *Para não esquecer: crônicas* (São Paulo: Atica, 1979), pp. 14–15. Here translated from the Portuguese by Adriana Kertzer.
2. Reference missing
3. René Crevel, *Paul Klee* (Paris: Gallimard, 1930), p. 10.

# Reason and Dreams

Rémi Labrusse

*Kairuan oder eine Geschichte vom Maler Klee und von der Kunst dieses Zeitalters (Kairouan, or the Story of the Painter Klee and of the Art of This Time)*, Wilhelm Hausenstein's book published in Munich in 1921, was not the first monograph on Klee—two smaller books had been published the year before, one by Leopold Zahn, the other by Hans von Wedderkopp—, but it was unquestionably the most ambitious of the three, visually and intellectually. The author, who was fairly influential in the leftist avant-garde circles of Munich in the 1910s, had been traumatized by the war and, as a consequence, had become a follower of Oswald Spengler's pessimistic philosophy which had recently been expounded in his highly successful work *The Decline of the West*. Hausenstein saw Klee's art as the embodiment of a kind of hybrid nihilism, with an "oriental" side, which had first come to light during the artist's stay in the Tunisian city of Kairouan (al-Qayrawan) in April 1914, and a modern "European" side, which had been brought to the fore by the disaster of the Great War. According to Hausenstein's vision, the "oriental" side of Klee's genius was of a metaphysical nature: the intuition of a sort of Buddhist nothingness allowed the artist to free himself from the world of things and to rejoice in pure subjectivity; but, as Hausenstein had it, the shock of the war had caused his work to fall from metaphysics into history, from mystical wisdom to individual despair, and to become, for that reason, self-destructive and tragic: "Kairouan and the European War: from the higher nothingness, the painter-draughtsman was thrown into the lower nothingness", the critic wrote in the central chapter of his monograph entitled "The Hereafter and the War"<sup>1</sup>.

Understandably, Klee was not particularly satisfied with this interpretation; soon after, he split with Hausenstein, who became himself increasingly conservative and embittered in his writings on contemporary art<sup>2</sup>. What upset the artist was the pessimism of a dualist vision, which was not overcome by a dynamic synthesis, as Klee would have wished. However, there can be no doubt that the high significance of Kairouan had been suggested to Hausenstein by Klee himself, who was busy imbuing himself with an oriental aura and designated the city of Kairouan as the umbilical cord of his mystical Orient, where, he used to say, he had acquired his identity as a painter in April 1914. No later than May 1914, a few days after his return from Tunisia, he proudly displayed eight watercolours he had brought back from there, at the Neue Münchner Sezession exhibition in Munich. From 1919 on, he strongly emphasised his privileged relationship to the "Orient", even suggesting that his dusky complexion and dark eyes hinted at "Oriental" roots, via his Swiss mother whose origins were in part Southern French (and might possibly be more exotic still)<sup>3</sup>. Around the end of 1921, he rewrote his Tunisian diary: in the final version, before leaving for Kairouan, he asks himself whether this could be his "native country" and soon after, in 1922, he fabricated a self-portrait puppet which recalls the clichés of the "Oriental" magus: dark hair, gigantic eyes, threadbare robe covering the whole body [fig. 1]. Meanwhile, he had convinced his first commentators that the trip to Tunisia had been fundamental to him: Tunisian watercolours are reproduced at the beginning of the three books by Zahn, Wedderkop and Hausenstein, and in all of them, Tunisia is described in almost the same words, as the decisive moment of discovery, by Klee, of his deepest and truest artistic being, through the revelation of colour. Zahn even points out: "When I speak of Paul Klee's art, the body of work to which I refer derives from these watercolours [from Tunisia]; the sheets made before 1914 can be considered separately as its prehistory" ; and Hausenstein speaks of Klee's Tunisian trip as "a journey to himself"<sup>5</sup>. Klee's own rewritten diary constitutes the acme of this "Oriental" narrative.

In a letter to his wife Lily, the short halt in Kairouan – less than two days, between April 16th and 17th of 1914—is described as the "zenith" ("*Höhepunkt*") and "final goal"<sup>6</sup> of the trip and the scene of a supreme revelatory event. In Kairouan, what is abruptly unveiled, we are told, is a place of origin<sup>7</sup>. There, the artist discovers and fully espouses his identity



Fig 1. Paul Klee. Self Portrait in Oriental Dress. 1922

hand puppet, various materials, h. 38 cm (15 inches)  
Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern



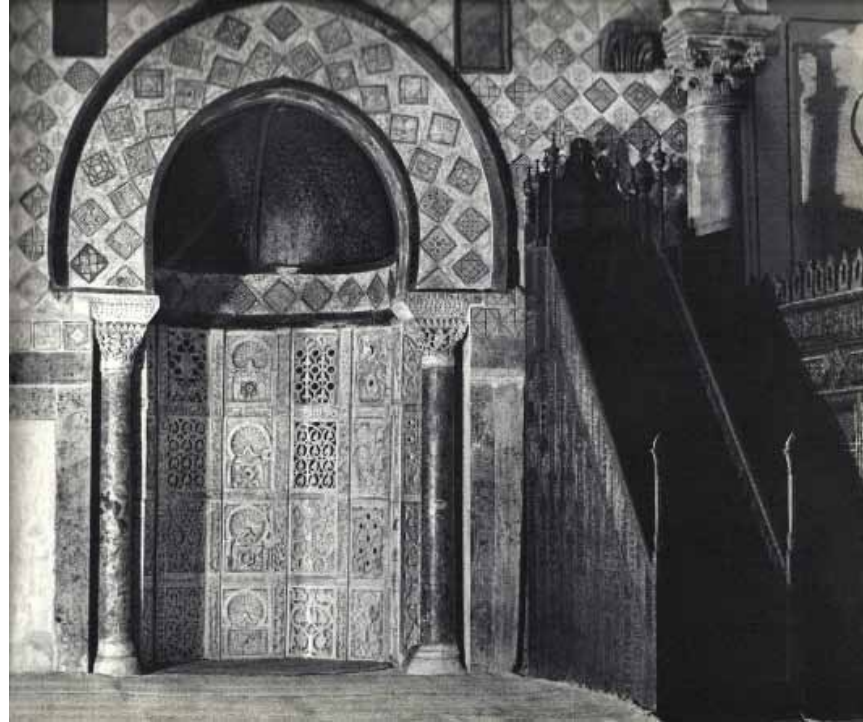


Fig 2. Mirhab of the Mosque Sidi Oqba, Kairuan, first half of the 9th century, painted wood, lustreware, stucco and carved marble.

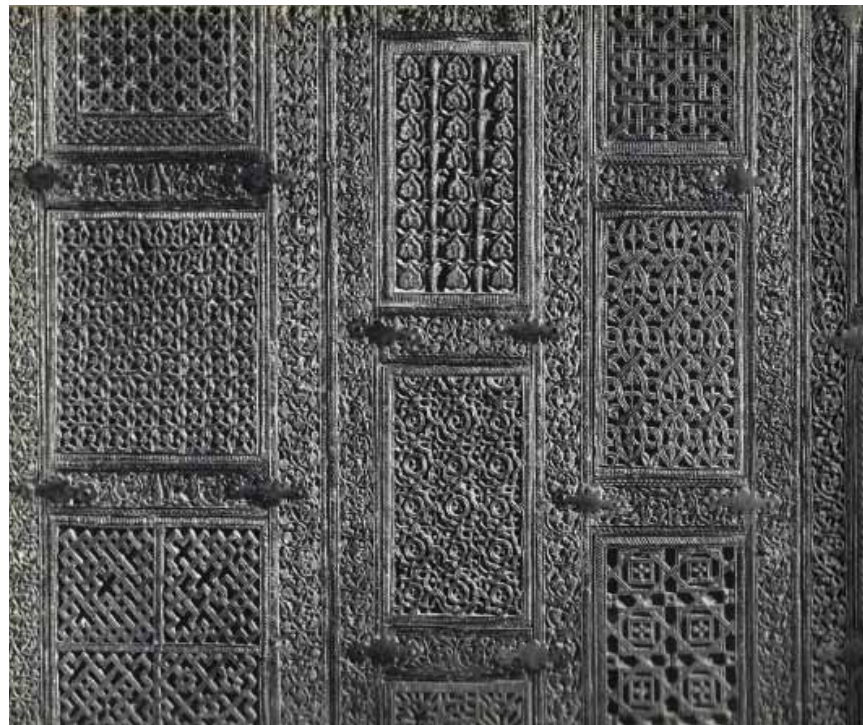


Fig 3. Details of the Minbar of the Mosque Sidi Oqba, Kairuan, ca. 853-863, carved wood.

as a painter, while he had mostly confined himself to drawing up to this point: "Here is the meaning of this magic hour. Colour and I are one. I am a painter"<sup>8</sup>. The slightly ironic tone of the diary entries before Kairouan—when Klee describes somewhat self-critically his wandering around Tunis with his two friends, August Macke and Louis Moilliet, in search of exoticism—suddenly ceases and gives way to a solitary Nietzschean exaltation of the Self. It takes on the appearance of a revelation precisely because it is sudden and short—all the more violent and intense for its brevity. Forever changed by the shock, the new-born painter, once he had gone through this extreme Kairouan experience, had nothing else to do but return home: "Today, I needed to be alone; the experience I had just undergone was too strong. I had to leave, also, in order to pull myself together"<sup>9</sup>.

Something unquestionably "Orientalist", in Edward Said's sense of the word, lies in this story of the painter Klee who finds himself in Kairouan. Think of Eugène Fromentin, among hundreds of other Orientalist painters of the previous century, who wrote in 1846, when he arrived in Algeria: "This is beautiful! This is beautiful! Everything is beautiful, even misery is beautiful, even the mud on the sandals! [...] God, if only this could make me a painter!"<sup>10</sup> In both cases, displacement is in order to create identity, but this is an imaginary displacement, motivated by prejudices and representations originally formed in the West. The "Mother Orient" is fascinating in so far as it is relegated to an original past and disconnected from the present: therefore, everything that is given to the artist in this "timeless" Orient has to be appropriated, utilised and brought back to the present within a European framework. In the meantime, the real Other is positively reduced to silence (no Tunisian speaks about Tunisia in Klee's descriptions); and the myth itself is all the more potent to the extent that it remains vague and syncretic. This is clearly expressed in Hausenstein's pages, where Klee's "Arabic polarity" (as opposed to his "European" one<sup>11</sup>) has less to do with any kind of Islamic thinking than with a superficial westernised Buddhism, mediated by the reading of Spengler and, further back, of Schopenhauer. The grossest clichés about the "Orient", land of camels, black men and limitless sands, oddly serve to introduce a far-eastern philosophy of impermanence: "The sable camels walked now as before in the nothingness of the desert, carrying black men whose senses were filled with music and by the belief that Nothingness was everything and that everything was nothing. At home, such was the traveller

now. [...] He painted [...] with a secret instinct, also celebrating the equanimity of Buddha, who, thousands of miles away, dwelt in the immutability of his images. [...] Kairouan. The name became a symbol for a manifold experience. In the East, what was to be discovered or confirmed was that in actuality things are without substance"<sup>12</sup>.

If Klee's "Orient" is vague and syncretic, Kairouan, however, is not a vague location at all: it is a real city with a strong artistic identity. The site of Klee's artistic birth at the beginning of the 20th century seems to have lacked any immediate attractive power for the average Orientalist painter. One of them, Ary Renan (son of the renowned philologist Ernest Renan) described the city in 1891 as an isolated place set in "a repellent and sullen desert", with "no Kasbah worthy of the name", and generally lacking the "picturesqueness, which thrives at every street corner in the Tunisian cities along the coast"<sup>13</sup>. The writer Guy de Maupassant, in turn, exclaimed in 1889: "Oh, what a sad city lost in the desert!" (but immediately felt "an unexpected and shattering emotion" in the great mosque.)<sup>14</sup> Easy to reach by train from Tunis, Kairouan did not even possess an aura of remoteness. Without vast palm groves or bustling souks, the pride of the city lies elsewhere: in its ancient, rather severe religious monuments, which are among the greatest architectural realisations of Islamic art—first among them the gigantic architectural complex of the 9th-century Aghlabid Mosque of Sidi Oqba, which, at that time, was paradoxically the only Muslim temple in Tunisia whose interior was open to non-Muslim visitors<sup>15</sup>. In the afternoon of the 16th of April, 1914, Klee and his friends visited some of Kairouan's old mosques, in particular Sidi Oqba. On this occasion, they could fully appreciate this construction with its pure and simple lines, which leads the faithful to the extraordinary ornamental flourishes of the mirhab [fig. 2] (with its luxurious lusterware tiles especially imported from Baghdad at the time of its construction) and of the wooden minbar [fig. 3]. Free from any superficial orientalism, one may assume that Klee's true revelation occurred during this visit. The recurring motif of graceful hemispheric domes, emblematic of Kairouan's mosques, present in the watercolours done on the spot or immediately afterwards [fig. 4] and in his later paintings [fig. 11], constitutes a private sign of the durable impact of this revelation. It is also telling that, when he travelled to Egypt in 1928, Klee's first reaction was to prefer the "pure" mosques of Kairouan (seen almost fifteen years previously) to those of Cairo, which he denounced



Fig 4. Paul Klee. *Rote und weisse Kuppeln* (Red and White Cupolas). 1914

watercolor and gouache on paper, 14.6 x 13.7 cm (5 ¾ x 5 ½ inches)  
Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Düsseldorf, n° 1014 (cat. Klee, vol. 2, 1154).



Fig 5. Owen Jones, *Moresque n° 5*,  
The Grammar of Ornament, London, 1856, pl. XLIII.



Fig 6. Owen Jones, *Persian n° 2*,  
The Grammar of Ornament, London, 1856, pl. XLV.

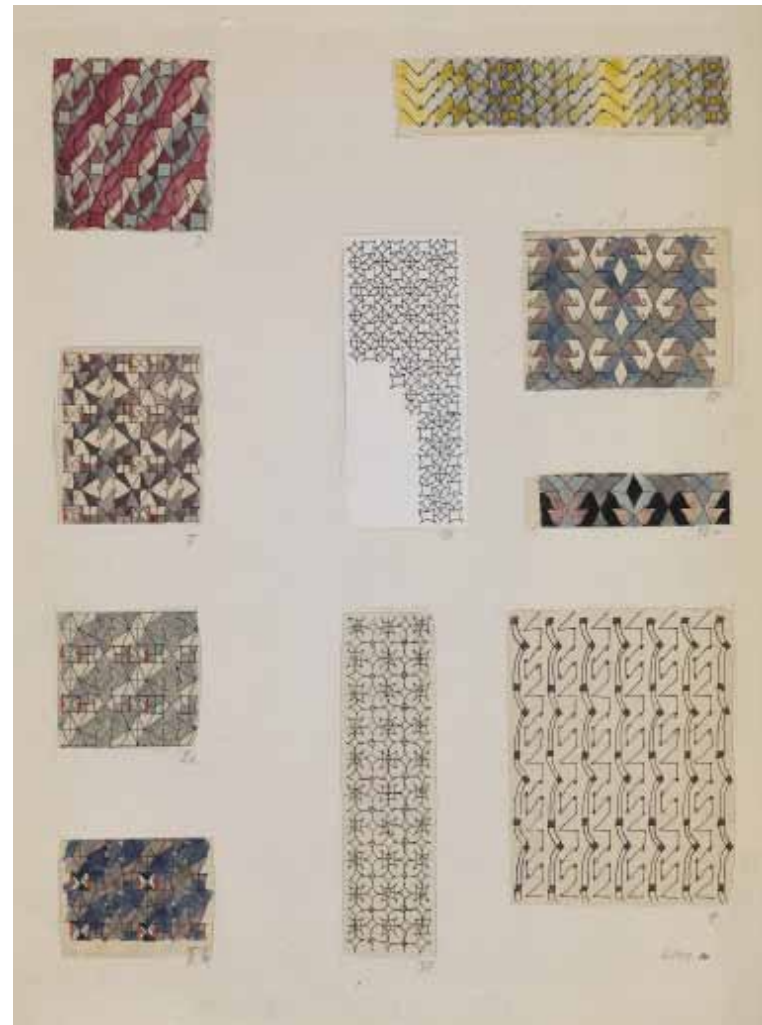


Fig 7. Paul Klee, *Diverse Entwürfe für Vorsatzpapier*, 1909

ink and watercolor on paper, various studies on paper pasted on cardboard  
Paul-Klee Stiftung, Bern, Z 137 (cat. Klee, vol. 1, 401).

as "kitsch"<sup>16</sup> (even if, some days later, he acknowledged the magnificence of the 13th–14th-century tombs of the Mamluk sultans of Cairo). Briefly speaking, in Kairouan, and nowhere else, Klee's dreamlike exoticism—imbued with a fanciful, somewhat stereotypical biblical atmosphere—became a direct encounter with the deepest realisations of Islamic aesthetics, something which he saw as a profound disruption in his artistic career and a new beginning.

In January 1921, when Klee arrived in Weimar and was enrolled by Walter Gropius as a teacher at the Bauhaus, he was fully committed to the elaboration and diffusion of his private Kairouan mythology. As Jenny Anger has shown<sup>17</sup>, this myth is also connected to his celebration of the intrinsic value of the decorative in modern art. Certainly, Klee's leanings towards ornamentation precede his discovery of Islamic decoration in Kairouan: as early as 1909, a series of small abstract patterns [fig. 7] irresistibly recalls the plates in the collections of ornamental models which, in the wake of Owen Jones's famous *Grammar of Ornament* in 1856 [fig. 5, 6], flourished all over Europe during the second half of the 19th century and were found everywhere in studios, workshops, schools of art or museum libraries. But even more significant than the date of creation of Klee's decorative patterns is the fact that he decided to paste them all onto a single sheet and to place it in his catalogue raisonné as an example of the early stages of his work (when he might well have excluded or even destroyed these tiny, apparently insignificant formal games). This decision was taken in the early 1920s and must have been all the more conscious and programmatic as ornament was not really welcome in the artistic circles he knew. No later than 1913, Kandinsky had written that, in an abstract painting, "the danger of an ornamental art had become clear to (him)"<sup>18</sup> and, in order to dispel this curse of the ornament, he forged the notion of "inner necessity" ("*innere Notwendigkeit*"), inseparable from his notion of the "spiritual in art". That which had been once rejected by Kandinsky for spiritual reasons or by Adolf Loos for political reasons, was also more or less plainly cast aside by Gropius and many of his allies at the Bauhaus: it was suspected of disguising the functional "truth" of pure industrial shapes and of threatening the economical viability of new design products. Contrasting with all these anti-ornamental positions, Klee's delicate interweaving of "decorative" patterns,

even in his most narrative works, did not fail to draw criticism. It even debarred him from the Fine Arts Academy in Stuttgart in 1919—although at that time the institution was won over to the cause of the German avant-garde. Oskar Schlemmer wrote him on this occasion that he had been criticised not only for his dreamlike fantasy but also for the “playful” and “feminine” quality of his work<sup>19</sup>—a customary characterisation of ornament as a minor art.

In order to take up the challenge of decorativeness in the historical context of the avant-garde, there can be no doubt that the Kairouan experience played a decisive role. It helped Klee to convince himself of the full historical legitimacy of ornamental aesthetics, combining the rigour of geometric laws and the unpredictability, the subtle unreliability of human gestures. Hausenstein, for instance, commemorates the triumph of the “arabesque” in the painter’s work from 1914 onwards, since, we are told, his “Arabic mind” was finally satisfied with “the multiple meanings which can only invest ornamental forms” and with the “rhythm of decorations” in which, “like the Believers in the Prophet”, he found “the ultimate meaning of life”<sup>20</sup>. We find similar, if less developed, appreciations of Klee’s love of the arabesque in Wedderkopp’s and Zahn’s books—which suggests that these ideas were, to some extent, directly inspired by the artist. Consciously or not, Klee was thus following the path of major 19th century reformers of ornament, who very often had a first, decisive experience of Islamic arts in situ—like the British architect Owen Jones in the Alhambra or the Frenchman Jules Bourgoïn in Cairo—and then systematically referred to Islamic art in order to free ornamentation from its subservience to the so-called higher arts of painting and sculpture. Hostile to Orientalism in all its guises, they drew on this appreciation of the scientific bias in Islamic patterns in order to reconcile science and art, objectivity and subjectivity, in the context of a modern industrial culture—a goal which was shared by Gropius during the first years of the Bauhaus. No wonder, therefore, that Klee’s graphic notes for his teachings closely resemble the visual experiments of these 19th century theoreticians. Like Owen Jones, for instance, who used to say that the ornamentations of the Alhambra, based on the combination of a few structuring elements, were “infinite, like the combinations of the seven notes of the musical scale”<sup>21</sup>, Klee resorted to the musical notion of “variation” in order to illustrate the logical production of an infinite variety of forms from

a finite set of simple geometric forms and primary colours [fig. 10].

Among the European theoreticians on ornament, Jules Bourgoïn is a particularly interesting case as he was obsessed by the need to counterbalance the scientific construction of form—by which he was fascinated [fig. 8]—with the physical implication of the individual. Trying to keep both sides together, he forged the idea of an “aesthetic geometry”, both rigorously scientific and unpredictably creative, which he opposed to a “scholastic” one, strictly confined to the limits of practical logic and favoured by modern industry<sup>22</sup>. Hence his systematic promotion of free-hand drawing and his deep interest in the patterning of knots [fig. 9], emblems of the infinite inventiveness and physical flexibility of a human gesture, as opposed to impersonal fixed patterns. A similar kind of attraction is expressed in Klee’s *Wege zum Knoten* [cat. 29], in which the loose arabesques suggest to the spectator’s mind a myriad of possible movements—an impression which he might have experienced for himself in front of the splendid, ever-changing patchwork of floral and geometric patterns in the venerable minbar of the Great Mosque in Kairouan [fig. 3].

There can be no doubt that his enrolment at the Bauhaus enhanced Klee’s appreciation for the power of pure geometric forms, scientifically arranged, particularly when, at the end of 1923, the school took a more pragmatic turn and Gropius distanced himself from the ideal of a junction between material production and “spiritual” speculations. Klee’s specific ornamentation, however, always stood apart from spiritual abstraction as well as functional materialism. Clearly, what drove him to ornamental forms was their visual and semiotic instability, the suggestion of movement, the specific power which allows a sinuous line to become (but never fixedly) a snake [cat. 28], a loose knot [cat. 29] or a reflection of the sun on water [cat. 27]—what Olivier Berggruen once described as his “ideal of the image-sign”, as embodied by his “obsessive arabesque”<sup>23</sup>. This is also why he was so moved by textiles (in sympathy with the textile workshop of Gunta Stölzl at the Bauhaus) and based numerous works, before and after Kairouan, until the very end of his life, on what can be named a poetics of the carpet [cat. 16-17]. A carpet is not only a fundamentally movable object, not only a surface on which the threads of coloured wool, cotton or silk blur the contours between compartments of pure colour and blend them together; it is also an art of undulating geometry, which submits the technical requirements of mechanical production (through

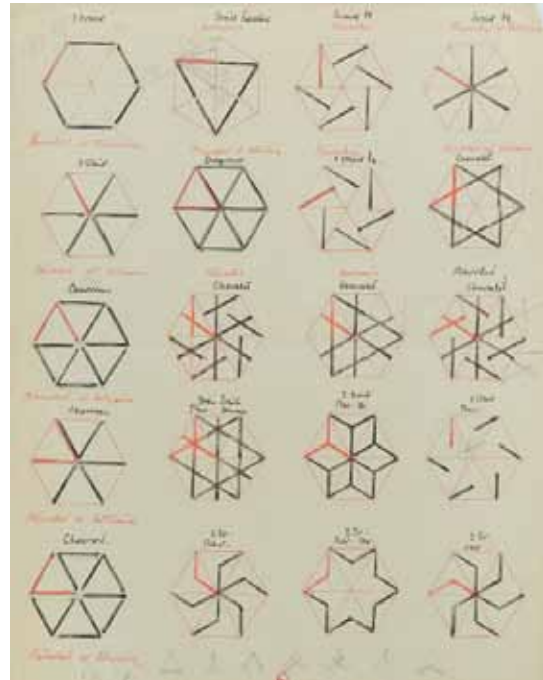


Fig. 8 Jules Bourgoïn. *Study for the plates 152 and 153 of vol. II of Etudes architectoniques et graphiques* (Paris, 1901)

pencil and ink on paper, 20 x 15,3 cm (8 x 6 inches),  
Paris, Institut National d'Histoire de l'Art, fonds Jacques Doucet



Fig. 9 Jules Bourgoïn, *Simple Nods*, ca. 1880-1890

pencil on paper, 15,6 x 10 cm (6 ¼ x 4 inches),  
Paris, Institut National d'Histoire de l'Art, fonds Jacques Doucet

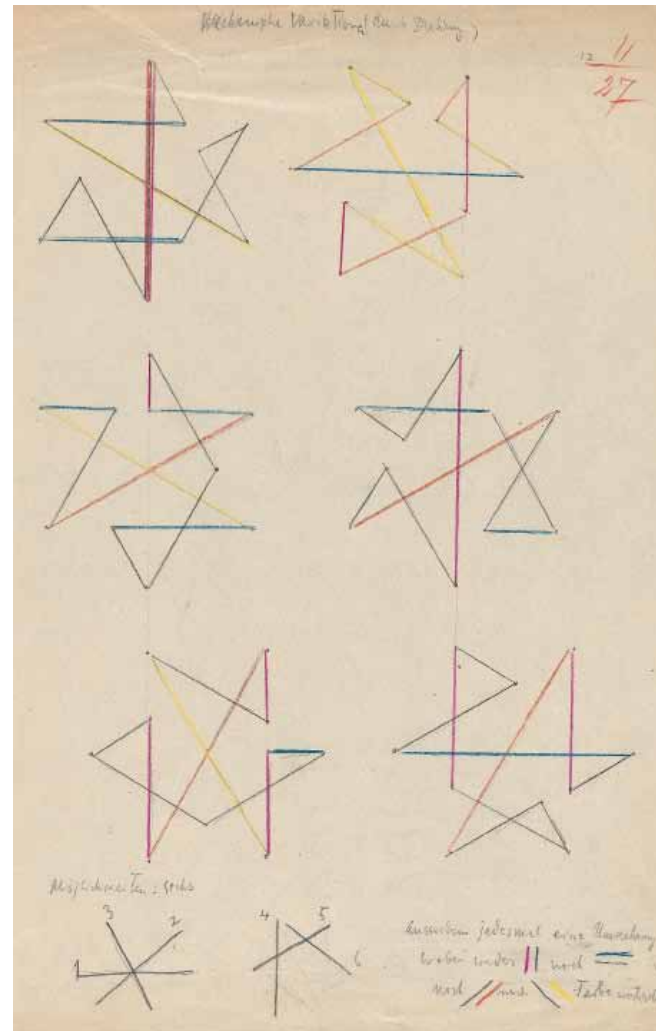


Fig. 10 Paul Klee, *Mechanische Variationen (durch Drehung)*, ca. 1925-1930,

crayon and pencil on paper, 33 x 21 cm (13 x 8 ¼ inches),  
pädagogischer Nachlass, planimetrische Gestaltung, Abweichung auf Grund der Norm, Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern, PN12 M11/27.

the weaving loom) to the intuitive decisions of individual craftsmanship. Both pragmatically and aesthetically, it favours movement, changeability, and unpredictability within a predetermined symmetrical scheme, something which is echoed in Klee's trembling lines and colour patches overflowing their contours in his grid-like compositions [cat. 15].

In his teaching notes at the Bauhaus, Klee systematically warns his students against the danger of a "legalistic exhaustion" of the creative impulse and recurs to the notion of "life" to counteract this tragic impoverishment<sup>24</sup>. "Movement" is the key-word in this context, an "initial productive movement", he says, "a spark comes from we not know where, which smoulders in a man's mind, then kindles it, moves his hand and, from then on, transfers this movement to matter, becoming a work of art"<sup>25</sup>. What does he mean when he speaks of life in an inanimate image, and of movement to characterise a composition of fixed forms? No doubt, for his students, he positioned himself against the dogmatic systematism of geometric abstraction as well as the processes of industrial design—a stand which made him feel increasingly isolated and ill-at-ease in Bauhaus circles at the end of the Twenties, up to the time of his resignation in 1931. Nonetheless, as intentionally inchoate as his images and formal compositions may be, they are not living beings for all that. Thus, the belief that it would be possible to carry the process of genesis into its final result, and to fuse together a creative impetus and a created object, belongs to the utopian fantasy of merging organic life and material work. We can surmise that this kind of animism—one of the prevailing myths of the early avant-gardes—was alien to Klee, not only because he never explicitly expressed such a view but also because the fundamental structure of his work hints at a very different understanding of what life can mean in an image.

It is a commonplace that Klee's work is characterised by a continuous tension between a narrative and a formal aspect, *poesis* and *pictura*: in his paintings, the suggestion of imaginary worlds and stories, through dreamlike settings and figures, plunging the mind into another spatiotemporal environment, is insistently set against the immediate physical impression of self-sufficient visual forms, with their arabesques, geometrical patterns and interwoven colour fields, redirecting the spectator's gaze to his perception here and now. Applying racial schemes (typical of 19th-century anthropology)

to this dualism, Hausenstein rigidly opposed, in Klee's case, an "Arabic" side, in thrall to the arabesque, and a Nordic "barbarian" side which was responsible for the transformation of these arabesques into runes and of these formal decorative compositions into mythic fables<sup>26</sup>. Even if Klee himself never developed such a pseudo-anthropological dualism, he nonetheless based his Bauhaus teaching on the analysis of his own works, both figurative and non-figurative, asking his students to deconstruct them (as, he used to say, a child is allowed to tear apart his toy in order to examine its components). At the Bauhaus they would have seen how their master's formalist decorativeness was counterbalanced structurally by the literary suggestiveness of dreams, just as, in Kairouan, his orientalist fantasies had been pervaded and internally criticised by his meditation on Islamic architecture and ornament. This does not only happen in different works, some of them quasi abstract, others emphatically narrative. In each of them, the two sides rub against each other in a fundamentally dialectical manner: ornamental forms appear almost animated, transformed into imaginary bodies and, conversely, a rigorous ornamental grammar deconstructs this nascent fiction and substitutes for them constellations of disembodied motifs. This is particularly clear in Klee's use of isolated letters or numbers [cat. 15, 19] in compositions where they play their part as ornamental components while they also appear as enigmatic remnants of some semi-erased inscription. Again, a similar effect is produced by the many pseudo-calligraphic images (a decorative method also present in the lustre tiles of the mirhab in Kairouan and pervasive in almost all periods of Islamic arts). A late work like *Grenze (Frontier)* [fig. 12], in 1938, provides us with a paradigmatic example of this constant shift between the realm of ornament and the realm of dream, denying the eye any univocal interpretation of these signs which are neither figurative nor semeiological, with facial features instantly lost in sequences of undecipherable hieroglyphic runes. The same can be said, from another point of view, of the splendid 1931 *Überbrücktes (Bridged)* [cat. 30], another emblematic title which, like *Grenze*, not only describes literally what is depicted in the image but also brings to mind the programmatic idea of trespassing or *bridging* the frontiers between heterogeneous visual regimes. Let us add that this process of "bridging" appears, not without humour, eminently fragile and transient, since the apparent stability of the little acrobat on the top of the painting seems to be seriously challenged by the collapse of his ledge—a strange and somewhat



Fig. 11 Paul Klee, *Vierteiliger Palast*, 1933

watercolor and ink on canvas,  
90.5 x 68 cm, (35 1/2 x 26 3/4 inches)  
Staatsgalerie Stuttgart, 3089 (cat. Klee, vol. 6, 6401).

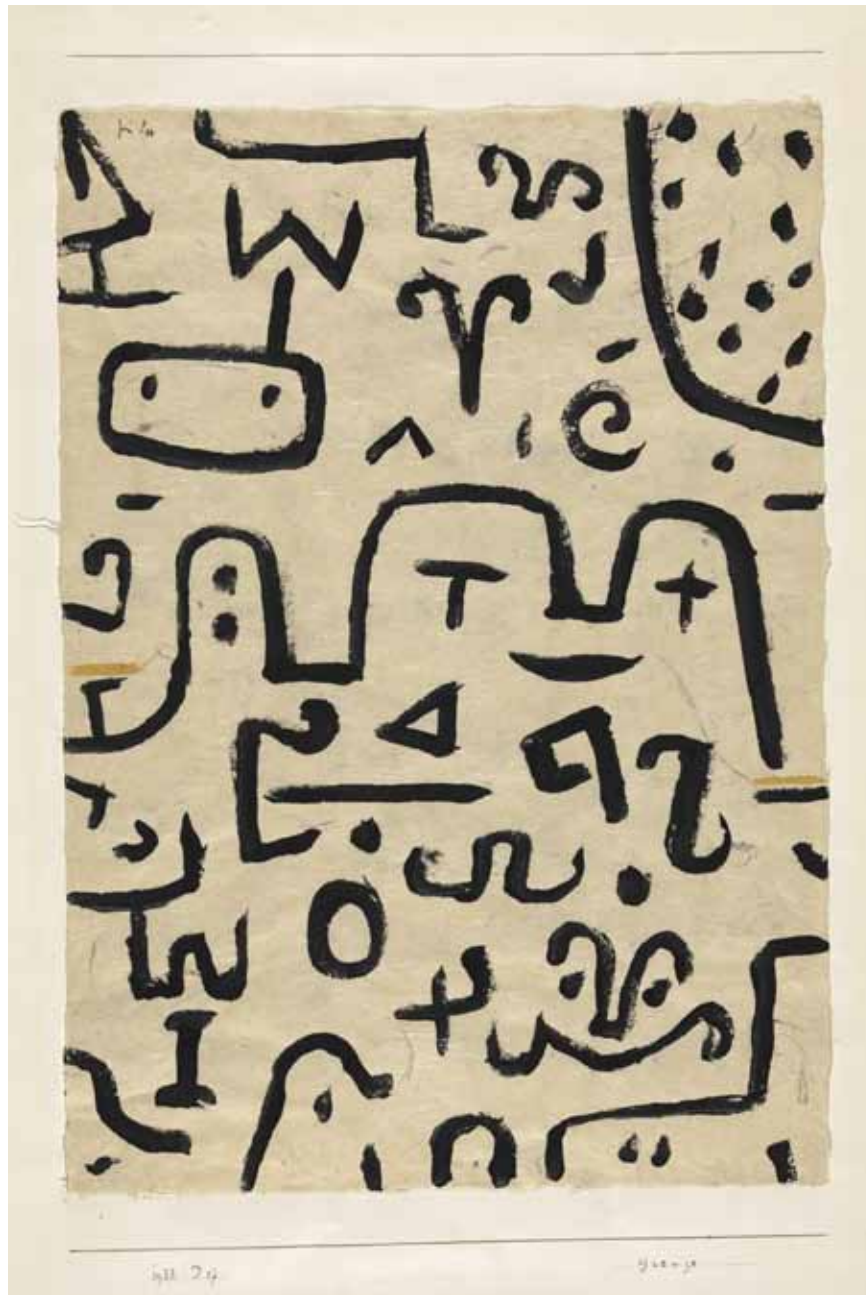


Fig 12. Paul Klee, *Grenze (Frontier)*, 1938

peinture à la colle sur papier sur carton,  
50 x 35 cm (19 1/2 x 13 3/4 inches),  
Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern

scary mixture of geometrical elements and half-formed human figures, all on the verge of falling into a formless, inextricable mess.

In short, two processes of disembodiment are systematically combating each other within Klee's creations: the bodily subjective experience of the creative Self is simultaneously transformed into a pure music of forms and throngs of oneiric figures, playing their parts on a theatrical stage. There is no place here for the pseudo-animism of the image as a living body *per se*. Yet, life is involved in so far as neither of these disembodiment processes ever succeeds in imposing imaginary representations or abstract patterns. Thus, neither narrative images nor ornamental configurations ever stand in for life. Life spreads from the image negatively, so to speak, because this strange combination of incompatible formal systems never reaches its full realization. It remains an unstable structure of conflicting forces, to which the spectator is unable to apply a clear visible code. These compositions do not provide any definitions on the nature of art; through their disorderly ornamental impetus, they leave the eye with unending questions about the reasons why the imaging process, as a fatal trait of human behaviour, unceasingly tries to substitute dreams for life. In these fleeting, self-critical works, Western vision explores time and again its own uncertainties, as if the dialectics of image and ornament were too deeply rooted in the artist's mind to allow a stable definition of art anymore.

Notes:

1. Wilhelm Hausenstein, *Kairuan oder eine Geschichte vom Maler Klee und von der Kunst dieses Zeitalters*, Munich, Kurt Wolff Verlag, 1921, p. 91 ("Kairuan und der europäische Krieg : aus dem oberen Nichts war der Malerzeichner in das untere Nichts geschickt").
2. On Klee and Hausenstein, see Otto Karl Werckmeister, "Kairuan : Wilhelm Hausensteins Buch über Paul Klee", in *Die Tunisreise*. Klee, Macke, Moilliet, ed. Ernst-Gerhard Güse, Stuttgart, Verlag Gerd Hatje, 1982, p. 76-93.
3. See Michael Baumgartner, "Paul Klee et le mythe de l'Orient", in *A la recherche de l'Orient*. Paul Klee. Tapis du souvenir, ed. Michael Baumgartner, Carole Haensler, Marianne Keller, Bern, Zentrum Paul Klee, Ostfildern, Hatje Cantz, 2009, p. 130-143.
4. Leopold Zahn, *Paul Klee. Leben / Werk / Geist*, Potsdam, Gustav Kiepenheuer Verlag, 1920, p. 14 ("In der Zielrichtung dieser Aquarelle liegt das nachfolgende Schaffen, auf das wir uns beziehen, wenn wir von der Kunst Paul Klees sprechen, deren Vorgeschichte wir aus den vor 1914 entstandenen Blättern entnehmen können").
5. Wilhelm Hausenstein, op. cit., p. 29 ("Es war eine Ausfahrt des Menschen zu sich selbst").
6. Letter to Lily Klee, Kairouan, 14th April 1914, in *Paul Klee, Briefe an die Familie*, vol. 2, 1907-1940, ed. Felix Klee, Cologne, DuMont, 1979, p. 784 ("Am letzten Ziel angelangt, zugleich dem Höhepunkt. Sonntag reise ich von Tunis ab").
7. The idea of Kairouan as a mystical ground for Klee's work is also expressed by Zahn, op. cit., p. 8 ("Mystik ist hier das Wort, das die Lernbegierigen sättigt").

8. Paul Klee, *Journal*, French translation by Pierre Klossowski, Paris, Grasset, 1986 [first publication 1959], p. 282 (17th April 1914).

9. *Ibid.*

10. Letters to Paul Bataillard, 7th and 22d March 1846 in Eugène Fromentin, *Lettres de jeunesse*, ed. Pierre Blanchon, Paris, Plon, 1909, p. 171-172.

11. Hausenstein's first draft for the third part of his monograph, in 1920, as quoted in Otto Karl Werckmeister, *op. cit.*, p. 83 ("Die Polarität des 'Arabischen' und des 'Europäischen' in Klees Kunst").

12. Wilhelm Hausenstein, *op. cit.*, p. 86 ("[...] die falben Kamele nach wie vor [...] in das Nichts der Wüste schritten, dunkle Männer tragend, denen der Sinn von Melodie erfüllt war und von dem Glauben, das Nichts sei alles, alles sei nichts. [...] Wie in der Heimat war nun der Reisende. [...] Er malte [...] mit einem geheimen Instinkt auch die Gelsenheit des Buddha verehrend, der Tausende von Meilen noch entfernt in der Unbeweglichkeit seiner Bilder wohnte") and p. 125 ("Kairuan. Der Name ward Symbol für eine vielfache Erfahrung. Östlich war, zu erkennen oder bestätigt zu finden, daß in der Tat die Dinge ohne Wesen sind").

13. Ary Renan, "L'Art arabe dans le Maghreb. Kairouan. Premier article", *Gazette des beaux-arts*, Paris, 1st May 1891, p. 371 and p. 382.

14. Guy de Maupassant, "Vers Kairouan", *Revue des deux mondes*, Paris, 1st February 1889, in *Œuvres complètes. La Vie errante*, Paris, Louis Conard, 1909, p. 211 and p. 217.

15. See Alain Messaoudi, "Une patrimonialisation pas très catholique. Le touriste, le fidèle, la mosquée et l'administration coloniale en Tunisie", in *Tourisme, patrimoine et colonisation au Maghreb. Un nouveau chantier pour l'histoire ?*, ed. Colette Zytnicki, Habib Kazdaghli, Madrid, 2011.

16. Letters to Lily Klee, from Cairo, 25th-29th December 1928, in Paul Klee, *Lettres de l'époque du Bauhaus (1920-1930)*, translation and ed. Anne-Sophie Petit-Emptaz, Tours, Farrago, 2004, p. 164-170.

17. Jenny Anger, *Paul Klee and the Decorative in Modern Art*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004.

18. Wassily Kandinsky, *Regards sur le passé et autres textes 1912-1922*, ed. Jean-Paul Bouillon, Paris, 1974, p. 110 and p. 208 ("[...] die Gefahr der ornamentalen Form").

19. Letter of Oskar Schlemmer to Paul Klee, 9th July 1919, quoted in Jenny Anger, *op. cit.*, p. 274 ("'Spielerich, feminin' sind weitere Worte des Zweifels").

20. Wilhelm Hausenstein, *op. cit.*, p. 30 ("Von diesem arabischen Schädel behext verlangt sie alsbald nichts andres als Arabesken: Bänder aus Farbe, die durcheinander laufen; Vieldeutigkeit, die nur in Ornamenten Gestalt gewinnen kann – denn die Gläubigen des Propheten vermeiden die Abbildung der menschlichen Gestalt, ja der Dinge, und sie begnügen sich mit dem Rhythmus der Verzierungen, gewohnt, in ihnen den Tiefsinn des Lebens aufzuschreiben").

21. Owen Jones, "Lecture XX. An Attempt to Define the Principles which Should Regulate Colour in the Decorative Arts", *Lectures on the Results of the Exhibition delivered before The Society of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce*, London, David Bogue, s. d. [1853], p. 296.

22. Jules Bourgoïn, *Les Arts arabes et Le Trait général de l'art arabe*, Paris, Veuve A. Morel et Cie, 1873 [1868-1873], p. 7.

23. Olivier Berggruen, "Alla ricerca di segni naturali", in Paul Klee. *La collezione Berggruen*, ed. Olivier Berggruen, Rome, Fondazione Memmo, Milan, Skira, 2006, p. 22-23.

24. Lesson 11, 19th December 1922, in Paul Klee, *Cours du Bauhaus, Weimar 1921-1922 : contributions à la théorie de la forme picturale*, Paris, Hazan, 2004, p. 216-217.

25. Lesson 7, 27th February 1922, *ibid.*, p. 126-127.

26. Wilhelm Hausenstein, *op. cit.*, p. 30 ("Macht aber in ihm die Völkerwanderung der Vandalen [...] einen Rückweg, [...] so ist es nicht erstaunlich, daß diese Zeichnungen sich der Rune bedienen").



# Paul Klee

The Bauhaus Years

Works from 1918-1932



1. Ohne Titel (Untitled). 1918

oil on cardboard, verso paper on muslin  
15 x 32 cm (5 <sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 12 <sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> inches)



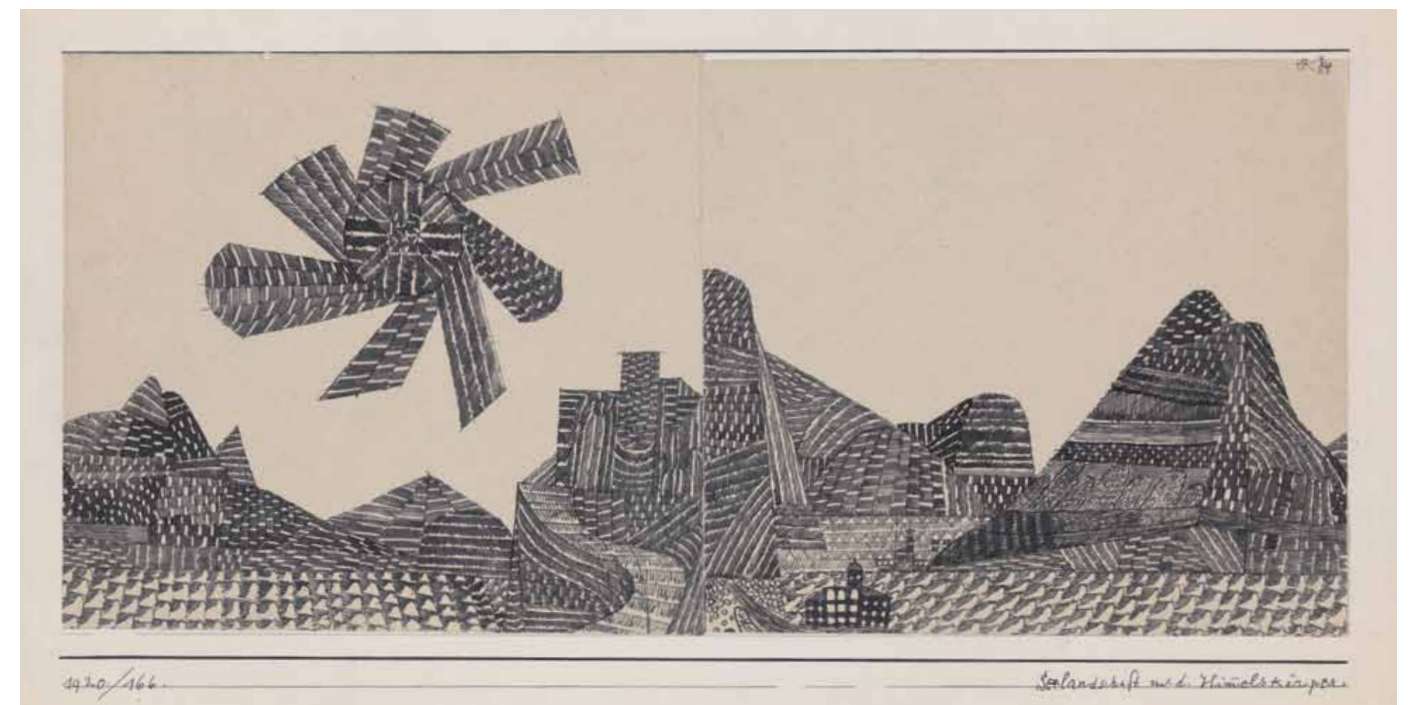
2. Mit dem grünen Quadrat (With the Green Square). 1919

watercolor on paper on cardboard  
26 x 20 cm (10 1/4 x 7 7/8 inches)



3. Dreitakt (Triple Time). 1919

watercolor and pencil on paper laid down on cardboard  
31.2 x 22.3 cm (12 5/16 x 8 3/4 inches)



4. Seelandschaft m. d. Himmelskörper (Lake Landscape with the Celestial Body). 1920

pen and ink on paper laid down on cardboard  
12.7 x 28.1 cm (5 x 11 inches)

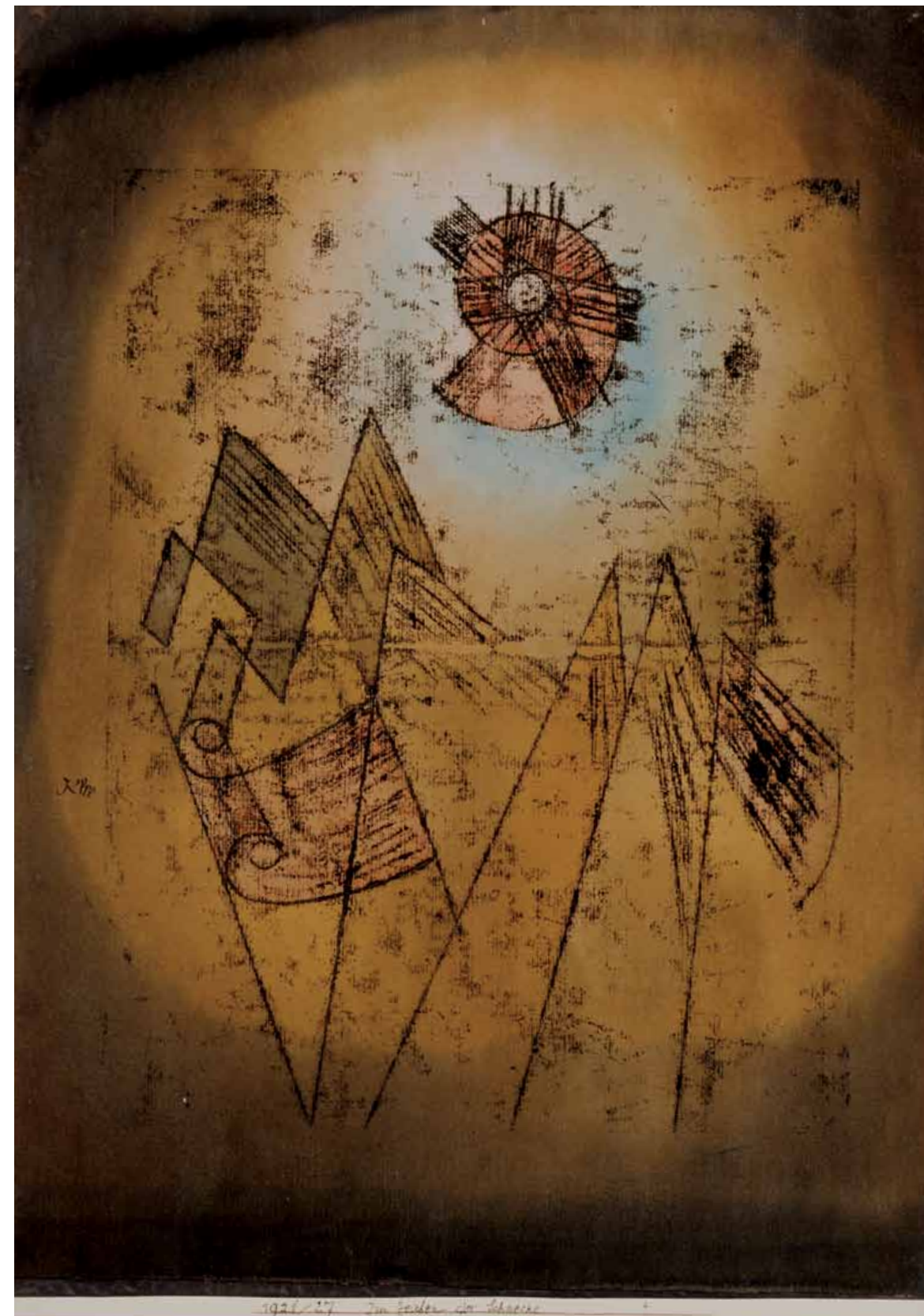


5. Frisst aus der Hand (Zweite Fassung) (Eats out of the Hand (Second Version). 1920

oil transfer and watercolor on paper  
30.4 x 24 cm (12 x 9 7/16 inches)

6. Im Zeichen der Schnecke (Under the Sign of the Snail), 1921

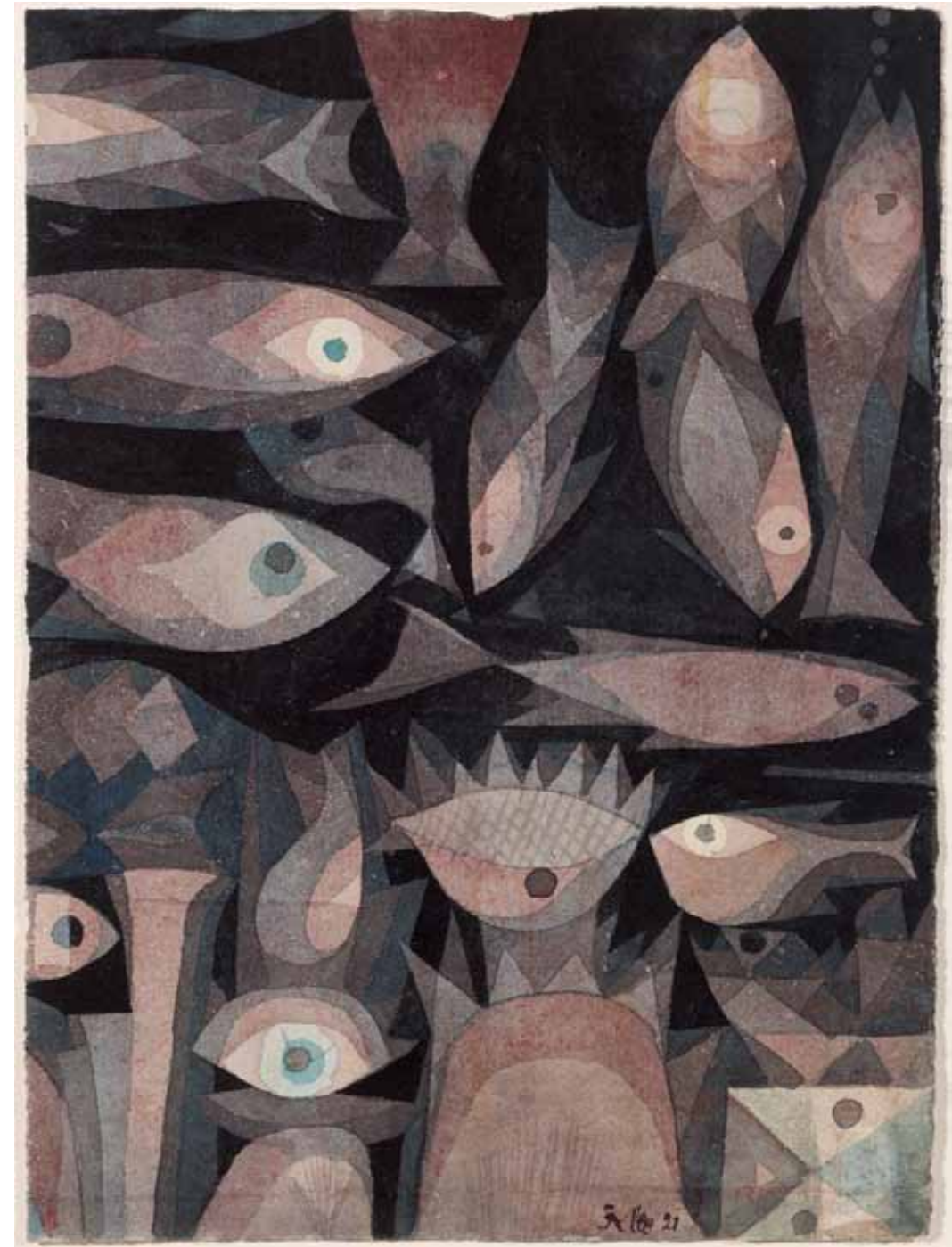
oil transfer and watercolor on paper laid down on cardboard  
38.8 x 27.4 cm (15 1/4 x 11 13/16 inches)





7. Das Tor der Nacht (The Gate of the Night), 1921

watercolor and pencil on Canson paper laid down on cardboard  
25 x 33 cm (9 <sup>13</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 13 inches)



8. Ohne Titel (Untitled), 1921

watercolor on paper laid down on cardboard  
21.6 x 16 cm (8 1/2 x 16 5/16 inches)





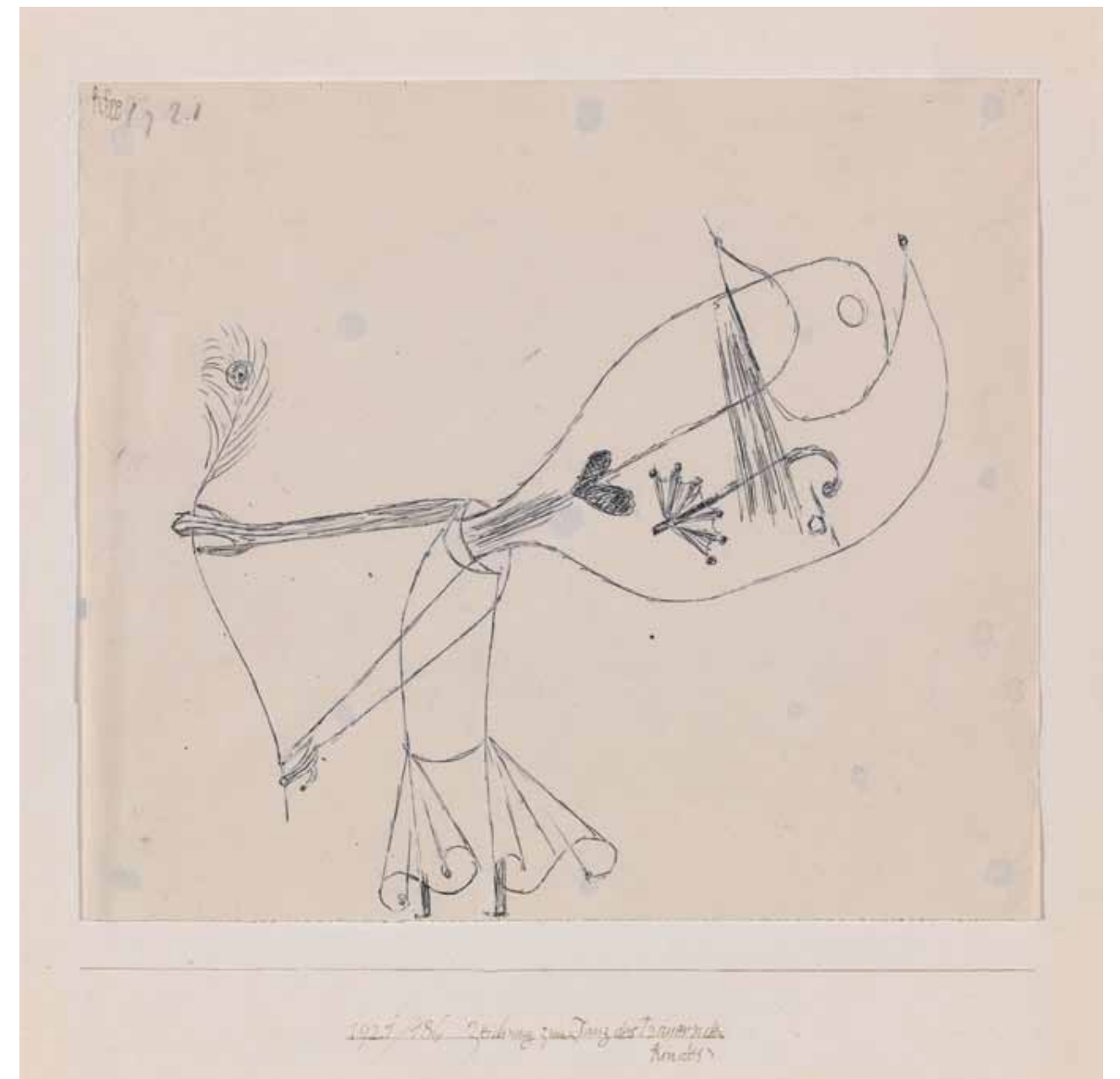
9. Fische in der Tiefe (Fishes in the Deep). 1921

watercolor on paper laid down on a second sheet of paper, laid down on cardboard  
16 x 21.7 cm (6<sup>5</sup>/<sub>15</sub> x 8<sup>9</sup>/<sub>16</sub> inches)

10. Läufer am Ziel (Runner at the Goal). 1921

watercolor and graphite on paper mounted on cardboard with gouache border  
39.4 x 30.2 cm (15 1/2 x 11 7/8 inches)



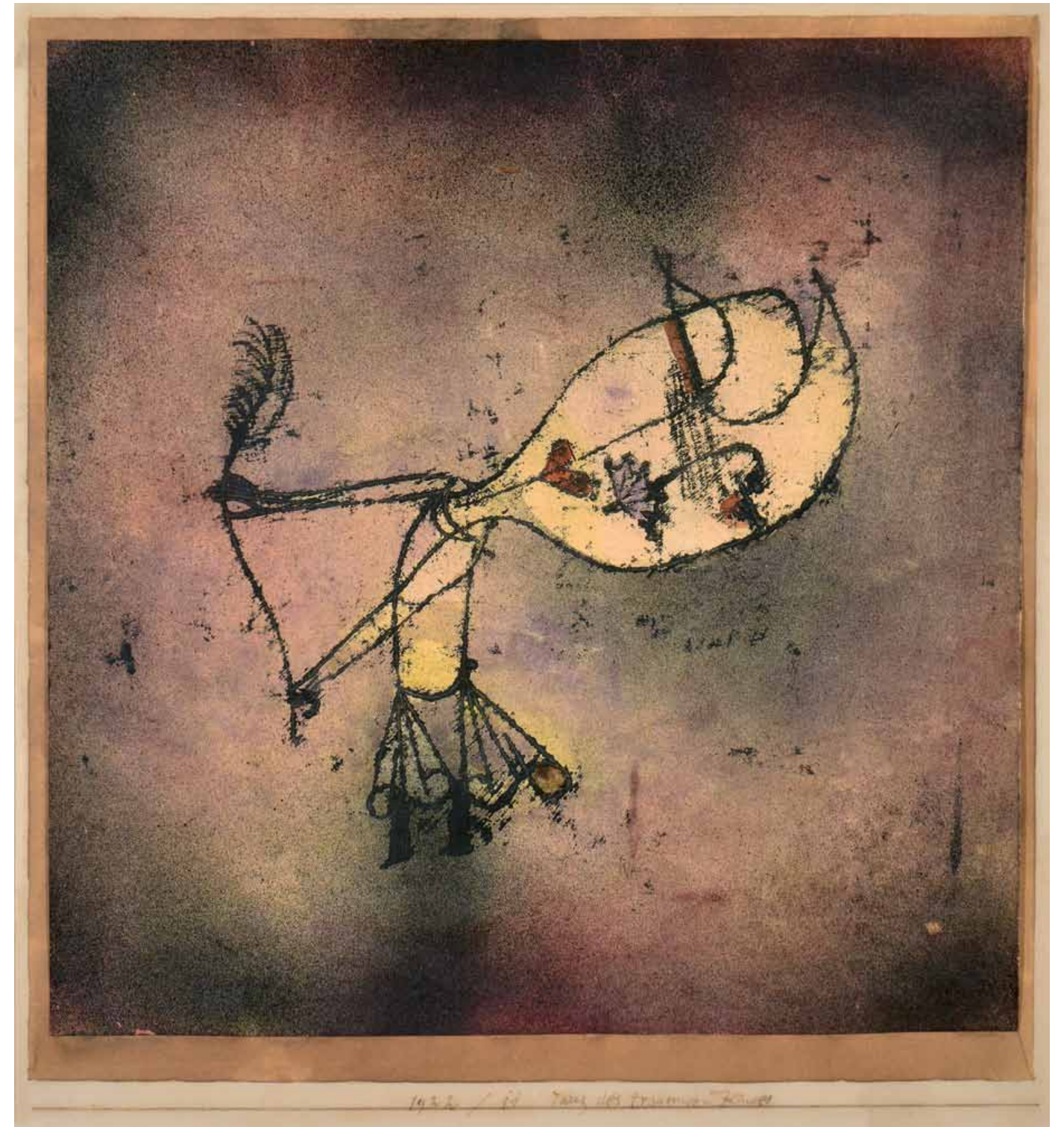


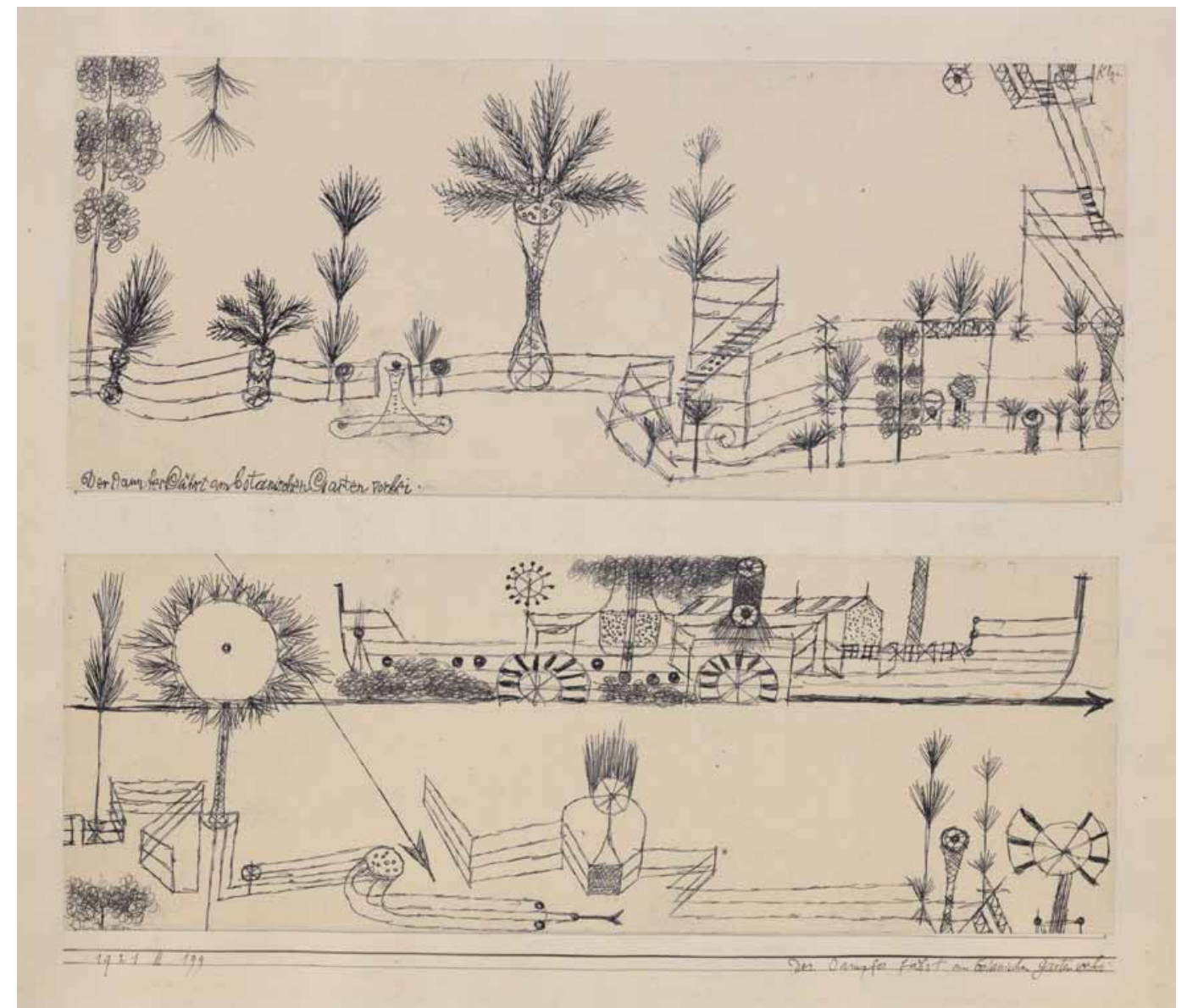
11. Zeichnung zum 'Tanz des trauernden Kindes' (Drawing for 'Dance of the Grieving Child'). 1921

pen and ink on paper laid down on cardboard, with glue spots  
 19.2 x 22 cm (7 <sup>9</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 8 <sup>11</sup>/<sub>16</sub> inches)

12. Tanz des trauernden Kindes (Dance of the Grieving Child). 1921

Oil transfer, watercolor and ink, partially sprayed, laid on paper laid,  
bordered with watercolor and pen and ink on cardboard  
29.2 x 27.3 cm (11 1/2 x 11 3/4 inches)





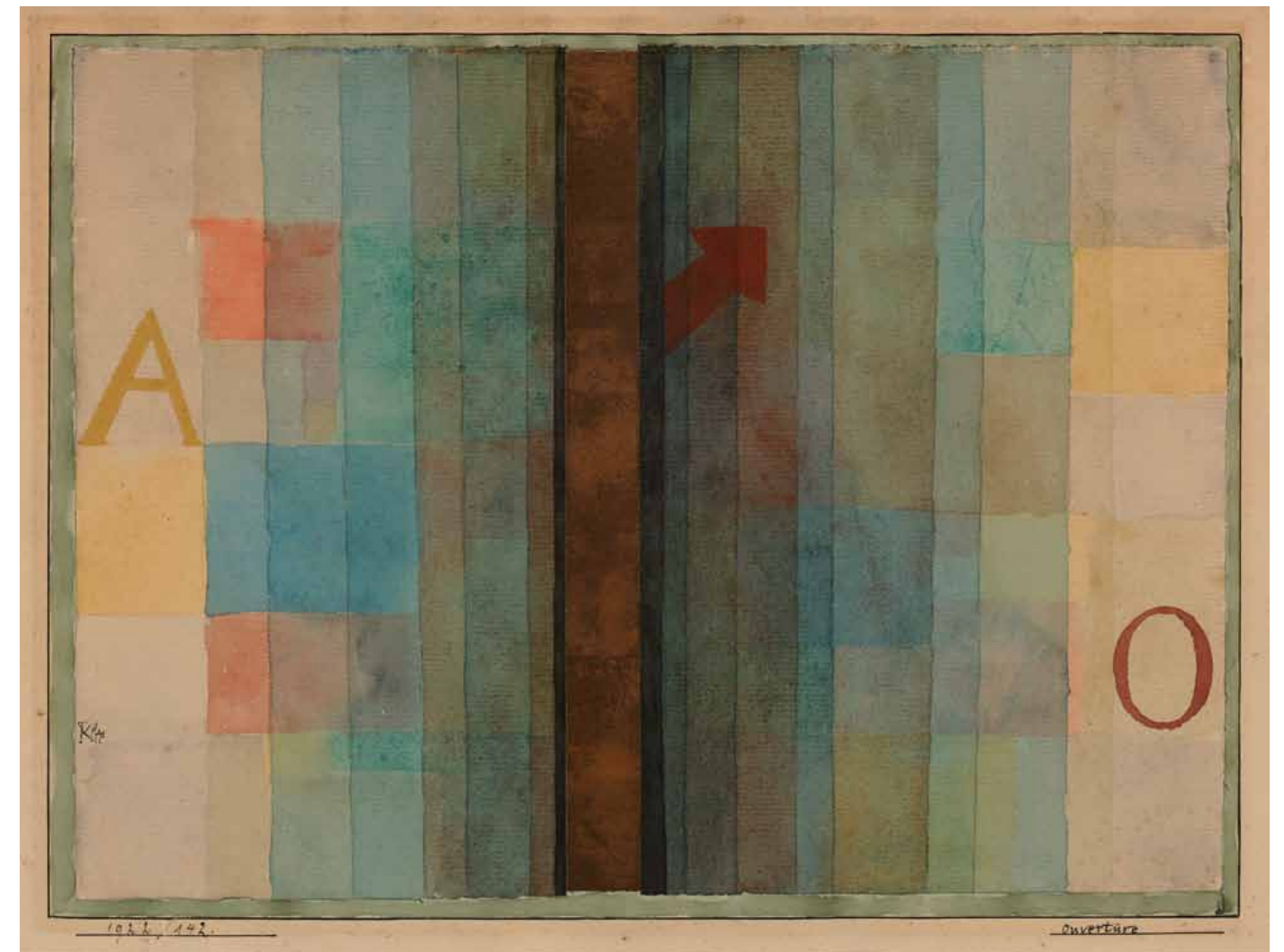
13. Der Dampfer fährt am botanischen Garten vorbei (The Steamboat Passes by the Botanical Garden). 1921

pen and ink on paper divided and newly combined on cardboard  
 a) 11.9 x 28.9 cm (4<sup>9</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 11<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> inches) b) 10.4 x 28.8 cm (4<sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 11<sup>5</sup>/<sub>16</sub> inches)



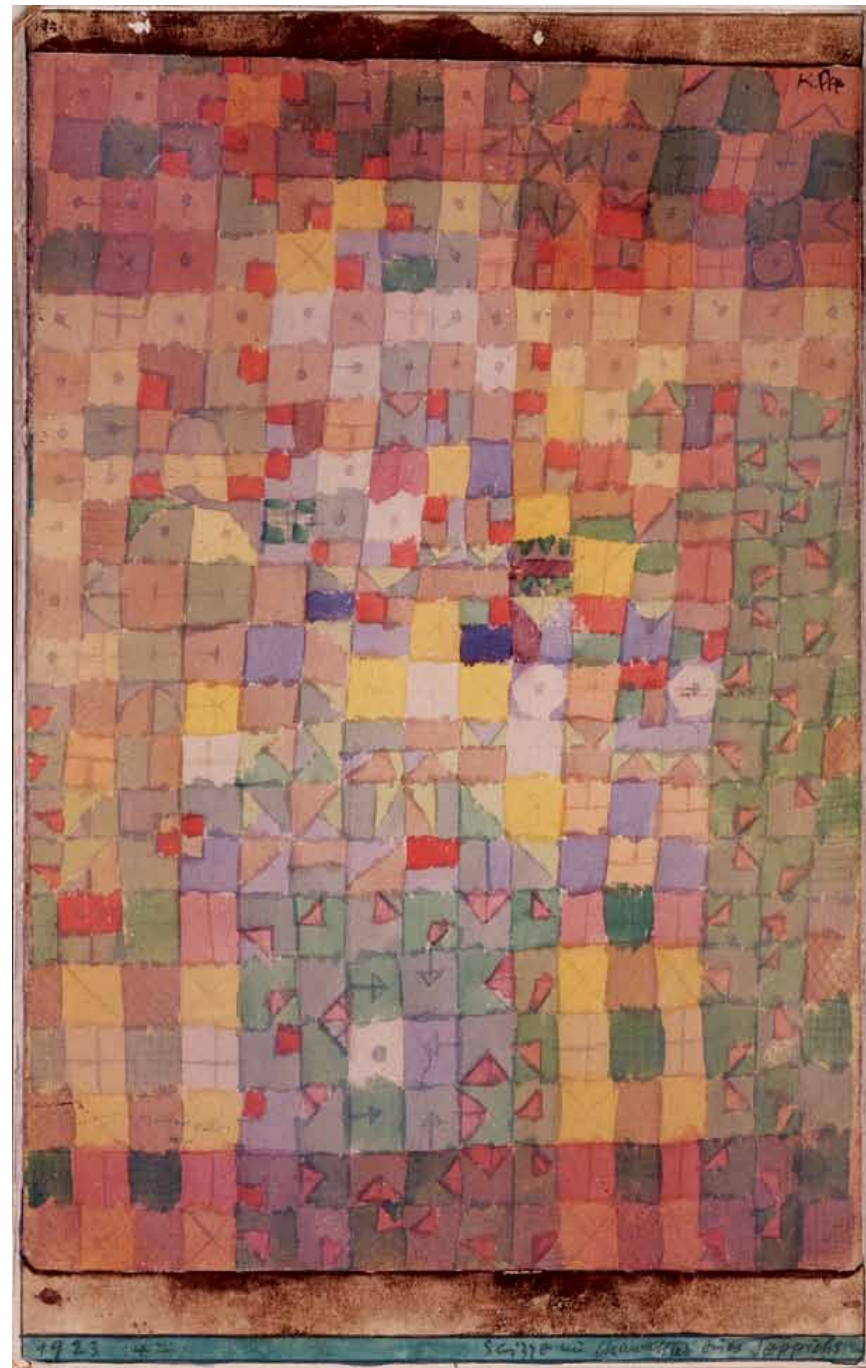
14. Wald-Einsiedelei (Hermitage in the Woods). 1921

oil on cardboard in its original frame  
19.8 x 30.2 cm (7<sup>9</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 11<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> inches)



15. Ouverture (Overture). 1922

watercolor and pencil on paper divided up and newly combined,  
bordered with watercolor, pen and ink on cardboard  
24 x 33 cm (9 7/16 x 13 inches)



16. Scizze im Charakter eines Teppichs (Sketch in the Manner of a Carpet). 1923

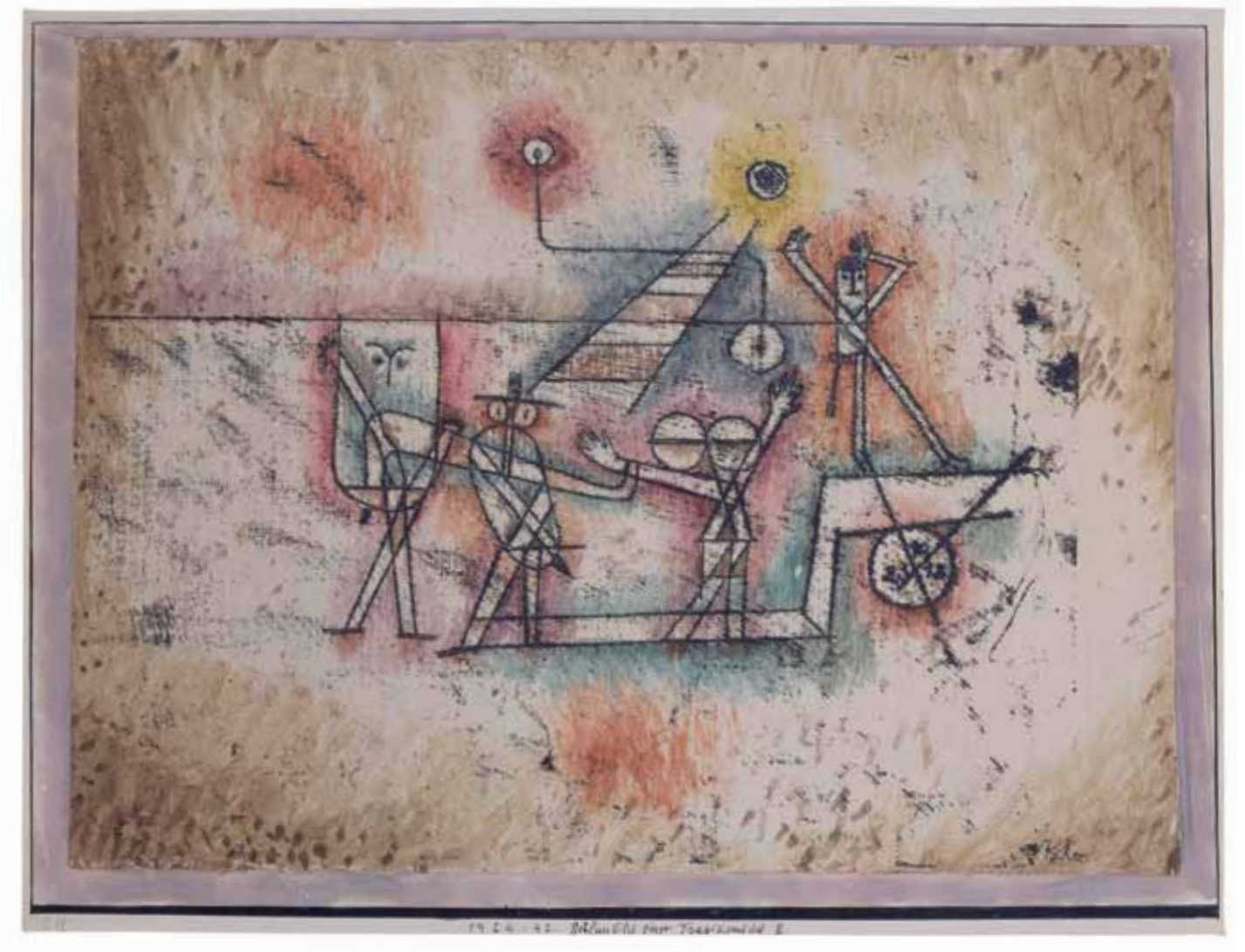
pen and watercolor on paper laid down on cardboard, above and beneath watercolor, and pen and ink edges, 22 x 14.7 cm (8<sup>11/16</sup> x 5<sup>13/16</sup> inches)



17. Wand Teppich (Tapestry). 1923

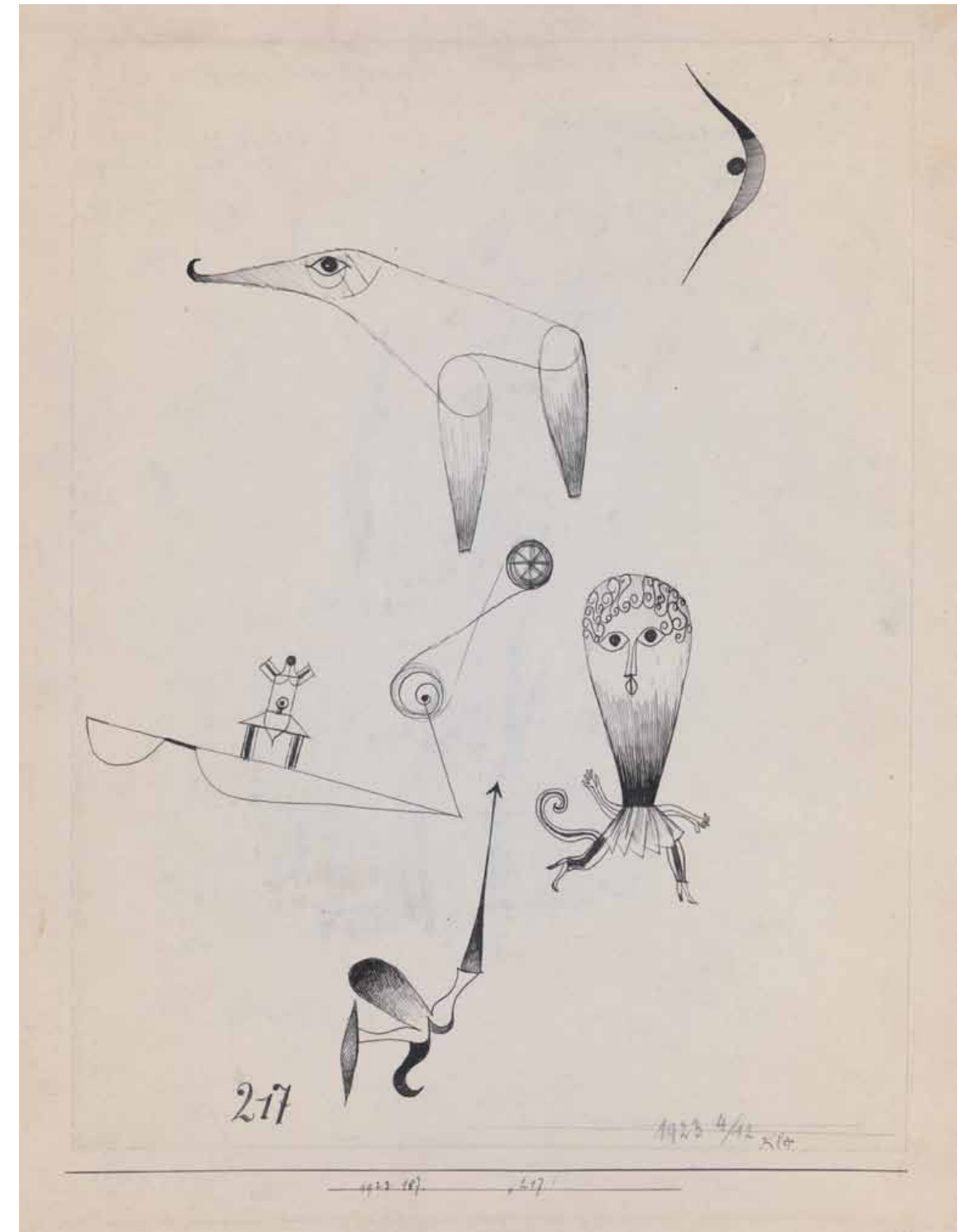
oil transfer and watercolor on paper, bordered with gouache and pen and ink on cardboard, lower edges with watercolor and pen and ink on cardboard, 32.5 x 24 cm (12<sup>13/16</sup> x 9<sup>7/16</sup> inches)





18. Schlussbild einer Tragikomödie (Final Scene of a Tragicomedy). 1923

oil transfer and watercolor on chalk-primed paper, upper and lower edges  
with gouache and pen and ink on cardboard  
25 x 35 cm (9<sup>13</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 13<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> inches)



19. "217". 1923

pen and ink and pencil on paper laid down on cardboard  
 28.7 x 21.7 cm (11<sup>5</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 8<sup>9</sup>/<sub>16</sub> inches)



20. Schwarzer Herold (Black Herald). 1924

watercolor and color paste on paper, bordered with gouache and pen and ink,  
 lower edge with watercolor and pen and ink laid down on cardboard  
 30.5 x 20.2 cm (12 x 8 inches)

21. Die Erfinderin des Nestes (The Inventress of the Nest). 1925

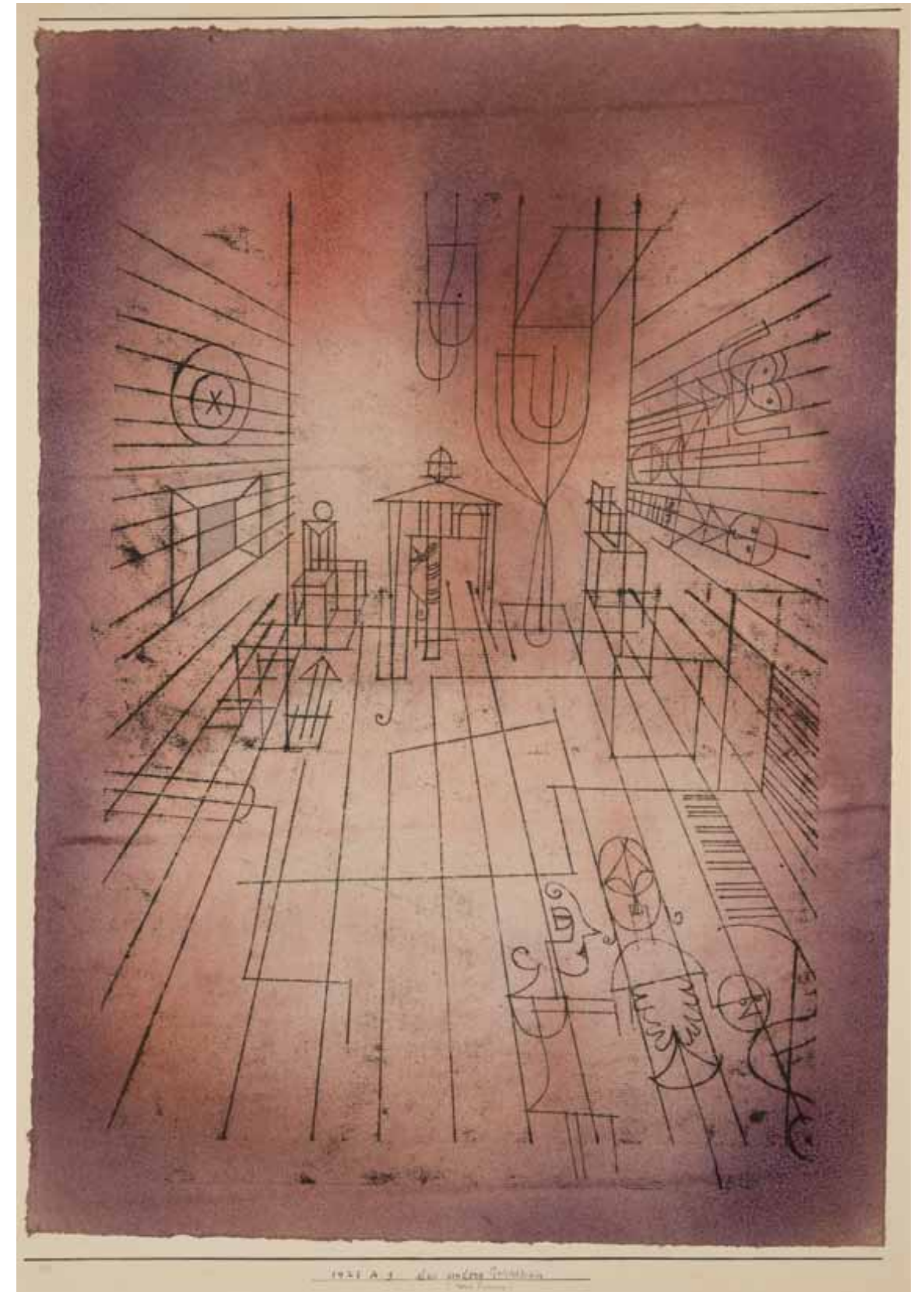
watercolor on chalk ground on paper laid down on cardboard  
27.6 x 22 cm (10 <sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 8 <sup>11</sup>/<sub>16</sub> inches)





22. Häuserbild mit dem Treppenweg (Pictures of Houses with Flight of Steps). 1923

watercolor on chalk basis on paper, bordered with gouache and pen and ink,  
lower edge with gouache and pen and ink, laid down on cardboard  
26.7 x 33.3 cm (10 1/2 x 13 inches)



23. Das andere Geisterzimmer (Neue Fassung) (The Other Ghost Chamber (New Version). 1925

oil transfer and watercolor, partially sprayed, on paper laid down on cardboard  
48 x 34 cm (19 x 13 3/8 inches)



24. Der Luftballon (The Balloon). 1926

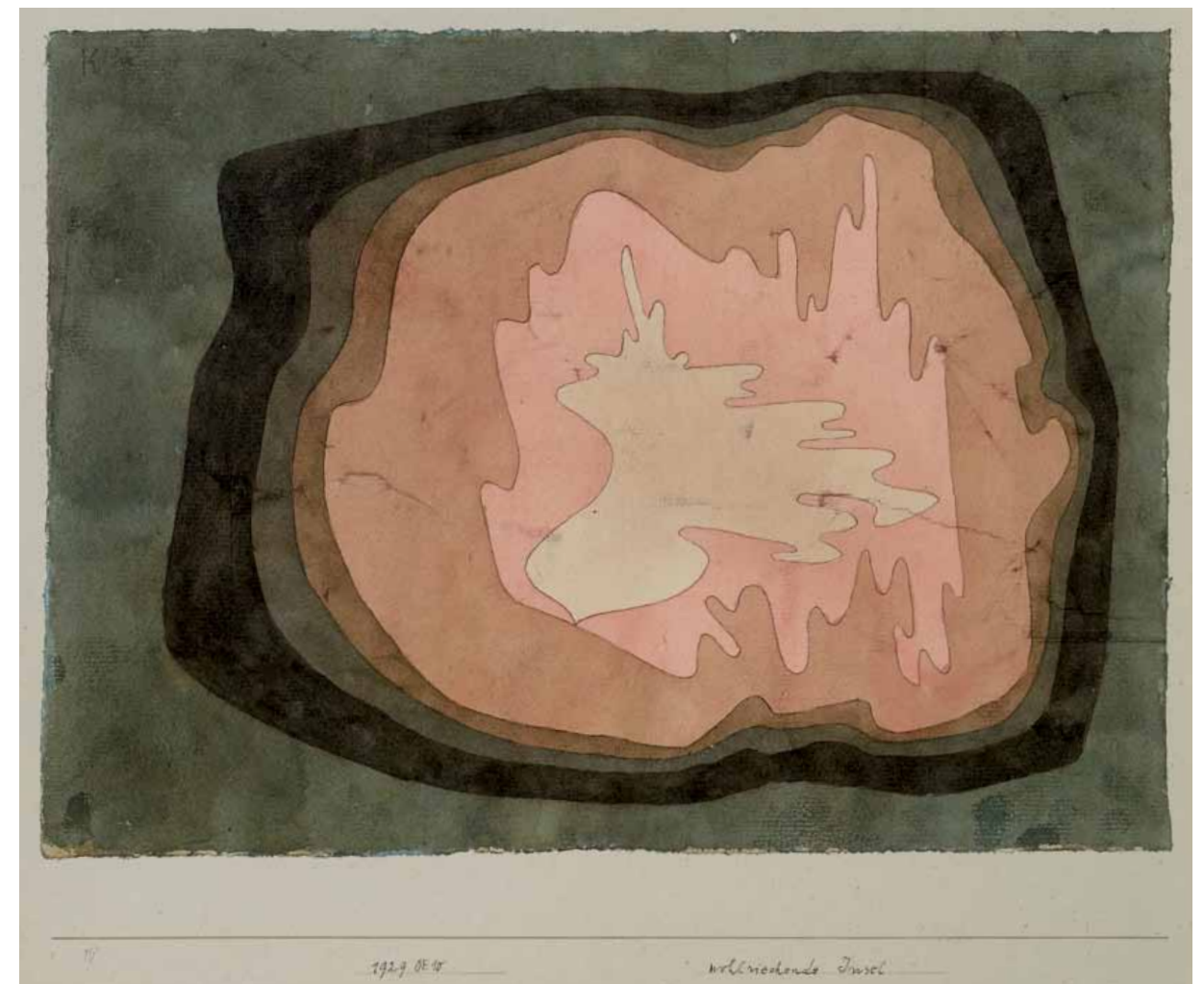
oil on a black basis on cardboard; in its original frame  
32.5 x 33 cm (12 <sup>13</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 13 inches)



25. Die Flut schwemmt Städte (The Flood Washes Away Towns). 1927

pen and ink on paper, with glue spots laid down on cardboard  
26.8 x 30.6 cm (10 1/2 x 12 1/16 inches)



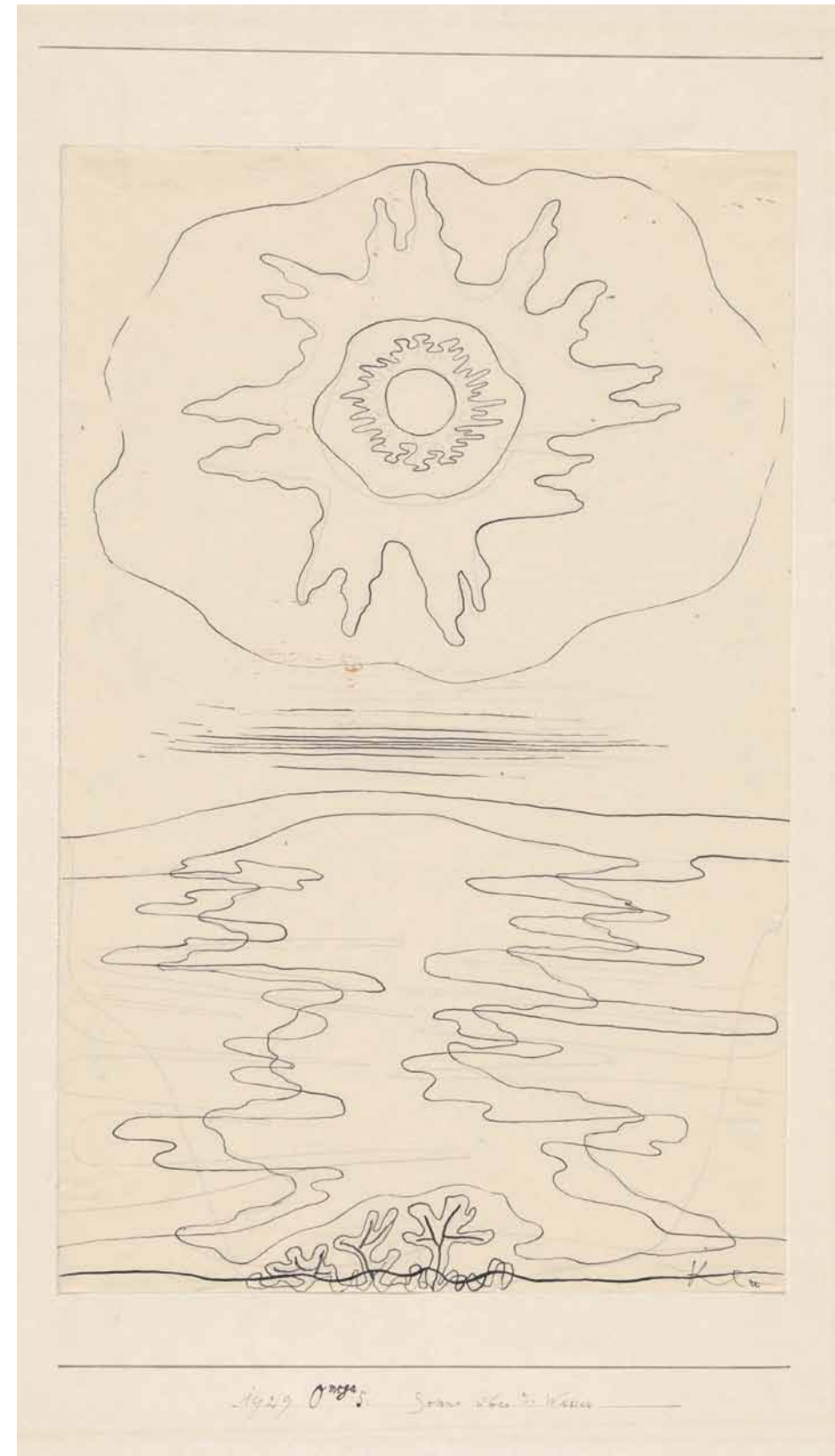


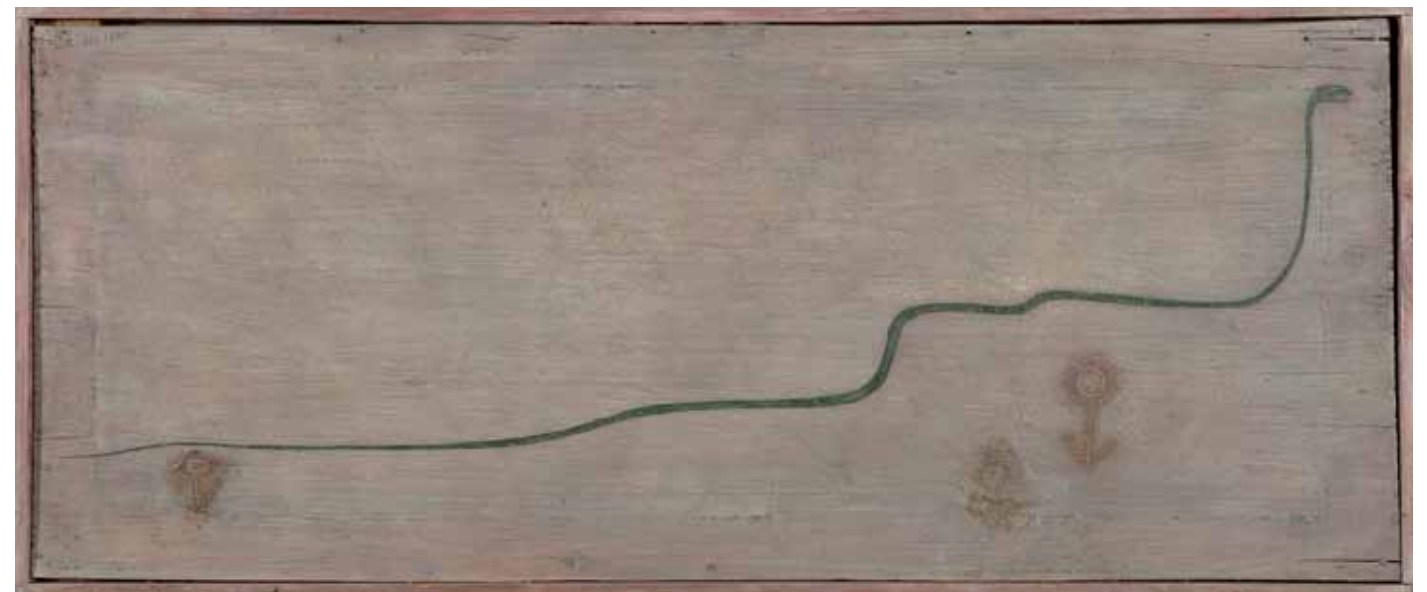
26. Wohlriechende Insel (Fragrant Island). 1929

watercolor and pen and ink on paper laid down on cardboard  
23 x 31 cm (9 x 12<sup>3</sup>/<sub>16</sub> inches)

27. Sonne über d. Wasser (Sun over the Water). 1929

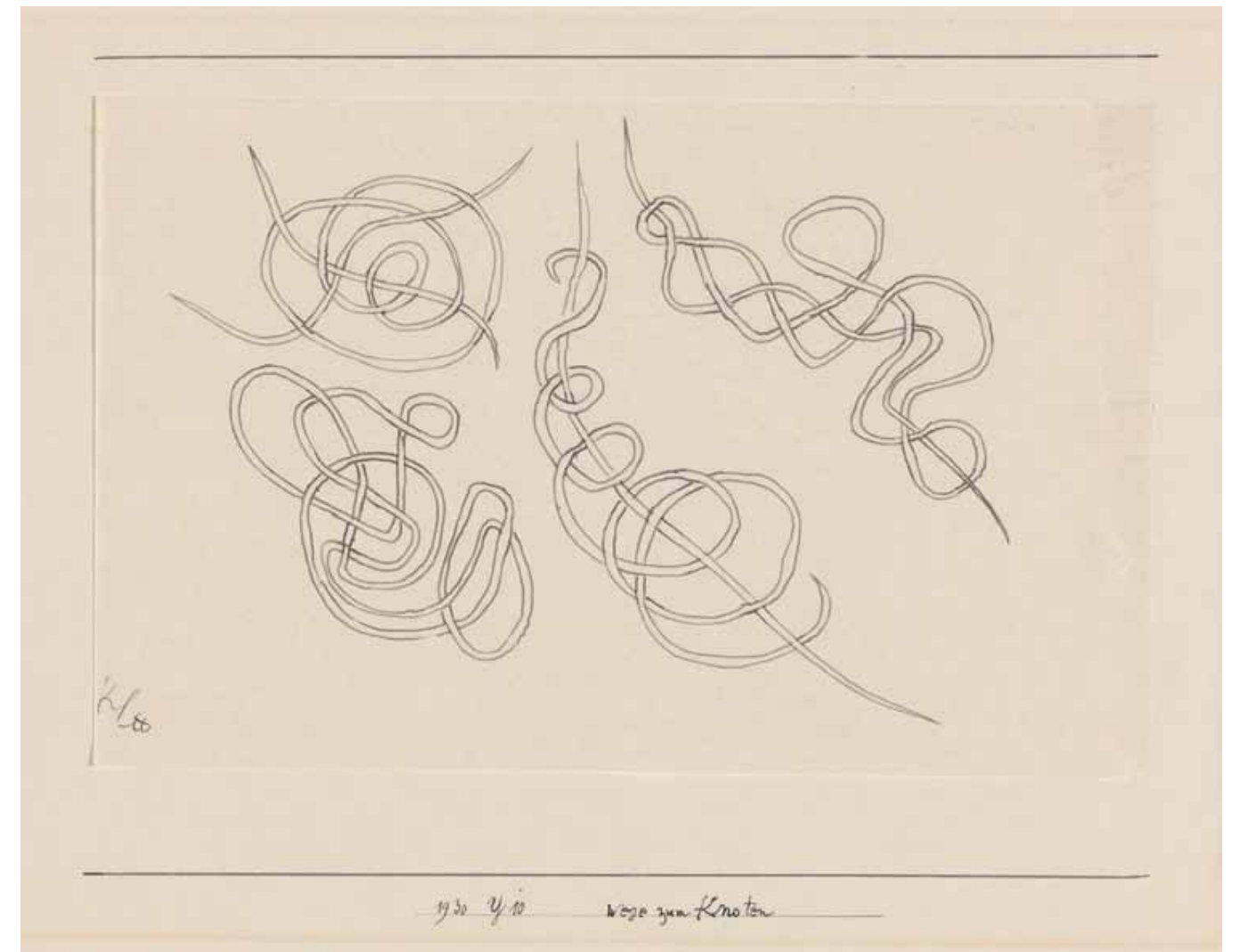
pen and ink and pencil on paper laid down on cardboard  
32.8 x 21 cm (13 x 8 1/4 inches)





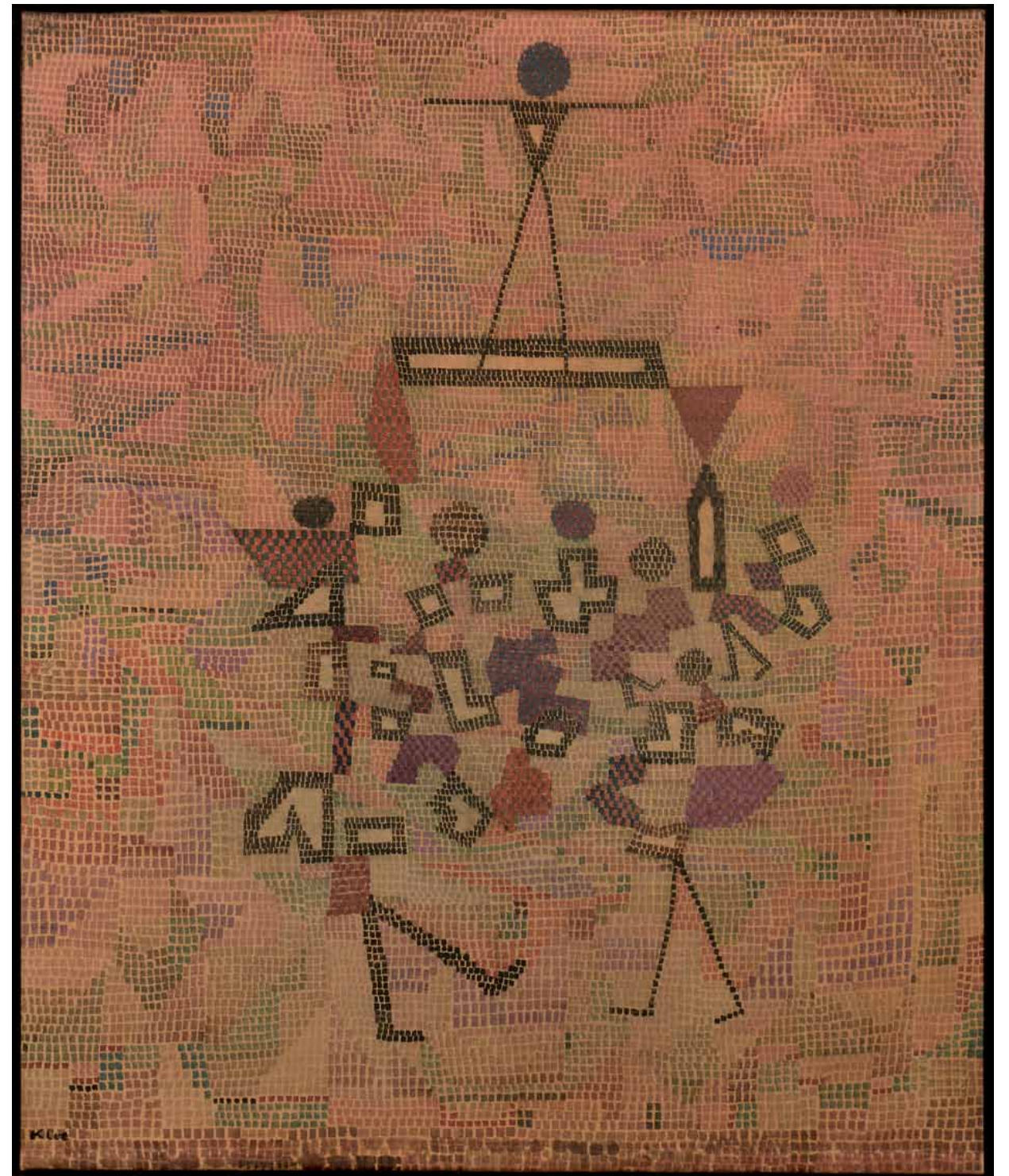
28. Die Schlange (The Snake). 1929

oil pigment and watercolor on wood, nailed on wooden strips,  
verso oil pigment and pen and ink on gauze; original frame  
31.5 x 74.5 cm (12<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 30 inches)



29. Wege zum Knoten (Paths to the Knot). 1930

pen and ink on paper on cardboard  
17.5 x 27.5 cm (6<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 10<sup>13</sup>/<sub>16</sub> inches)



30. Überbrücktes (Bridged). 1931

pen and ink on paper on cardboard  
60.7 x 50.5 cm (23 3/4 x 19 7/8 inches)



## The Bauhaus Years: A Chronology

### 1918

**December** Klee is released from the army and returns to Munich for Christmas.

### 1919

**January** Joint exhibition with Kurt Schwitters and Johannes Molzahn at Galerie Der Sturm in Berlin.

**February** Rents a studio at Suresnes Castle in Schwabing, Munich, after being permanently discharged from the army.

**April** Invited to join the leftist Action Committee of Revolutionary Artists (an offshoot of the Novembergruppe), led by Hans Richter.

**Summer** Fails to succeed Adolf Hölzel at the Stuttgart Academy of Arts, despite recommendations from Oskar Schlemmer and Willi Baumeister.

Signs a three-year contract with the dealer Hans Goltz, in Munich, which will be renewed in 1922.

### 1920

**May–June** First exhibition of Klee's work at Goltz's Galerie Neue Kunst in Munich, where 362 works are shown.

**October** Invited by Walter Gropius to teach at the Bauhaus in Weimar.

**Autumn** First monographs on Klee, written by Leopold Zahn and Hans von Wedderkop.

Publication of Klee's essay "Farbe als Wissenschaft" in *Mitteilungen des deutschen Werkbundes*.

**1921**

Wilhelm Hausenstein publishes his monograph on Klee, *Kairuan oder eine Geschichte vom Maler Klee und von der Kunst dieses Zeitalters (Kairouan, or the Story of the Painter Klee and of the Art of This Time)*

**January** Klee takes up his post at the Bauhaus but continues to live in Munich, commuting fortnightly between Weimar and home. Fellow teachers include Gropius, Lyonel Feininger, Schlemmer, Johannes Itten, Hannes Meyer and Gerhard Marcks.

**October** Klee moves to Weimar.

**November** Until the following May, gives his *Beiträge zur bildnerischen Form*.

**1922**

**April** The bookbinding workshop at the Bauhaus, in which Klee is teaching, is dissolved.

**July** Vasily Kandinsky joins the Bauhaus teaching staff.

**November** Klee teaches *Farbenlehre* and becomes artistic advisor in the stained-glass workshop.

**1923**

**August–September** First International Exhibition of the Weimar Bauhaus. Klee's essay "Wege des Naturstudiums" (Way of studying nature) is published in *Staatliches Bauhaus-Weimar 1919–1923* to coincide with the exhibition.

**October** Teaches *Elementaren Gestaltungsunterricht* until the following February.

**1924**

**January–February** First American exhibition of Klee's work, organized by Katherine S. Dreier at the Société Anonyme (an association she founded with Marcel Duchamp in 1920 for the promotion and study of modern art), in the Heckscher Building on West 57th Street in Manhattan.

**January** Klee delivers the lecture *Über die moderne Kunst* (On modern art) to inaugurate his exhibition at Kunstverein Jena.

**March** Forms *Die Blaue Vier* with Kandinsky, Feininger and Alexej von Jawlensky, a group promoted chiefly on the west coast of the United States by Emmy Scheyer.

**December** Bauhaus at Weimar officially closes.

**1925**

**April** The Bauhaus moves to Dessau. Klee is promoted to the title of Professor.

**May–June** Second one-man show at Goltz's Galerie Neue Kunst, after which his contract ends. Alfred Flechtheim, with galleries in Berlin and Düsseldorf, becomes his new dealer.

**October–November** First exhibition in France, at Galerie Vavin-Raspail, Paris.

**November** Klee's work is shown in the first Surrealist exhibition, at Galerie Pierre, Paris.

Publication of *Pädagogisches Skizzenbuch*, an extract of a lecture course from 1921–22.

Otto Ralfs founds the Klee Gesellschaft.

**1926**

**July** Klee shares a two-family house with Kandinsky.

**October–November** Travels to Italy in the summer: Elba, Pisa, Florence, Ravenna.

**December** Despite financial crisis, Walter Gropius' Dessau Bauhaus is inaugurated.

Klee teaches sculpture and painting class as well as **Grundlehre(transl)**.

**1927**

**Summer** Travels to Porquerolles and Corsica.

Teaches *Gestaltungslehre für Weberei, Formenlehre* and painting.

**1928**

**March– April** Gropius, Herbert Bayer, Marcel Breuer and László Moholy-Nagy leave the Bauhaus. Hannes Meyer becomes its new director.

**July–August** Klee travels to Paris and Brittany.

**December** Start of month-long trip to Egypt.

## 1929

Joins Deutscher Künstlerbund.

In honor of Klee's fiftieth birthday, various exhibitions are staged in Dresden, Berlin and Paris. The exhibition at the Galerie Alfred Flechtheim, Berlin, is shown in New York the following year.

*Editions Cahiers d'art* publishes Will Grohmann's monograph on Klee.

## 1930

**March–April** Sixty-three works by Klee are shown in a retrospective at The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

**Spring** Invited to teach at the Düsseldorf Academy.

**August** Ludwig Mies van der Rohe replaces Meyer as director of the Bauhaus.

## 1931

**April** Klee terminates post at the Bauhaus. Continues to live in Dessau.

**October** Joins faculty of the Düsseldorf Academy as professor of painting.

## 1933

Klee is persecuted by the Nazis and returns to Switzerland.



## List of Plates in order of appearance

### 1. Ohne Titel (Untitled). 1918

oil on cardboard, verso paper on muslin

15 x 32 cm (5 <sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 12 <sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> inches)

inscribed on the verso: *Haltbarkeitsprobe: umstehende Arbeit steht Aquarell u. Tempera auf gefirnisstem Ölgrund, dieser ist geleimt, was die Haltbarkeit in Frage stellt, die Temperaschicht ist mit Leinölfirnis überzogen; underneath: A. Grund: materielle Technik A: alte, sehr trockene Ölmalerei (pastose) mit Bimstein und Wasser geschliffen, dann geleimt. B Malerei Auf diesem Grund mit Aquarell und Temperafarben gemalt, diese Temperaschicht ist zum Schluss mit Leinölfirnis überzogen (aus dem Jahr 1918). Die Haltbarkeit is anno 1928 besser als erwartet. Klee*

Private collection, Switzerland, on permanent loan at the Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern

### 2. Mit dem grünen Quadrat (With the Green Square). 1919,69

watercolor on paper on cardboard

watercolor on paper on cardboard

26 x 20 cm (10 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 7 <sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> inches)

inscribed upper right: *Klee*; on the cardboard lower left: *1919.69.*

Collection of Gretchen and John Berggruen

### 3. Dreitakt (Triple Time). 1919,68

watercolor and pencil on paper laid down on cardboard

31.2 x 22.3 cm (12 <sup>5</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 8 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> inches)

signed lower right: *Klee*

inscribed lower left: *1919.68*; on the cardboard center: *Dreitakt*;

on the cardboard lower left: *SCl*

Private collection

### 4. Seelandschaft m.d Himmelskörper (Lake Landscape with the Celestial Body). 1920,166

pen and ink on paper laid down on cardboard

12.7 x 28.1 cm (5 x 11 inches)

signed upper right: *Klee*

inscribed on the cardboard with margin lines; lower left: *1920./166*;

lower right: *Seelandschaft m. d. Himmelskörper*

Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern

### 5. Frisst aus der Hand (Zweite Fassung) Eats out of the Hand (Second Version). 1920,171

oil transfer and watercolor on paper

30.4 x 24 cm (12 x 9 <sup>7</sup>/<sub>16</sub> inches)

signed upper left: *Klee*

inscribed on the cardboard lower left: *1920/171 Frisst aus der Hand (zweite Fassung)*

Private collection

### 6. Im Zeichen der Schnecke (Under the sign of the Snail). 1921,27

oil transfer and watercolor on paper laid down on cardboard

38.8 x 27.4 cm (15 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 10 <sup>13</sup>/<sub>16</sub> inches)

signed center left: *Klee*

inscribed on the cardboard: *1921/ 27\_Im Zeichen der Schnecke +*

Private collection

### 7. Das Tor der Nacht (The Gate of the Night). 1921,56

watercolor and pencil on Canson paper laid down on cardboard

25 x 33 cm (9 <sup>13</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 13 inches)

signed center right: *Klee*

inscribed on the cardboard lower center: *1921/56 das Tor der Nacht*

Private collection, Trieste

### 8. Ohne Titel (Untitled). 1921

watercolor on paper laid down on cardboard

21.6 x 16 cm (8 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> x 6 <sup>5</sup>/<sub>16</sub> inches)

signed lower right: *Klee*

inscribed lower right: *21*

Private collection

### 9. Fische in der Tiefe (Fishes in the Deep). 1921,87

watercolor on paper laid down on a second sheet of paper, laid down on cardboard

16 x 21.7 cm (6 <sup>5</sup>/<sub>15</sub> x 8 <sup>9</sup>/<sub>16</sub> inches)

signed lower right: *Klee*

inscribed lower left on cardboard: *1921 /\_87*; lower right: *Fische in der Tiefe x*;

verso: 1921 / 87 Fische in der Tiefe Klee

Private collection, New York

### 10. Läufer am Ziel (Runner at the Goal). 1921,105

watercolor and graphite on paper mounted on cardboard with gouache border

39.4 x 30.2 cm (15 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> x 11 <sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> inches) overall

signed middle right: *Klee*

inscribed on the border of the cardboard on the lower left: *1921 105 Läufer am Ziel \_*;

in pencil lower left: *S\_ Cl.*

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York

Estate of Karl Nierendorf, By purchase 48.1172.55

**11. Zeichnung zum "Tanz des trauernden Kindes"****(Drawing for "Dance of the Grieving Child"). 1921,186**

pen and ink on paper laid down on cardboard, with glue spots

19.2 x 22 cm (7 <sup>9</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 8 <sup>11</sup>/<sub>16</sub> inches)signed upper left: *Klee*inscribed upper left with pencil: *1921*; on the cardboard lower center:*1921 / 186 Zeichnung zum 'Tanz des trauernden'; below: Kindes'*

Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern

**12. Tanz des trauernden Kindes (Dance of the Grieving Child). 1922,11**

oil transfer, watercolor and ink, partially sprayed, laid on paper,

bordered with watercolor and pen and ink on cardboard

29.2 x 27.3 cm (11 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> x 10 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> inches)signed lower center: *Klee*inscribed on the cardboard border lower center: *1922 / 11 Tanz des trauernden Kindes*

Collection of Michael and Judy Steinhardt, New York

**13. Der Dampfer fährt am botanischen Garten vorbei****(The Steamboat Passes by the Botanical Garden).1921,199**

pen and ink on paper divided and newly combined on cardboard

a) 11.9 x 28.9 cm (4 <sup>11</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 11 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> inches); b) 10.4 x 28.8 cm (4 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 11 <sup>5</sup>/<sub>16</sub> inches)signed on sheet a) upper right: *Klee*inscribed on sheet a) lower left: *Der Dampfer fährt am botanischen Garten vorbei*;on the cardboard double bordered lower left: *1921 /// 199*; lower right: *Der Dampfer**fährt am botanischen Garten vorbei*

Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern

**14. Wald-Einsiedelei (Hermitage in the Woods). 1921,225**

oil on cardboard in its original frame

19.8 x 30.2 cm (7 <sup>13</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 11 <sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> inches)signed lower right, faded: *Klee*originally inscribed on the verso on the upper frame ledge: *Wald-Einsiedelei 1921 225 Klee*

Private collection, Switzerland, on permanent loan at the Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern

**15. Ouvertüre (Overture). 1922,142**

watercolor and pencil on paper divided and newly combined, bordered with watercolor,

pen and ink on cardboard

24 x 33 cm (9 <sup>7</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 13 inches)signed lower left: *Klee*inscribed on cardboard lower left: *1922 / 142*.; lower right: *Ouvertüre*

Collection of Alexander Berggruen

**16. Scizze im Charakter eines Teppichs (Sketch in the Manner of a Carpet). 1923,142**pen and watercolor on paper laid down on cardboard, above and beneath watercolor,  
and pen and ink edges22 x 14.7 cm (8 <sup>11</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 5 <sup>13</sup>/<sub>16</sub> inches)signed upper right: *Klee*inscribed on the cardboard edge lower left: *1923 142*;lower right: *Scizze im Charakter eines Teppichs*

Denver Art Museum Collection: Gift of Katherine C. Detre, 1981.12

**17. Wand Teppich (Tapestry). 1923,167**oil transfer and watercolor on paper, bordered with gouache and pen and ink on cardboard,  
lower edges with watercolor and pen and ink on cardboard.32.5 x 24 cm (12 <sup>13</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 9 <sup>7</sup>/<sub>16</sub> inches)inscribed lower left on the cardboard: *1923 167*; lower right: *Wand Teppich*

Private collection

**18. Schlussbild einer Tragikomödie (Final Scene of a Tragicomedy). 1923,144**oil transfer and watercolor on chalk-primed paper, upper and lower edges with  
gouache and pen and ink on cardboard25 x 35 cm (9 <sup>13</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 13 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> inches)signed lower right: *Klee*inscribed on cardboard lower center: *1923 144 Schlussbild einer Tragiködie*;lower left with pencil: *///*

Collection of Laetitia Malingue

**19. 217. 1923,187**

pen and ink and pencil on paper laid down on cardboard

28.7 x 21.7 cm (11 <sup>5</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 8 <sup>9</sup>/<sub>16</sub> inches)signed lower right: *Klee*inscribed lower right with pencil: *1923 4/12*; on cardboard lower center: *1923. 187. "217"*

Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern

**20. Schwarzer Herold (Black Herald). 1924,117**watercolor and color **paste** on paper, bordered with gouache and pen and ink,

lower edge with watercolor and pen and ink laid down on cardboard

30.5 x 20.2 cm (12 x 8 inches)

signed lower right: *Klee*inscribed on cardboard on the edge lower left: *1924 117*.; lower right: *Schwarzer Herold\_*;on the cardboard: *für Walter Dexel, freundnachbarlich, Klee*

Private collection, New York

**21. Die Erfinderin des Nestes (The Inventress of the Nest). 1925,33 (M 3)**

watercolor on chalk ground on paper laid down on cardboard

27.6 x 22 cm (10 <sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 8 <sup>11</sup>/<sub>16</sub> inches)

signed lower center: *Klee*

inscribed upper left with pencil: *25 2 12*; on the cardboard edge lower center:

*1925 m. 3. die Erfinderin des Nestes*; lower left with pencil: *Sg. K Privatbesitz*

Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern

**22. Häuserbild mit dem Treppenweg (Pictures of Houses with Flight of Steps). 1923,31**

watercolor on chalk basis on paper, bordered with gouache and pen and ink, lower edge

with gouache and pen and ink, laid down on cardboard

26,7 x 33,3 cm (10 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> x 13 inches)

signed lower right: *Klee*

inscribed on the cardboard's edge lower center: *1923\_///\_31\_ Häuserbild mit*

*dem Treppenweg*

Collection of Michael and Judy Steinhardt, New York

**23. Das andere Geisterzimmer (neue Fassung)****The Other Ghost Chamber (New Version). 1925,109 (A 9)**

oil transfer and watercolor, partially sprayed, on paper laid down on cardboard

48 x 34 cm (19 x 13 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> inches)

signed lower right: *Klee*

inscribed on the cardboard edge lower center: *1925 A. 9. das andere Geisterzimmer*;

below: *(neue Fassung)*; lower left with pencil: *VIII*

Private collection

**24. Der Luftballon (The Balloon).1926,153 (F 3)**

oil on a black basis on cardboard in its original frame

32.5 x 33 cm (12 <sup>13</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 13 inches)

signed upper left: *Klee*

inscribed upper left: *\_1926 F\_3\_*; on the verso and frame: *1926 F\_3 Luftballon Klee*

Private collection, Switzerland

**25. Die Flut schwemmt Städte (The Flood Washes Away Towns). 1927,50 (N 10)**

1927,50 (N 10)

pen and ink on paper, with glue spots laid down on cardboard

26.8 x 30.6 cm (10 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> x 12 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>16</sub> inches)

signed upper left: *\_Klee*

inscribed upper left with pencil: *die Flut schwemmt Städte\_*;

on the cardboard edge, lower center: *1927 N 10 die Flut schwemmt Städte*

Collection of Michael and Judy Steinhardt, New York

**26. Wohlriechende Insel (Fragrant Island). 1929,280 (OE 10)**

watercolor and pen and ink on paper laid down on cardboard

23 x 31 cm (9 x 12 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>16</sub> inches)

signed upper left: *Klee*

Private collection, Trieste

**27. Sonne über d. Wasser (Sun over the Water). 1929,295 (Omega 5)**

pen and ink and pencil on paper laid down on cardboard

32.8 x 21 cm (13 x 8 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> inches)

signed lower right: *Klee*

inscribed on the cardboard edge, lower center: *1929<sup>Omega 5</sup>. Sonne über d. Wasser*

Private collection, Switzerland, on permanent loan at the Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern

**28. Die Schlange (The Snake). 1929,341 (3 H 41)**

oil pigment and watercolor on wood, nailed on wooden strips, verso oil pigment

and pen and ink on gauze; original frame

31.5 x 74.5 cm (12 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 30 inches)

signed upper left: *\_Klee*

inscribed upper left: *1929\_3\_H\_41\_*; verso on the upper wooden strip:

*1929 "3\_H\_41." "Die Schlange" Klee Cl\_14*

Private collection

**29. Wege zum Knoten (Paths to the Knot). 1930,150 (Y 10)**

pen and ink on paper on cardboard

17.5 x 27.5 cm (6 <sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 10 <sup>13</sup>/<sub>16</sub> inches)

signed lower left: *Klee*

inscribed on the cardboard edge, lower center: *1930 Y 10 Wege zum Knoten*

Private collection, Switzerland, on permanent loan at the Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern

**30. Überbrücktes (Bridged). 1931, 153 (R13)**

gouache and pencil on cotton canvas laid down on canvas in its original frame

60.4 x 50.5 cm (23 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 19 <sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> inches)

Private collection, New York

## Colophon

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Ouverture (Overture). 1922

watercolor and pencil on paper divided up and newly combined,  
bordered with watercolor, pen and ink on cardboard  
24 x 33 cm (9.4 x 13 in.)

