


# PAUL KLEE

1879 - 1940

Swiss/German Painter



*Art does not reproduce what we see. It makes us see." Paul Klee*

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The Art Heritage Program's Paul Klee unit meets the following Colorado Department of Education-Visual Arts Standards (2009)

1. Observe and Learn to Comprehend
2. Envision and Critique to Transfer
3. Invent and Discover to Create
4. Reflect and Connect to Transfer



## LEARNING TARGET:

- I know two important facts about the artist.
- I can create art in the style of the artist.

## SUMMARY

- Paul Klee (pronounced "CLAY") was equally at home with the abstract and the absolute, the emotion and the intellect. A painter of many styles and techniques, he was also a philosopher and a poet, a man who read Greek poetry in the original and who, resourceful and pragmatic, used his Munich kitchen as a studio so he could look after his young son and cook the family meals. (4)
- Klee came from a musical family and lived a musical life. He was born in Switzerland to a German father who was a church organist. Klee was a trained violinist and studied music in Germany. It was not until he was a young adult that he decided to devote himself to art, rather than music. (2)

- He was a member and an instructor of the legendary Bauhaus, the international school and philosophy that aimed to combine art and craft into a functional lifestyle, to ultimately create a kind of “gothic cathedral” where artists and artisans could make a master structure that was both beautiful and functional. His work was later considered “degenerate” by the Nazis and he was forced to flee to Switzerland.(4)
- Primitivism, childhood drawings, the walls of Pompeii and the hot, vibrant colors of Africa inspired his art. He was even inspired by the fish he saw in a Naples aquarium. He used hieroglyphic-like symbols to create his own language, a combination of deceptively simple compositions with lines that almost speak from the canvas with witty and ironic words. His work was emotional and analytical, logical and fantastical, individual and cosmic. (4)
- Klee worked with both his right and left hands, equally comfortable with either, although he preferred using his left hand for drawing and his right for writing.
- Klee’s artworks are called poetic; that is, his paintings are like poems to be held in the hand and read, rather than pictures to be hung on the wall and viewed. (2)
- Klee’s paintings combine folk art, abstract art, and humor. Many of his images have titles that make us smile. One of his earliest pen and ink drawings is called “*Two Men Meet, Each Believing the Other to Be of Higher Rank.*” Another famous Klee painting showing simple bird shapes on a wire is called “*The Twittering Machine.*” (2)
- When he died, he left almost 9000 pieces of art as well as the publications and diaries he wrote from 1897 to 1918 – an important source for his poetic theories, his painting, and his inspiration. He believed creating a work of art brought order to the creative mind. His goal was to be able to let his imagination wander freely over a keyboard of color among pots of watercolors set up in rows.

## VOCABULARY

- **Abstract art** – art that is geometric in design or simplified from its natural appearance; abstract art does not need to look like anything real. (2)
- **Fugue** -- A musical form where a theme is introduced and variations of the theme comprise the work.
- **Surrealistic art** – Also known as “Fantasy Art”, this art is a combination of Cubism mixed with rich imagination based on childhood memories, folklore, and country life. (2)
- **Cubism** – The first abstract art style of the 20<sup>th</sup> century; instead of art that was realistic or representational, art was expressed with neutral color and geometric form; Cubists tried to create a new way of seeing things from every angle at once; the most famous Cubists are Picasso and Braque. (2) Cubism is the artistic technique of taking something and reducing it to its basic geometric shape...it also allows a three dimensional form to remain that way in a two dimensional depiction. Imagine yourself with a zipper up your back that allows you to lay flat on a page, but shows your whole body.

- **Blaue Reiter** (Blue Rider) -- An art group in Germany, including Klee and Kandinsky, who believed that color by itself can arouse powerful feelings.
- **Bauhaus** -- A school of "modern art" formed in Germany in the 1930's. Klee was a teacher and a member. The group sought to join craftsmen and artists into a single entity whose goal was to deny the current art standard and find innovative ways to create order and function in art as well as consumer goods. Bauhaus artists heavily influenced architects, furniture designs and art. Many Bauhaus artists came to the United States after the Nazis forced them to leave Germany.

## SETTING THE SCENE

Paul Klee left Switzerland as a young man to go somewhere "where life was bigger, more interesting and more alive." Although France was considered to be the scene of the second Renaissance of art, in the form of Impressionism, Neo-Impressionism, Symbolism, and Cubism, Klee chose to go to Munich, Germany. Munich was the center of the movement called "*Jugendstil*" which was a form of modern art. Germany was also one of the centers for the growing science of psychology. Klee's artwork and theories about art represent a fusion of many things that were happening at the time as well as incorporated themes, techniques and ideals of primitive art.

Klee was greatly influenced by the work of other artists. He cited those most significant to him, as Michelangelo; van Gogh, Cézanne, Matisse, Picasso, Rousseau and Kandinsky. Klee was also attracted to a wide variety of styles. He incorporated many techniques in his own works. Klee used as many ways as he could to make "art visible." ("In art it is not seeing that is so important, but making visible-1918): He liked to create art in two basic ways:

- 1) ***Klee liked to establish a key space or figure and put colors in large areas around it. He often chose lighter and darker tones of the same color;***
- 2) ***Klee enjoyed being guided by sensation or mood, and putting patches of color in inventive ways, then finding figures to outline or model. He also enjoyed making studies of tones of just a few colors.***

Klee eventually joined the "Blaue Reiter" (Blue Rider) group. The Blaue Reiter were primarily German and Russian painters who did not advocate a specific style, but professed a "...*general faith in the power of painting to communicate, principally through color, the stirring of the human spirit to which in the past only music had been free to do justice...*" As Klee was an excellent musician, it is no wonder he was drawn to this group that synthesized the two arts. World War I broke up the group...some members were killed in the war.

After the Great War, a similar group formed again in Germany under the auspices of the "Bauhaus." This was a modern art academy where writers, painters, musicians, architects and others gathered. Klee was one of the prime movers of the often-quarrelsome group. The Nazis broke up the Bauhaus citing their work as "decadent art." Klee returned to Switzerland where he kept writing about his philosophies of art. Some of his art ideas that came from his prolific writing

are thought provoking. Here are some excerpts:

- *"In art everything is best said only once and always in the simplest possible way."*
- *"The more fearful this world becomes, the more art becomes abstract." (Written soon after the Nazis came to power)*
- *"The best pictures cannot be willed, they just come into being."*
- *"The painter, when he really paints, allows form to arise."*
- *"An artist knows a great deal, but he only knows it afterwards."*
- *"A title of a work can be a confirmation, contradiction or enlargement of a painting's apparent meaning."*
- *"A work of art is above all a process of creation. It should never be experienced as a mere product."*
- *"I paint in order not to cry."*
- *"Without studying nature, an artist cannot make progress anywhere."*
- *"Color is the irrational element in painting and chief vehicle of expression."*
- *"Cubism is 'form thinking'...the reality behind visible things. Art does not reproduce the visible, but rather makes it visible."*
- *"Genius is the error in the system. That is the reason why so many students, even though they assimilate everything there is to be learned, nonetheless never reach the point of creating."*
- *"Language cannot communicate several processes simultaneously, like art and music."*
- *"Language cannot communicate several processes simultaneously, like art and music."*
- *"Art is like a tree. Nature is the root and the artist is the trunk who takes what the root offers and produces the treetop or work of art. They all are not the same but are part of the same thing."*

Klee, echoing some of the psychological gurus of his time, believed the humans who saw the world most purely was children, those diagnosed as mentally ill, or those removed from modern influences (primitives). Klee labeled his attempts to replicate a child-like vision as "disciplined simplicity." He also noted, "Those gentlemen, the critics, often say that my pictures resemble the scribbles and messes of children. I hope they do!" Klee sought to bring some kind of order to the chaos of the creative mind. An order that enhanced what was created, not oppressing life.

Another prime influence on art during Klee's lifetime was the work of Einstein. His "Theory of Relativity" upset the way the world had been viewed for hundreds of years. Artists of the time found many ways to incorporate the new reality into their works. Klee's studio was described as a "chemistry show." He enjoyed having "technical experiences." He would mix oil and watercolor, paint on different kinds of paper, cloth, glass and all kinds of materials.

### **BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION**

Paul Klee was born in a small village near Berne, Switzerland on December 18, 1879. His father was a church organist and a music teacher, and his mother was a professional singer. His father, Hans Klee, had trained as a singer but failed to achieve the fame he envisioned. As a result, he became a music teacher. Reportedly, Hans' disappointment in his personal loss caused him to be

bitter and often, to direct his frustration at Paul. Paul inherited his father's sharp wit, but it was softer, and more of an ironic humor that was evident in his later paintings through the interplay between images, symbols and words. (4)

Paul's mother, Ida Marie Frick Klee, was Swiss and had trained as a singer as well. She chose to abandon her career to marry Hans. Described as sensitive, devoted to her son, and encouraging to his artistic bent, Ida became partially paralyzed in 1906 and her illness brought them even closer. On the day she died, in 1921, Klee dreamed of a woman, a ghost, floating through his studio.

Other childhood influences included Klee's maternal grandmother, who was also devoted to him. When he was four, she gave him a box of colored chalk. She read him fairy tales that inspired his childhood drawings and showed him prints of the religious subjects that she held dear. As a young child, Klee loved to daydream and draw pictures of his daydreams. Klee's uncle owned a restaurant in the countryside outside Bern. Klee was fascinated by the marble tabletops in the restaurant. He saw grotesque monsters and fascinating shapes in the marble's swirls and texture, and he copied these with a pencil. Klee had one sibling, his sister Mathilde. She did not inherit the artistic skills as Klee had, however the two siblings were very close and she was devoted to him throughout her life.

Klee was skilled in both music and art. He was a talented violinist who played in his local orchestra in his teens. He was also an accomplished writer and poet. Although he chose to be an artist, music was the inspiration for many of his works. He was able to draw well with both his left and right hand, but preferred to paint with his left hand and write with his right hand.

Klee included many childhood images in his artwork. He found Christmas trees to be mystical symbols of happiness and bittersweet memories. These trees evolved into the pine trees found in much of his work. Also, Klee loved cats. Many of his paintings include a cat in a corner or on a floating table as a pictorial essence of sensuality. Klee was so devoted to his pet cat, Bimbo, that later when he was away teaching, he would often write his wife asking only about Bimbo.

Klee attended elementary school followed by preparatory school and the Literarschule. (4) Klee was not a great academic student, the only class he felt passion for was Greek and he continued to read Greek poetry in the original until his death. When he graduated from school and took his university exams, Klee, like other young artists at the turn of the century, had a choice. He could go to Paris or Munich. Both capitals were cultural centers to which aspiring young artists as well as established artists were drawn. Klee chose Germany.

In 1898, he moved to Munich and began his studies. Initially he was denied acceptance at the Munich Academy because of his lack of skill in figure drawing. Klee took drawing lessons from a private drawing school to increase his skills. In addition, he enjoyed an active social life with opera, theater and dating young women. He wrote, "We often skipped school. First of all, I had to become a man. Art would follow that passion." Klee was finally accepted and began attending the Munich Academy in 1900. There his teacher was the popular symbolist and society painter Franz von Stuck. Klee later toured Italy (1901-02), responding enthusiastically to early Christian

and Byzantine art

Klee supported himself by doing graphic artwork, many satirical pieces based on the politics of the time. In 1902, he moved back to his hometown of Berne, Switzerland. He traveled to Munich later that year to become engaged to pianist, Lily Stumpf, whom he had met at a musical evening at her parents' home. Klee was very attracted to Lily and wanted to marry her, however he felt he needed time to achieve artistic maturity. Klee worked to gain confidence by analyzing everything he did and everything he thought, a process that would become part of his painting style.

After an eight-year engagement, in 1906, he married Lily and returned to Munich. He had his first one-man show of etchings and made enough money to support his wife and require no more financial assistance from his father. His success was unusual because most galleries would not accept etchings. The couple settled into a small, second-floor apartment. Lily gave piano lessons and Klee shopped for food, cooked and cleaned the apartment. When son, Felix, was born in 1907, Klee took on the responsibility of his care as well. Klee painted in the kitchen, while Felix slept. When the weather was good they'd sit on the balcony overlooking the courtyard, or take walks together with Klee carrying his painting equipment and Felix holding his toys. Klee would paint what he saw and Felix would play with the toys his father had made for him, a sailboat, a puppet theater and a train.

It was a peaceful time with evenings of music—Lily on the piano and Klee on the violin. Friends would visit and settle in for an evening of music and conversation. In Munich, there were concerts, art exhibitions and other stimulating activities. In 1908, Klee saw a large exhibition of van Gogh's paintings and read van Gogh's letters. Klee was inspired by van Gogh's ideals of painting and his expressive, emotive style. He also noted, "His (van Gogh's) pathos is foreign to me, but he is certainly a genius . . . This is a brain which is suffering from the burning fire of a star." Klee decided to travel to France to view Impressionists and the Post-Impressionistic works. He started experimenting with color, making many of his tonality pictures (studies in the use of the same tone of color within an artwork) during this period.

In 1911, Klee attracted public attention with his illustrations for Voltaire's *Candide*. His illustrations contained a philosophical depth that provoked much discussion. Klee did not feel the pictures were all that people said they were, "In art everything is best said only once and always in the simplest possible way."

One of the most influential friendships Klee made was with Russian painter, Wassily Kandinsky. The two were very innovative, both sharing a love of color and music. The two families, Kandinsky and Klee, later shared a large divided (duplex style) home and an art studio. Although the two were good friends and respected each other's work, they did not have any particular artistic influence on each other.

Klee was drawn to the "Der Sturm" (The Storm) artists in 1912. He liked their ideas of experimentation and using light in different ways. He also was part of the Der Blaue Reiter (Blue Riders) group begun by Kandinsky, and taught for them for the next 13 years. Klee was a gifted teacher and felt teaching made him formulate the theories of what lay behind his works. He

believed an artist had to understand the fundamentals of life forces and each had to find their own way of creation. He saw his role of a teacher as helping students to find their own way, not to impose his own ideas and thoughts upon them.

The Blue Riders were influenced by Cubism, but in addition, they emphasized the process of painting with vibrant brushstrokes and dramatic color. They tried in their work to reflect their inner impulses and to provoke intense personal reactions from their audiences. They also believed that such sources as children's drawings, oriental paintings, African sculptures, and medieval ivories, could be the roots for art's renewal and rebirth. (4)

The Blue Riders broke up as the result of World War I. Klee, by now a German citizen, was drafted. However, supported by the King of Bavaria, artists were exempted from serving in the army. Klee was given the job of painting airplane wings. He wrote, "I have had this war within me for some time. For this reason it does not touch the inner me."

After the war, Klee traveled to Tunisia, which provided a turning point in his career. He wrote, "Color has taken possession of me; no longer do I have to chase after it, I know that it has hold of me forever. That is the significance of this blessed moment. Color and I are one. I am a painter." Klee began building up compositions of colored squares that had the radiance of the mosaics he saw on his Italian sojourn.

Klee often incorporated letters and numbers into his paintings. These, part of Klee's complex language of symbols and signs, were drawn from the unconscious and used to obtain a poetic amalgam of abstraction and reality. He wrote that "Art does not reproduce the visible, it makes visible," and he pursued this goal in a wide range of media using an amazingly inventive battery of techniques. Line and color predominated with Klee, but he also produced series of works that explored mosaic and other effects. (5)

In 1920, Klee was invited to join the faculty at the Bauhaus school in Munich. By then, critics were hailing him as one of the most eminent artists of the modern movement in Germany. He enjoyed the Bauhaus and the freedom of ideas there. The influence of the Bauhaus innovations can be seen in architecture, art and furniture all over the world. The group had their first exhibit in the United States in 1924. The school's declared goal was to eliminate the separation between art and craft, between the artist and artisan, and to create a unity between function and design. Some of the most famous architects, designers and artists were invited to teach at the school and promote their ideas of structure and function as art. The Bauhaus, synonymous today with clean, functional design also had as its ideal a unity of all the arts.

Some of Klee's most famous paintings were completed while he worked at the Bauhaus. During his five-year association with them, he was free to explore his theories of composition, structure, and the function of art. "Pictures look at us," he told his students. Later he added, "The artist contemplates what nature sets before his eyes . . . and the more deeply he penetrates, the easier it is for him to shift the viewpoint from today to yesterday, the more will be impressed on his mind . . . the one essential image, that of creation as genesis." Klee compared the creation of the world with

the creation of a work of art, a dynamic, natural process that gives birth to form – and life.

During the Bauhaus years, Klee also produced his magic squares. These paintings, composed of rhythmic chromatic relationships are a brilliant contrast between a mathematical grid structure and the rich density and resonance of color pigments. As the years passed, Klee became more and more absorbed in his own intense research, in his attempt to combine the abstract and the personal, his roles of mystic and mathematician, intellectual and poet. His teaching began to encroach more and more upon his art. At first, he simply reduced the number of classes he taught. Unfortunately, that activated academic politics as colleagues and administrators disagreed

over his absences. Added to this was the German right-wing pressure to close the school. In 1931, a few months before the Bauhaus ceased to exist; Klee resigned and went to work for the Academy in Dusseldorf, a state-run school. (4)



By 1933 the Nazis had come to power in Germany. They required all employees of the state to demonstrate their Aryan origins. Failure to do so would result in immediate dismissal. Although Klee despised the law, he wanted to paint, and he decided to obtain the documents he needed to prove his non-Jewish origins. The rules, however, changed in midstream. Not only did he have to prove his origins, he had to declare loyalty to the Nazi regime. Klee refused to do so. He was dismissed from the Academy, and returned to

Bern, Switzerland. (4)

The years 1927–37 were critical for artists in Germany. In 1927, the National Socialist Society for German Culture was formed. The aim of this organization was to halt the “corruption of art” and inform the people about the relationship between race and art. By 1933, the terms “Jewish”, “Degenerate” and “Bolshevik” were in common use to describe most modern art. (1)

In 1937, Nazi officials purged German museums of works the Party considered to be degenerate. From the thousands of works removed, 650 were chosen for a special exhibit of *Entartete Kunst*. The exhibit opened in Munich and then traveled to eleven other cities in Germany and Austria. In each installation, the works were poorly hung and surrounded by graffiti and hand written labels mocking the artists and their creations. Over three million visitors attended making it the first “blockbuster” exhibition. (1) Paul Klee’s works were ridiculed in the exhibition as well as Kandinsky’s, Marc Chagall’s and Max Ernst. Today these artists are considered masters of the twentieth century.

Klee’s health deteriorated following the move to Switzerland. In 1935, the first symptoms of scleroderma, a chronic immune disease, appeared. As his health deteriorated and his physical discomfort grew, Klee’s artwork portrayed dark lines and reflections on death and war. Klee died on June 29, 1940, just days before he was to be granted Swiss citizenship. On an easel in his

apartment stood his last painting, *Still Life* contained a jug, some vases, and flowers on a table. They are dense with color and the background is black. An angel carries a cross off in the corner. There is no signature.

Klee looked upon his paintings as his children and would set aside a special time to name them, a week after they were finished. Written on his tombstone is, "*I belong not only to this life. I live well with the dead, as well those not born. Nearer to the heart of creation than others. But still too far.*"

When he died, he left almost 9000 pieces of art as well as the publications and diaries he wrote from 1897 to 1918 – an important source for his poetic theories, his painting, and his inspiration. He believed creating a work of art brought order to the creative mind. Klee was a successful composer, a "painter with a small orchestra" he called himself. We can hear his unique music when we view his works.

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## POWERPOINT PRESENTATION

*Observe and Learn to Comprehend & Envision and Critique to Transfer (VA 1 & 2)*

1. **Photos.** Paul Klee (*pronounced CLAY*) was born in 1879 in Switzerland. These photos show Klee, his family, his wife and his son. Klee came from a musical family and lived a musical life. His father was a church organist and his mother was a professional singer. As a young child, he loved to daydream and draw pictures of his daydreams and scenes from his favorite fairy tales. He also loved to find figures in the swirls of color in the marble tables at his uncle's restaurant.

He was talented in both music and art. He was a gifted violinist as well as an accomplished writer and poet. Although he chose to be an artist, music was the inspiration for many of his works. His wife was also a talented musician.

2. **My Room:** *Pen and ink wash. 1896. 4 3/4 x 7 1/2 inches.* One of Klee's first jobs was as an "engraver", etching fine detail onto metal. He was equally good at drawing with either hand, although he preferred to use his left hand for drawing and his right for writing. He did this drawing of his room when he was 18 years old.

3. **In the Quarry:** *Watercolor: 1913: 9" X 14".* While his wife taught piano lessons; Klee painted at the kitchen table. He was the main caregiver for their son and cooked the family meals. During these years his drawings, etchings, and watercolors were small due to the size of the table. In this painting, Klee has given us the impression of a very complicated landscape. The techniques he used here included bands of contrasting color; he also outlined some areas and includes some geometric shapes.

4. **Full Moon:** *Oil on paper: 1919: 19" X 15": Otto Stangl Gallery, Munich* On sunny days, Klee and his son would go to a nearby park and Felix would play while Klee painted. Klee made many of Felix's toys, including a puppet theater, a train set, and a sailboat.

In this painting we see another collection of brightly colored geometric shapes. The moon dominates the scene. Would that have happened if Klee had used any other color besides yellow? The picture appears flat with little perspective, but the horizon can be felt. The presence of people is implied. Klee believed art was a form of sign language, with hieroglyphic symbols and images used to communicate a thought or feeling.

5. **Landscape at Sunset:** *Oil on canvas: 1923: 12" X 16".* Klee also became an art teacher. He taught at several schools, including a famous one in Germany. The Bauhaus (*Bow House*) was a school where many well-known artists came together to share their ideas and to create functional things in an artistic way. The Bauhaus artists may have inspired your chair or your drinking cup.

This painting is a landscape with houses and trees colored by the last rays of sunshine before sunset. This was the first work to exhibit Klee's use of "Magic Squares" - a work of art in a checkerboard pattern, which he used on many paintings. A Magic Square is a math table of numbers where all the numbers added together either horizontally, vertically or diagonally equals the same sum. Klee assigned colors to the numerical values and colored in his squares all over the canvas around his main figures.

6. **Dream City:** *Watercolor and oil: 1921: 19" X 12":* Many of Klee's paintings were inspired by his interest in music. In this painting, Klee has taken the same color and basic rectangular and triangular shapes and repeated them over and over in different variations like a song. Klee loved music and was an accomplished violinist. How has Klee given a rhythm to the piece? How has Klee used color to give the picture a fantasy or dream effect?
7. **Twittering Machine:** *watercolor, pen & ink: 25 1/4" x 19": 1922: Museum of Modern Art, NYC.* This picture was created after Klee started teaching at the Bauhaus and is part of a body of light-hearted works he called "inventions." Birds were often a symbol in Klee's work; here they are a contraption making "bird song". This painting, done in pen and watercolor, gently makes fun of people's belief in machines and their love of bird song. Can a machine truly replace a songbird?
8. **Landscape with Yellow Birds:** *Watercolor on blackened background: 1923: 14" X 18" Private collection:* Klee wrote many papers on his theories of creating art. One of the things he told us was, "A picture may also be regarded as a dream." This painting is like an Oriental carpet where up and down are hard to figure out. Trees, flowers, fir trees, and birds are present. One bird is perched on a cloud, upside down. What about the scrawny bird at the bottom? Is he coming or going?
9. **The Golden Fish,** 1925. *Oil & watercolor on cardboard. 19 1/8" x 27". Kunsthalle, Hamburg, Germany.* In this painting, the fish glides through deep, mysterious water, and all the smaller fish clear away a space for it. This is a magical fish with secret symbols or runic messages upon its body, scarlet fins and a large pink flower for its eye. Klee liked to combine images, fantasies and symbolic messages into his paintings. We may not understand what it means, but it is there. Art critics think this fish represented Paul Klee, that he wanted us to know and remember him for his work and his contributions to the world of art.
10. **Red Balloon:** 1922. *Oil on chalk-primed muslin mounted on cardboard. Guggenheim. New York. USA.* Klee experimented in many types of painting and canvases. He liked his art to be many-layered, like nature was many-layered. His paintings combine folk art, abstract art and humor.
11. **"Sinbad the Sailor"** *Battle Scene from the Comic Fantastic Opera: The Seafarer 1923, 15 x 20", Private Collection*
12. **Water-tower bird:** 1937, *tempera and pencil on paper on cardboard 27 x 21 cm* Klee had a magical way with lines. The line permits us to do with our eyes what we did as small children in getting to know the world. Toddlers handle everything and feel the edges. Klee takes the line on a journey, one of his famous sayings is **"A line is a dot that went for a walk"**. With a few simple shapes he presents a whole idea. Klee was inspired by children's art work, he felt kids communicated better through their art than adults and was flattered when people said his own artwork looked like a child had done it!

13. **Ad Parnassum:** *(and close-up on next slide)* Oil on canvas: 1932: 30" X 50": This is one of the largest paintings that Klee ever did although it is still only about the size of a large poster. It is another of his Magic Squares designs. The colored squares are used like a **mosaic** (a mixture of small tiles or pebbles used to create a design on sidewalks and outdoor tables.) Klee saw mosaics in his travels to countries like Tunisia and Egypt.

Klee put a lot of thought into his artwork and studied natural history, anatomy and anthropology because he was interested in how they were a part of painting. He also studied theories of color and music and how they were a part of art and nature. If you imagined each square of color in this painting as the sound of a musical note, you'd have an idea of what he was trying to do here. The pyramids in Egypt and a pointed mountaintop near his home may have inspired this painting.

14. **Heroic Roses:** 1938 68 x 52 cm

15. **Insula Dulcamara** 1938 (210 Kb); Oil on newsprint, mounted on burlap, 31 1/2 x 69 in; Klee Foundation, Bern. This art piece is similar to what we will be working with later when we do our own artwork. Notice the background of soft colors that Klee has highlighted with black lines. What do you see in the images?

16. **Park Near Lucerne:** Oil on burlap canvas: 1938: 39" X 27 1/2 " This is another painting with bold symbols. Klee named this for a park near his home. What do you see in the dark lines?

Klee lived in Germany during a time when a strong, new political party was growing in power. They declared people they had to prove their family background or they couldn't work. Klee didn't agree with this policy but he did want to continue working. However while he was gathering the documents to prove his family heritage, the government added another requirement...he also had to declare his loyalty to the party. Klee couldn't do this as he felt it was wrong. He was forced to leave his job and home and move back to the country of his birth, Switzerland.

Shortly after his move, he developed an illness that eventually killed him. When he died, he left us over 9000 pieces of art and his journal writings about his ideas.

**REFLECT AND CONNECT TO TRANSFER** (VA Standard #4)

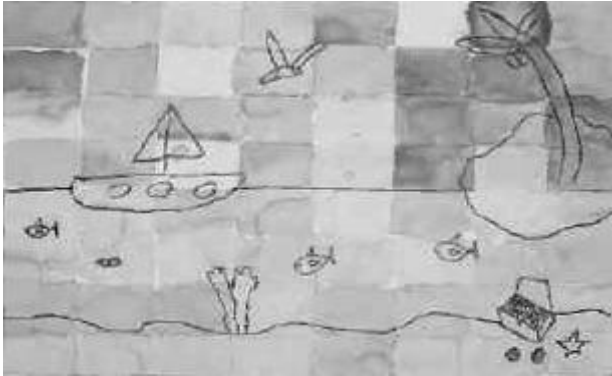
***During the last 5 minutes with your students, perhaps as they are cleaning up or while they are creating, take a moment to encourage the students to discuss and review their understanding of Paul Klee:***

**ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS:**

1. ***What was one thing you learned about Klee?***
2. ***How did Klee use images and words to advertise an event or a product?***
3. ***How will you (did you) use color and line to create your art?***
4. ***What do you wonder?***

## FEATURED ART PROJECT

*Invent and Discover to Create (VA Standard #3)*



**“A line is a dot that went for a walk” (Klee)**

**Your school’s art supply box includes paper, sponges, black markers and colored markers**  
(this is a great time to pull out the old, mostly dried up markers!)

Students explore different line types (vertical, horizontal and diagonal, zig zag, curvy and spiral) in a project inspired by the artwork of Paul Klee. We begin with a discussion of “what is a line?” I

illustrate a dot on the board and the kids take turns taking the “dot for a walk” in different directions (zigzag, straight, curvy, wavy, etc.) We discuss this vocabulary to describe the variety (even the word variety) of lines.

You may want to include a warm-up exercise in which everyone “draws” the different lines in the air with their hands and arms to convey the lines through large muscle movement. *Stretch out your arms and show me what a horizontal line might look like*, “*Can you make a dotted line using just your nose?*”, “*Reach for the ceiling and make a vertical line.*”

*Optional for the K-1 grades: ask little ones to begin by putting a dot anywhere on the edge of a 9” x 12” white paper with a thin line Sharpie marker. Next, ask them to take this dot and make it a line. Once they have a line, they “take the line for a walk” across their paper, trying to draw the line in a variety of directions. As they take their “pet” line for a walk, they make one continuous line that can even cross over itself to make shapes. (5 min.) I demonstrate the “walk” on my paper first, distinguishing it from “scribble-scrabble”, and stress that the line must end up on the opposite side of the paper.*

### Preparations:

- Cut the sponges into 1-2” squares, using scissors—these will be used several times and washed and dried after each lesson.
- Place bowls or small buckets of water where students can clean sponges and dampen them for new colors.
- Paper, markers (black and colored ones)

**Process:** Using a dampened sponge square, students will “ink” the sponge with the colored markers, and then blot areas of color lightly all over their “canvas.” After the paint dries, students use black markers to add lines or illustrate a simple line drawing of their choice.

### Alternate Projects:

1. A lot of Klee’s work looks like ancient mosaics found on the walls of Istanbul, Iran and Greece. They also look like geometric tapestries (like quilts). Students can tear up small pieces of colored paper or cut them into one

shape or several shapes and form them into something. They could either do large sections of color or try to find shapes afterwards or they could have a scene in mind and reduce it to the small geometric shapes that make it up.

2. Klee loved music. One way to make an abstract is to play Bolero or another piece where the same theme reoccurs. Have student pick a shape and color and each time the music changes, they change colors and shapes placing them randomly on the paper. They could also just change the size and position or the same shape and use a different hue of the same color. When they are done, have them give the picture a title.
3. On either of the above projects, students could take a dark marker or crayon and outline shapes or objects they see in their mosaics.
4. Play two or three very different music selections and have students draw an abstract (no recognizable shapes) that the music suggests to them (what colors are they using and why?). Does the music suggest any geometric shapes? Which ones? Why?
5. Students can take dark paper and draw designs in white chalk. It is fun to put the music on for 5 minutes, have them close their eyes...let their chalk wander and then color in or deal in some way with the design they create.
6. Klee loved to paint on unusual materials. If you have surplus jars, burlap, gauze or something similar, students could paint on them. Especially with the jars you could explore how the transparent "canvas" affects the color and appearance of the work.
7. Have three or four microscopes set up and have the students do a picture of what they see...Get National Geographic *Explorers* where the back page is pictures of magnifications of common objects. Have student draw some of those. Have students picture how they think a microscopic or kaleidoscopic view of something might appear.
8. Take Q-tip and paint or use markers and put a series or dots in the squares of graph paper. If students do it randomly, does a figure emerge? What if they do this to music? What colors have they chosen?
9. Klee used letters frequently in his work. Have students do the alphabet or their name. What color will they make each letter? Surround the letter with a shape. What shape did they chose? Why? Can they make a landscape using letters laid different ways (like a puzzle picture where you have to find the letters). Does it make a maze like the Klee's park?



## Art Heritage Program

Student reflection paper

We learned about Paul Klee (pronounced Paul CLAY) in Art Heritage today.

Klee was a Swiss/German artist who lived from 1879 to 1940. He created paintings using a variety of media, including paint, chalk, and watercolor.

### How to Spot a "Klee":

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
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2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



Student Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_