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PAUL KLEE AND CHILDREN'S ART

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER:	
I PAUL KLEE'S BACKGROUND AND INFLUENCES	6
THE EARLY YEARS	
BLAUE REITER GROUP	
THE EARLY YEARS CONTINUED	
BAUHAUS YEARS	
THE LAST YEARS	
II PAUL KLEE AND CHILDREN'S DRAWINGS	18
THE CHILDS ARTISTIC DEVELOPMENT	
THE CREATIVE PROCESS	
SCRIBBLING	28
SCRIBBLE DRAWINGS OF THE THIRTIES	
SCRIBBLE DRAWINGS OF THE TWENTIES	
AUXILIARY SCRIBBLES	
THE SCHEMATIC MODE	36
SIMPLE REPRESENTATION FOR FIGURE AND FACE	
FIGURES WITHOUT LIMBS	
THE BUILDING UP PROCESS	
OVERLAPPING AND TRANSPARENT IMAGES	
RECTANGULAR FIGURES AND MOVEMENT	
THE SCHEMATIC MODE AND WRITING	46
III CONCLUSION	50
ILLUSTRATIONS	54
BIBLIOGRAPHY	65

ILLUSTRATIONS

Colour Plates

NO.		PAGE
1.	<u>ROOM-PERSPECTIVE WITH OCCUPANTS</u> by Paul Klee	54
2.	<u>ERROR ON GREEN</u> by Paul Klee	54
3.	<u>EMBRACE</u> by Paul Klee	55
4.	<u>EQUILIBRIST</u> by Paul Klee	55

Black and White Plates

5.	<u>FOOL</u> by Paul Klee	56
6.	<u>FORGOTTEN BY NOAH</u> by Paul Klee	57
7.	<u>KREEPING</u> by Paul Klee	57
8.	<u>DOLL THEATRE</u> by Paul Klee	58
9.	<u>MASK OF FEAR</u> by Paul Klee	58
10.	<u>GROUP OF MASKS</u> by Paul Klee	59
11.	<u>DANCING FROM FEAR</u> by Paul Klee	59
12.	<u>HEIGHT</u> by Paul Klee	60
13.	<u>SHYLY, HE LIFTS THE VEIL</u> by Paul Klee	60
14.	<u>SPIRITUAL CATASTROPHE</u> by Paul Klee	61
15.	<u>UNCANNY MOMENT</u> by Paul Klee	61
16.	<u>ACROBATS</u> by Paul Klee	62
17.	<u>SPECTER OF A GENIUS</u> by Paul Klee	63
18.	<u>POET-DRAFTSMAN</u> by Paul Klee	64
19.	<u>SERMON TO DESERT-ANIMALS</u> by Paul Klee	64

INTRODUCTION

The consideration given to the work of professional artists has had the effect of conditioning the public, of creating a state of mind which makes it responsive only to the art displayed in museums and galleries or to art that depends on the same frame of reference, the same means of expression. Any works which out of ignorance or obstinacy, depart from the accepted codes are given no more than a passing or condescending glance.

Western society has long remained blind to whatever departed drastically from its own standards, as fixed and institutionalized since the Renaissance. These standards were based on the exclusive priority of optical representation and all conventions deriving from it. Thus painting was governed by principals such as a fixed viewpoint, unity of space and lighting linear and aerial perspective, etc.

The history of western culture and more particularly the figurative arts over the past two or three centuries, has been that of a slow and cautious shift away from this system of rules. The artists who aspired to break away from it were naturally led to take their stand on other representational systems, earlier or exotic ones. In the nineteenth century the Romantic generation turned towards the East, the Realists went to popular imagery or Dutch and Spanish painting for inspiration, and the Impressionists to Japanese prints. These borrowings were assimilated slowly without impairing unity.

Whatever its capacity of assimilation Western culture has long persisted in dismissing three self-governing forms of expression, those of children, the mentally ill and the naive artist. For a century now however Western society has changed its attitude towards these forms of expression. One of the reasons for this change of attitude was the discovery of what has been called "primitivism". For a long time the African and Oceanian arts were considered uncouth inarticulate and unworthy of figuring in a museum. For the non-Western arts to be recognised as genuine cultural and artistic achievements, they had to be discovered by Gauguin, the Fauves, the northern Expressionists, and Cubists and Surrealists : by making explicit borrowings from them, these artists acclimatized them to our sensibility. This discovery enabled artists like Klee and Kandinsky to study childrens art without being laughed at. Klee commented at the time of the Blaue Reiter exhibition -

"Do not laugh reader! Children also have artistic ability and there is wisdom in their having it! The more helpless they are, the more instructive are the examples they furnish us; and they must be preserved free of corruption from an early age" ①

For a long time children's drawings were regarded as mere doodlings, judged to be awkward mistaken or accidentally correct and a resemblance between child and adult art would not have been noted. The first children's drawings to be kept and studied in the late nineteenth century, were those of 'infant prodigies', who at eight or ten were already drawing like grown-ups. Yet the way had been shown by the

pioneers of a new teaching method, like Jean-Jacque Rousseau and Pestalozzi, who saw the child mind not as a still formless outline of the adult mind but as a world with a structure of its own. Later, thanks to the work of child psychologists and psychoanalysts like Freud, Melanie Klein, Wallen and Piaget, much insight was gained into the successive stages of the mental development of young children but the point of view remained adult-centered. Here again our eyes have been opened by modern artists like Klee, Ernst, Miro and Dubuffet.

One of the first artists to concern himself with the artistic development of children was the German painter Phillip Otto. The Impressionists had spoken of the "innocent eye", Van Gogh, Gaugin and Emille Bernard spoke of "painting as children paint", Picasso said -

"Once I draw like Raphael, but it has taken me a whole
lifetime to learn to draw like children" ②

But Paul Klee was the first artist to paint pictures that children can understand in terms of what they already know about art. Children can understand his painting because one of Klee's means of 'reforming' art was to introduce the actual methods and techniques of the child artist : heavy outlining, scribbling, scratching and dotting are to name but a few.

FOOTNOTES

- ① Jim M. Jordan, Paul Klee and Cubism, pg.27.
- ② Ellen Winner, Invented Worlds, the Psychology of the Arts, pg.144.

CHAPTER I

PAUL KLEE'S

BACKGROUND AND INFLUENCES

THE EARLY YEARS

Paul Klee was born near Bern in 1879, he spent three years studying art in Munich and his work at this time was purely academic. During his early years he rarely used colour and devoted himself above all to drawing and developed that very distinctive style, at once philosophical and satirical, which was to characterise his work until around 1913.

Music and poetry were always close to Klee. The thousands of titles Klee invented for his pictures are a direct outgrowth of his poetry and Klee made use of musical theory in his painting to stimulate himself and as a means of control.

Between 1903 and 1905 Klee made fifteen etchings, Klee refers to all of them as Inventions, one of the most intense engravings is Perseus : Wit Has Conquered Suffering. Certain aspects of his style are similar to Beardsley but Klee possesses a keener sense of the grotesque and a very characteristic humour.

Klee then turned to glass painting, between the years 1905 and 1906 he produced twenty-six drawings and watercolours on glass, others followed between 1907 and 1917. The discipline of glass painting and its materials enriched Klee's vocabulary considerably. The glass paintings, although still more or less satirical in spirit, are very different from the etchings. In Conception they resemble the drawings and

watercolours done in the same period. These last are often impressionistic in character. Those done in black and white are close to his black and white watercolours. Before applying colour, he experimented with tones. The Colourful Garden Scene, 1905, comes close to Matisse, the black and white Street and Carriage, 1907, which limits itself to tonal differentiations, could have been painted by a Fauve.

Klee went beyond his experiments in black and white and polychromy and studied the effects of light that nibbles at contours, bends lines, deforms perspectives and eats away colours. He was also trying to integrate the notion of time into his spatial, an attempt that he was to pursue for a number of years. On occasion Klee quite appropriately made use of binoculars, as much to liberate himself from the naturalistic perspective as to capture his models from life. In this period Klee's visual experiments indicates how anxious he was not to founder in imitative representation.

In 1912 Klee exhibited at the second Blaue Reiter exhibition and in 1913 at the first German Herbst-Salon, organised by Der Sturm in Berlin. During this time his drawing was now becoming diversified and at the same time acquiring schematizations that were almost oneiric in nature and inventions that resembled the art of children. Certain discoveries inspired by his reading of Prinzhorn's 'Plastic Activity

of the Mentally Ill' were to increase his long-standing interest in children's drawings. Klee felt children often saw things in a much clearer perspective than adults and that children's art could offer important clues as to what is truly essential and universal in the process of image making. Ludwig Tiek said -

"I would gladly give up action, passion composition and everything else if you could open up to me with Roseate Keys the country of the child's mysterious thought" ①

Klee shared the same view, he was interested in reaching the innocence of children's art in both their style and their perception.

BLAUE REITER GROUP

Klee's interest was also shared by others at the time. The Blaue Reiter alamac collected in 1911 by Wassily Kandinsky and Franc Marc gave considerable weight to the value of children's art for the artist. Kadinsky praised children for 'drawing what they know rather than what they see'. ② He maintained that their work is on just as high a level, loading his argument with the weight of biblical quotations.

The Blaue Reiter group had no precise artistic programme. Its activities consisted in the organisation of exhibitions and took its stand upon the freedom of experimentation and the unhampered development of originality. In the catalogue of the inaugural exhibition the aims of the group were stated as follows -

"We do not seek to proagate any precise or particular form, our object is to show, in the variety of forms represent how the inner desire of artists realises itself in a multiple fashion" ③

The criterior of selection for the exhibitions is not easy to define. There does not seem to be any common denominator in terms of pictorial form. Reproductions of children's drawings appear opposite Bavarian folk paintings on glass and Old German Woodcuts, with theatre masks and shadow puppets and other evidence of the wide ranging taste of the modern artist, seeking to slough off the tradition of formal naturalism in Western art. Despite the variety of styles one common factor was evident throughout the work. This common factor stemmed from the nature of their artistic motivation that 'Inner desire' which Kandinsky spoke of.

Kandinsky in his essay on the question of form (Der Blaue Reiter 1912) insists that the practical and effectual are quite foreign to the child, that he views every object with a fresh eye and still enjoys the unspoiled capacity to percieve the thing in itself. Kandinsky also believes as though through x-ray eyes the child sees through walls and clothing, through all artificial barriers and depicts what lives and breathes behind them. In the process he alters proportions to bring things into his own scale, as though employing quite archaic distinctions between large and small exterior and interior. Out of play and emotion he constructs his miraculous world, but when play and emotion cease his

artistry vanishes. An understanding of cause and effect and of trial and achievement takes the place of untentioned creation.^④

THE EARLY YEARS CONTINUED

In 1914 Klee went to Tunisia, here he was confronted with a new kind of light and his palette became brighter he said

"colour and I are one" ^⑤

like Delaunay, Klee used colour as a means to bring space, movement, time and even objects into the picture. Out of crystalline structure of forms and colours emerges a mosque a palm tree, or even a camel as in Hammamet with Mosque. Klee admired the cubists for their 'form thinking', although he did not go as far as breaking down the object to the point of total abstraction. He did however produce a completely nonobjective work from time to time.

While serving in the army in Bavaria Klee painted some watercolours. After largely nonobjective Anatomy of Aphrodite, 1915, he executed Dynamic of a Lech River Landscape, 1917, and Once Emerged from the Gray of Night, 1918. In 1919 back in Munich Klee painted some small oils : He painted very free compositions; like the Shrub in the Thicket, landscapes in particular and experimental forms. The more cosmic pictures, like the Lech River Landscape and the more philosophical ones such as the Aphrodite, are no less built up layer by layer, than a work like Little Tree, 1919.

In Klee's sketches from the years 1914 to 1920 the variety of treatments is matched by an increasing number of techniques besides paper Klee paints on fabrics, wood and cardboard.

BAUHAUS YEARS

In January 1921 Klee went to Weimar as a professor at the Bauhaus, his work continued to grow both in quantity and in richness of content. Despite his easily identifiable subjects, the movement towards abstraction is clarified and accentuated, especially in the definition of spaces. Examples of this can be seen in Dream City and Picture of a Town with Red-Green Accents, both painted in 1921. The geometrical shapes in many of Klee's paintings intersect, thus creating multiple spaces, those very spaces that were soon to develop in the direction of perspective schemata.

Around 1922 appear scenographic themes inspired by the opera and the circus with their train of actors accessories and settings. In the Wild Man, 1922, we see a figure reminiscent of a clown. The Magic Theatre, 1923 was another work belonging to this period. Klee did approximately five hundred works on this subject matter.

In 1923 he adopted drawing with hatchings or stripes and screens and painted the first magic squares. Gradation of Colours from Statics to Dynamism, 1923, followed, at intervals until the end of his life,

by Rhythmical, In Flower and others. The latter works, whose square-ruled surfaces are enlivened by several rows of small squares, can simultaneously be regarded as reminiscences of oriental rugs or the perpetuation of a slight Cubist influence, undoubtedly a little of both.

In 1925 his 'Pedagogical sketchbook' was published, the sketchbook contains numerous theoretical considerations on the subjective perspectives of space, modalities of composition, the relationships of measures and weights, spatial projections and so on.

In his work of this period coloured margins, which formed as it were a second border inside certain watercolours, disappear and fade away; the space is now continuous and is occupied by Celtic and Runic looking signs. In his drawing the line, whose nature is continually being modified is sometimes drawn freehand, sometimes guided. For curves Klee often uses the compass, whose leadless tip also serves to engrave an intaglio line in the thickness of the paper. Klee also made some technical discoveries, he obtained fuzzy and shaded effects within forms, effects that contrast with the precision of the outlines. Klee also discovered what have been called 'lace effects' - close, dense calligraphies like knitting motifs, sometimes extremely complicated and capable of being repeated.

In 1927 Klee went to Corsica, from which he brought back a certain lightening of tonalities. The character of his works of this period, less fairylike than that of the works he created at Weimar but in

which the imagery holds an equally large place, may instead be hallucinatory. Compositions with straight or curved parallel lines, a continuation of the earlier musical staves, followed in succession.

Klees graphic experiments were very numerous around this time. He began a series of works with a melodic line; the schema is the more productive because here the continuous flow of the winding lines is more important than rhythm or repetition. Examples of this can be seen in the painting Chosen Site, 1927, and the drawing Animals in Moonlight, 1927. There are also however noncontinuous lines in works of great sensibility such as Dreamlike, 1930.

THE LAST YEARS

At Christmas 1938 Klee returned to Bern and although the memories of his trip to Egypt in 1929 were fading, he frequently consulted his notebooks he had brought back, we note, through the systematic distribution of planes, the persistence of his Egyptian impressions, these can be seen in his Arab Song, 1932. It was now however works which originated from within that predominated such as Fire by Full Moon, 1933. He also painted several oils characterised by their thick masses of pigment, including The Future Man, which with its grids and textures is much more reminiscent than the Divisionists works of the Mosaics of Ravenna and which seems to have paved the way for the development of the Angels series of 1939.

Between 1934 and 1936 Klee's output of work was relatively small due to illness but the last three and a half years of his life proved extraordinarily rich. Klee at this time did not limit himself to just a few themes or concentrate on a few pictorial conceptions. In 1937 Klee paints pictures composed of bars of varying thickness, in some of these colour asserts itself against a skeleton of bars. Sentry, 1937, is rather menacing with its thick bars but Klee could also be very gentle with the bars, even without the addition of intermediate lines, as we can see in the brush drawing Dear Oh Dear, 1937.

In 1938 Klee painted seven large horizontal formats which in a very free way combine bars with other pictorial means, especially colour. Among those are Fruit on Blue Ground, Rich Harbour, Spring of Fire and Insula Dulcamara.

In 1939 Klee increased his output, constantly widening the area of his investigations and experiments. Having completed the cycle Everything That Stands on Its Feet Walks and Runs, he began the Approaches, Eidola, Infernal Park, Angels and Durx cycles.

Thus Klee entered the final period of his life. The pictures of this period are full of daemonic elements; We see demons and angels who bear a strange resemblance to each other. The demons represent the creatures of a world that is at once outside of and anterior to our own. In 1939 Klee produced twenty-eight angels and four more the year of his

death, about twenty had preceded these.

Klee's last dated work is of May tenth 1940 but he left few pictures unsigned, they revolve around the theme of death and transience and fall into three groups. The first comprises such symbolic signs set down with a broad brush, as Alea, Jacta, Hurt and This Star Teaches Bending. The second group comprises the pictures with lattice work, of which Captive is an example, which transcends all boundaries between this world and the beyond. The tragedy takes place in an intense blue, not in the hellish red of Death and Fire, the main work of the third group, with Figures of Death and The Ferryman.

FOOTNOTES

- 1 Denys Chevalier, Klee, pg.5.
- 2 Wassily Kandinsky and Franz Marc,
The Blaue Reiter Almanac, pg.174.
- 3 Harold Osborne, The Oxford Companion to Art, pg.139.
- 4 Wassily Kandinsky and Franz Marc,
The Blaue Reiter Almanac, pg.174-176
- 5 Hans L. Jaffé, Klee twentieth-century masters, pg.9.

CHAPTER II

PAUL KLEE

AND CHILDREN'S DRAWINGS

Throughout Klee's life the definition of the origins of expression obsessed him and he dreamed of reaching that absolute point zero from which he could make his real start, reconstruct creation and launch his message. The study of primitive art helped Klee reach this point, it enabled Klee to free himself from the narrow European traditions in art. Primitive for the Blaue Reiter group and Klee meant primary, basic essential and was applied to almost any work created outside the Renaissance tradition they rejected. The art of the mentally ill and naive artist falls into this category and Klee also shared an interest in both. He often made references to Hans Prinzhorn's book 'Art of the Mentally Ill'. Klee believed that the images these unschooled people make are products of a more authentic less falsified, less spoiled, wholly human desire for self-expression.

Similarities are often made between children's art and that of the mentally ill and naive artist. The art of the mentally ill, like children's, lies outside any historical development along the course of human progress. It too can achieve no continuity since the distorted forms of madness receive their stimulus from a sickness which precludes any conscious creative production. The sick mind works spontaneously and uncontrollably. Another similar feature between the art of the mentally ill and that of children is their absence of intention. It is known that the child and disturbed person have a private understanding of their work. For example the child sees a perfectly reasonable likeness of her mother in her drawing, while the disturbed person perhaps sees God in their drawing.

Comparisons of works by children with those by naive artists often displays profound affinities. Both the child and naive painter strive to shape and interpret their experiences of the world in images. Their disregard for anatomy and perspective are not the result of deliberate choice of style, but rather the stamp of a less developed level of consciousness. The child and naive artist never hesitate to change their scale or viewpoint in the course of execution. Every drawing is an adventure, a sequence of problems with which they cope freely and inventively as they arise, without keeping to any constant principals. This perceptual limitation at the same time favours the preservation of total expressiveness and originality of image.

If deep similarities are evident when one compares the work of children and naive's there is none the less a constant divergence to the point of separation between the permanance of children's creations and those of the naive's. The child's artistic output is ephemeral, as he developes his instinctive powers are reduced. The work of the naive artist however has a chance at permanance, the art of the child passes away.

THE CHILD'S ARTISTIC DEVELOPMENT

From looking at worldwide studies of children's art it becomes clear that there are patterns of development which are universal. These patterns can be seen in the symbols children use and the order in

which they use them.

Almost every young child begins by scribbling and slowly they gain control until they acquire the power to repeat certain marks, signs and shapes. From the age of one to three there is an emerging form, a movement towards an oval shape, the child also finds the muscular control and co-ordination of hand and eye to repeat and produce this shape.

Following the discovery of the oval, the child will begin to elaborate it by adding dots and perhaps lines, dots and lines appear within the oval. Gradually the lines and dots become grouped so as to represent the eyes, nose and mouth and the lines which once radiated from the oval become legs and sometimes arms. The 'big head' figure is established, the child tends to isolate it and use it singly. Irrelevancies are discarded and the figure becomes all important.

The same development can be traced when the child uses paint. Young children naturally draw in line and when they are given a paint brush they will still draw a line. As in linear patterns of development, a child discovers within his scribble the 'oval symbol', then the 'big head' symbol for the human figure, both patterns arrive at the same point.

At this stage in the child's development he paints and draws what he experiences, he is not interested in imitating the outward appearance of his mother, father or himself. His only interest is to relive or to express events which have been important to him.

When the child arrives at the simple 'oval big head plus two legs' stage his development accelerates. He modifies the shape by lengthening the two legs giving the hair pin figure. It is a simple logical step from that to drawing a line across to join the lower ends of the legs, thus making a body. The child now reaches the stage when he can produce a human figure with head, body, legs and arms in various assortments and sizes.

When a child reaches the age of seven he will become much more aware of his environment. In the same way that they found and used the 'big head' they now use new symbols, the strip sky, the strip ground and the box house. The familiar radial is now used for flower heads and the sun. The child has a logic which is entirely his own.

The characteristics remain, namely lack of proportion, for example a woman can be seen the same size as a tree, proportion is frequently equated with the significance or intensity of experience. Absence of local colour is another characteristic, at this stage the child still makes no attempt to indicate what they see, they paint what they know.

The child invents new symbols and uses these symbols as vehicles of expression. At this stage children's drawings will be progressively richer, more complex and the child will also become self-critical and will be dissatisfied with his drawings and painting.

THE CREATIVE PROCESS

The work of a very young child is explicit, uncomplicated and direct. It follows certain broad patterns of development. The four year old child experiences something which triggers off a work of art, the expression of the idea is powerful, direct and simple. It is a complete and clear statement. At this stage the child is still unable to express himself in writing, yet his expression of experience in terms of drawing is prolific. The expression is effective and communicates the nature of the original experience to the viewer. Gestural impulses, tactile and dynamic sensations, delight in the manipulation of materials and the emotional values attached to the objects pictured, all this enters into the expression at least as much as if not more than the perception of visual forms.

The five year old is a rapidly developing human being, every kind of event presses upon his consciousness. Relationships with parents, friends, situations and environment are all on hand, waiting to be expressed. The prolific nature of the child's personal experience of his world largely accounts for the spontaneity of his art work and the continuousness of its flow. He is never without something to

express. The child merely by using simple dots, lines, loops and patches creates a fantasy world of whatever is most important to him in his own personal experience at that time. Drawing and painting are rapid shorthand, pictograph language of great flexibility which provides a channel for the child to communicate. There is no need for external stimuli to start the youngest child painting and drawing. Children are not mere imitators of art but creators.

As the child gets older he enters what psychoanalysts have called the 'latency period'. He becomes less spontaneous and therefore his self confidence becomes diminished. For example when a child draws a figure and the arms are too short, this fact is completely unimportant to the child and to the expression of his fantasy, the length of the arms is immaterial. Adult standards and proportion are not within the child's comprehension, they are not necessary to him for his means of expression. When this fact is pointed out to the child he will change the length of the arms to conform with adult standards. The child is made to feel that his way of working is not what is wanted and will reject his own spontaneous expressive way of drawing and painting and will only work in a manner which he knows will be approved. His own spontaneity will be gone and he becomes dependant upon direction by the adult. This is a process of conditioning which nowadays tends to begin and take effect at an even earlier age. This means that in their drawings children are initiated earlier into conventional practices and attach greater value to them as means of communication.

Klee exploited the whole range of representational devices mentioned, from the child's first scribbles to their first attempts at picture making. Klee did not use these devices consistently and rarely used any without reinterpreting them and making them entirely his own.

Klee said -

"Don't translate my works to those of children they are worlds apart Never forget the child knows of art

The artist on the contrary is concerned with the conscious formal compositions of his pictures, whose representational meaning comes about with intention, through associations of the unconscious." ①

In children's drawings Klee rediscovered values foreign to the illusionistic techniques that were his inheritance from the art of the past and in this rediscovery he combined different modes of representation in children's art, within the same image. In this way his art differs from that of children's creations. We can see examples of this in Room-Perspective with Occupants, 1921. In the early Bauhaus years Klee did several perspective drawings, human occupants of rooms can be seen drawn into the lines of the perspective of walls and floors. In Perspective with Inhabitants, 1923, the space is symbolic, the ordinary room becomes a wind tunnel exerting such suction that the occupants cannot stand. In Room-Perspective with Occupants the space again affects us, schematic figures are projected on the floors and walls. The figures' legs can be seen drawn straight up and down, at right angles to their skirts. One of the figures has its arms raised, a rectangular break at the elbows. Before children

discover that the addition of diagonal legs and arms will add a sense of movement to their figures they organise all direction changes into simple rectangular contrasts. In one of the figures in the painting Klee has omitted certain parts of the body and the mute figure because it is armless appears rigidly bound by the tight construction lines of the perspective.

At an early stage children draw armless figures but these figures are not used for a calculated expressive effect as Klee has done in the painting. When children are drawing, they tell a story and will often omit parts of the body that are not relevant or important to them and have no story telling function. When children are developing from one stage to another they will often combine previous pictorial knowledge with more advanced forms of pictorial expression. In children's drawings we can see limbless figures appearing beside figures with limbs although it is not a matter of choice.

Klee took advantage of this and in his perspective pictures figures are seen combined with a sophisticated system of perspective representation which children never arrive at independently. Not until the invention of central perspective in the Renaissance did artists begin to draw from a unity viewpoint. Before that adult artists constructed drawings from mixed viewpoints, for example the Egyptians would paint a face in profile while the body is drawn from a frontal view. Klee's use of childish forms is part of the twentieth century revolt against the

literal reproductions of appearances. Room-Perspective with Occupants in many ways comment on the limitations of this system - the two dimension figures trapped in a three dimension room.

Klee on several occasions combined the two-dimensional mode of children's drawing with the illusionistic trickery of the traditional artist. Such contrasts appear in the turning of the nose in Herr Max Mayerhofer, 1911, and in the otherwise flat Flag-bedecked Pavillion, 1927.

SCRIBBLING

The order of appearance in Klee's work of the various devices used by children in their drawing is no more methodical or consistent than his practise of combining a variety of dissimilar representational modes in a single picture. Klee certainly did not take up particular pictorial devices in the same sequence in which they invariably occur in the work of children. Scribbling is the child's earliest form of expression and Klee did not intensively exploit scribbling until quite late whereas such relatively detailed images as Herr Max Mayerhofer were made much earlier.

Children's first marks on the page take the form of scribbles. Scribbling children concentrate intensely on the activity of marking and often produce one drawing after another in rapid succession. There is no question of representation, as children scribble their arms move in a regular rhythmic motion around the page. The scribble patterns that children make are spontaneous inventions and the lines are presentational not representational.

Klee studied children's scribbles and in his Pedagogical sketchbook he wrote

"an active line on a walk moving freely without a goal a walk for a walk's sake" ②

The child is totally absorbed in the activity of creation as an end in itself.

When the child is around the age of three scribbling gives way to more controlled, nonrepresentational configurations. The scribbles are visual explorations of lines and shapes and as the child develops he has control over the marks he makes. From the scribbles appear arcs, loops, corkscrews and spirals. The child then becomes interested in representation and begins to label his scribbles. At the age of three or four children are able to spontaneously produce forms that are recognizably representational, although the earliest representations are highly unrealistic.

For Klee a sense of motion and sequence was essential to the artistic process. We can see just how important a sense of movement was to Klee when he wrote.

"A certain fire of becoming flares up; it is conducted through the hand flows to the picture surface and there bursts into a spark, closing the circle whence it came, back to the eye and further back to a centre of movement, of volition of the idea The pictorial work springs from movement, it is itself fixated movement and it is apprehended by eye movement" ③

Tree Felling, 1930, springs from this movement. In the drawing the moving line is used to suggest the process of natural growth. The line moves over the page and repeatedly circles about the central trunk or stem, in a movement analogous to the growth of plants. The time element inherent in the process of drawing has been incorporated as an essential part of Tree Felling. As in children's scribbles

time plays an important part.

Drawing was important to Klee, his drawings became a proving ground to him for trying out variously 'constructive', naturalistic and impressionistic experiments. Klee carried out many experiments in his scribble drawings of the twenties and thirties.

From children's scribbles representational forms appear Klee also used this method of working and the drawings of the twenties and thirties arose out of a similar non-representational play with line for its own sake without intention of forming any preconceived image. Klee would play with an abstract line and if a representational form appeared he would develop it, unlike children Klee's method was consciously pursued.

SCRIBBLE DRAWINGS OF THE TWENTIES

A great many drawings of the twenties evolved in this way. Interlacing of a continuous line was used to create a number of portraits, figure drawing, animal and human. The most familiar of the group is Mockers Mocked, 1930. The first drawings made experimenting with this method were made in 1920. In Disputing Magician, 1928, the body of the figure as well as the head were formed from a maze of continuous lines.

The drawings most likely developed from the wandering of a line upon a page without any preconceived idea do not look like any of those children would produce at any age. Once children master clear schemata for representing the human figure they no longer use scribbling as a formative device.

In these drawings Klee uses two methods of working to represent the figure - the scribbles used in the early stage of children's drawing and the continuous outline used at a much later stage of the child's development. Children find this continuous line quicker and they sometimes fill in the outline with scribbles but not so intimately as Klee does in his drawing. The figure drawing Fool, 1927, is nothing like any drawn by children. It is compiled from a combination of different modes. The profile of the fool emerges directly from the flowing scribble forming his body.

SCRIBBLE DRAWING OF THE THIRTIES

At the beginning of the thirties Klee's scribble drawings became abstract and were hardly intelligible without the titles, they have a closer resemblance to the non-representational drawings of children than the complex figure style Klee developed in the twenties.

Landscapes are the best examples of this form of drawing and like children's scribbles they originate from the unpremeditated movement of lines across the page. These lines unlike the drawings of the twenties are easy to follow.

Quite a few differences between children's and Klee's landscape drawings can be seen. When children are at the scribble stage they could never conceive an entire landscape. When children begin to draw landscapes they build them up in a simple language of pictorial symbols. The first scribbles are non-representational, they are experimental play with various lines. Children never use continuous scribble alone as a creative means and they would be unable to achieve such mastery over the movement of a single line.

On and In the Lake, 1934 is composed of only four lines unlike some scribble pictures of the thirties, that are so abstract that even the title will not bring a natural image into focus. In Autumn Branches, 1932, the lines have little more than their basic linear character in common with branches. The branches are discontinuous and do not connect to anything that looks like a trunk. These pictures grew from a purely presentational play with line but unlike landscapes in the continuous line they never evolved into clearly recognisable representational images. Discontinuity of line and extreme abstraction give them an even closer resemblance to the scribbles of children, especially to the line children make when first practising loops and arcs. In the brush drawing Begging, 1932, a figure can be seen emerging from discontinuous lines, although this drawing is not as abstract as the landscapes of this period.

Klee developed this discontinuous scribble and at first glance the drawings look abstract but on further examination shapes appear and dissolve into other images. In Towards the Mountain, 1934, the broken lines form a configuration of part man, part beast and part mountain. In the drawing Forgotten by Noah, 1935, four unidentifiable species - part hound and part horse, part lion and part man muddle together and gaze upon nothingness.

Confused Siesta, 1934, looks remarkably like the first representational drawings of children, as in a dream ghostly heads emerge from the scribbles and a circle resembling a head represents both body and head together. As in children's first drawings the figure appears to be no more than disembodied heads with circles for eyes a line for the mouth and a few dangling limbs.

The child when he draws a circle representing the head and body does so because it is the simplest way of defining an independent area and is used to stand for any material thing. Klee's method is different, instead of being bound by a single enclosing line, shapes are formed by the intersection of a number of separate lines. This creates a dreamlike effect of shifting images. In Kreeping, 1933, we can see a man crawling and because of the intersection of a number of separate lines the figure looks as though it has two heads.

The most enigmatic of the scribble drawings in Symptom to be Recognised in Time, 1935, in this drawing the scribble now becomes the primary

bearer of content. The representational element, a skull-like loop with a dotted circle for an eye owes its very existence to the mysterious scribble. It is a group of linear signs set down without reference to the illusionistic space, signs left by the spontaneous movement of the pencil across the page.

AUXILIARY SCRIBBLES

Long after children have progressed to more advanced modes of representation they retain the scribble to define amorphous areas and to suggest motion. Klee also used the scribble for the same purpose.

In some of Klee's early pictures, conceived from a single viewpoint, scribbles are used just as they are by children to indicate smoke. Scribbles drawn by children to represent smoke are not essentially different from the scribbles coming from the locomotives in Klee's 1911, etching of the Munich Hauptbahnhof or in the 1925 painting Flotilla. Visually there is nothing smokey about the scribbles except perhaps for their relatively dense dark mass. Scribbling is singly the most expedient way of indicating an area having no obvious shape. By using the continuously looping line however, it is possible to recreate the movement of smoke as it curls upwards.

Klee and children both use the corkscrew scribble to indicate hair. Like the smoke scribble the hair scribble is drawn in the direction of natural hair growth, it issues from the scalp. In the lithograph

Scene From a Hoffmann-like Tale, 1921, the pigtail of the girl is scribbled down from her head. In the painting Doll Theatre, 1923 the doll's hair is represented with a corkscrew scribble. In this painting we can see a doll geometrically shaped and jointed at points, it wears a triangular skirt carefully striped, its torso is heart shaped, its head round with neat lips and round eyes, its legs and arms are sticks. There is a child's sun in the sky and another doll lies on the ground. There is a suspended window, a donkey and a house, all are striped and set down with no relation to one another.

Children do not try to organise objects on the page in the way that they are related spatially in the world. Instead objects typically float all over the page. These objects may not appear connected by any logic but they are often connected by a visual logic. Examples of this can also be seen in Klee's Doll Theatre.

In A Sailor Feels the End is Near, 1938, the simple two-looped corkscrew in the sailor's head is used solely for its basic impact. It is a sign that suggests but need not describe the motion of a sinking ship and the giddiness of fear. Klee has ignored static form and represented significant motion by the simplest linear means.

Only a small part of Klee's work is executed solely in scribbles. Scribbled lines may be of primary significance within a work developed largely with other forms, as in A Sailor Feels the End is Near. Klee cannot be said to have copied the scribbles of children, the patterns are too basic to speak of copying and the method is quite simply the most elementary but it is just this fundamental character that appealed to Klee.

THE SCHEMATIC MODE

After months of scribbling the child will learn how to control his scribble and specific lines and shapes will appear. Children's earliest spontaneous representations are highly unrealistic. The first representational form is typically the human figure, the human figure features heavily in the work of children as it does in Klee's.

It is at this stage, when children have learned to draw preconceived forms and these forms are soon put together into simple but recognizable schemata representing familiar objects, that Klee found most instructive. When a child arrives at a formula for representing each familiar object, the schema remains unchanged except for the occasional addition or omission of parts at the time invented. At the time of their invention they are repeated over and over again and dropped for more promising ones.

The first shape children use to represent objects is the circle, besides being easier to make than squares or triangles, they provide better representation of many objects. The circle stands for the head and torso of a human figure and smaller circles or lines represent features of the face. Longer lines are drawn out from the circle to represent limbs.

Klee made schemata as simple as this and sometimes even simpler. In the Boulevard of the Abnormal Ones, 1938, and Bal Champêtre, 1940, the figures are no more than empty featureless circles or oblongs supported on two legs. In Mask of Fear, 1932, a large oblong body can be seen supported by four small legs. Large heads are common in children's drawings and can also be seen throughout Klee's work. In the painting Error on Green, 1930, Klee paints a moon figure with a large circle for the head which rests on a segment of a circle, supported by two stick legs. In Group of Masks, 1939, Klee collects the faces, jumbles and reduces the bodies to shrunken remnants that lie beside the distended heads.

When a child draws a circle to represent the human figure it stands for the neck and torso all together, these figures are called tadpoles. Klee found the ambiguity of these tadpoles figures fascinating and by juxtaposing them with more completely articulated figures he emphasised their equivocal character. By attaching legs, standing, walking or dancing, Klee found he could lend life to any shape. In Scarecrow, 1935, a square shape has been given life by the addition of two stick legs and arms. In Dancing from Fear, 1938, triangles and squares with the addition of simple legs sticking out at points become stick figures dancing wildly. Shapes are also brought to life in On Their Way Out, 1929, and Overbridged, 1931.

SIMPLE REPRESENTATION FOR FIGURE AND FACES

Children find it satisfactory to represent a face with a circle and two dots for the eyes. Klee by the inclusion of two circles or dots within a shape created an effect more ominously ambiguous than featureless shapes with legs. In Confused Siesta, 1934, the central figure could be another shape if it was not for two tiny circles which give it life. In Embrace, 1939, the addition of two black dots close together transform a simple assemblage of modern shapes into a figure of primeval power. Arab Song, 1932, is composed of rectangular and square shapes and this time with the addition of two eyes we can now see a figure peeking out of a window.

Klee enjoyed transforming the personality he saw in abstract forms into actual persons. The child also enjoys personifying familiar objects, as the sun by adding a smiling face. In Sunset, 1930, Klee personifies the sun and in With the Eagle, 1918, he personifies nature by the addition of an eye in the sky. In Drawing for Ideal Household, Lily, 1920, the automatic household appliances are given an added touch of whimsy by the provision of human features.

Faces among the rocks in the drawing Fabulous Island, 1913, are earlier examples of anthropomorphism but faces of the teens and twenties are quite complete compared to the single dots and circles that alone serve to create the phantoms of the thirties.

Great variety of objects could be suggested with the simplest form. Children would use the circle to represent any number of different things. Klee also used the circle for the head, eyes, hands, pigtail and what appears to be a flower in Dance, 1940. Circles serve for heads, eyes, nostrils, hands and even a tree in High Spirits, 1939. In Height, 1928, Klee used the childish sun-schema-a circle with radiating lines - as the light in a street lamp and as the eyes of a starry-eyed girl, as well as for the sun.

FIGURES WITHOUT LIMBS

By reducing his formal means to variations and arrangements of the simplest shapes Klee found he could create visual metaphors that brought him close to a goal he had sought for years. In the evolution of Klee's mature work the reduction of all things to basic forms was an ultimate achievement but children proceed from the point Klee finally arrived. Children learn to elongate basic circles and attach them to round bodies of their figures as arms and legs. Klee used elongated figures in the series of illustrations for Candide which he prepared in 1912. Elongated figures can be seen in Shyly, He Lifts the Veil, 1911.

In adding together parts of figures children sometimes neglect to indicate all the limbs, it is enough for them to set down only those parts that are most important to the story they are drawing. In Klee's Room-Perspective with Occupants the figures have no limbs. Klee like children left out the arms because they simply contribute nothing of importance to the picture and from a formal point of view might actually

detract. This is true of the brush drawing Little X, 1939, where we can see a figure with no arms.

In The Burdened One, 1929, an armless figure is seen dangling from a string, his feet hang above the ground, the body cannot move in the space in which it swings. Behind there are bright squares of colour in children's primaries.

In the lithograph Queen of Hearts, 1921, the queen has been given no arms and legs for reason of both form and expression. Such slender appendages would detract from the rotundity of the curves of which she is solely composed, the limbs in this print are hardly missed.

In Boulevard of the Abnormal Ones, 1938, none of the crowd of figures have arms. This is the one 'abnormality' they all share although their bodies from the illusionistic point of view are variously handicapped. In this picture Klee repeats the form developed in the normal evolution of the figures in children's drawings.

Children do not intentionally leave out limbs but the absence of arms in Boulevard of the Abnormal Ones, and Spiritual Catastrophe, 1916, is an intentional expressive device. We expect to see arms in both cases but do not. In Big Circus, 1928, the figure has no arms and in Queen of Hearts no limbs this fact can be overlooked but in the others a point is made of their absence.

THE BUILDING UP PROCESS

During the second and third decades of the century, by far the greatest number of Klee's figures are built up as in the schematic drawings of children by the addition of simple geometric units, complete in themselves. Once children have settled on a satisfying schema it may be set down rapidly in continuous outline but while they are still experimenting with various schemata each part of the anatomy is separately added to the body.

Klee used the same method and built up his figures and compositions part by part. By using the additive process Klee was able to build up complete compositions with a single tiny formal motif. The tiny figures in the 1912 drawing Rapture of the Dance are primarily made up from triangles. The geometric shapes here appear to grow out of one another and by simple extension of some of the lines, as in the waists and thighs of the figures, very complex graphic suggestions are made. The figures take on a new complexity and simplicity at the same time.

Perhaps the most successful drawing of this type was an Uncanny Moment also drawn in 1912. Here a very great openness and suggestment of movement is created by an arriculation made entirely of triangles. Klee has drawn dogs which, at the same time are read as graphically consistent structures. The man and boy to the upper right, made

similarly of triangles, are however even more complex. These two figures share common geometric forms which make them seem to sprout from a single pair of legs.

Once Klee had chosen the basic motif the subject almost shaped itself. By using an additive method, Klee was able to combine representation with abstract form, he was actually able to enhance rather than diminish the expressive power of pure form.

OVERLAPPING AND TRANSPARENT IMAGES

Klee's method of part by part construction retains many of the characteristics existing in the schematic mode of children. He makes a point of the transparent overlapping of part that is a logical concomitant of the additive method in a two-dimensional mode but, from the illusionistic point of view is contrary to nature.

When children intersect the lines of arms and legs, from an illusionistic point of view a transparency is created that robs their figures of substance. More than one object seems paradoxically to occupy one place at the same time. The child is not aware of any incongruity because he draws one and then another. To the child each limb is complete in itself because it has been separately drawn. The sequence in which he draws each part is of more importance to him than the completed image.

Klee worked in this way, he was able to build on what was already drawn. Overlapping the consisting parts of shapes he was able to sub-divide them into new configurations of shapes and develop his compositions without destroying what came before. The geometrical robots in the drawings of 1929 and 1930 are most obviously the product of building with separate transparent parts. In Fear of Becoming Double, 1929, the method is reduced to absurdity. Many of the subjects in these drawings could gain clarity by the use of transparencies because all parts could remain visible.

In the drawing Artistes, 1915, Klee by overlapping the limbs of the stiffly jointed acrobats divides them into a pattern of facets and at the same time clarifies their mechanical motions. Overlapping limbs of figures can also be seen in Acrobats, 1914. In this drawing the figures are themselves their apparatus; they are transparent figures sharing body-lines which also map out their descent. The fall is ungraceful, for the jointed figures limbs are capable of only two-way action.

When children begin to clothe figures they will often draw the outline of a figure with a completed set of limbs, then without obscuring anything which they have already drawn they will clothe the figure. This is the logical extension of the additive process used to form the figures themselves. The clothing does not look transparent to the child

because he has conceived the image in only two-dimensions. The clothes appear transparent only if the image is perceived three-dimensionally.

The draped figures of the Candide drawings are the earliest examples of the sequential and transparent clothing of the figure in Klee's work. The transparent clothed figures of the twenties are more schematic but the sequence of drawing the parts does not always correspond to the order normally followed by children. In Specter of a Genius, 1922, what now appears as a transparent smock was probably drawn before the combined shirt and body-shape that appears beneath it. The finished effect, however, is very much like the transparent but more rationally clothed schemata of children.

In the Female Artist of 1924 we see a figure poised on ungraceful legs, through her transparent clothes we can see her heart drawn on her breast.

RECTANGULAR FIGURES AND MOVEMENT

Children master the indication of direction by rectangular contrasts. They arrange parts of their figures within a system of simple rectangular contrasts - straight out to the left and right or straight up and down. To the child these drawings were fused with vitality but to the adult they still look rigid. It is this rigidity that appealed to Klee. He started to compose his figures by arranging the limbs in strictly rectangular patterns. Examples of this can be seen

in figure drawings Poet-Draftsman, 1915, and Head Jugglers, 1916. The figures in both look mechanical due to their rectangular composition. In Big Ones and Little Ones, 1923, the disposition of the limbs almost implies an underlying grid system.

Once the child masters the indication of direction by rectangular contrasts he eventually discovers that he can make his figures even more lively by setting the limbs at an oblique angle to the body. Having found the more flexible method for relating the body and limbs the child becomes dissatisfied with the rectangular figures.

To the adult the new figures with diagonal arms and legs seem hardly less stiff than the rectangular figures, especially when the figure is seen from the front and each arm and leg is set at the same angle to the body as the other. Klee emphasised the rigidity of the figure in Under a Black Star, 1918, to evoke the involuntary motions of a person under a spell.

The dynamic character of the diagonal is especially emphatic when children draw their figure in profile with both legs or just one leg set at an angle. The figure seems to step right across the page. Klee used this illusion, simply by adding two diagonal lines he could animate his figures and make them walk as convincingly as the little man tip-toeing along the border of Doll Theatre, 1923, and the figure walking across the tightrope in Equilibrist painted in the same year.

Klee's animals often walked on two inverted "V's" placed under their bodies and by changing the angle of divergence between the legs Klee could determine the speed of movement of the animal. In Doll Theatre, the unicorn can be seen walking across the page compared to the trot of the startled horse fleeing the battlefield in History, 1930. In Dancing from Fear, 1938, the figures look as if they are moving about frantically and in Sermon to the Desert-Animals, 1929, the animals can be seen marching.

THE SCHEMATIC MODE AND WRITING

Picture writing develops directly from the schematic mode. Many children spontaneously develop their own simple pictographic systems once they grasp the idea of writing. When they are learning to spell out their first words they sometimes support their limited symbolic vocabulary with schemata.

Klee produced his own pictographs transforming simple schematic figures into signs of varying degrees of abstraction. A systematic transformation of forms into figures is found in Project, 1938. Many of the symbols that recur in Klee's pictures of the thirties such as the flag-shapes and the plant-form in Project, 1938 were used in ancient Mediterranean scripts, ancestors of the Modern Roman alphabet.

Writing had always played an important part in Klee's pictures and in

the alphabet Klee found a ready-made system of discrete units that he could combine and recombine in endless variation. In 1938 Klee began to alter the shape of the letters so that they suggested representational images by themselves. In the *Studies of Active Figures*, 1938, letters of the alphabet have been reactivated by linear extensions suggesting the arms and legs of scampering figures.

In Klee's last years he became involved in the creation of ideographic pictures. The ideographic drawing should be separated from both simple picture writing and those drawings representing a specific scene however schematic. Harbour at K, 1939 is so abbreviated that signs resembling the Egyptian determinatives for 'water' and 'Foreign land' are found but it is still the representation of a particular Harbour at K.

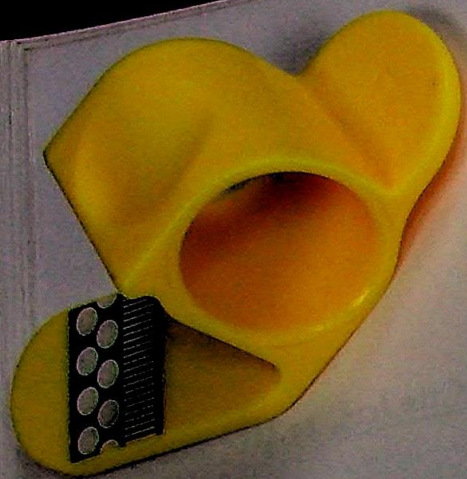
Klee was interested in the double meaning of the early schematic drawings of children. Although the evolution of the pictographic forms of writing towards simplicity generally reverses the development of children's schemata towards more complex figures, there is a point at which the schematic figures of young children are very much akin to the abbreviated forms of pictographs. The childlike pictures of the teens and twenties were inspired by the more elaborate drawings of older children. The laconic works of the thirties reveal an interest in their earlier schematic drawings that is concomitant with Klee's absorption of picture writing.

In Klee's late works he makes use of the ambiguous nature of simple schemata in pictographs and ideograms far more meaningful than the schematic drawings of any child. In Love Song by the New Moon, 1939 the heart-sign is repeated throughout as the dominant motif of the whole image. By reducing heart, buttocks and breasts to a common shape he creates a forceful ideogram of erotic love.

The final ideograms of death are the natural conclusion to his work in Death and Fire, 1940, Klee's features are formed with the three letters of his name in German. One thing dissolves into another but all are joined in Death. Klee created very powerful ideograms of death and nothing comparable can be found in the prior history of western art since the Renaissance. Klee guided by the schematic art of children and man's first efforts at writing created richly evocative ideograms, unbound by time or place, that with the simplest natural signs gave visible form to things only felt before.

FOOTNOTES

- ① Ellen Winner, Invented Worlds The Psychology of the Arts, pg.144.
- ② Paul Klee, Pedagogical Sketchbook, pg.16
- ③ Christian Geelhaar, Paul Klee and the Bauhaus, pg.29.



CHAPTER III

CONCLUSION

Klee's art has been compared to works widely separated in space and time and differing markedly in subject and intention, works by professional artists, amateurs and the untutored, works of folk art, West African, Oceanic and Pre-Columbian art, the drawings of children and early systems of writing. All have been grouped under the heading "primitive" art, which to the Blaue Reiter group applied to almost any work created outside the Renaissance tradition they rejected.

Klee shared Kandinsky's view of the significance of all art forms no matter how humble their origins and from these forms he drew inspiration throughout his life. The variety of "primitive" forms and methods Klee used exceeded even the range of works illustrated in the Blaue Reiter almanac. He certainly surpassed any single artist of the group, Campendonk and Münter restricted themselves to the evocations of the folk spirit and Kandinsky soon passed from his "primitive" stage to pure abstraction. It is doubtful whether even Picasso, Miro or Dubuffet could have understood the underlying principals of "primitive" art as thoroughly as Klee.

The art of the child would have remained valueless in our eyes had it not been for artists like Paul Klee who took an interest in children's art and through his own adventurous speculations made us capable of responding to it.

The bias today however appears to be going quite the other way. What before were dismissed as short comings in children's art are now idealised. Studios of child art and exhibitions of the "creative child" type are becoming more and more common. Their effect paradoxically enough is to produce a standardisation of artistic expression in children of an even younger age group.

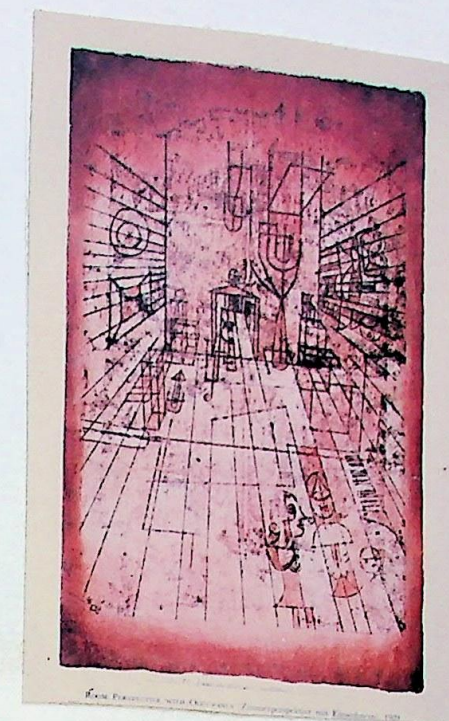
For several decades now children have become aware of the value that grown-ups attach to their productions. Children's drawings today as compared with what they were half a century ago betray a specific academicism of their own, whose inroads can be detected at an even earlier age.

In Klee's study of children's art he rarely used any forms without re-interpreting them and making them entirely his own, Klee certainly cannot be said to have copied the scribbles of children in the same way he may have borrowed motifs used by children at the schematic stage. The patterns are too basic to speak of copying and the method is simply the most elementary it is just this fundamental character that appealed to Klee.

Klee restored to art its basis in movement. He revitalised what had come to be considered a static art and executed drawings and paintings which might well be considered the most dynamic in the entire previous history of Western art.

Klee found many ways to indicate motion but the most basic was the simple linear movement of the scribble in which graphic art has its origin and as Klee's line grew so did his drawings. Klee helped change the very concept of art as the working out of preconceived subject, substituting for it a process of spontaneous generation. Klee's scribble drawings, as the presentational scribbles of children, were not developed from the start as pictures of something but as something in themselves.

Through his study of children's art Klee freed himself from the narrow European traditions of illusionism and expanded the range of visual expression to so great an extent that even today artists are still learning from him.



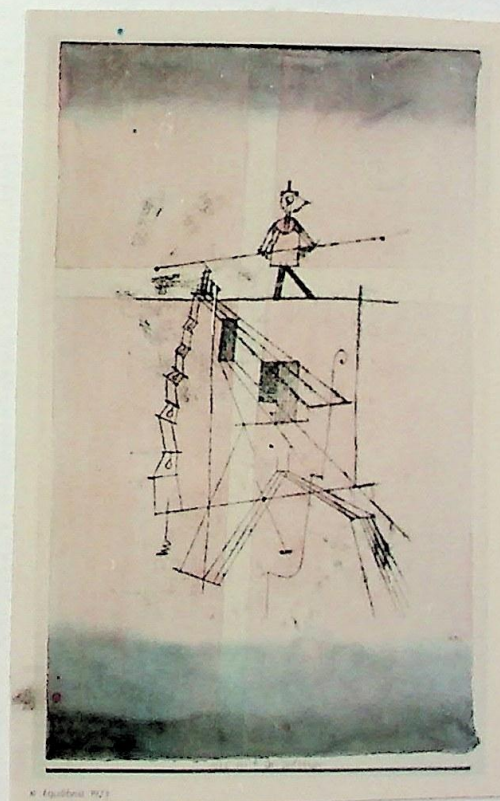
1. ROOM-PERSPECTIVE WITH OCCUPANTS 1921



2. ERROR ON GREEN 1930



3. EMBRACE 1939



4. EQUILIBRIST 1923





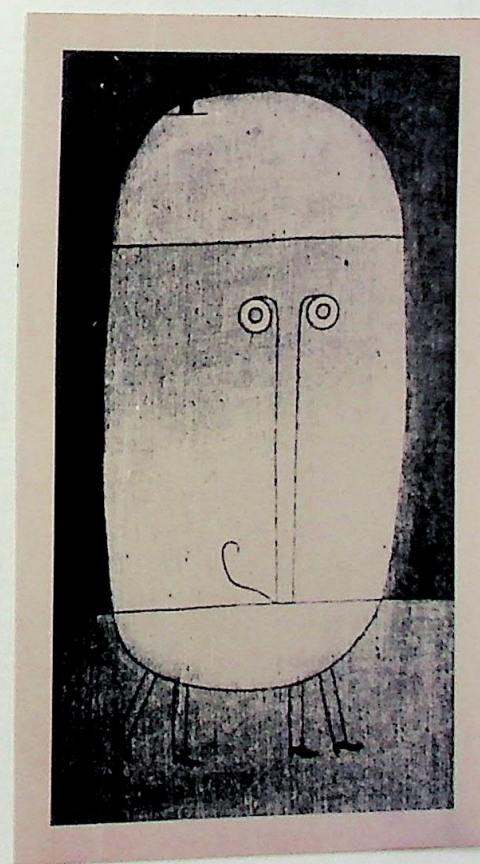
6. FORGOTTEN BY NOAH 1935



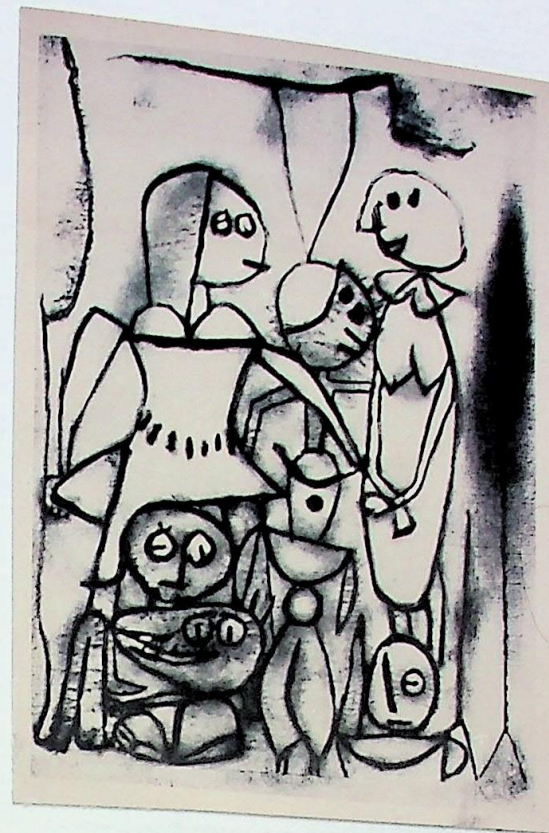
7. KREEPING 1933



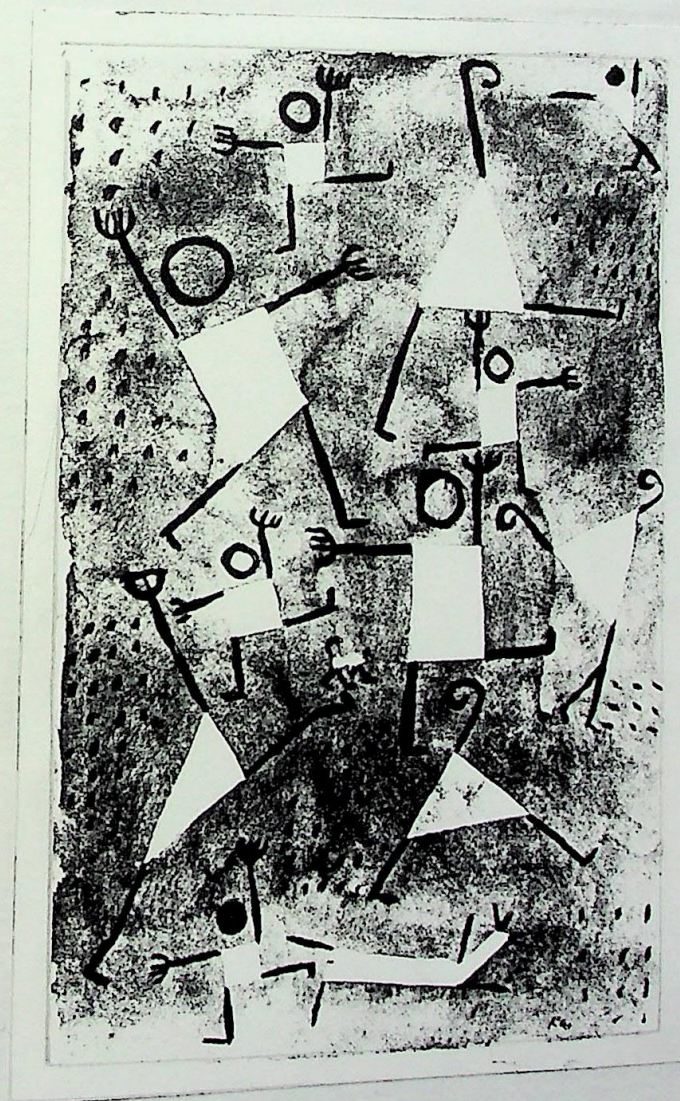
8. DOLL THEATRE 1923



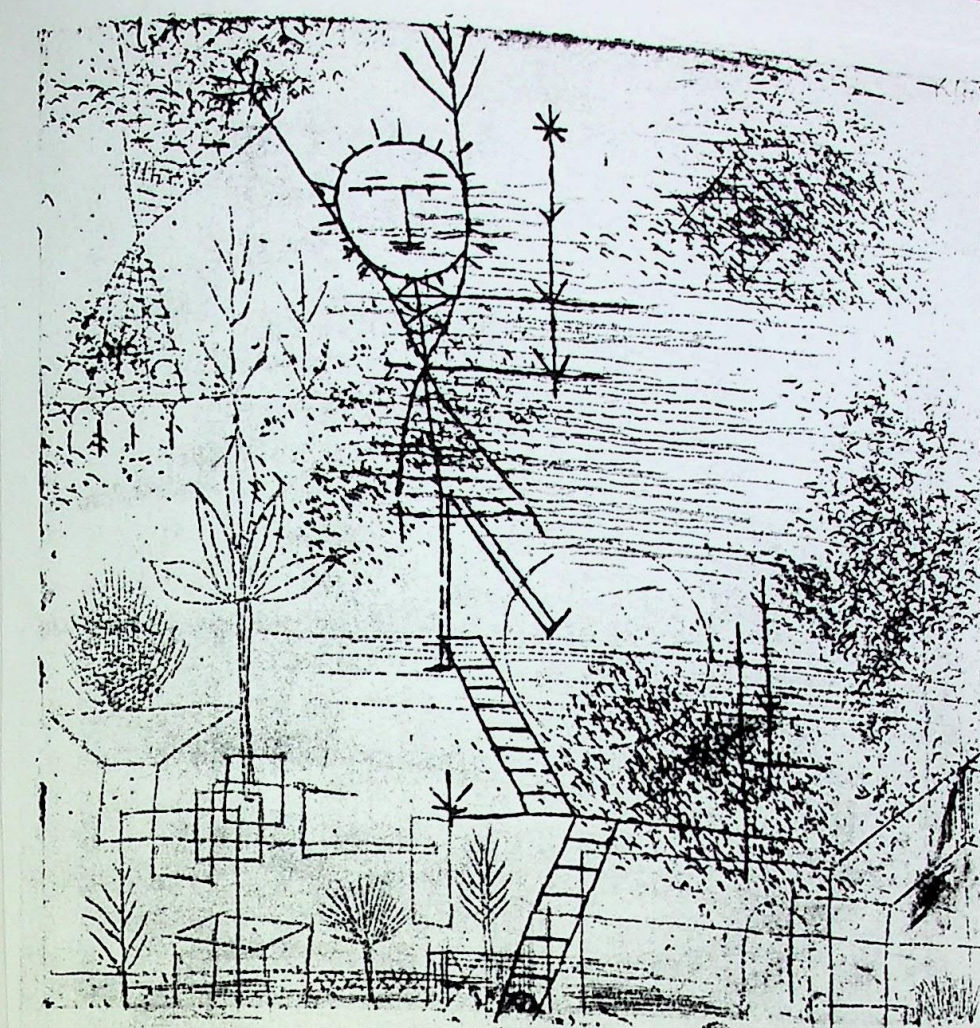
9. MASK OF FEAR 1932



10. GROUP OF MASKS 1939



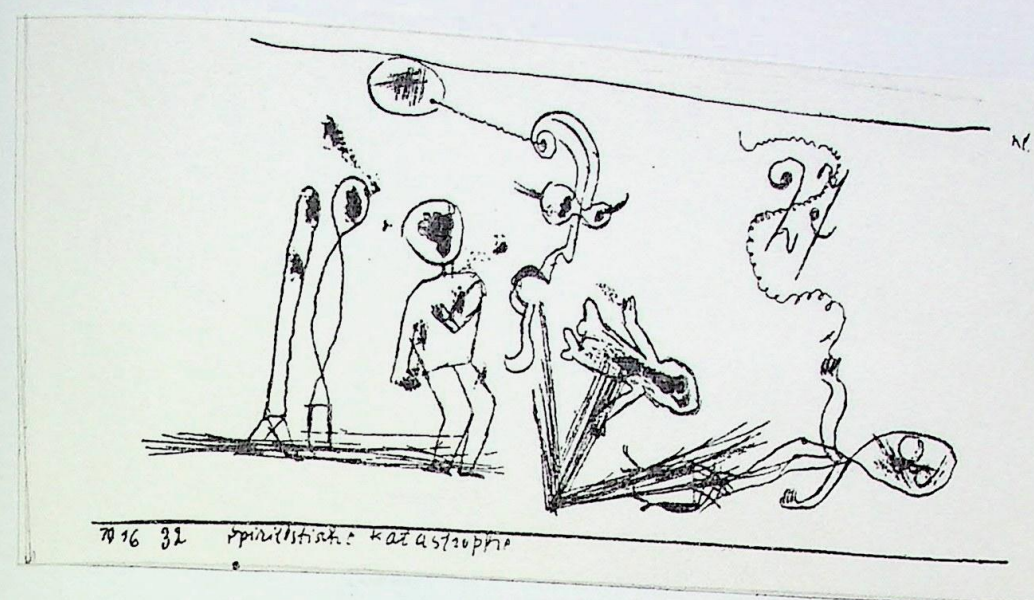
11. DANCING FROM FEAR 1938



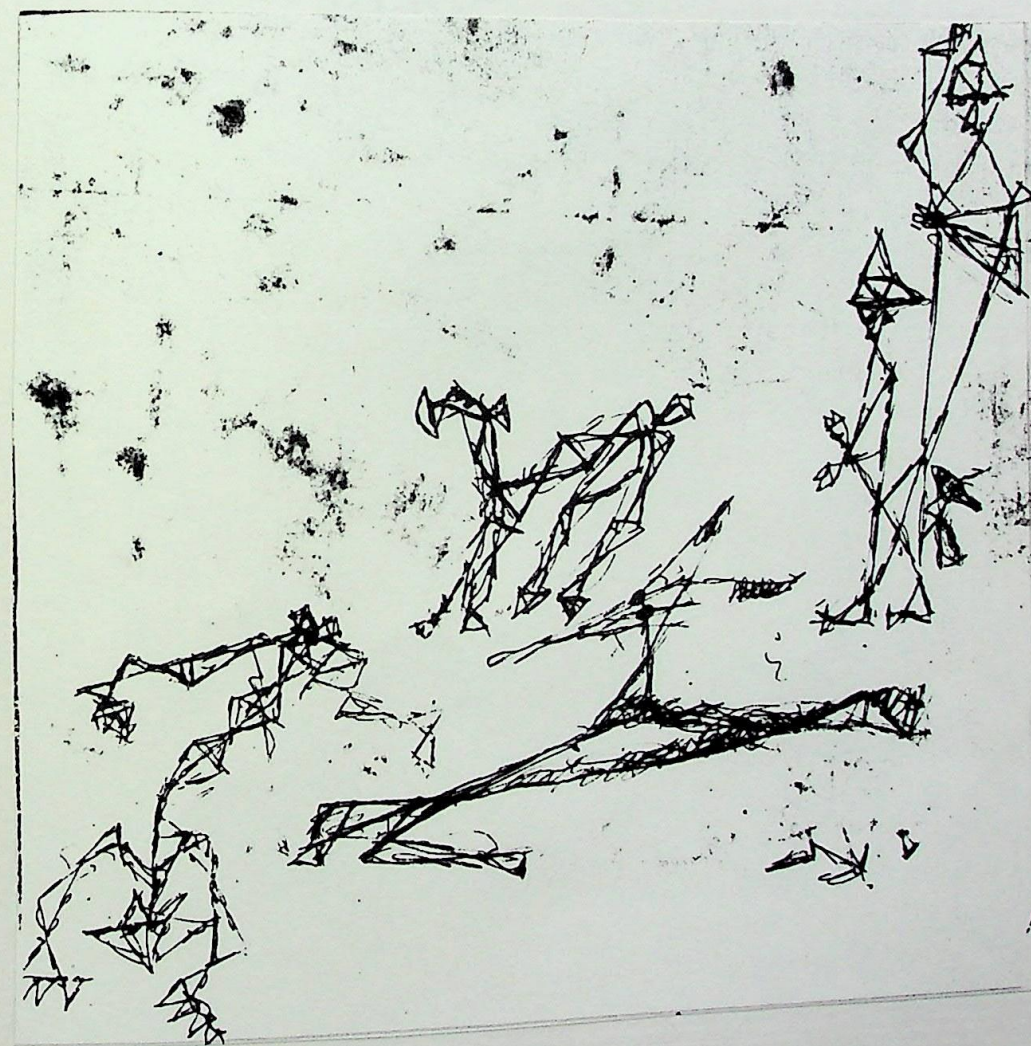
12. HEIGHT 1928

13. SHYLY, HE LIFTS THE VEIL 1911

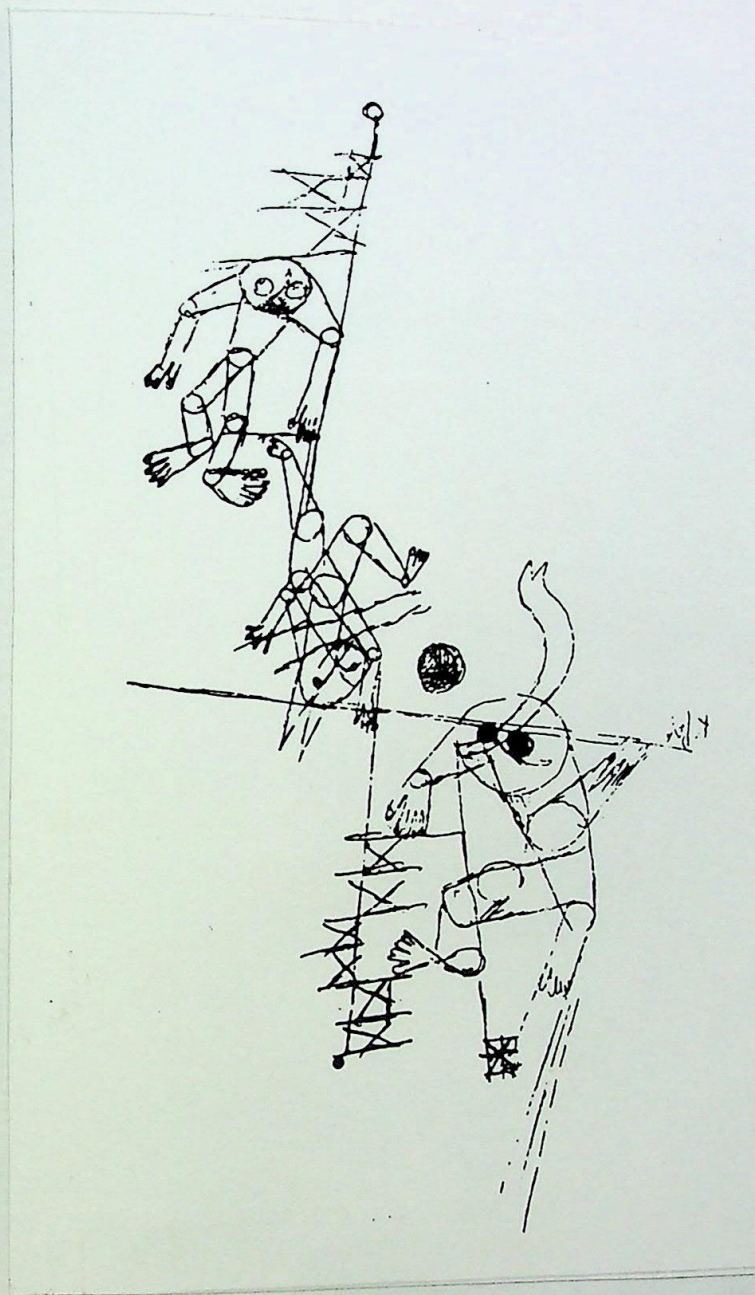




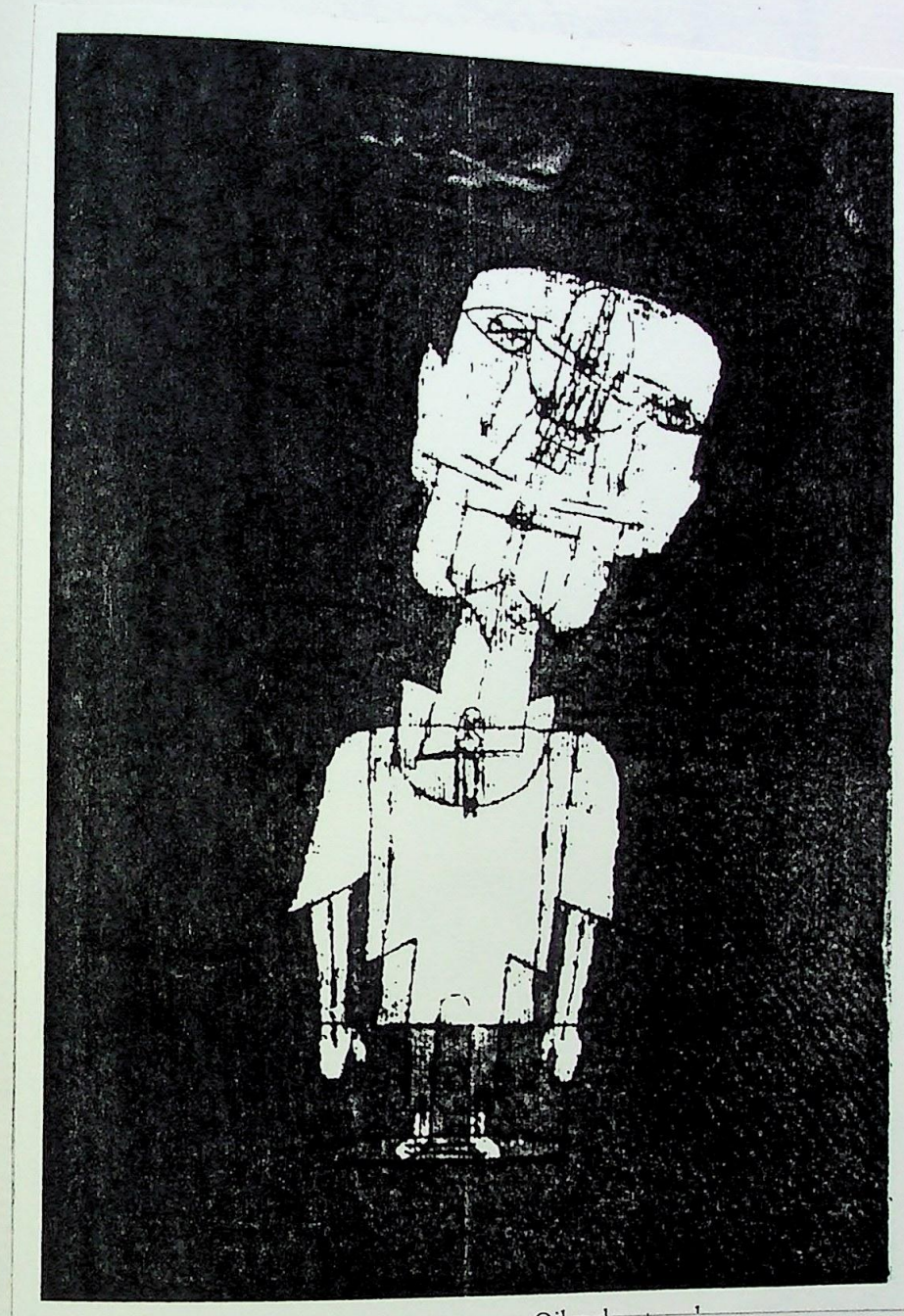
14. SPIRITUAL CATASTROPHE 1916



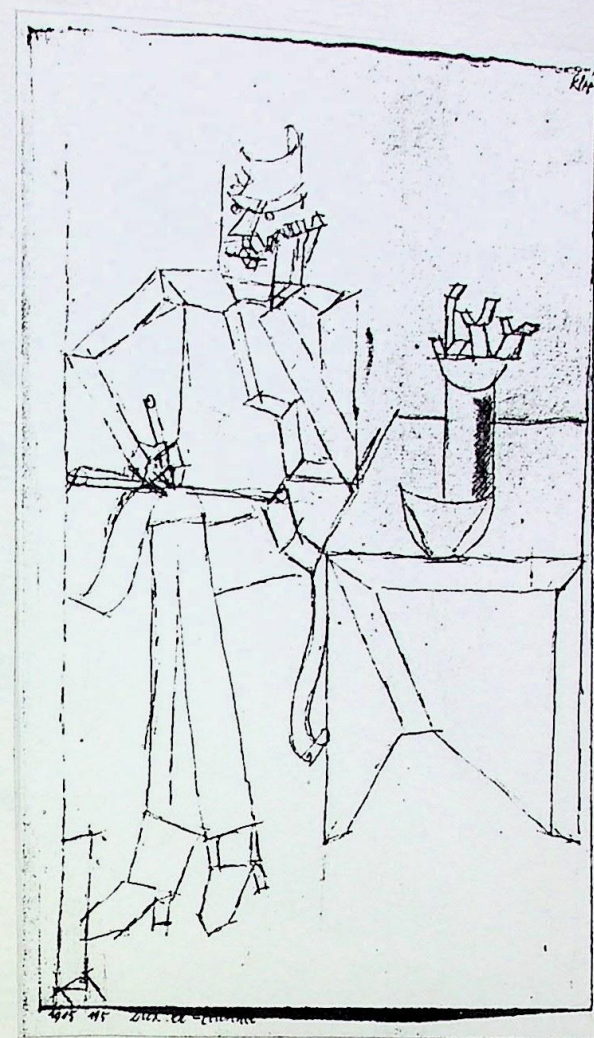
15. UNCANNY MOMENT 1912



16. ACROBATS 1914

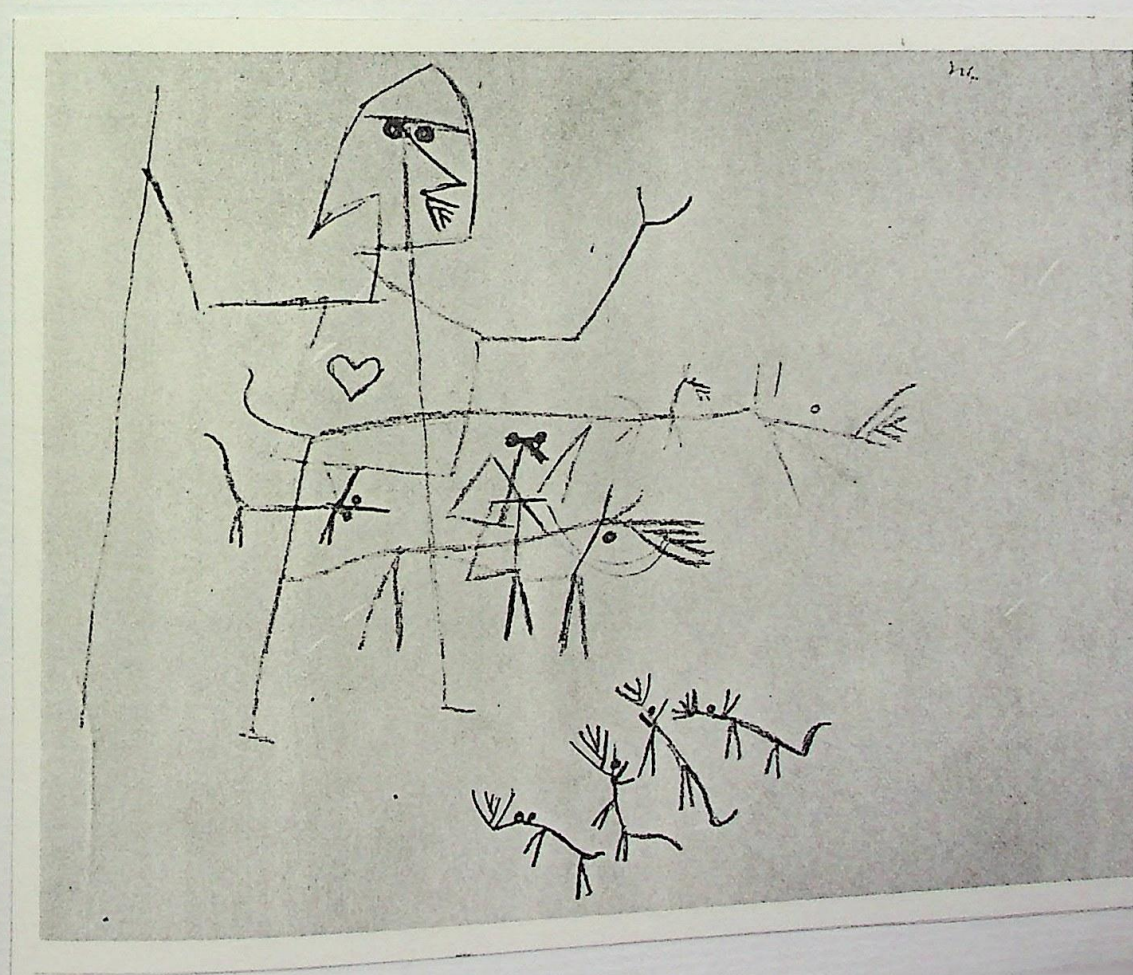


17. SPECTER OF A GENIUS 1922



18. POET-DRAFTSMAN 1915

19. SERMON TO DESERT ANIMALS 1929



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