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PAUL KLEE

1879 - 1940

THE NATIONAL COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN

THE THEATRICAL INFLUENCES
ON THE ARTIST, PAUL KLEE

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THE FACULTY OF HISTORY OF ART AND DESIGN
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BY
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DEDICATION

With gratitude to my father and mother,
my family and friends for their help
and encouragement.

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'The artist has undertaken to deal with this complex world, and he has, let us assume, adjusted to it to some degree, quietly, on his own. He is so well orientated that he can impose some order on the fleeting phenomena and experiences of the world. I should like to compare this orientation in the things of nature and life, this highly ramified order, with the root structure of the tree. Pressed and propelled by the power of the flowing sap, he transmits the content of his vision into his work. Just as the crown of the tree visibly spreads in all directions, in both time and space, so it is with the work. It would occur to no one to insist that the tree shape the crown like the roots. Everyone will understand that there can be no exact mirror relationship between bottom and top.'

- Extract from lecture by Klee in 1924 in which he discussed the artist, his relationship to nature, and his transformation of this relationship into a work of art.

PAUL KLEE 1879 - 1940

INTRODUCTION

Via the Artist's Life

'Art does not reproduce the visible, but
makes visible.' - Klee

'Personality is unconsciously acquired through
the continual experiencing of poetic emotions
intensely lived.' - Marino Marini

'No man is an island. An artist is a man and a
study of his life, his upbringing and his environ-
ment is necessary to the understanding of his
art.' - H.C.Dent, 'To Be A Teacher', 1947.

Every artist, no matter how great his genius or his individualism, is a product of his time and environment. Shakespeare, Beethoven and Michelangelo have a greatness which is almost frightening, yet they appeal to the essential humanity and understanding of mankind. Enjoyment of their works is not confined to an intellectual elite, and, indeed, a purely intellectual approach to them strips the greatness away and leaves only a coldly analysed skeleton. Likewise an artist who cannot identify with all emotions cannot become great - his work is sterile, artificial and petty.

At the same time a great artist such as Paul Klee has a unique quality, a quality which was summed up by Herbert Read in relation to an other artist, the great sculptor, Marino Marini: 'This uniqueness is essentially a power or energy, what we sometimes call a force of nature, and is something born with the artist, as singular as his physiognomy or temperament. It is, indeed, that temperament or psychic disposition "canalized" and driven in a particular direction, gaining power by the constraint or limitation of its direction.' (Herbert Read in his introduction to 'Marino Marini', Tudor Publications, 1970)

The effect of this individual power acting upon environment is readily visible in the case of Klee, who inherited an interest in music but who obeyed an impulse towards the graphic arts.

Paul Klee was born on 18 December 1879 at Munchenbuchsee, near Berne in Switzerland. His father, a native of Bavaria, was an organist and music teacher. His Swiss mother was an accomplished pianist. Klee's childhood was dominated by music, and with his mother's encouragement he concentrated on his favourite instrument, the violin, and became an excellent violinist. He retained an intense interest in music throughout his life and was particularly devoted to the music of Mozart.

Klee did not pursue a professional career in music. He was possessed by an urge to create, but his creativity did not lie in the field of musical composition, nor in the secondary but most important field of musical creativity by interpretation which a virtuoso performer has.

In his youth Klee displayed some ability and sensibility as a poet, but again he found that his creative impulse did not lie in the direction of literature. By the time he had finished his school education he was sure where his main interest lay. In his short autobiography, written towards the end of his life, he says : 'My school leaving-certificate meant that I could have taken up anything, but I wanted to become a painter and to devote my life to art. At that time - and even today - this meant going abroad. The only choice I had to make lay between Paris and Germany. My own feelings in the matter took me to Germany.'

Klee's awareness of art, literature and music shows him to have been a true humanist, a 'Renaissance man', and like many such he was driven to fulfill his creative destiny in one area only - in Klee's case this was in art. Similarly Wassily Kandinsky (1866 - 1944), a friend of Klee's, was an enthusiastic and sensitive amateur musician, but first and foremost he was an artist. Arnold Schonberg (1874 - 1951), the avante-garde composer and friend to both Klee and Kandinsky, painted in his spare time. The three men encouraged and influenced one another.

Klee was influenced in his choice of Germany by the fact that his father was Bavarian, but also by the tidiness and thoroughness which characterizes the Germanic temperament, traits which are apparent in all of Klee's work.

He went to Munich in 1898 to study painting, at first in the school of Edwin Knirr and later under the dictatorial Franz von Stuck. Stuck preached a rather gloomy classicism which was popular at that time, a style which failed to absorb the individualistic Klee, but which activated within him a reaction to stereotype art. He did not feel in the least impelled, however, to leave Germany, in which he subsequently spent most of his working life.

Munich, the Bavarian capital, had a livelier side, represented by the Secessionists and their magazine, 'Die Jugend', which gave its name to 'Jugendstil', the German equivalent of Art Nouveau. 'Simplicissimus', another magazine with satirical, biting cartoons also appealed to the young artist.

The combination of symbolism and satire experienced by Klee outside the studio formed the basis for his first mature works. He returned to Berne and spent the period from 1901

II

to 1906 there working on a series of etchings or 'inventions'. These bizarre figures and animals are strongly ironic, but there is an unusually bitter streak in their physical distortions and hard, harsh delineation.

In 1905 Klee paid a visit to Paris. He married a Munich pianist, Lily Stumpf, in 1906, and he and his wife resided in Munich until 1914. It was during this time that Klee discovered the fantastic vision of James Ensor's graphic work.

James Ensor (1860 - 1949) said of himself : 'I have cheerfully withdrawn into the realm of waggery in which the mask rules with force, light and brilliance.' Masks are a characteristic, major influence and feature in Ensor's painting. But not only as a masquerade: the absurd, the grotesque, even the sinister are introduced, with masks becoming images of life, and are used in a startling variety of ways. Ensor had an important influence on Klee's already exploring mind.

Klee had already been affected by the work of the artist and poet, William Blake (1757 - 1827), of whom the poet T.S.Eliot has said : 'Blake was naked and saw man naked, and from the centre of his own crystal.' Blake's fantastic and disturbing imagery found a response in Klee's imagination and outlook.

Another artist who had a deep influence on the young Klee was Francisco Goya (1746 - 1828), whose grotesque studies depicting man's inhumanity to man affected Klee, already an imaginative introvert.

Klee was also impressed by the work of Van Gogh and even more

so by Cezanne, whose work he saw first in 1909. He said that Cezanne 'is the teacher par excellence'.

In 1910 a selection of Klee's works were exhibited in cities in Switzerland, and in the following year he had a one-man show in Munich as the result of help given by Wilhelm Michels, who had drawn attention to Klee in his book 'The Diabolic and the Grotesque In Art' in 1911. The Munich exhibition was not a success, however.

Throughout all of his life Klee had a great love for the theatre in all of its forms : Drama, Opera, Ballet, Puppetry. But during his artistic period up to the time of his Munich exhibition he avoided colour and gaiety in his work, deliberately restricted himself to the techniques and materials of the graphic arts - black and white prints and drawings with great emphasis on a crisp linear style, reflecting his interest in artists such as Goya, Redon, Blake and Ensor, who had explored a world of fantasy, imagination and introversion. But he had begun to develop an interest in the French painter, Robert Delaunay and his radical theories of light and colour.

Klee visited Paris again in 1912 and met several cubist painters, Picasso, Braque and Delaunay. At the same time in Paris he saw the work of Douanier, Rousseau and Matisse. After his Paris visit a strong influence of cubism can be discerned in his work.

In April 1914 he went to Tunisia with the painters Louis Moilliet and Auguste Macke. This visit to a country where he was suddenly exposed to a shock of light and colour proved to be a

turning point in his life. His palette became brighter and he produce more paintings and water-colours, whereas formerly he had preferred black and white media. He had already been exposed to bright colour in nature on a visit to Italy in 1901 and by his study of the works of Cezanne, Matisse and Van Gogh, but it was the Tunisian interlude which broke his obsession with monochrome.

In 1911 Klee's move to colour was given further impetus when he came into close contact with the Blaue Reiter group, which included Kandinsky, Franz Marc, Alfred Kubin and Auguste Macke. This circle of artists was dedicated to an expressive handling of colour, in part inspired by music, but also deeply influenced by mysticism and primitive art. Klee felt a strong affinity with their ideals, and decided to pursue his inherent interest in what was to him a parallel course - children's art.

However, as already stated, it was not until his visit to Tunisia in 1914 that he felt able to fully exploit colour to suit his own needs.

Between 1916 and 1918 he served as an air force ground crew man, having been conscripted into the German forces, and also as an office worker at a pilot training school. During this period He pursued his artistic career in his spare time. The artist Auguste Macke had been killed early in the war. Franz Marc was killed two years later. Marc's death plunged Klee into despair and further into introspection and affected him for the remainder of his life, plaguing him with terrible images of destruction

and chaos. The total disintegration of Germany after the first World War, the ongoing economic collapse and the rise of the brutal Nazi regime which foreshadowed future horrors could not but affect a sensitive mind already deeply distressed by, in particular, the death of his beloved friend, Marc.

By the age of thirty-seven, while he was in the army, Klee's studies were bearing fruit. By the time he was released from the army, in 1918, he was an assured master of his art and was beginning to receive popular and critical acclaim. His exhibitions were proving successful.

In 1920 he was offered the post of Master of Form at the newly established and ultimately vastly influential art school, the Bauhaus, which, under its first director and guiding spirit, had been set up so that teachers in different fields could collaborate in the training of a new and energetic generation of architects and designers. The visual arts and craft skills were considered as essential components in the education programme.

In the Bauhaus Klee found for the first time financial security, a sense of community shared with other artists. He had his own studio and participated in many of the college activities. He was especially pleased when Kandinsky joined the staff.

Klee's major contribution to the Bauhaus was his development of a sequential programme of technical exercises which examined the basic qualities of lines, planes and textures - the exploration of the raw materials of pictorial art and the setting down of the results in texts, such as the 'Pedagogical Sketchbook'



Members of Bauhaus staff in 1926. Klee is fourth from right, Kandinsky fifth from right.

which has since been used worldwide in the teaching of art.

During his time with the Bauhaus Klee's reputation as a painter continued to rise and exhibitions of his work were held in Germany and abroad. In 1925 he exhibited in the first Surrealist group show in Paris, together with Miro, Ernst, Picasso and others. He was hailed as an ally of the Surrealist movement.

In 1928 Klee went to Egypt, his most ambitious journey. The monuments of the ancient civilisations, the vast desert spaces, the hieroglyphics and remains of antique artifacts had a profound and lasting influence on his work. From then on stylized pyramids and exotic flora appeared in his paintings.

Klee had become dissatisfied with the increasingly left-wing political dominance of the Bauhaus in Nazi-pressurised Germany. He accepted a post to teach painting at the Dusseldorf Academy, but the political climate worsened, the swastika was flown over the academy, and Klee left Germany for ever, and settled back in Berne, in Switzerland.

Klee's many German artist friends were scattered over Europe because modern art was held in contempt by the Nazis. But from Berne he travelled on occasions to France and Italy, and so was not unduly isolated. Now that he was not teaching he had more time to paint. Seventeen of his previous paintings were included in the infamous exhibition of 'degenerate art' held in Munich in 1937 by the Nazis to underline their contempt for progressive ideas in art - to the Nazis they were retrogressive.

Not long after retreating to Berne Klee developed a rare and



Hitler at exhibition of 'Degenerate' Art, 1917,
to ridicule progressive art. Seventeen of Klee's
works were included.

and debilitating disease now known as scleroderma, a progressive and incurable ailment. In spite of discomfort Klee was capable of bursts of activity, and Dr. David Owen, Lecturer, University of Glasgow, states that this period was very productive and likens it to the eruption of a volcano. In 1937 Picasso, Braque and Kirchner visited him to give him moral support.

Paul Klee died on 10 May 1940. On his gravestone there is a short passage from his journal : 'In this world I cannot be wholly understood. So I am better among the dead, or among the unborn. Closer than most to the centre of creation, but still not close enough.'

The character of his work changed during his illness, showing a darkening of the spirit brought on by his awareness of impending implacable death, and titles such as 'Death and Fire' tell us of his frame of mind. Yet, he cannot have despaired - because he worked until he could work no more.

PROLOGUETO : THEATRICAL INFLUENCES ON THE ARTIST

Klee produced 10,000 works - he was an artist of many parts - a complex mind laying down a rich, variegated and vast mosaic, which, like life, has no definite pattern.

Choosing a theme is like a child picking up a handful of shining pebbles which somehow appeal to him, and tossing them into the air, while underfoot the mass of other pebbles on the restless shifting beach distract his attention - and those pebbles he flings into the sunlight are each multi-faceted, each one displaying and reflecting an individual mini-mosaic, itself complex, fascinating, hypnotic.

PEBBLES :

MASKS

DRAMA

PUPPETRY

OPERA

DANCE

CIRCUS

CINEMA

MUSIC

BALLET

MANUSCRIPTS
LIBRARY

It is difficult to view Klee's work as a whole because his huge output of almost 10,000 works has no real unity of style. He did not adopt a specific technique and always wished the work to assume its natural form. He said that the artist is an instrument through which larger, more elemental forces are channelled, the artist's function being to organize this complex material and to present it in a way that makes sense to others. Therefore Klee has often been linked to both the Surrealist and the Expressionist school, but he was tied to no circle, and followed paths of his own making. ♪

The essence of Klee's work lies in his profound belief that a life-force or spirit operates through all things - the life-force of the univers. We cannot fully understand the universe. The simple fact is that we cannot even define space or time, which are both boundless and expanding in spite of all we try to do to impose limits upon them. We live in a box of space and time, which we have manufactured by our own minds and on that depends all our so-called knowledge of the universe. The simple fact is that we can never know all things, nor are we made to know them. Much of our lives must be taken on trust.

Nevertheless mankind thirsts for knowledge, for a deeper communion with the life-force of the universe so that we can evolve to greater things. Klee's contribution to our quest was to channel his conception of the life force in many of its complex forms so that mankind can progress.

The thematic basis of this thesis is to show the influence of Klee's work of the theatre in its many forms :

Drama, Puppetry, Masks, Opera, Dance, Ballet, Cinema,
Music, Cinema.

Klee was born into a musical family. His father was an organist and music teacher, his mother was a skilled pianist. So from birth he was exposed to music. He became an accomplished violinist and played the violin throughout his life. He married a professional pianist, thus welding himself closer to music. He was a poet, and continued to write poetry. His love of music and poetry, and through them of the performing arts, ensured not only a broad outlook which is evident in his art, but imbued his art with a vibrancy and richness culled from great minds in other spheres of artistic expression. In his paintings and drawings there is a shining forth of musical, poetic and dramatic vision.

There is also evident a thoroughness, a dedication to hard work, both a consequence of his being the son of a German father

and of a mother who had the Swiss inheritance of precision coupled with the Germanic gift of thoroughness. Not only did Klee practise his art, he continually studied it in all of its forms. It is not surprising that such a person, gifted with imagination and a studious approach, should become a teacher of dedication.

His diaries show that Klee had a deep love of nature. He believed that the life-force operated in all things. He insisted on the need to 'enter into the creative drive to form, to penetrate its secret, to trace the path to creation.'

But his diaries also show that he also draws upon the unnatural, artificial worlds of drama, dance, music and literature. Indeed to call those worlds unnatural and artificial is a contradiction, because from earliest times man has naturally and unconsciously imitated the sounds of nature by singing, has told stories around the camp fire, has imitated the beasts in dance and has drawn what he observed on cave walls - so that he could attune to nature and at the same time sublimate his inner longing for an understanding of the univers around him and to express his emotions.

From an early age Klee found the theatre and opera fascinating, and as his knowledge of these grew they heightened his awareness of the human dramas of real life. He saw deep human emotions and truths condensed and sharply delineated on the stage, in tragedy, comedy, farce - exaggerated to capture the attention and

awareness of the audience, and to entertain.

Klee, always sensitive and introspective, developed a wry and satirical manner, the result of which is constantly reflected throughout his vast oeuvre. Tragedy with a sardonic laugh. Death with a wry smile.

The American painter, Robert Motherwell, summed up Klee's tragi-comical tendencies effectively : 'There is a point on the curve of anguish where one encounters the comic. I think of Miro, of the late Paul Klee, of Charlie Chaplin, of what healthy human values their wit displays.'

There is to me in this attitude more than a suggestion of wearing a mask, of there being a mask behind the mask. And behind the second mask, how many masks? The stage itself is a mask; good drama consists of peeling off that mask as a play unfolds, and still more masks, until the truth, as conceived by the writer, is revealed or merely indicated.

A substantial amount of imagery throughout Klee's work owes its existence to drama and literature. He was influenced by Aristophane, Goethe, Calderon, Moliere, Tirso de Molino and Schiller. He illustrated Voltaire's 'Candide' in 1911.

The fact that Klee was touched by the abstract spiritual qualities of music coupled with his love of the stage made him a dedicated follower of opera. He rightly regarded opera as a drama in which music is an integral part of the dramatic effect, whereas many people consider the drama as being merely a vehicle to carry

the 'tunes'. The musical and intellectual environment of his home ensured a proper appreciation of opera in its fullness, which included an awareness of the magnificence of the opera houses, a grandeur which contributed to the impact of opera.

Edward J Dent, in 'Opera' (Pelican Books, 1945) sums up succinctly thoughts which are scattered throughout Klee's diaries :

'The (Paris) Opera House is a thing that cannot be missed; it is simply unavoidable. It occupies the most conspicuous site in the centre of Paris . . . It employed innumerable sculptors and painters to decorate it with statues and frescoes . . . All this grandeur and magnificence, all this co-ordinated contribution of architects, sculptors, painters and engineers, had been assembled for the sole purpose of creating a house that should be worthy of music and the musical drama . . . (just as) we are accustomed to the idea that palaces and cathedrals should inspire a sense of wonder and awe in their beholders.'

Klee's knowledge of Opera was wide-ranging - he enjoyed Donizetti, Verdi, Gluck, Wagner, Debussy as well as works by contemporary composers such as Hindemith. But Mozart was his favourite composer and he once described 'The Marriage of Figaro' as 'an incredible work, reaching the very highest of ethos.' (RI)

While he was at the Bauhaus he became involved in contemporary opera, becoming much impressed by Oskar Schlimmer's and Lothar

Schreyer's pioneering work. Through Kandinsky and the Blaue Reiter group he came into contact with great modern composers such as Arnold Schonberg and Igor Stravinsky. The Blaue Reiter group was very much involved with the interactions of the arts, especially music, drama and painting. Exposure to influences in the most modern and radical approaches to opera and the stage affected Klee's aesthetic outlook and widened his scope.

The way of utilising music to create an atmosphere of mystery, whether in a play or in an opera, is what is generally called 'romantic.' Music has been associated with drama from the earliest beginnings of the dramatic art. The most primitive forms of drama were religious festivals to which singing and dancing were indispensable. Music was supposed to put man in touch with the supernatural. To a man as musical and sensitive as Klee opera opened out a world of the imagination, from which he could leap to discover and explore other worlds in his own art, graphic art. Music became colour which he added to the drama of his drawings, but only after he had conquered his early introverted inhibitions which were deep and ingrained. His nature delayed his own use of the romanticism which he had long been accustomed to in opera.—

The great German composer, Richard Wagner, was only four years dead when Klee became musically conscious. Wagner, therefore, was still considered a modern composer. Richard Strauss, another giant in music and opera, also German (1864 - 1949) was another innovator who broadened the scope of music. Artists like Klee and Strauss interacted with each other in the field of experimentation.

REFERENCE
ONLY

Many-sided Klee was also, like many artists, enthralled by Harlequins, Pierrots and the tragi-comedy world these portrayed. Pierrots have been popular for centuries. Pierrot is a white-faced, white suited unhappy lover of the french arlequinade (harlequinade) developed from the comic Italian servant Pedrolino. Harlequin, a character in a Harlequinade, an entertainment derived from Commedia Dell Arte, which was an Italian improvised comedy which flourished all over Europe from the early 16th. century to the early 18th. century. The Commedia dell Arte was important for its influence on the written drama in France and Italy in particular. In the intinerant companies which played this type of comedy the actors were known by the type-names of the characters which they portrayed, such as Arlecchino (Harlequin), Pantalone (Pantaloon), Pulcinella (Punch), and drew on a large stock of well-known speeches and situations to carry on the action of a comic play within a given scenario, using many visual jokes and silent by-play. In the most popular harlequinade Harlequin elopes with Columbine in defiance of her father, Pantaloon.

Artists, such as Klee, use these stock characters, often in incongruous settings, to portray the human angst - man against the world, man in an incomprehensible world, the world against man, man misunderstood/temporarily ecstatic/bewildered/chased/chasing/woefully sorrowful. In a sense they represent everyone, and are translated from their original play-setting to paper and canvas. They comment and invite comment.

Puppets and marionettes were a joy and a fascination to Klee. Puppets (usually worked by the hand within the figure) and marionettes (usually worked from above) date back to the very beginning of theatrical history, extensions of crude wooden and clay figures carved and made by primitive man. Artists, especially in the last 100 years, frequently use puppets in their drawings and paintings. They are manipulated, somewhat like the stock characters, Harlequin and Pierrot, yet there is something of the hidden life-force in them, at times happy, at times sad, even, on occasion, sinister. Modern man's preoccupation with robots, especially on a fantasy level, is a parallel. They are also akin to masks. What is behind the mask? What, in our imagination, lies within and behind the puppet? Who is pulling the strings - the marionette or the operator?

In Klee's time Gordon Craig, a leading stage director, promoted the art of the marionette, and went as far as saying that the actor must be replaced by the inanimate figure. (R2). There was extensive use of marionettes, for instance in the Dadaland Puppetry in Zurich and in the Futurist puppetry theatre in Milan. Puppets were looked upon by many artists as figures of superior grace, classical representations from which human imperfections could be banished. Klee sympathised with this approach, and went further on a tangent, seeing similarities between the world of puppetry and children's art.

He constructed a puppet theatre for his son, Felix, in Weimar in 1922. The airy mystical feeling of Klee's paintings were tran-

sferred to this small stage along with his imagery. There were carefully painted backdrops and powerfully expressive figures and masks.

Klee attended many puppetry performances, especially in Munich. He went often with Kandinsky to the famous Paul Brann puppet theatre, which opened in 1906 to see adaptations from literature, drama and opera. These were quintessentially artistic productions, pure art where the living human body was dispensed with. Klee recognised the pure quality, the emanation of, at times, the primitive spirit or life-force, and the grace. He used these in his own work, having refired them in the furnace of his imagination.

The circus appealed to Klee because of its human character and childlike charm. It is a hurly-burly world where, at the same time, an amazing degree of precision and timing is carefully hidden. The timing of the clowns must be exact. Behind the swagger of the jugglers lies practised precision and timing. Only in the high-wire act is the precision openly shown, even ostentatiously shown. In a way circus life is one big mask hiding a multitude of lesser masks. Circus folk guard their secrets - the clown behind his mask of grease-paint and his extrovert behaviour is a very private person.

The great clowns of the cinema, especially Charlie Chaplain and Buster Keaton, inspired Klee by the poetic vision of their tragi-comic world, a world where the little man, epitomised by Chaplain in particular, came up smiling after slipping on the

banana skin of life. He saw a parallel between such film small men and the ordinary man in Germany who was suffering from economic inequality. Much of the suffering depicted in Klee's paintings reflects the oppressions of the human spirit rather than the grand tragedies so often portrayed by artists of the past.

Just as opera appealed to Klee because of its integration of drama and music, so dance attracted him by its magical and primitive cohesion of movement and music. Like Augustine Rodin and Edward Degas before him, he was enthralled by the powerful movement behind every form of dance, whether it be utterly graceful or heavily dramatic, stylised or free. Behind the most light-seeming painting or sculpture there must lie an unerring powerful line if the work is to be true art. Unerring. Powerful. The dancer's body must have strength and force guided by a mind which has the refinement of a finely tuned violin.

While on his Italian trip of 1901 Klee has recorded in his diary many expressive accounts of cabaret dancers he saw. He said of (one) Cleo de Merode, and (another) Guerrero, who often danced together in the Spanish style : 'All in all the act is too light to be more than entertaining. Technically speaking de Merode's torso lacks mobility and remains too stiff amidst the otherwise free-flow of lines.' (R3). Klee demanded a great degree of aesthetic and artistic precision, qualities which he achieved in his own work only after prolonged and assiduous study.

He was a regular attender at the ballet. This was in ~~post~~-Diaghilev days, when ballet flowed along strictly classical lines.

^{most} ^{Skill}
 ^ ^

Many artists and musicians, as well as directors and choreographers, were growing tired of the constant repetition of ballets from the accepted repertoire. This repetition of old ideas, even in new ballets, led to a staleness and often to carelessness. Klee was aware of the artistic potentiality of ballet. After attending a performance of the then touring Russian Ballet in 1914, Klee wrote an article for the German periodical, 'The Mask'. He said: 'It is nothing new. It is old French ballet warmed up. As a work of art Russian ballet is a myth, and as a work of originality it is a fraud.' By then there had been a major break-through into new ideas in ballet, led by the impresario, Serge Diaghilev, who had employed Picasso to design sets and Stravinsky to write music in a modern idiom. It was therefore galling for Klee to see new ideas, originated by the greatest artistic minds of his day, largely ignored, especially in Germany.

Klee also interested himself in the qualities of the Eastern theatre, wherein he saw an expression of spirituality and free movement. (R4).

The use of the mask was a most important theatrical influence on Klee, becoming a major instrument in his portrayal and analysis of the human condition. Emotional anguish, either deeply felt or merely superficial, sometimes conveyed by facial expression, characterised some of the major art work in the period around 1900. Among the famous instances are the poor, blind and drunk characters of Picasso's early work, when for a few years he captured melancholy with a palette of all-pervading blues. The young Klee

correspondingly restricted his interests to melancholy heads, tragic masks and emaciated bodies. He quotes as applicable to this work Gogol's description of his novel 'Dead Souls' as a 'world of visible laughter and invisible tears.' The comedies of Aristophanes inspired him to create a grotesque mask which he saw as representative of art hiding in the 'grave, moral head' of man, with the lines of the mask as 'roads to the analysis of the work of art.' This mood prefigures his application to the study of art, and his teaching of the formulae of art in later years.

- *- Only in the last few disease-ridden years of his life do themes of gloom and evil return, when he executed a large number of works based on demons, ghosts, sinister angels and dismembered human bodies, all symbolic of fear and anxiety, all mask-like.
- * It is significant that Klee lived in an age when Sigmund Freud and his followers in Vienna were discovering the unconscious, analysing by psychoanalysis images buried in the depths of the mind and memories of dreams - stripping away mask upon mask to reach the inner core of the unconscious.
- * It is also meaningful that he lived during a period of deep anxiety for the German people, when decaying imperialism wore the mask of bravado, when ruthless Nazism wore the mask of benevolent socialism and when the rest of Europe wore the mask of indifferent concern.
- * In Klee's lifetime the masks worn by the politicians were the masks of death, hidden by the masks of humane concern.

INFLUENCE OF THE DRAMA
AND THE STAGE :

In art there is an important difference between a sense of the theatre and theatricality. Just as it is weakening to design a stage setting for a dramatic work in a natural manner, so it is artificial and false to paint or sculpt in a theatrical way. All great artists have an inherent sense of the dramatic, which is deepened and modified by study. Take, for instance, the ways in which Rodin posed the two lovers in 'The Kiss', how Michelangelo posed his 'David' and 'The Dying Slave' - these works have an expressive dramatic presentation without relying on extravagant theatrical histrionics.

Turner possessed a high sense of dramatic presentation, as displayed, for instance, in 'The Fighting Temeraire' : From the day of its first presentation this has been a very popular picture, as much for its patriotic sentiments (not overdone) as for its blazing pictorial splendour. The picture shows the Temeraire, a famous sailing warship, being towed up the Thames to a breaker's yard by a grimy unromantic steam-paddle-boat, against a backdrop of dramatic skyscape, with the grimy black buoy in the foreground emphasising the finality of this last melancholy journey. Nothing is overstated, the dramatic content is an inherent part of the picture, it does not intrude with tearful sentimentality.

Klee used his sense of the theatre - the stage, the drama - to reflect and state his ideas. He did not present his vision

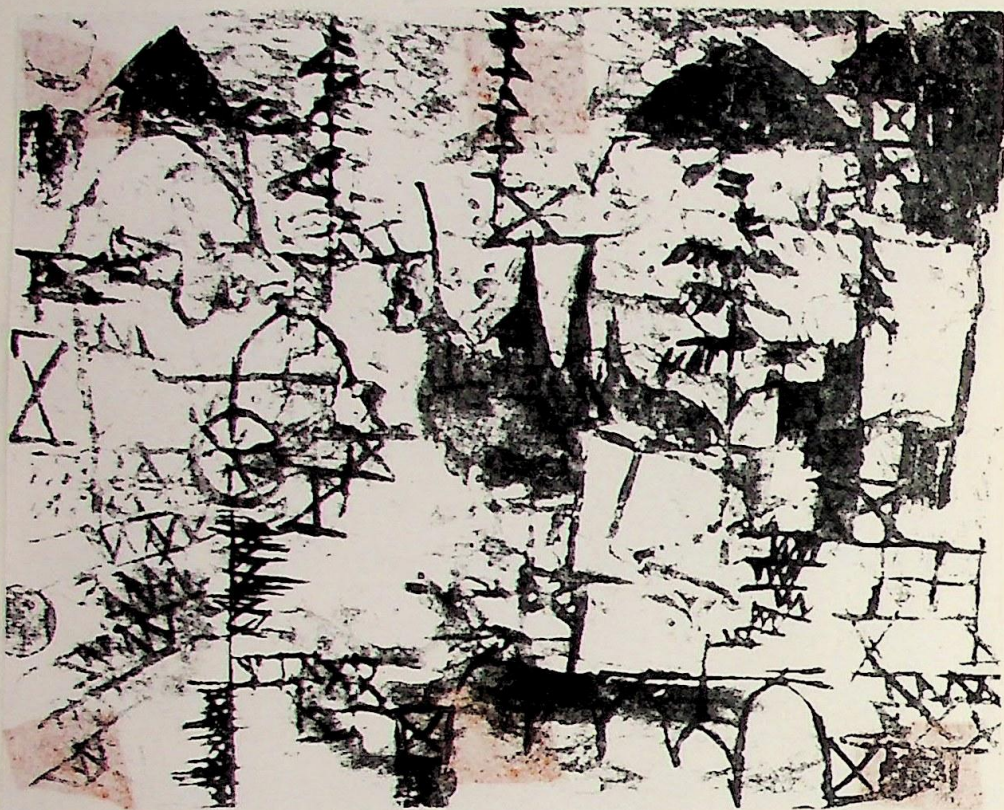
stageily, with artificiality. Even when he presented nature in terms of theatrical stage settings he was using theatrical devices to propose, expound and display profound truths, just as Beethoven used the popular dance rhythms of his day to carry the themes of his symphonies. Klee did not confuse the vehicle with the goods it carried.

Klee, an avid reader, was familiar with Calderon's 'The Great Theatre of the Universe', a classical statement of the ancient metaphor of the world as a stage. Shakespeare put into the mouth of one of his characters : 'All the world's a stage . . .'. This thinking influenced Klee's nature paintings between 1914 and his early Bauhaus years.

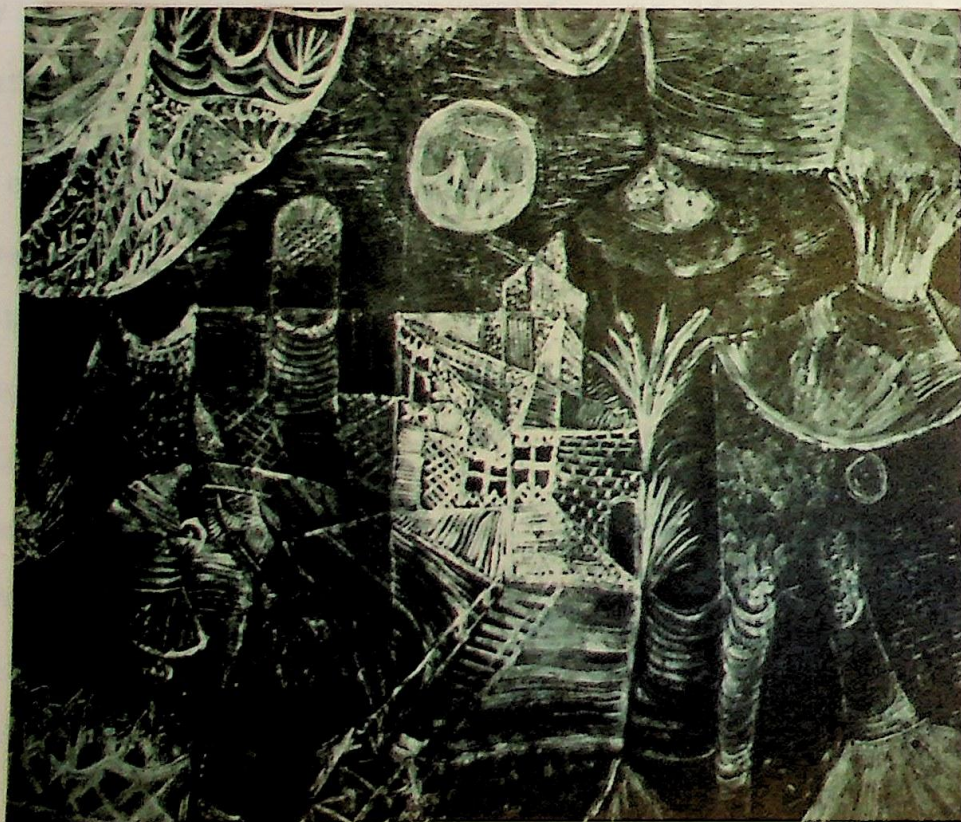
'Nature Theatre' (1914) is an atmospheric moody work, typical of the traditional Northern European style in presentation, even though it has a Swiss landscape with mountains and fir trees. Its depth is achieved by layers of two-dimensional structures reminiscent of receding stage backdrops. The tree and mountain images are built up with transparent coats of watercolour, giving a glazed curtain effect.

'Stage Landscape' (1922) bears similar structures, but here the medium is oil on cardboard, demanding a more calculated build-up. The feeling is mystical, threatening and symbolic. A psychic vibration is achieved by bright structuring lines against a dark background. The curtain-framing in the top left corner and the centre spotlight effect are evidences

33a



'Nature Theatre' 1914. No. I . Page 33a



Stage Landscape. 1922. No. II.

REFERENCE
ONLY

of a wish to deepen the spectator's awareness by the use of theatrical techniques.

Klee continues to use stage effects to interpret nature in ways which arouse our feelings of awe - heightening our suspense in the presence of natural objects, increasing the mystery of objects we take for granted.

'Hermitage' (1918) is a watercolour on a chalk-primed base. Here there is a pervading feeling of isolation, achieved by its flatness and subtly dramatic presentation in a static structure.

'Night Flowers' (1918) has a similar haunting feeling, with less overt references to the stage. The chalky texture, layered perspective and simple imagery give it a primitive impact, allied with a fairytale charm, and is unselfconsciously reminiscent of children's puppet theatre.

Klee continued using the stage as a vehicle in his paintings during his early years in the Bauhaus.

'Magic Theatre' (1923) has a darkening of tone and colour, with suspense and drama created by the framing device and the almost luministic aura of light. It portrays a strange world of symbols, and there are performing animals of different sizes, with varied expressions. The sun, moon and stars symbolically sketch time and the whole piece has sinister overtones suggestive of the dark side of a mediæval mystery play.

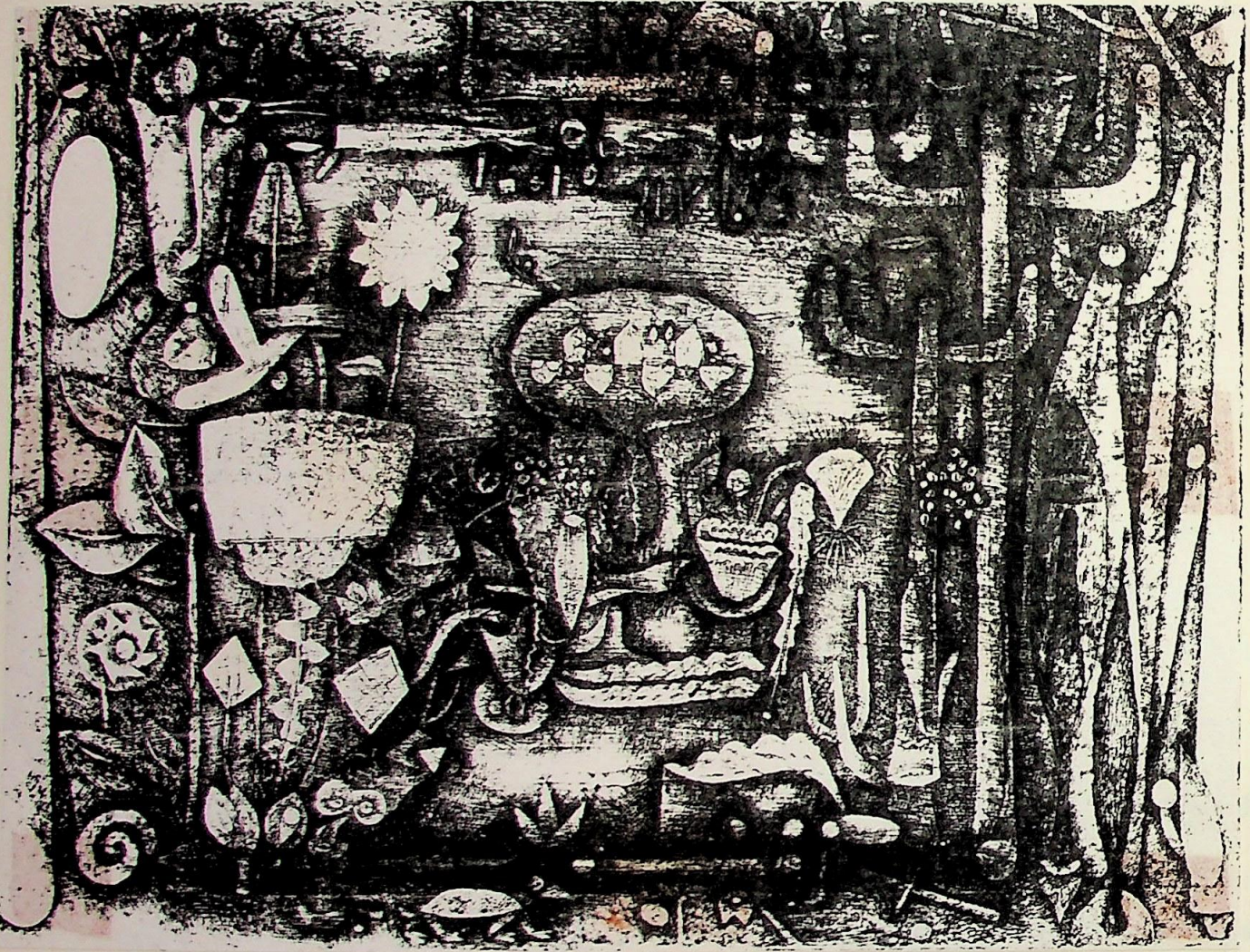
'Botanical Theatre' (1924) puts nature on the stage of Klee's



Night Flower. 1918. No. III.



Magic Theatre. 1923. No. IV.



Botanical Theatre. 1924 - 1934. No. V.

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mind - he portrays the secrets of creation, its cycles, laws and unutterable mystery using a refined pure harmony. No one can solve the mystery of creation, but Klee says paradoxically : 'The mystery is to share in the creation of form by pressing forward to the seat of the mystery.' Nowadays cosmic and quantum scientists realise that the more they explore the univers and the atom, the more there is left to explore - but the human spirit in its quest for a greater understanding of the life-force presses on towards the seat of the mystery.

A recurrent theme of Klee's is the depiction of degenerate types on the brink of tragedy, explorations of which he saw frequently in plays. He said : 'By including the concepts of good and evil, a moral sphere is created - art should be at home everywhere like a fairytale, and it should know how to deal with good and evil like the Almighty.'

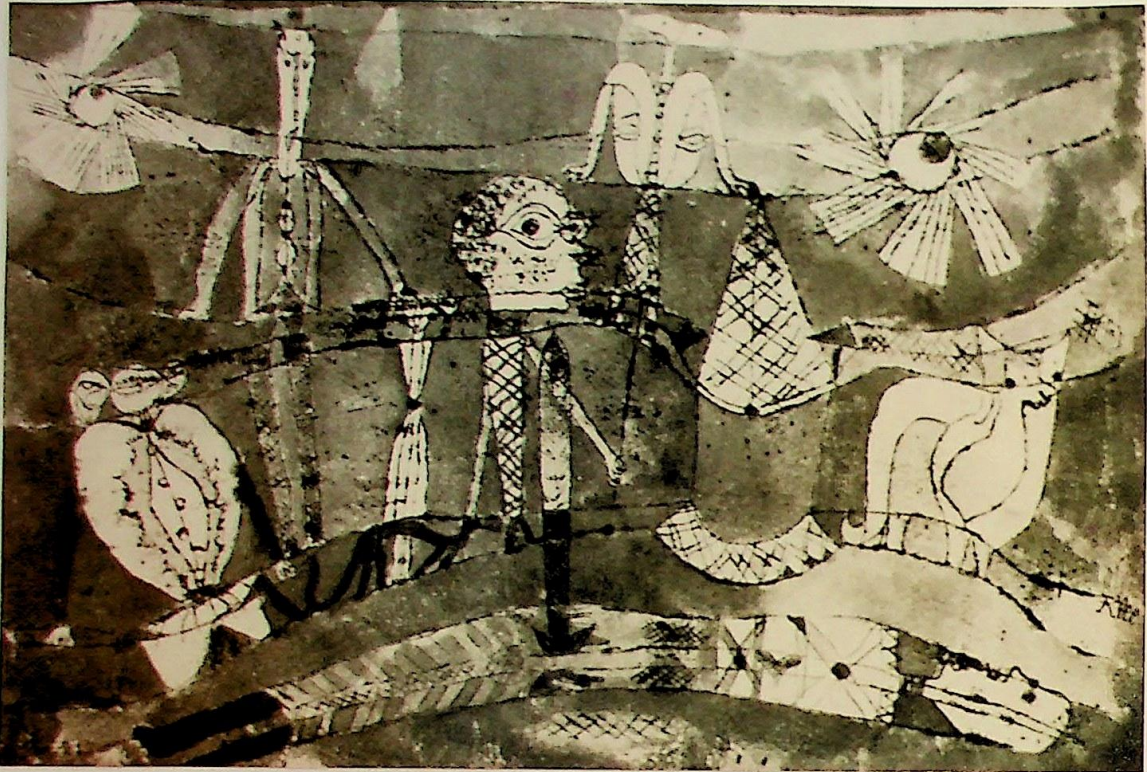
Bourgeois sexual behaviour is a common theme for his satire. Just as frequent are his comments on middle-class manners and inhibitions, as in his early etchings 'Two Men Meeting, Each Presuming the Other to be of Higher Rank' (1903) and 'Perseu, Wit Has Triumphed Over Misfortune' (1904). These have a literary orientation, and are sharply satirical.

'End of the Last Act of a Drama' (1920) is a satirical social comment with explicit sexual overtones. A helpless woman is stretched on the ground, supporting a group of smartly dressed

men and a strangely symbolic cat. A cat has frequently been used by artists to represent lust, as in Manet's 'Olympia' of 1865. Two suns scrutinise the walking stamping men, each sun an observant eye. A black arrow depicts the sexual thrust and obsession of the central male towards the woman's genitals. The depth of the watercolour washes aligned to the flatness of the figures gives an atmosphere of stage lighting. This painting puts the characters 'on stage' and makes a private passion paradoxically public. It points out that behind the human facade a drama takes place which is masked often down into the subconscious.

'Comedy' (1921) has again a statement on the human sexual condition, with numerous phallic symbols and erotic imagery. A parade of creatures with animalised and plant features parade, natural symbols in an unnatural setting against a backdrop of layered tones. There is an interplay of dark and light, a conflict between good and evil. The striated layers of washes echo the concepts of the Bauhaus theories of stage production, where simplistic abstract sets heightened the enactment of the drama. The blackness of the comedy points out to us that we are not only animals but, in human concept, animalistic, that we have the cloven hoof - concealed.

36a



End of the Last Act. 1920. No. VI.



Comedy. 1921. No. VII.

INFLUENCE OF THE OPERA :

Klee, a regular patron of the opera in Switzerland and Munich, contributed reviews to the paper 'The Berner Fremdenblatt' and 'Verkehrszeitung'. From 1903 to 1906 he wrote fifty-one pieces concerning operas at the Municipal Theatre, Berne. He was a sensitive, understanding but also a demanding critic.

Though he had a sensitive rapport with opera from an early age his youthful rebellious antipathy towards society coupled with a natural Blakesian introversion prevented a blossoming of his love for musical drama in his own art. It was as if he had been wearing a mask of cynicism to hide his inherent joy of life. In his early Bauhaus years, 1921 to 1923, his association with other artists and their companionship freed him from his inhibitions.

'The Singer L as Fiordiligi' is a direct translation of the heroine from Mozart's 'Cosi van Tutte', and depicts a character who is seeking perfect love. The face is imposed on a discreet wash of colour, and is imbued with marionette characteristics.' This was painted in 1923.

'The Voice Cloth of the Singer Rose Silber', also 1923, shows a different opera-stylised expression, concentrating on the power and sublime pitch of the trained voice. It is abstract, with initials of the singer's name used symbolically for further sharp observation of quality and personality rather than the individual persona. Refined in the extreme, the five



The Singer L as Fiordiligi. 1923.
No. VIII.



The Voice Cloth of the Singer
Rose Silber. 1922.
No. IX.

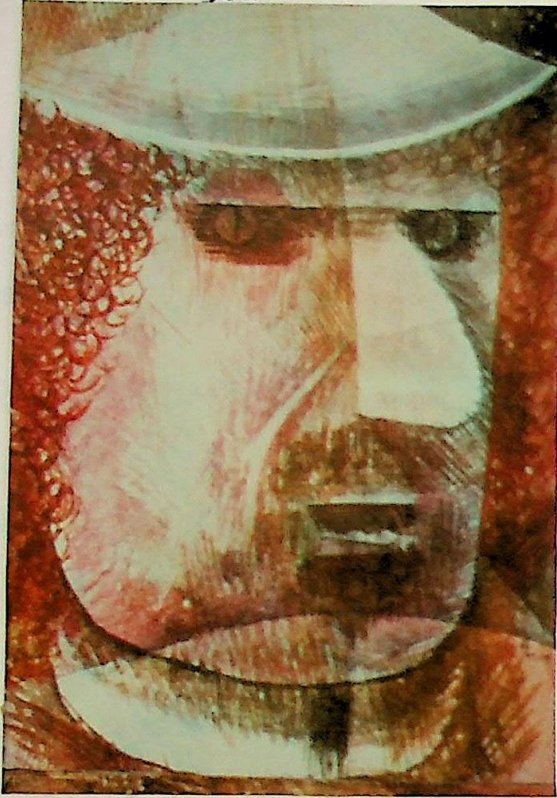
vowel sounds are imposed on layers of alternating textures, from heavy fabric texture to light smooth chalk.

'Mask for Falstaff' (1929) was inspired by Verdi's opera based on Shakespeare's boisterous rogue-buffoon, jolly in 'Henry the Fourth', parts I and 2, and in 'The Merry Wives of Windsor', with his underlying sadness breaking out tragically in 'Henry the Fifth'. Klee lets us see the inner Falstaff, peering from behind his mask, with tragic bewildered near-cynicism. His death is looming - following his rejection and disgrace. It depicts a muted horror as he finally realises what he always strongly suspected: he was a man without the stuff of greatness.

'Don Chi' (1934) was suggested by Mozart's 'Don Giovanni', the 'great lover' shown in semi-harlequin-fool costume, almost dismissively sketched on ragged hessian, with phallic symbols of deliberate naivety - the 'grand passions' of the womaniser are reduced to retrospective futile unproductive philanderings

'Doctor Bartolo' (1921), is a subtly and clinically executed parody, full of forceful movement and spacial exaggeration, of a character in Mozart's 'Marriage of Figaro'. A constructional motif of five lines form a musical staff around the middle of the figure and also indicate the boards of the stage. Bartolo integrates with music, stage and set.

38a



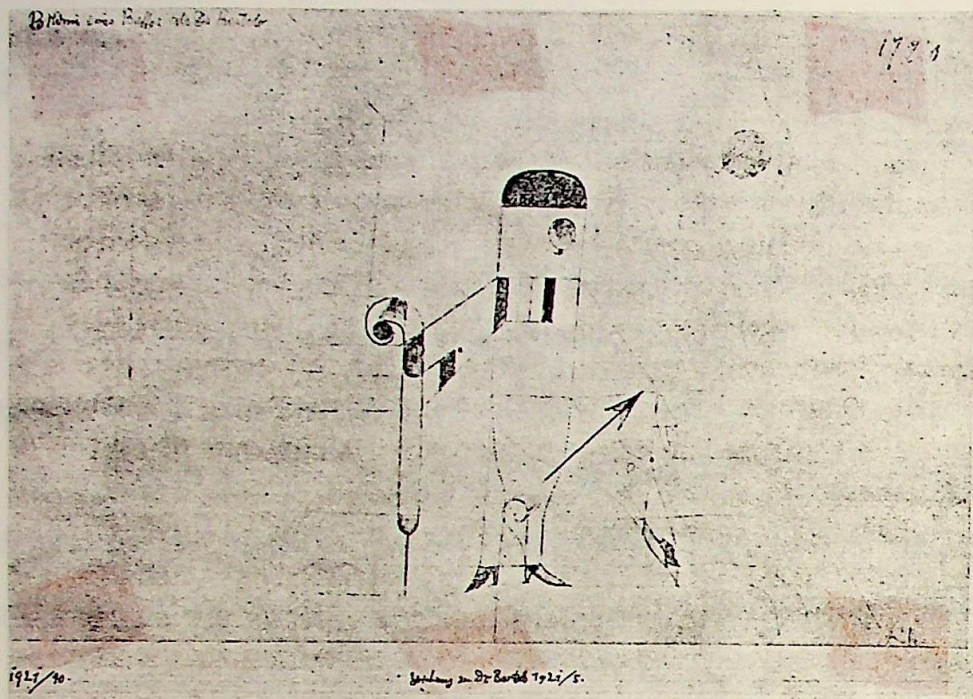
Mask for Falstaff. 1929.
No. X.



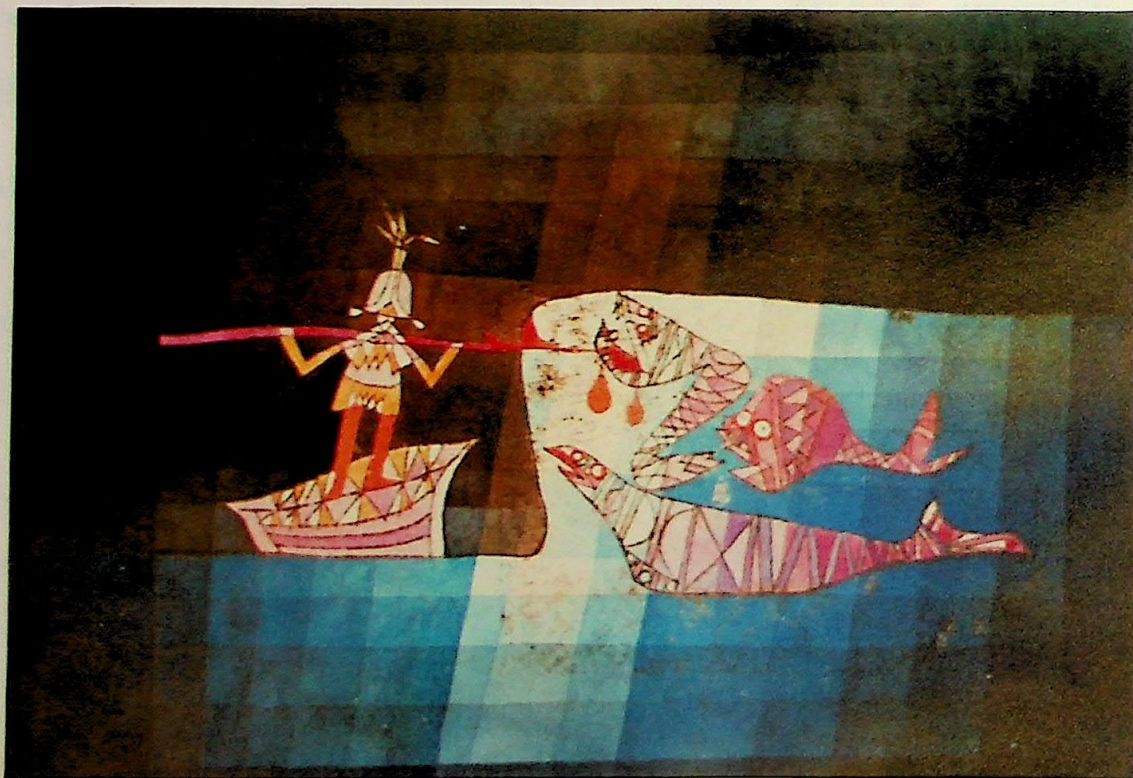
Don Chi. 1934. No. XI.

New ideas for pictorial expression of the human mind, its emotions and motivations, its aspirations and despairs, flowed from Klee's ever-increasing knowledge and love of music-drama.

'Battle' (1923) emerged from the comic opera 'The Seafarer'. The emphasis is on the effect of musical melodrama, with much musical references in abstraction as was common in Klee's and other artists' paintings of the period. The dark band shifting of the colour shapes whirl us into the mood and movement of lyrical resonance. Colour harmonies and tonal contrasts assimilate and reflect musical characterization and structure. The images of the sailor and the sea-monster are imposed on the carefully tonal structural background, and we receive a figurative impact of drama which is paradoxically mixed with humour, thus echoing the interactive elements of the opera and our own awareness of the paradox of human conditions.



Dr. Bartolo. 1921. No. XII.



Battle Scene from the Comic Opera
'The Seafarer'. 1923. No. XIII.

THE INFLUENCE OF HARLEQUINS AND PIERROTS
CIRCUS AND CINEMA CLOWNS
PUPPETS AND MARIONETTES

Pablo Picasso, George Roualt, Paul Cezanne and very many other artists were fascinated by these characters. Klee, therefore, was not alone in his appreciation of them. He used them 'to penetrate to the heart of . . . the simple but profound mystery', the life-force or spirit of the universe and the inner core of man. He spent most of his life developing that simplicity of vision that he so admired in the child's response to the world.

Harlequins and Pierrots were used by artists to depict the down-trodden, the degenerate, the loney and weak - mankind at his frailest. Musicians such as Igor Stravinsky and Arnold Schonberg used them as key figures in major works. Pierrot became a key expressionist character in the theatre of the absurd.

Walter Gropius, the founder of the Bauhaus, encouraged his staff to experiment. A prominent member of the Bauhaus, Oskar Schlemmer, responsible for sculpture and stage design, created 'The Triadic Ballet', which combined colour, dance, costume and puppetry.

The role of the puppet(and marionette) was strongly aligned, though not always, with the conception of Harlequins, Pierrots, circus and cinema clowns as tragic-comic figures, symbols of all that is aspiring but inadequate in mankind.

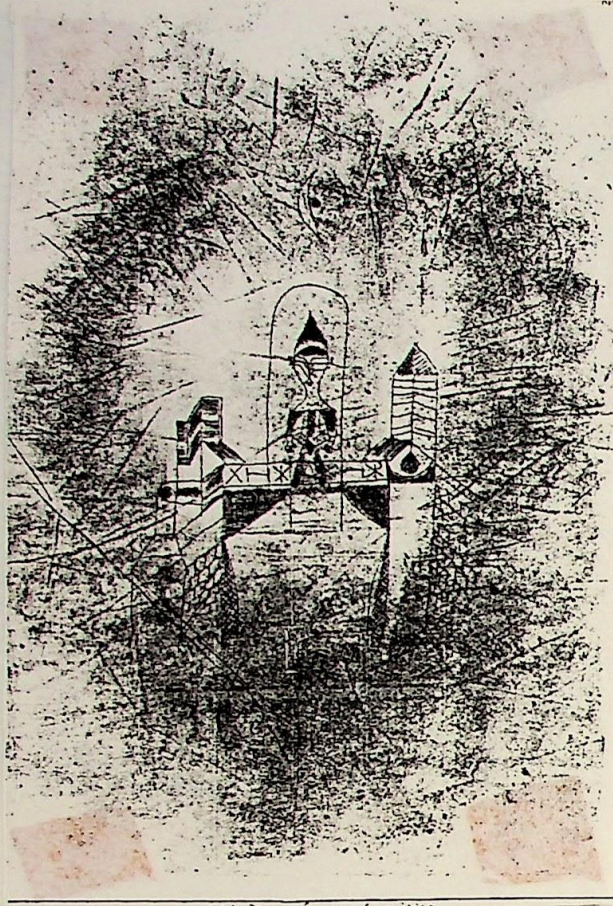
'Harlequin on the Bridge' (1923): This combines symbolism

- 'Harlequin On The Bridge' (1923). Here Klee is figurative and using symbolism, as he usually did in Harlequin/Pierrot etc. paintings. The bridge's intricate structure in the middle of the work, is incapable of support for even itself. A lack of perspective focuses our attention on the bridge which hovers over a vacuum. The bridge is a symbol of suicide, and a half-moon gazes malignly down like the eye of an implacable fate. The Harlequin's body, at war with itself, incapable of free movement, is surmounted by a head with thinly banded eyes and screaming mouth, symbolising schizophrenia and despair. (Munch used such attitudes frequently, but figuratively, as did the Surrealist, Magritte. This work conveys a disturbing sense of hopeless isolation and Klee may have intended it to refer specifically to the artist who is tortured by being ignored and misunderstood.

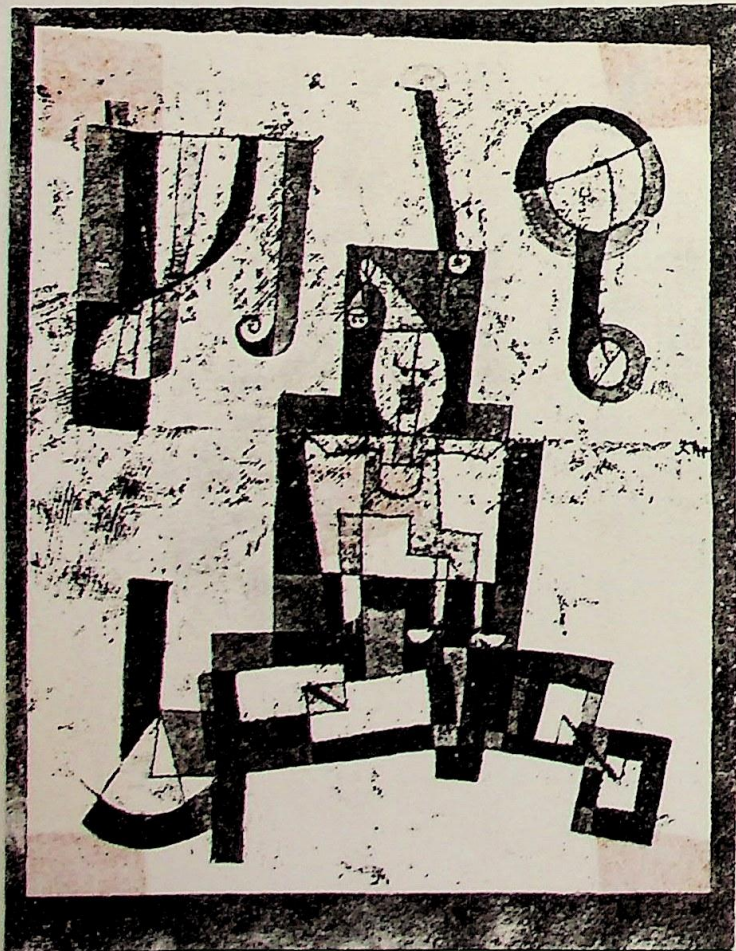
'Captive Pierrot' (also 1923) : Surrealist expression of despair, its structure influenced by the Bauhaus theories of geometric shape and structure, with Cubist overtones and owing a debt to the Symbolists. Oppressive tones of watercolour imprison the Pierrot, and also give a feeling of self-imprisonment. We get an emanation of psychological enclosure, of flaccid hysteria and intellectual boredom and despair - apt in the age during which Freud was exploring such cases.

'Brutal Pierrot' (1927) : Klee admired Chaplain, the cinema type of Pierrot, but his delineation of the ravaged character of Pierrot is more precise and deeper. Here the figure is off balance, uncomfortable; He wears a bright pink mask of deception,

4Ia

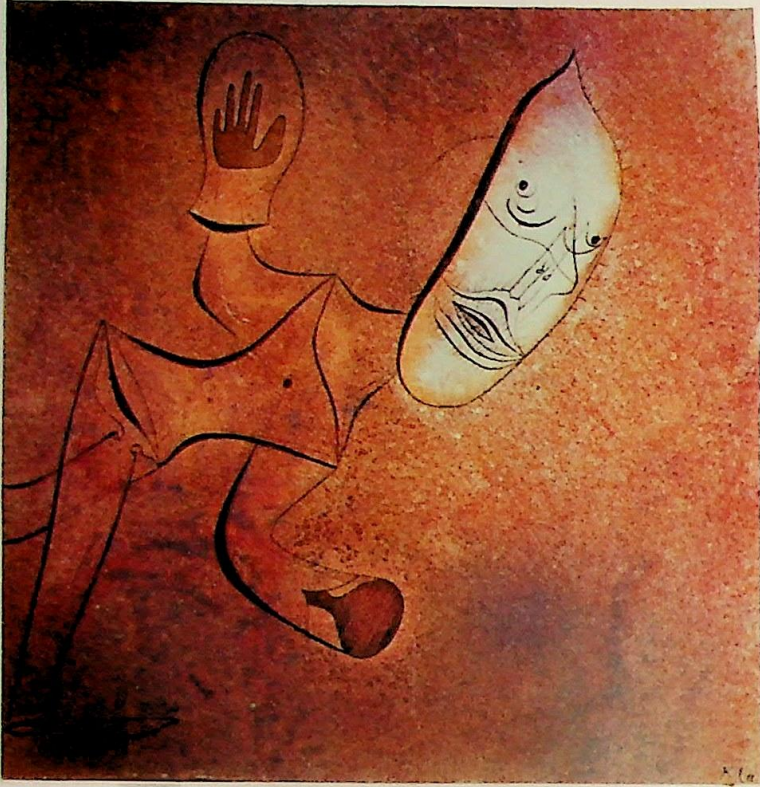


Harlequin on the Bridge. 1923.
No. XIV.

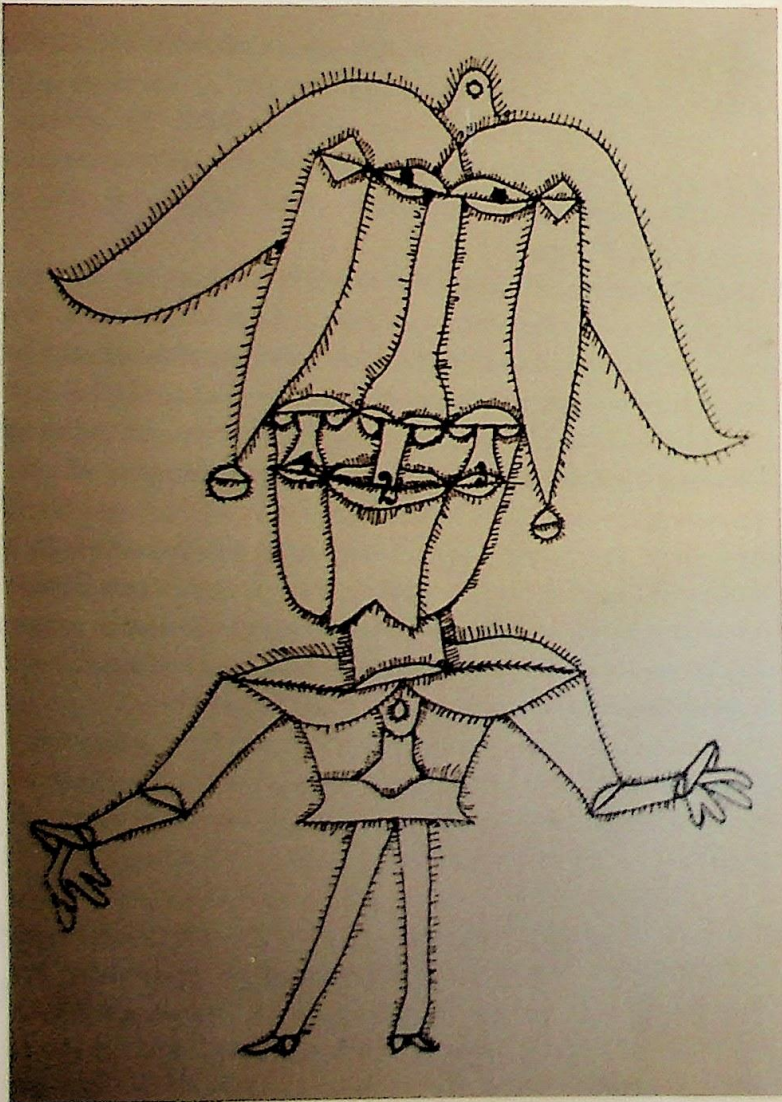


Captive Pierrot. 1923. No. XV.

4Ib



Brutal Pierrot.
1927.
No. XVI.



Three Gentle
Words from a
Fool.
1924.
No. XVII.

but appears to be mainly trying to deceive himself into believing he can use brutality to achieve sexual satisfaction. His mouth and body both represent a vagina. The innocence seems to have vanished under an evil leer, yet he is an unstable person, a hollow man.

In the late twenties the innocent and naively interesting Pierrot becomes a fool-figure in Klee's work, symbolising the classical fumbler, ignorant, clumsy and incapable. (Germany at that time, and, indeed, Europe as a whole, was fumbling and inept socially, politically and economically.) The pierrot's check clothes and pointed tails indicated a lack of good taste and reason, especially indicated by their lack of symmetry.

'Three Gentle Words' (1924) - full title: 'Three Gentle Words From a Fool'. This shows the traditional jester's hat and long spiky nose, breaking up the features of a face which has an earnest defeated. Three small numbered words represent the three gentle words. Reminiscent of St. Francis of Assisi in its innocence. The delineation give the character a fleeting unstable effect. He is leaving. He is not wanted - not in a world which madly pursues material things. He gives his gentle little messages in a drab uncaring grey-green desert of absolute indifference.

The jester, and in particular, the diamond-shaped patterns of his garb was used by Klee to suggest movement through colour and line. He said : 'The jester might be taken as an example of superimposed

instant views of movement.' Expanding on this he said : 'The combination of the bodily, spatial and inward forms lead to synthesis that is an interpenetration of space, body and thing. The influence of the lines and planes forms suggests productive increase and decrease, outer and inner energies, growth and change. (The Cubists had somewhat similar ideas but worked in a different way.) Klee uses these ideas on movement and space and line to emphasise, when he so wishes, a lack of symmetry both in body and mind,

'Allegorical Figureline' (1927) shows how the structural lines create a strong sense of movement within the distorted frames of the jesters.

'Fool In A trance' (1929) is a development of the process used in 'Allegorical Figureline'.

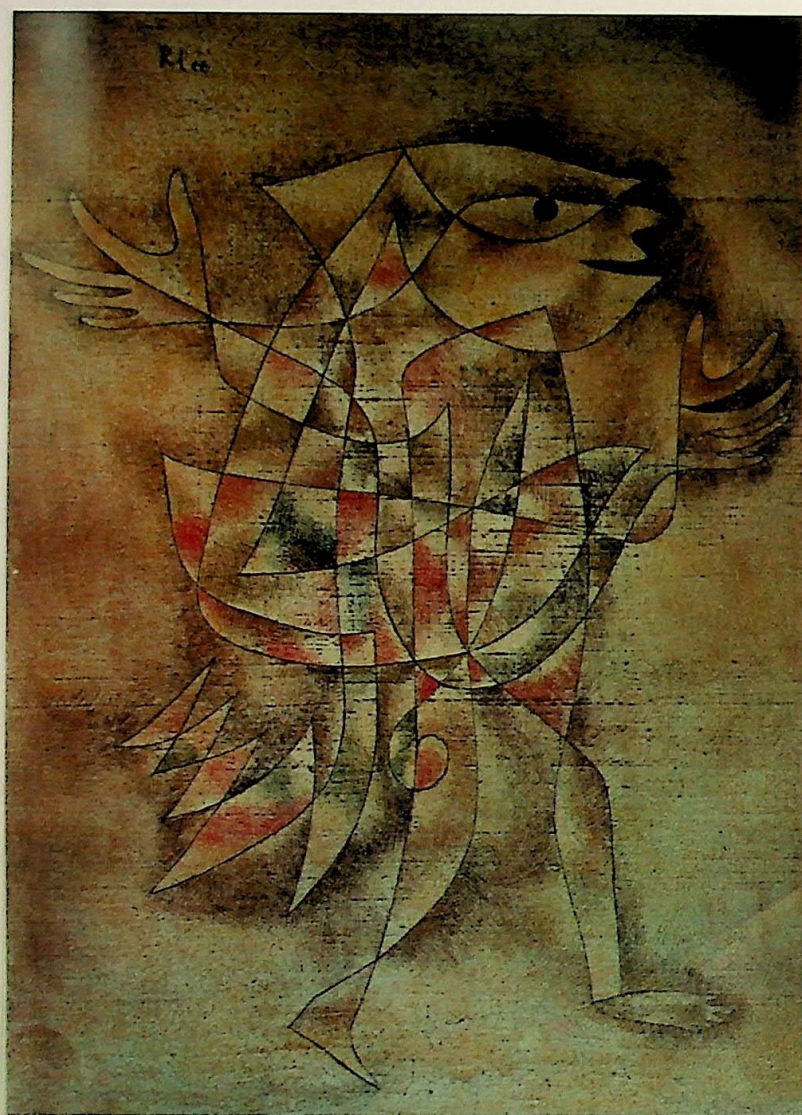
Sidney Tarachow describes the circus thus : 'The circus . . . is the child's theatre, dramatising the child's fantasies, conscious and unconscious, his daydreams, games, nightmares, anxieties . . . The child is presented not only with a victory over space and gravity, but magic and illusion, as well as triumphs over ferocious animals.'

All aspects of the theatre appealed to Klee, particularly the art of clowns, jugglers and acrobats.

Illustrations I5 and I6 (from a folio of drawings published 1914 in the Expressionist paper 'Sturmbilderbunch III) show puppet-like acrobats in uneasy and unsuccessful performances, symbolising physical and psychological imbalance. The lines are deliberately feverish within a paradoxically symmetric framework.



Allegorical Figuring. 1927. No. XVIII.



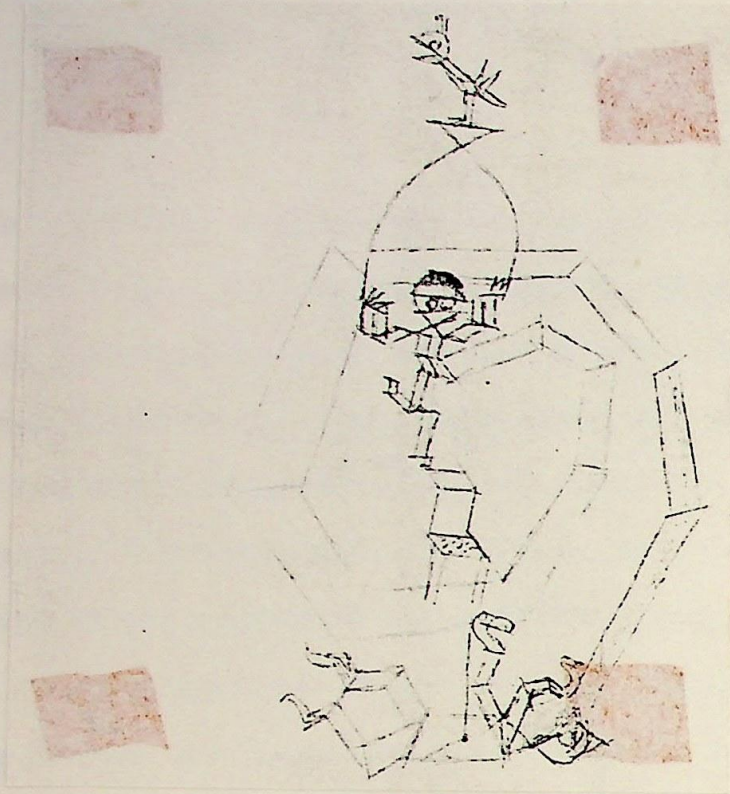
Fool in a Trance. 1929. No. XIX.

'Miserable Circus' (1917), 'The Equilibrist' (1923), and many similar works are concerned with balance, mental and physical. They are not comments on the circus but on the circus of life.

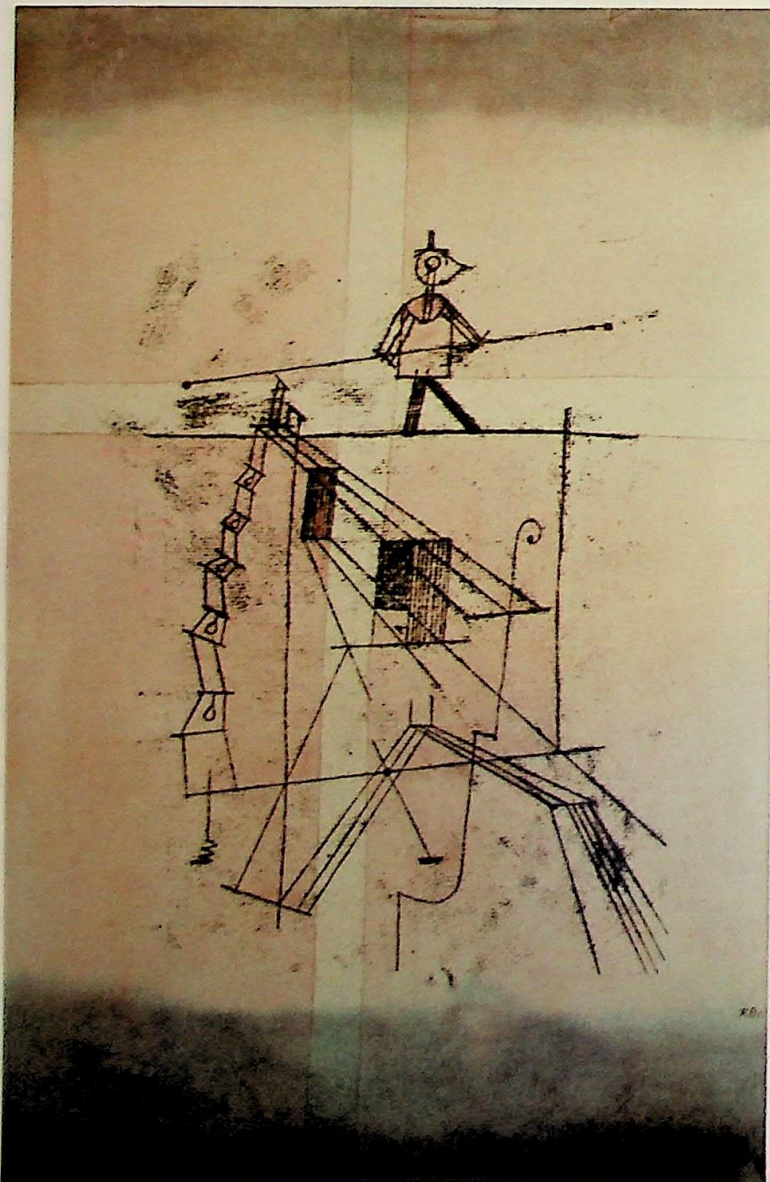
In many ways Klee's examination of the human condition in works already described, runs parallel to the work of Freud in psychology and psychoanalysis. Freud suggested that the conscious mind defended itself from unpleasant memories by repressing them and forcing them into the unconscious, and that it was only under the influence of acute distress that these traumata were re-activated, when they manifested themselves in coded form through hysteria, neuroses and obsessional behaviour. Freud's explanation of neurotic behaviour was revolutionary as it was then generally held that the symptoms of neurotics were meaningless aberrations. Freud went on to investigate the ways in which coded messages from the subconscious appeared in everyday life - in slips of the tongue, in jokes, and especially in dreams.

Klee, in his function of artist, recorded in very many paintings and drawings his analytical observations of the human being under different kinds of stress. Being an artist he does not prescribe a cure, he points out the problem. But foremost he was able to state his observations in works of art which have beauty and profundity.

44a



Misérable Circus.
1917.
No. XX.



Equilibrist.
1923.
No. XXI.

Klee and his friend, Kandinsky, went regularly in the early 1920s to Paul Brann's puppet theatre in Munich. Brann's theatre shoedded many highly imaginative and dramatic productions and soon became quite famous in Germany. Its productions had an expressionist character and did interpretations of works by Maeterlinck, Goethe, Gluck, Mozart, Pergolesi and Offenbach. Max von Boehn said : 'On his immature stage appears a harmonious unity of all the arts, much more convinsing than in the regular theatres; naive dramatic work and pleasant settings are here triumphant, precisely because (their)lifelikeness is not is not demanded from his stringed marionettes.' The influences and inspirations from these shows are evident in many of Klee's opera inspired paintings, with their mannikin figures and marionette stage settings. Brann's theatre also showed Klee the possibilities of creating his own puppetry show.

Between 1916 and 1925 Klee created fifty puppets for his son's puppet theatre. Felix, who was his only son, describes its conception : 'Twice a year we went to the flea market. There at bargain prices my father would buy the old frames which can still be seen around many of his pictures . . . he would take a seat for me at the Punch and Judy show, which for me was the high point of the flea market. The rough Bavarian humour of the performance captivated me and I was eager to own and operate a show of my own. This childish desire was realised in 1916, when my father made some puppets for me and contrived a theatre to go with them.'

The puppets, of which only thirty survive, show Klee's great sense of originality of expression. They reflect his pictorial work, full of tragi-comical feeling and light satire. Klee's puppet theatre in general had a simple primitive feeling. It was demonstrative of his ability for childlike expression and willingness to relate to a child's sense of intrigue and passion. The same sense of mystery and improvisation that so typified his painting was evident in these puppets and stage settings.

The puppet's heads were made out of plaster, papermache, feathers, nut shells, ox bone, glove rings, wood, match boxes, electric sockets, horse shoes, etc.

As in his two-dimensional work, Klee believed in an endless amount of experimentation with materials. He then painted and drew the faces in his typically Bauhaus style, giving them subtle yet ingenious expressions. The clothes for the characters were skilfully and cleverly made by himself, except for the early puppets of 1916, which were tailored by a friend, Sasha van Sinner. The clothes show a strong concern for texture, colour and pattern, and significantly add to the puppets' characters.

His son said : 'Taking a large picture frame, my father covered it with strips of cloth, and hung it in the doorway between the living-room and the bedroom. Against it, by way of a backdrop, he set up a magnificent canvas representing a village church with a huge clockface.' The characters included Eastern figures, figures of death, peasants, caricatures of friends, clowns, fools, Philistines and even a wry caricature of a member of the German National People's Party.

The faces have features similar to those in simple folk art, such as the widely-set eyes and the emphatic separation of eyelashes and eyebrows.

The puppet figure which attracts me most is Klee's self-portrait of 1922. The head is made of plaster and ox bone, painted and drawn upon in his inimitable style, with imagination and intuition. It reads like his 'Lost In Thought' self-portrait of 1919, but is now three-dimensional.. The psychic expression and the all-seeing eyes hint at Klee's great artistic vision, reminding us of his statement, 'The mask represents art and behind it hides man'.

* The puppet-drama itself had great character and appeal, as Lyond Feinger remembers : 'Most beautiful of all were the masks and figures of the puppet theatre, that Klee had made for Felix. Indescribably expressive each figure, even portraits of close friends aptly characterised and humorously caricatured. There was no end to the laughing and enthusiasm when Felix gave a performance in his grotesque manner. Klee then sat somewhere in a corner, smoking his pipe and smiling in quiet enjoyment.'

Felix Klee remembers many hilarious performances, and in particular a scene played in the Kaffeetalchen of the Bauhaus in 1922. 'It featured Emmy Galka Scheyer trying to coax my father into buying a picture by Jawlensky. Klee kept saying no, and remained unyielding. Finally, working herself into a passion, Galka took the picture and smashed it to pieces over Klee's head.'

The puppets were a useful extension of Klee's intuition and an

outlet for his need to communicate to others in a companionable as well as an artistic way.

The puppet image reappears strongly in Klee's late painting. It now serves to express his tragic fears and disillusionment:

'Outbreak of Fear' (1939) : The puppet image appears as a broken, disembodied, vandalised doll, hovering in ominous space, expressing a suicidal despair through slitted eyes.'

'Lady Death' (1921) : Has less tragedy, coming from an earlier period. It possesses a sardonically welcoming Death, a looser and less personal and introverted assessment of the finality of human existence. But the menace, though not structured with terrifying emphasis, still remains.

'Buddhist Monk' (1920) : Paradoxically a serene menacing statement, the rich golden hues of the cloak contrasting with the mummy-like staring features, the cloak pierced by white body-strips. Serenity and a knowledge of surrounding evil in uneasy alliance.

'The Sultan' (1920) and 'Crowned Poet' (1919) : Aloof puppet-figures, richly and brightly clad, with self-assurance and self-esteem. But the dirty textures of the heads and the over-staring eyes indicate an internal imbalance and an awareness of the transience of publicly expressed esteem. 'Uneasy lies the head that wears the crown.'



Outbreak of Fear. 1939. XXV.



Self Portrait. 1922. No. XXVI.

49c



Lady Death. 1921. No. XXVII.



Buddhist Monk. 1920. XXVIII.



The Sultan. 1920. No. XXIX.



Crowned Poet. 1919. No. XXX.

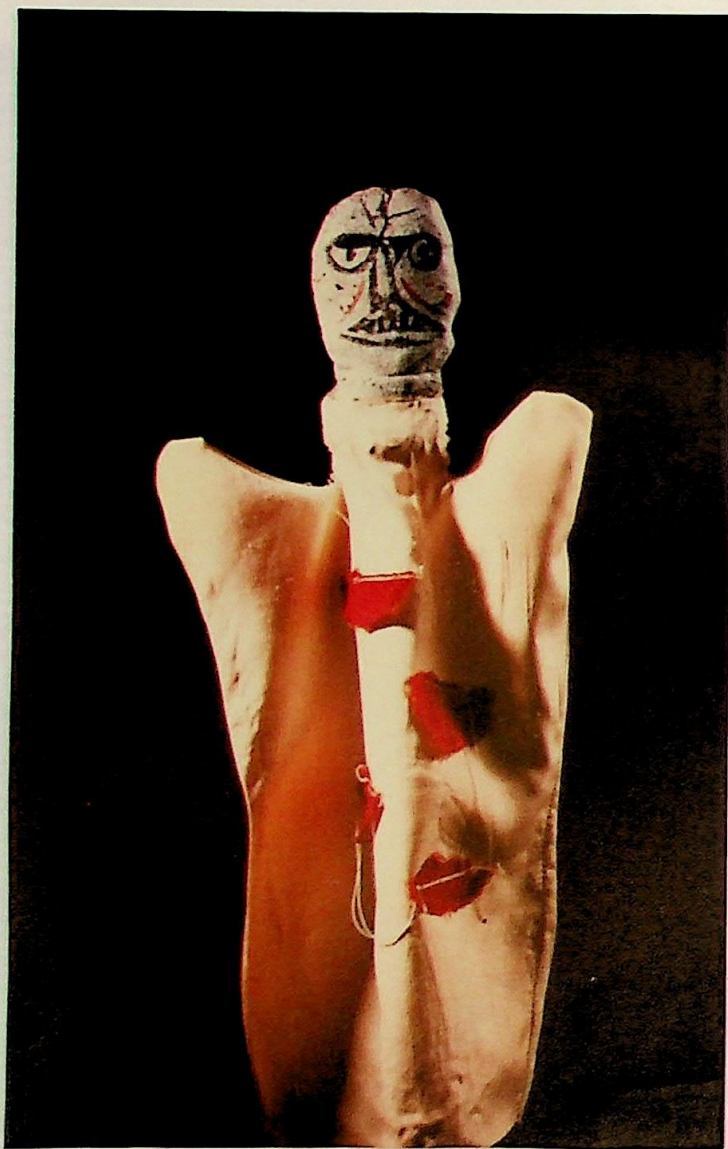


Member of German National
Peoples Party.
1921. No. XXXI.



Philistine. 1925. No. XXXII.

49j



Absolute Fool. 1923. XXXIII.



Death. 1916. No. XXXIV.

THE INFLUENCE OF DANCE - ESPECIALLY BALLET :

Klee enjoyed dance and especially ballet. He also viewed dance from the point of view of a graphic artist, learning from the vigour and grace of rhythmic physical movement. He talks, in his diaries, of the connection between his visual researches into the theories of movement and actual dance : 'The performance of the dancer, La Belle Otero . . . apart from what is after all of an orgiastic character, the artist can learn much here. Of course there would need to be another dancer if one is not only to feel the law of movement, but also to understand it. The point at issue is perhaps only the complication of linear relations that subsist between bodies at rest.' This type of analysis of movement had already been done by stop-go photography and was of intense interest to artists who could thereby study the lines of a body, or the interconnecting lines and planes of two or more bodies, at 'rest', frozen at a certain point of movement.

Klee was nourished on the traditional classical ballet. His analytical approach to dance was not fully stimulated until the 1920s when he was exposed to the freshness of experimental dance at the Bauhaus, even though radical new approaches had been instigated already by, especially, Diaghilev who employed the composer, Stravinsky and the artists, Picasso, Matisse and Braque (to mention only a few) to produce ballets in a modern dynamic idiom.

At the Bauhaus Schlemmer envisaged 'plays consisting of forms,

colours, lights and the mute play of gesture and movement.' Klee shared many of Schlemmer's aspirations and the two-dimensional dance experiments of Schlemmer were influenced by Klee's figures, theories on lighting and the equilibristic dynamics of figures. Klee's ideas on stage construction based on his advances concerning movement and expression helped Schlemmer. The 'Triadic Ballet', conceived by Schlemmer and performed at the Bauhaus, involved many of Klee's propositions and showed how abstract character in movement, using marionettes, could be transferred from its two-dimensional concept in drawing to three-dimensional dynamically moving form.

Klee also transferred what he observed in this type of three-dimensional stage production back into two-dimensional graphics - there was a continual cross-fertilisation of ideas.

'Fragment from a Ballet to Aeolian Harp' (1922) : Here Klee is inspired by the stark bareness of the Bauhaus stage and by the smoothly flowing curves and flows of Schlemmer's figures, with a subtly cubistic effect and a delicate delineation which is evocative of refined thought and sensitive feelings. The line-structure gives an echo of the marionette.

'Genii Figures (from a ballet) of the same period has power and drama and is less introspective, pouring out a glow of emotion from a semi-classical design. It is evocative, in a more restrained way, of 'The Firebird' which had been scored by Stravinsky.

50a



Fragments from a
Ballet to Aeolian
Harp.
1922.
XXII.



Genii. 1922.
No. XXIII.

'The Female Artist' (1924) : Poise and balance are the key elements, with acrobatic and equilibristic overtones in its structure and subtly suggested movement. The moon-symbol gives an uncanny mixture of traditional romance and schizophrenia by suggestion, rendering the character pathetic.

It was natural that Klee should find inspiration in dance. Although he created a world of fantasy, this world has an organic and dynamic life. The different elements in his paintings do not have the disparate, immobile quality of the works of his Surrealist contemporaries.

It is significant that Klee said (in 1923) : 'The artist is a man, himself nature and a part of nature in natural space.'

51a



Female Artist. 1924. No. XXIV.

THE INFLUENCE OF MASKS :

J Huizina says in his book 'Homo Ludens' about the mask : Modern man is very sensitive to the far-off and strange. Nothing helps him so much in his understanding of savage society as his feeling for masks and disguise . . . The sight of the masked figure as a purely aesthetic experience carries us beyond ordinary life into a world where something other than daylight reigns, it carries us back to the world of the savage, the child and the poet, which is the world of play.'

Art circles around 1900 were fascinated by the mask. Picasso and Matisse used the mask extensively in paintings; the Die Brücke movement in Germany used the mask in their search for that paradoxical concept, a new primitivism; August Macke contributed an essay on masks to the Blaue Reiter almanac of 1912, the contents of which tended to the metaphysical rather than the ethnological and was directed towards a search for the expression of our innermost thoughts. Very few artists followed Gauguin's example by actually living among primitive or semi-primitive peoples and were content to draw inspiration from examples of imported masks and other primitive artifacts. Their study of masks was a springboard into the primitive emotions of civilised man.

Klee said : 'The mask represents art and behind it lies man.' He was not much interested in borrowing from primitive cultures and saw the mask as a powerful vehicle for modern social statement and artistic licence.

Masks are as old as mankind, and in one shape or another have appeared in every culture. They are closely connected with religion and the supernatural, and have proliferated into drama, dance and art. As a young man Klee was much influenced by Ensor, who was fascinated by the carnival masks sold by his mother in Ostend. A mutual friend of Klee and Ensor was Emil Nolde who saw the mask as being as important in expressive art as the stringed instrument became to the Cubists.

Klee said in 1901 : 'I am not here to reflect the surface, but to penetrate inside. My mirror probes down to the heart. I write words on the forehead and around the corners of the mouth. My human faces are truer than real ones.' This reflects the psycho-analytical probings of Freud. Klee attempts to express dualism in the human condition, the extremes of order and chaos, comedy and tragedy, and the grey areas between.

His etchings of 1903 - 05 are examples express the twin roles of the actor, the man and his portrayal of man, in relentlessly forceful and powerfully delineated lines, influenced by literature and the grotesqueries of Goya.

'Mask' and 'Pangloss Mask' both from 1912 show his frontal use of the mask. They are small pieces and are executed with pen and ink wash (wet on wet) on light drawing paper, spontaneous in feeling and showing perceptions of anguish. In 'Pangloss Mask' the duality of emotions (a determination to look on the bright side of life at war with suffering and defeat) is conveyed by the loose structure, the neurotic gaze and the floating of the mask on the surface of the paper.



The Strange Masks (Detail) by James Ensor. No. XXXV.



Mask. 1912.
No. XXXVI.



Pangloss Mask.
1912.
No. XXXVII.

'Head of a Young Pierrot' (1912) shows a delicacy and refinement which, in spite of its glum, almost threatening look, invites out sympathy. The head is round, over-large and gives an intuitive glimpse into the sad reality of theatre comedians and also into the reality which each human being faces each day. There is a childlike appeal behind the cross, astigmatic eyes - we are looked at, yet at the same time looked away from, appealed to, yet there is a consciousness that the appeal for help will be rejected. This piece retains a subtle element of caricature carried over from Klee's earlier works.

Klee's mask paintings of the 1920s show a strong geometric accent which he acquired at the Bauhaus. This influence of the geometric is startlingly illustrated in 'Senecio' (1922), with the circle related to the square, the inter-relation of colour and structured expression, and sub-divisions of the total area into facets of light and colour modifications. We are confronted by the analogy of the poisoned flower and the tragic dramatist which inhabits the mask-face. The use of colours associated with a harlequin's costume both sublimates the subject and makes it human.

Klee avoided the harshness of the popular Primitive cultures which influence many artists of his time, including Picasso. He had been influenced by more sophisticated forms of Eastern art.

Margaret Plant in her book 'Figures and Faces' shows the similarity between Klee's 'Actor's Mask' and Katsushika

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Head of a Young
Pierrot.
1912.
No. XXXVIII.



Senicio. 1922.
No. XXXIX.

Hokusai's 'Lantern Spectre From a Hundred and One Tales'. There is not a literal comparison, as Klee's painting is frontal, with inward turning introspective eyes in the style of his self-portrait 'Lost In Thought' of 1919. The spectre's spiky hair becomes an arrogantly coloured and styled, almost childish, haircut in Klee's. Klee repeats the horizontal cracking in the face, and altogether Klee's countenance of the woman is far more closed and unreceptive.

*The fact that Klee had been influenced by Japanese art as far back as 1906 drew him towards a less hard-lined approach towards masks. He wanted always to indicate, however subtly, the humanity behind the mask, the anguish of the soul behind the facade.

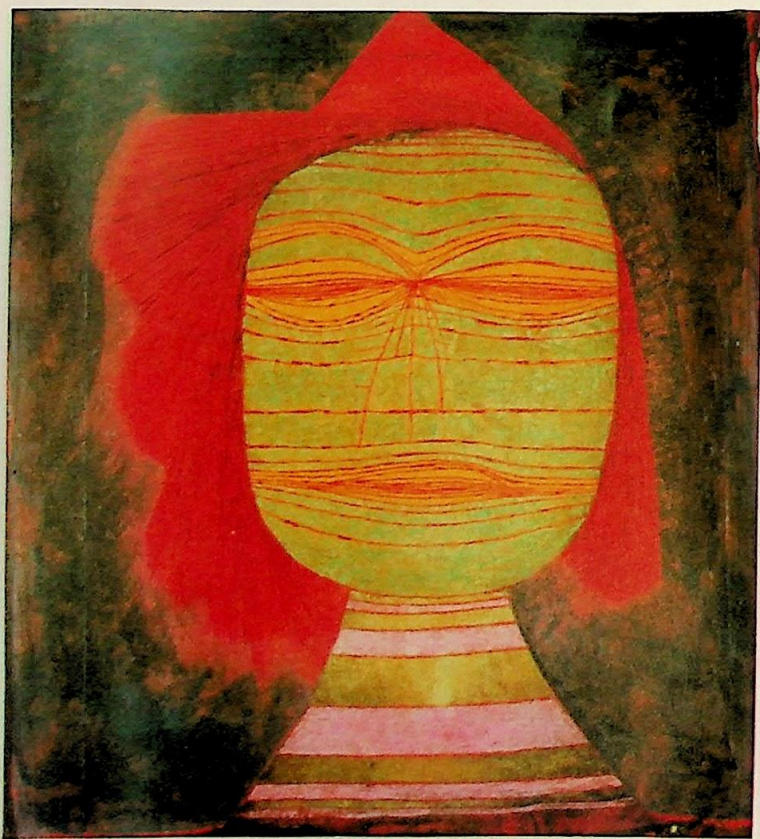
'Masculine Head' and 'Gypsy Type' of 1927 clearly show the Japanese influence, but are less subtle than usual, an expression of overt rebellion, and are similar in line and construction to the work of the Japanese artist, Kuniyoshi.

'Actor' (1927) : An oil painting on board shows a more primitive, Oceanic influence. The head is a squashed circle; it has a childlike Humpty-Dumpty questioning look: its very short legs betray its vulnerability to attack, its peering but open eyes indicate a fear of criticism.

** Faced by artistic persecution by the Nazis, Klee fled from Germany in 1933 to his birthplace, Berne in Switzerland.



Lantern Spectre from a Hundred
Tales by Hokusai. No XL.



Actor's Mask. 1924. No. XLI.



Masculine Head.
1906.
No. XLII.



Gypsy Type.
1912.
No. XLIII.



Actor. 1927. No. XLIV.

In 1935 a terminal illness struck him and he suffered for the last five years of his life.

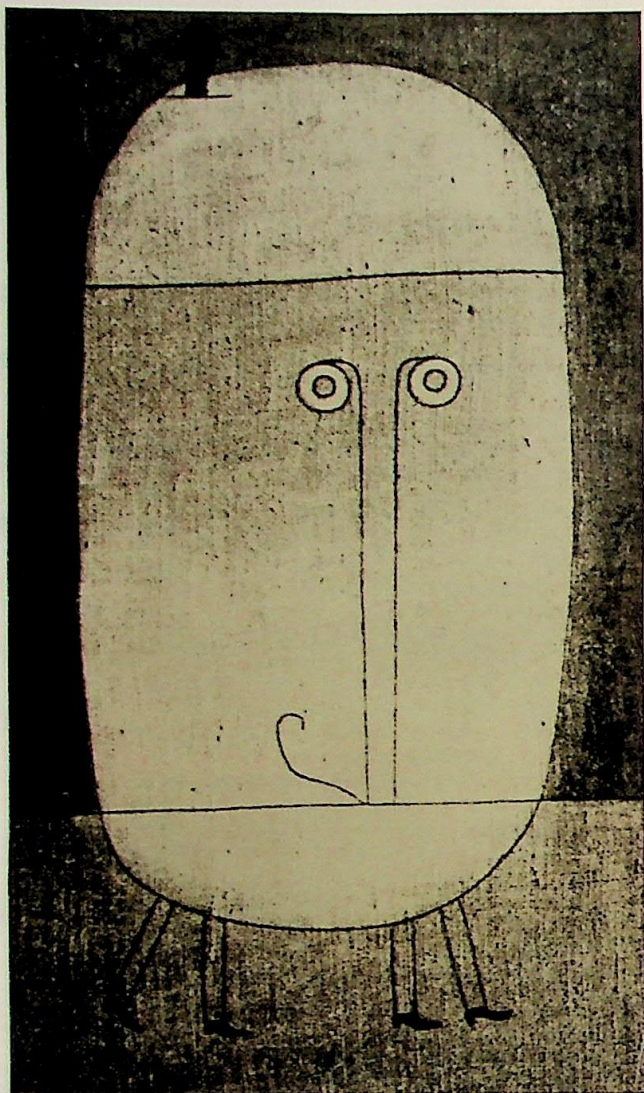
Other great creative artists have had to endure, even surmount, physical defects and suffering - Beethoven became deaf; Chopin had tuberculosis; Schubert became diseased, as did Gauguin; Monet went partially blind; Renoir suffered from arthritis. Klee, like these, did not surrender to his illness, but became inspired to work with volcanic energy during his periods of improvement.

He drew on the dark forces of his youth, but he now imbued them with the reflected serenity of his middle years. Now his works became more simple, even brash; his philosophical statements are deeper, and contain an impetuosity which give them a freshness which is heartening in spite of the many clear indications of his knowledge of his impending death. It is natural that some of these last works are unambiguously macabre, but in these there is a Dance of Death rather than a crawling whimpering approach to his implacable fate

'Mask of Fear' (1932) : This no longer conceals. Neither is there a sense of play, unless it is a macabre type of play. The mask formed the whole body, it stares sideways in fear, but it still retains a wry humour, suggested by its almost grinning mouth.

'Fire Mask' (1939) is the face of a bewildered incendiary, who with dribbling mouth and flaming hair appears to be

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Mask of Fear.
1931
No. XLV.



Fire Mask.
1939.
No. XLVI.

consuming himself with the unquenchable fire of disease. His mask-face (for now the mask is welded to the flesh of the face and the face seeps through the mask) is painted with flaccid deathlike hues.

'Voice From The Ether' (1939) shows a strong social statement within a satirical conception. C.M. Kaufmann describes it :

'The head is strong and economically rendered. . . staring eyes and a mouth dripping with saliva are the sitter's unpleasant characteristics . . . the head may be interpreted as a portrayal primarily of the greed whetted by the promises of Nazi propaganda.' The ferocity of this head suggests an all consuming rage which is self-destructive, as was the Nazi

*There was, naturally, a great consciousness of threat running through Klee's work from 1932. He was doomed by disease, mankind appeared to be doomed by Fascism of the Nazi type. He had escaped from the Nazis see SS in place of an ear in 'Fire Mask', only to contract a fatal illness.

'Mask' (1940) is a construction, mediaeval in its conception of a pale beckoning death.

'Death and Fire' (1940) : Painted in the year of his death. The human spirit is indomitable. Even when facing death Klee did not lose his sense of fun. This profound work has a grim and macabre humour. The features of the ghastly leering face, malign-

57a



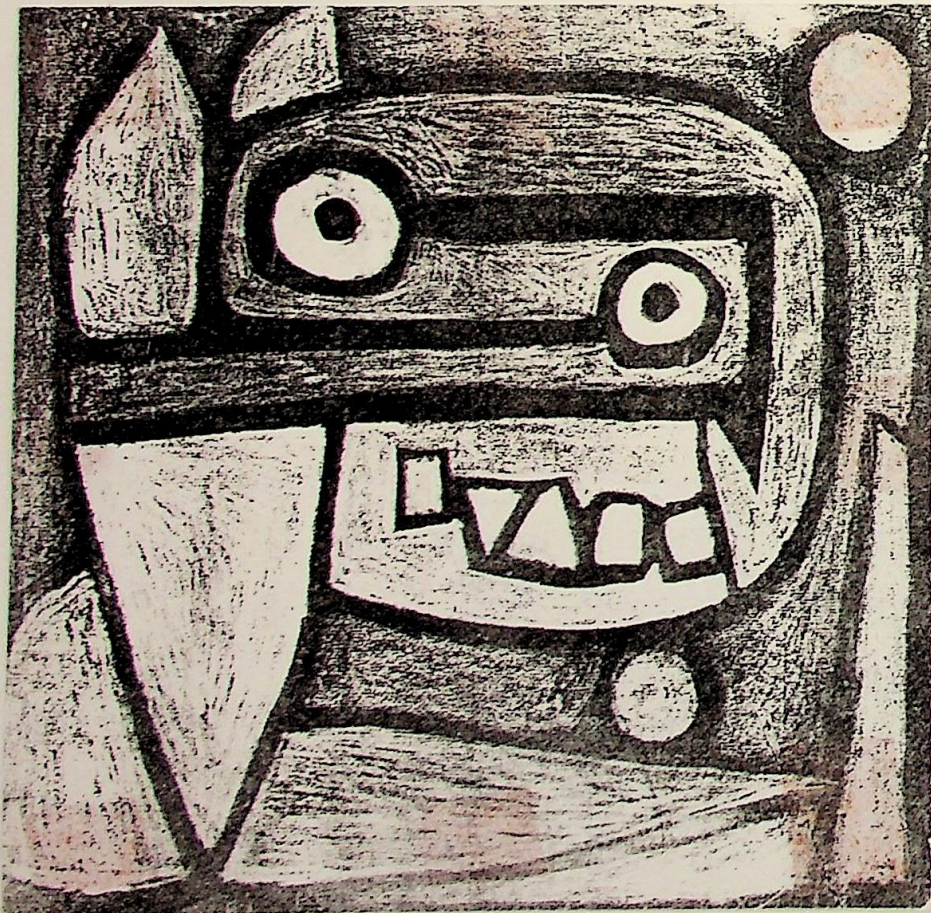
Voice from the Ether. 1939. No. XLVII.

57a

nantly triumphant, are made up of the letters 'TOD'. Tod is German for death. The ultimate terrifying mystery of death is concentrated into a few broad strokes of the brush. The painting is done on ragged hessian like sackcloth, a symbolic expression. The fiery but purifying furnace of death is indicated by a mixture of red, ochre and brown tones. There is a mysterious stick-like figure on the right and a circle on the upper left. The figure is reminiscent of an ancient Egyptian hieroglyphic, a symbol of hope or of serene acceptance of death; and the circle may represent an escape into a future existence: Klee does not tell us. But it is not a completely doom-ridden picture. Death's leer also contains a lopsided grin, a kind of 'hail fellow, well met'. Man contained the seed of his own death and the power to destroy fellow man and nature. Death is not only man's constant companion, he is man's final end. Or is he? Is Death merely the end of the beginning? Klee has made a powerful abstract and symbolic painting; he does not explain - he leaves it open to every man to make his own personal interpretation.



Death and Fire.
1940.
No. XLVIII.



Mask.
1940.
XLIX.

CONCLUSION

It is not a matter of opinion as to what direction
 the world is to take - or to be guided. The other intentional and over-
 whelmingly compelling force is the human mind, which is
 giving its profound thought, - something new merely for the sake
 of being new - has created a "new" world of "ideas". One (idea)
 follows the last trail, and a matter of "ideas" grows from
 ideas which themselves are the evidence and are shortly left
 high dry and bleached under the scorching heat of unbridled
 criticism. It is not healthy to fear the unknown, which is
 healthy to fear around in fear of not profiting something original.
 In this's time there was a pleasure of "ideas" to obtain the best
 of these ideas, but was not tied to any particular one, in
 spite of being caught by the followers of one more or another
 and confusion.

It is not a matter of opinion as to the production of great
 works of art, but training and discipline and study will guide
 the artist to the development of his intuition. This was prob-
 ably for over forty years and during all of that time he de-
 veloped an immense amount of skill as a professional and ex-
 ceptional teacher. He regarded himself as a "teacher" and
 for knowledge, an artist with a great exploring mind.

In one of the best essays contained in his writings this man said that
 that man did not produce the world's best work visible. The art of
 the man was not a half century, like ourselves, and consequently

CONCLUSION :

In every age there is a conflict of opinion as to what direction Art should take - or be pushed! The often irrational and overwhelming compulsion to produce something new, without first giving it profound thought, - something new merely for the sake of being new - has created a cult of 'isms'. One 'ism' follows the last breathlessly, and a welter of 'isms' comes from minds which thrash around in the shallows and are shortly left high, dry and bleached under the scorching heat of enlightened criticism. It is not healthy to fear the unknown; neither is it healthy to race around in fear of not producing something original.

In Klee's time there was a plethora of 'isms'. He studied the best of these closely, but was not tied to any particular one, in spite of being adopted by the followers of ones such as Symbolism and Surrealism.

Rules and regulations will not lead to the production of great works of art, but training and discipline and study will guide the artist in the development of his intuition. Klee was productive for over forty years and during all of that time he remained an assiduous student as well as a conscientious and enlightened teacher. He remained, because of his constant thirst for knowledge, an artist with a fresh exploring mind.

In one of the best known passages in his writings Klee said that 'art does not produce the visible but makes visible.' The art of the past four and a half centuries, Klee considered, had concentrated

too exclusively on an exact rendering of an object's surface in a 'painfully precise investigation of appearance'. As a result, he said, 'unoptical impressions' were neglected. He further stated : 'The artist of today is more than an improved camera.' Indeed, as a young man he had regarded photography as an 'invention that had occurred at the right moment as a warning against materialistic vision.'

Klee said : 'Ingres is said to have created an artistic order out of rest. I should like to create an order from feeling and going further, from motion.'

The empathy Klee had with the theatre, in which there is expression of human emotions combined with movement, greatly led him to an early appreciation of how to express in painting active feelings of sadness, anguish, anger and despair. These feelings are sometimes coupled with varying degrees of acceptance. He was able to use theatrical techniques and attitudes, especially after being exposed to the experimental work of the Bauhaus, to demonstrate a private anxiety or an angst in ways which vary from the obvious to the subtly suggested.

I was impressed in my study of Klee by the combined influences of music, opera and dance on the presentation of his pictures, in which the characters seem to dance to the music of time, a music whose rhythm is sometimes slow and sad, other times fast and frenetic, illustrating states of depression or furious despair.

But Klee, not always gloom-mantled, had from his early youth a

a natural sense of play and improvisation, and this sense was fostered by his early exposure by his cultured parents to the theatre in its many forms. He quickly developed from this background a fondness for all things dramatic, including satire, but his inherent poetic vision prevented him from confusing a sense of the theatre with the theatrical.

In the mosaic of Klee's work the theatrical influence runs like a stimulating thread of emotional colour, subtly shaded but glinting with evocations of deep emotions, a vital thread of life.

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