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Change the Frame and You Change the Game? Research and Reevaluation of the Presentation Formats of the Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen's Paul Klee Collection

INTRODUCTION

Knowledge of the presentation formats originally devised by Paul Klee is crucial to a more complete understanding of his works. The artist's very specific ideas about presentation become obvious when one studies the original frames of paintings and the secondary supports of works on paper. However, the simplicity of Klee's style in mounting and framing often led dealers or previous owners to intervene, changing the frame or even altering original mounts. The study documented in this paper was done in conjunction with the exhibition *100 x Klee,* which opened in September 2012 at the Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen in Düsseldorf. The preparations for that exhibition, which focuses on the history of the museum's Klee collection, inspired a study of the original presentation formats of the Paul Klee works in the collection. At the Kunstsammlung, the majority of Klee's works arrived in frames representing the tastes of their previous owners rather than that of the artist. Extensive documentation was gathered by examining all of Klee's works in the Kunstsammlung's collection, which had never before been studied as a group. By comparing this information to existing original presentation formats and to archival photographic records, a better understanding of the original mounting systems of the works was gained.

BACKGROUND

To illustrate the importance of the Klee works for the Kunstsammlung, it is necessary to look back at the beginning of the museum. It was founded in Düsseldorf, Germany, in 1961, after the Federal State of Nordrhein-Westfalen, in a landmark political act, acquired a singularly large body of works by Paul Klee. This decision signaled the desire to rebuild the state's cultural identity after the Second World War. The political leaders of post-war Germany were trying to make up for the wrongs of the recent past, since Düsseldorf's art scene—like that elsewhere in Germany—had been suffocated by the cultural politics of the Nazi dictatorship.

Many of today's most esteemed artists were labeled as degenerate by the Nazis, terrorized by the authorities, and in many instances even forbidden to work. Paul Klee, who had long been connected to Düsseldorf through collectors, and especially through dealer Alfred Flechtheim, suffered directly. He was suspended from teaching at the Kunstakademie in Düsseldorf in April 1933, only two years after he'd taken up this position. Fearing for his safety and artistic freedom, Klee fled to Switzerland soon after the suspension, never to return to Germany. His business with German and European collectors began to suffer at the same time, leaving only one promising market open for Klee: the United States of America. There, the art dealers Emmy "Galka" Scheyer, Israel B. Neumann, and Karl Nierendorf had set out to introduce German artists to the American public in the 1920s. They were joined by Curt Valentin, who emigrated from Berlin in 1937. They managed to promote Klee's works successfully, so that several institutions and a number of American citizens were able to build respectable collections of Klee's works early on.

It was the bulk of one such private collection that the young state of Nordrhein-Westfalen bought in 1960 as an act of "atonement" (*Wiedergutmachung*). The private collection in question was that of G. David Thompson of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The collector began buying Klee works in the 1940s, and acquired his works from both Valentin and Nierendorf in the United States, from Berggruen in Paris, and from the Scheyer Estate. Famous for being headstrong and irascible, he had bargaining techniques that frightened dealers, and he had a penchant for buying in bulk.[1] In this way, by the time he decided to part with his collection, he had managed to amass one of the world's largest Klee collections.

With the acquisition of 87 works from the Thompson Collection, the foundation for the Kunstsammlung's collection was laid. Today, the Düsseldorf Klee collection encompasses

Presented at the Book and Paper Group Session, AIC's 40th Annual Meeting, May 8–11, 2012, Albuquerque, New Mexico.

100 works: 39 black-and-white drawings, 36 colored works on paper, 23 panel paintings, and 2 paintings on glass.

CURRENT PRESENTATION FORMATS OF THE DÜSSELDORF KLEES

Most of the Kunstsammlung's Klee paintings entered the collection in typical commercial gallery frames, consisting of gilt frames with textile-covered wooden liners. Many of these frames could be traced back to exhibitions in Valentin's gallery in the late 1940s or early 1950s. It is possible that similar frames were implemented by the other American dealers, but a lack of photographic records makes this difficult to prove.[2] The majority of the Kunstsammlung's Klee paintings remain in these gilt frames to this day. Aesthetically, these frames clearly reflect the preferences of the mid-20th century, as well as the tastes of their previous owners. While this is certainly informative, the current frames do not enhance the works themselves. From today's point of view, they appear to muffle the works' striking modernity, and in many cases, the liners cover up original components, such as parts of the strainers, the margins, or even the inscriptions on the mounts.

The black-and-white drawings arrived in Düsseldorf in less elaborate frames, as a photograph from the Kunstsammlung's opening exhibition indicates (fig. 1). This specific group of works received new frames in 1999, after their presentation system was reevaluated by the new head of conservation and the new director of the museum.[3] While curators and conservators at the Kunstsammlung were also suspicious about the origin of the gilt frames that the paintings and colored drawings had arrived in, the resources necessary to address the issue properly were simply not available. However, awareness of the incongruity of the dated, historicizing frames and their modernist works increased every time a work was unframed and examined. In 2010, when a major digitization project took place at the museum, all 100 Klee works were unframed within a period of one week. The chance to examine the works together spurred a reevaluation of the presentation formats of the paintings and the colored works on paper in the Klee collection. The prospect of the 2012 Klee exhibition paved the way for a research project in which the conservation department worked intimately with the curatorial department.[4]

Fig.1. Installation view of the 1961 inaugural exhibition held at the Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen. To the left is the drawing *Glass Figures* (*Glasfiguren*), 1937.214, which appears to be framed in a simple wooden frame. *Lions, attention please!* (*Lowen, man beachte sie!*), 1923.155, a colored work on paper, appears in a more elaborate gilt frame. Courtesy of Rudolf Holtappel, Oberhausen, Landesarchiv Nordrhein-Westfalen, Abteilung Rheinland, RWB 0934 Nr.0002

OVERVIEW OF PAUL KLEE'S ORIGINAL PRESENTATION FORMATS

A previous study distinguished between several broad categories of original presentation formats, based upon the examination of early studio and exhibition photographs.[5] Paul Klee had studios in Munich, Weimar, Dessau, Düsseldorf, and Bern. Sadly, no photos from his working space in the Academy in Düsseldorf survive, but his studios at the Bauhaus especially were quite well documented, and the photographs are available to study at the archive of the Zentrum Paul Klee. For this research, these archival photographic records were consulted by Anette Kruszynski and the author. Fortunately, the Zentrum's files yielded a number of images in which works from the Kunstsammlung could be seen. While most images pertaining directly to works held by the Kunstsammlung were exhibition photographs from 1948 onward, a few studio photographs could also be consulted. From these, it became clear that Klee used a variety of frames over the course of his life.

Early on, he apparently often worked with used frames he picked up in antique shops. Beginning in the early 1920s, a Bauhaus-inspired frame with a heavy triangular molding appears quite frequently. One favored format of presentation that can also be found in many studio photographs from his time at the Bauhaus is a very simple strip-frame. After his emigration to Bern, he frequently employed a store-bought frame with a steep, rounded molding and a deep lip.[6] Judging from the amounts of works and easels present in some studio photographs, one cannot help but form the impression that Klee, who always used to work on several pictures at once, apparently liked having his works around him. In figure 2, an impressive number of works—started, finished, framed, and unframed—can be seen leaning on the easels and hanging on the walls, most of them in strip-frames; a work with a slanted, broad molding is visible at the upper right.

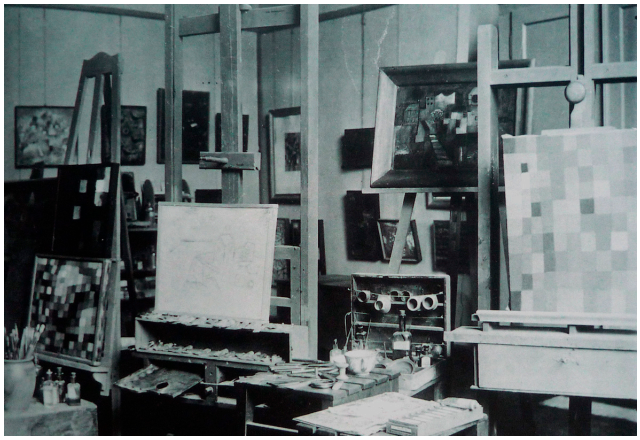

Fig. 2. Klee's studio at the Bauhaus in 1925. Photo by Paul Klee, courtesy of Archiv Zentrum Paul Klee

A number of works with their original presentation formats intact can also be studied at the Zentrum Paul Klee in Bern. There and at the Klee Estate, also in Bern, scholars have compiled a considerable amount of information concerning Klee's original frames and mounts.[7] Written proof of the artist's scrupulous attention to all aspects of the making and the presentation of his works can be found in Klee's diaries and letters and in the recollections of his contemporaries. His son Felix Klee remembered that his father "not only made paintings, he also prepared the colors himself, fabricated the frames and mounts and recorded every work, including measurements and technique, in his oeuvre catalogue."[8]

The handwritten work catalogs that Klee kept to systematically record his works also provide invaluable information on original mounting and framing. In his records, Klee assigned each work a catalogue number and noted the title. Next he checked the category—in his oeuvre, he differentiated between "single color sheets," "multicolored sheets," and "panels": an unusual use of terminology, but one that is of considerable interest in the study of Klee's works. A "single-color sheet" (*Blatt einfarbig*) indicates a drawing executed in a single medium. A "multicolored sheet" (*Blatt mehrfarbig*) can be carried out in watercolor, oil, pastel, chalk, or paste paint. "Panel" (*Tafel*) is the term reserved for works carried out on a support such as a wooden panel or a canvas on a stretcher, but also for pieces of cardboard mounted onto strainers or works on a gesso base.[9] Next, Klee added a description of the media and techniques he used. Often, for his panels, this includes a remark about framing. For the multicolored or single-color sheets, no comments about framing appear, as his mounts were the official presentation formats for works on paper.

All this information has been transcribed into the *Catalogue Raisonne Paul Klee*.[10] Checking an entry in the *Catalogue Raisonne Paul Klee* and comparing this information to the actual condition of the work will indicate whether a Klee work has an original frame or mount. A note about the "condition" (*Erhaltungszustand*) was added when it became known that a work had been altered in any way.

The Strip-Frame

One presentation format Klee favored for his panels appears to be the simple strip-frame. These strip-frames were recorded in his oeuvre catalog as "original strip-frame" (*Orig. Leisten*). One studio photograph shows a work from the Düsseldorf collection propped up on an easel in the artist's studio (fig. 3). The panel *Dangerous* (*Gefährliches*),1938.124, appears in a strip-frame with the strips of wood butt-joined rather than mitered at the corners: a typical feature for Klee. The strip-frame recorded in this image was discarded at some point in the history of the object, possibly for the gilt frame the work had when it arrived in Düsseldorf. The original strip-frames are not well represented in the Kunstsammlung's Klee collection. It seems likely that once the works left the sphere of influence of the artist, the strip-frames were no longer regarded as original artistic components of the works and were replaced by more elaborate frames.

However, one cannot help but feel the connection between a work's specific construction and Klee's choice of frame. For example, the surface appearance of the panel *Colorful Lightning* (*Bunter Blitz*), 1927.181, was achieved by a creating a structured, almost crusty ground into which the lines that form the image were incised. It has a certain mural character that is much enhanced by the stained strips of wood nailed to its sides, which are happily still in existence (fig. 4). Yet even in the instances in which the strip-frames have survived, slight modifications have often been made. In this case, the strips were taken off and re-applied so that they are

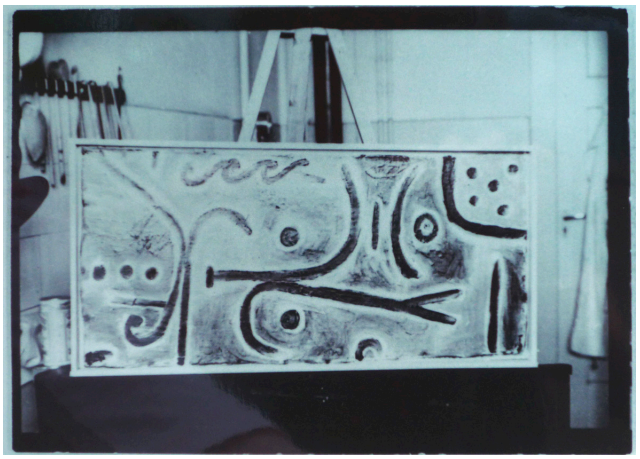

Fig. 3. Paul Klee, *Dangerous* (*Gefährliches*), 1938.124. Oil on cotton on cardboard on strainer, 27.5 x 58.5 cm. Archival photograph of the work in the studio in Bern, showing the work with an unpainted strip-frame attached to its edges. Photo by Paul Klee, courtesy of Grohmann-Archiv, Stuttgart

Fig. 4. Paul Klee, *Colorful Lightning* (*Bunter Blitz*), 1927.181. Oil on canvas on cardboard on strainer with original strip-frame, 50.3 x 34.2 cm. The strip-frame is level with the surface of the work, a tell-tale sign that the strips have been taken off and reapplied by a third party. Courtesy of the author, Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen

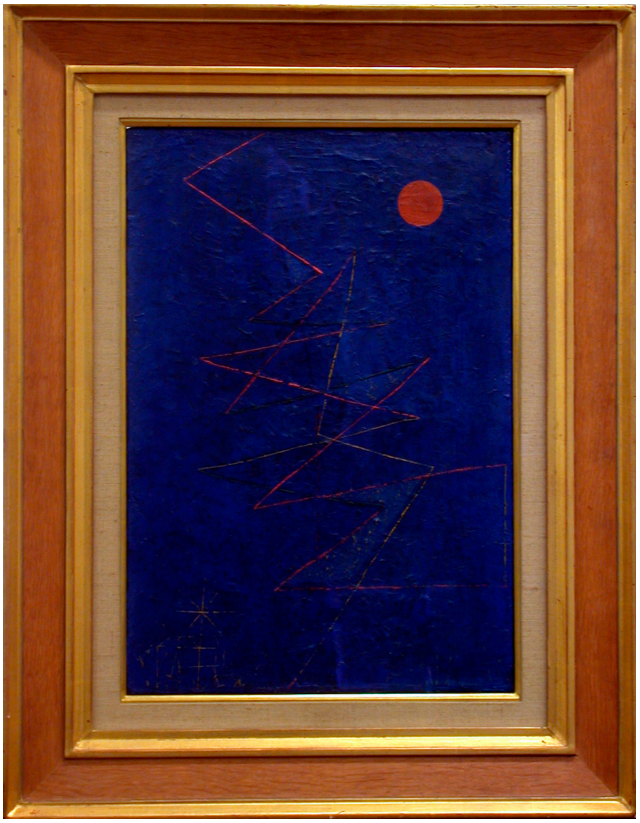

Fig. 5. *Colorful Lightning* (*Bunter Blitz*) in its ornate frame and liner, which cover up the strip-frame and hide the work's three-dimensional character. Courtesy of the author, Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen

level with the surface of the work, probably so that the work would fit snugly into its gilt frame (fig. 5). Klee, however, always mounted the strips to his panels in such a way that they protruded 5–10 mm from the surface of the work.[11]

Today, works that have retained their strip-frames are often presented in simple box frames that allow the viewer to appreciate the three-dimensional character of these works while providing the necessary level of protection. However, it is important to be aware that strip-framed works were actually intended to go up on the wall just as they were, as can be seen in an early installation shot that shows *Colorful Lightning* in the *Surrealist Exhibition* organized by Roland Penrose at the Cambridge University Arts Society in 1937 (fig. 6). In this image, the work is mounted on the wall in its strip-frame, amidst works by other artists in ornate frames. After the artist's death, in the *Paul Klee Memorial Exhibition* at Kunsthalle Basel in 1941, works in strip-frames were also hung amidst works in other types of frames (fig. 7). This seems to indicate that in exhibitions that were prepared while Klee was alive, or that took place where his influence or that of his family prevailed, the strip-frames were regarded as complete presentation formats.

Fig. 6. *Exhibition of Surrealism*, Cambridge University Arts Society, 3–20 November 1937. *Colorful Lightning* is visible at the top right, presented just in its strip-frame. Roland Penrose, *Penrose's Scrapbook, 1936-1937*, Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, p. 36

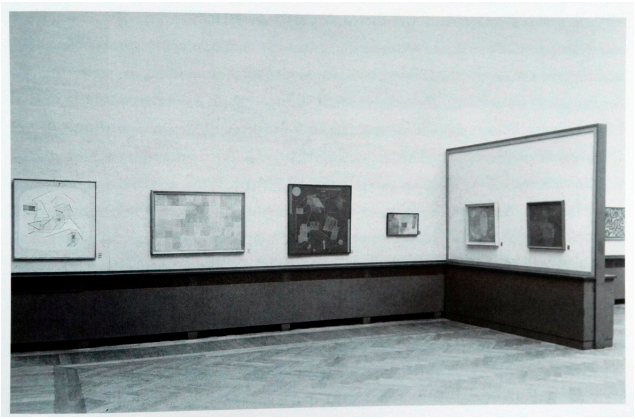

Fig. 7. *Paul Klee Memorial Exhibition* held at the Kunsthalle Basel in 1941. Works in strip-frames are shown next to works in other types of frames. Photo by Robert Spreng, courtesy Archiv Zentrum Paul Klee

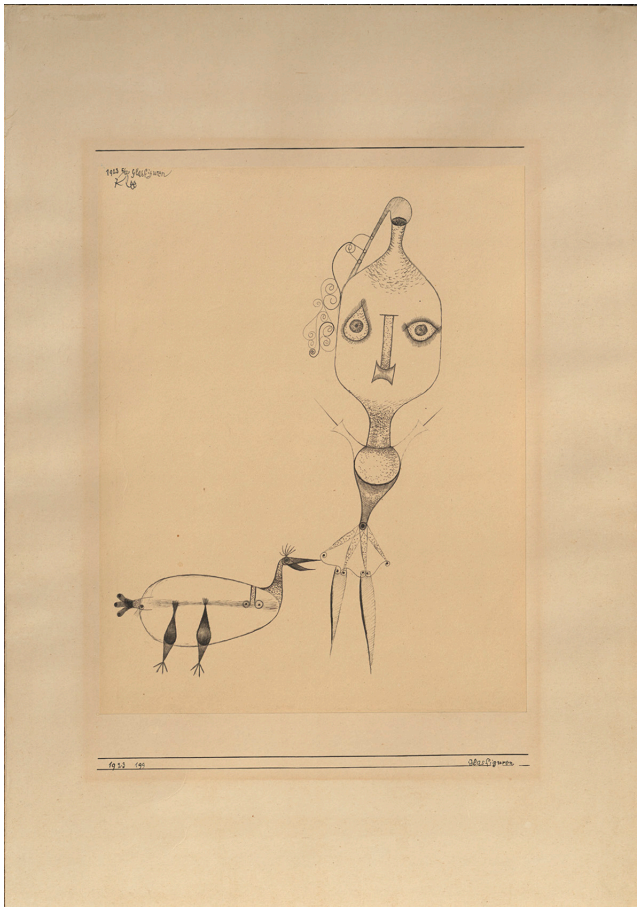

Fig. 8. Paul Klee, *Glass Figures* (*Glasfiguren*),1923.199. Pen and ink on paper, mounted on cardboard, 28.8 x 22.4 cm. The ink drawing was lined onto the mount, which developed slight horizontal buckles in the process. Courtesy of the author, Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen

Klee's Standard Presentation Format for Works on Paper

To distinguish works on paper from panels, Klee developed a distinct presentation format for them. This involved mounting works on paper onto secondary supports. Paper conservators in the United States have raised awareness of the special needs of Klee's works on paper, describing them as compound "art objects, that is to say, two sheets of paper aesthetically related as well as physically adhered to one another."[12] The material of the mounts in the Kunstsammlung's collection is typically a thin, compound board made of two calendered endpapers of reasonable quality covering a slightly thicker core of woodpulp stock.

Mounting Methods for Works on Paper

In the early years of his career, Klee lined his works to mounts; later, he mounted his works with dabs of adhesive, the amounts of which would vary from just a few spare dots to many of them all along the margins. Even though it is apparent from the lack of air bubbles between the layers and the absence of spilled adhesive on the fronts of the mounts that Klee worked meticulously when lining his works, the secondary supports sometimes do exhibit horizontal undulations. These seem to appear mainly in those cases where Klee used machine-made paper, referred to as "writing paper" (*Schreibpapier*) in the *Catalogue Raisonne Paul Klee*. This short-fibered paper stretches considerably when moistened in the lining process and then contracts upon drying, creating the undulations that can be seen, for example, in the drawing *Glass Figures* (*Glasfiguren*), 1923.199 (fig. 8).

In the instances where Klee chose to spot-adhere a work to the mount, there is often the phenomenon of the primary support buckling around the adhesive dabs. The dabs themselves seem to acquire an embossed appearance, as can be seen in the drawing *Venus Leaves and Withdraws* (*Venus geht und tritt zurück*), 1939.679 (fig. 9). While the localized tension that this method of adhesion created can be problematic—some works have been known to develop tears around the adhesive dabs—they should also be regarded as part of the artist's composition, because the buckling must have occurred in the process of mounting of the works rather than upon aging.[13] Judging from how much he favored this method of mounting in later years, it seems likely that Klee not only accepted but actually intended the change of appearance the papers underwent when he spot-adhered them to his secondary supports.

Dimensions and Design of the Mounts

Apart from using the method of mounting each work as an artistic device, it can be assumed that Klee also chose the format of each mount deliberately to complement the dimensions of the work. Studying the group of black-and-white drawings held by the Kunstsammlung,

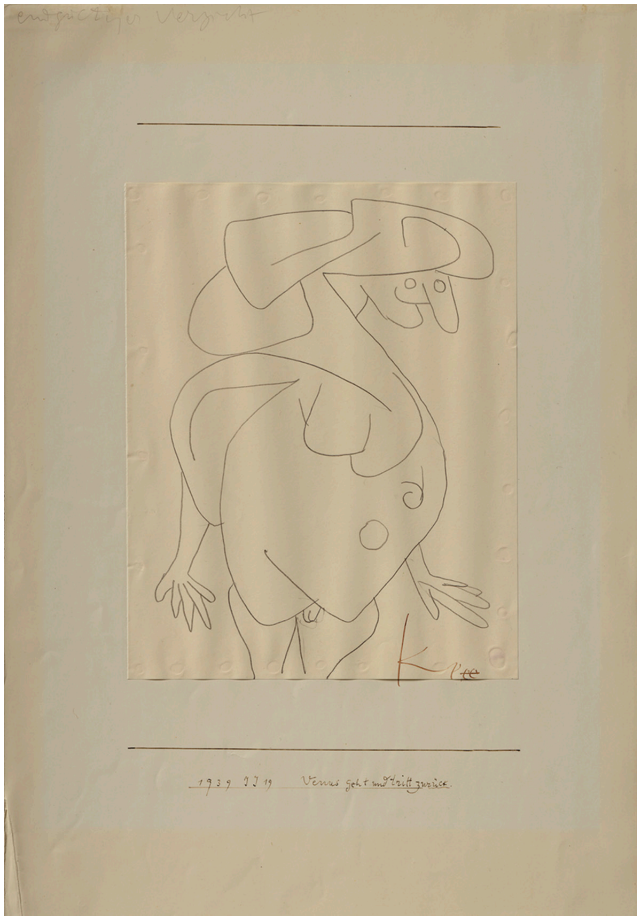

Fig. 9. Paul Klee, *Venus Leaves and Withdraws* (*Venus geht und tritt zurück*), 1939.679. Pencil on paper, mounted on cardboard, 50 x 35 cm. The work was adhered to the mount with dabs of adhesive placed in fairly regular intervals along the edges of the primary support. Courtesy of the author, Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen

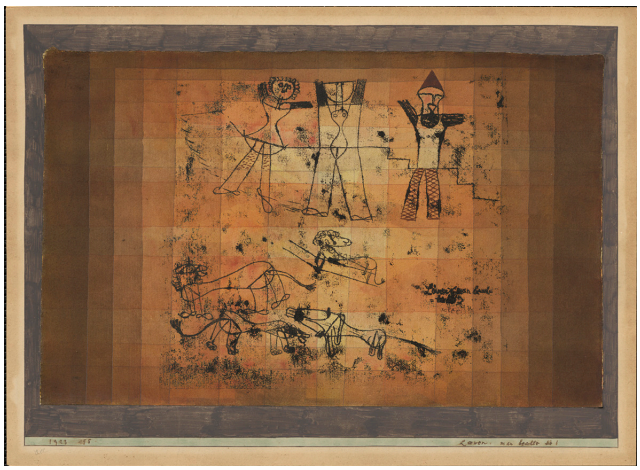

Fig. 10. Paul Klee, *Lions, attention please!* (*Loewen, man beachte sie!*), 1923.155. Oil transfer drawing, pencil, and watercolor on paper, bordered with watercolor and ink, mounted on cardboard, 30.5 x 48.5 cm. Klee decorated the mount with bands of watercolor, noting the title and date in the pale blue band below the image. Courtesy of the author, Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen

it seems obvious that the format of the primary support, rather than being forced to conform to a standardized format, appears to have been chosen so that the margins are in proportion to the dimensions of the work. Klee also often decorated the margins around a work. In these instances, the mount serves as an integral part of the design, as in the work *Lions, attention please!* (*Loewen, man beachte sie!)*, 1923.155, which he chose to border with bands of watercolor (fig. 10).

The Mount as Record-Keeping Device

Klee routinely entered inscriptions—comprising the date, catalog number, and title—on the mounts of his works, and frequently added marginal lines above and below the primary supports. About the secondary supports' record-keeping role, it has been observed that "in a broader sense, this scrupulous procedure of mounting and recording his works implies that Klee did not consider [his works on paper] officially finished until he had done so."[14]

PROBLEMS WITH CONSERVATION TREATMENTS

The following tale from the Kunstsammlung's own history is related to draw attention to the fact that Klee's eclectic use of mounting methods can easily lead to misinterpretation on the part of people entrusted with the care of these objects. A treatment report in the museum's files, dated 1991, describes the separation of the primary support and mount of *The Boulevard of the Abnormal Ones (Der Boulevard der Abnormen)*, 1938.46, a painting on newsprint mounted on cardstock that shows a parade of figures marching across a landscape (fig. 11). The report contains photographs showing that the painted newsprint was almost three-dimensional in appearance (fig. 12). At the time, it was felt that the work exhibited an unacceptable amount of buckling of the primary and secondary supports.[15] The report states that it was feared the buckling would cause the underbound paint layer to flake off. As a precautionary measure, it was decided that the primary support would be taken off the mount, relaxed, and then lined rather than spot-adhered to the mount, which itself would be lined onto a new auxiliary board. Today, *The Boulevard of the Abnormal Ones* lies perfectly flat, and is thus a world away from the topographical landscape Klee created by spot-adhering the piece of newsprint to the mount. Such interventions have sparked critical debate among Klee scholars: "How do Klee's works look when they have been treated by traditional conservation techniques? Is it still possible to appreciate and understand the substance of the work, or does only a relic remain of the original?"[16] These questions are uncomfortable ones, and ones that our profession will have to grapple with.

A conservation problem that looms large for the Kunstsammlung's Klee collection was created by

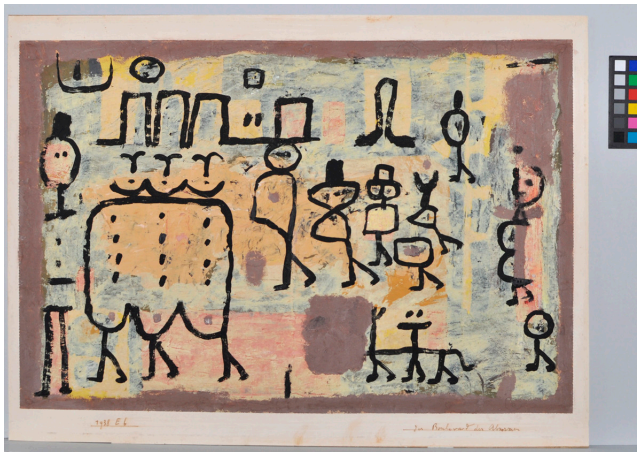

Fig. 11. Paul Klee, *The Boulevard of the Abnormal Ones* (*Der Boulevard der Abnormen*), 1938.46. Colored paste on newspaper, mounted on cardboard, 33.2 x 49 cm. Courtesy of the author, Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen

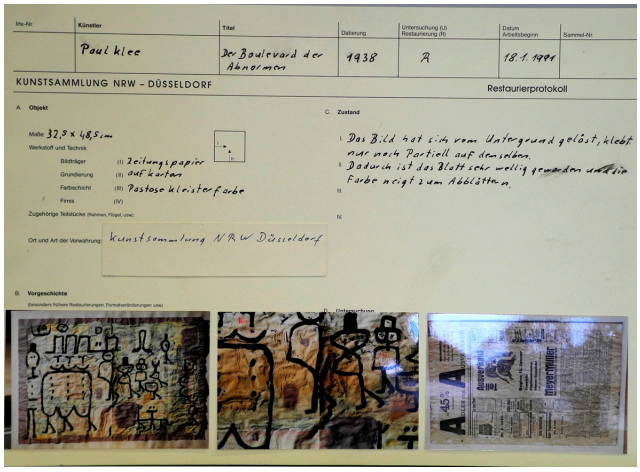

Fig. 12. Treatment report from 1992 describing what was felt to be damage to *The Boulevard of the Abnormal Ones* (*Der Boulevard der Abnormen*). Courtesy of the author, Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen

near-permanent periods of exhibition in the early days of the museum. The decision to allow permanent access to this body of works went in conjunction with the act of atonement (*Wiedergutmachung*) that was so vitally important for the founding of the museum. It was the wish of the politicians to show Klee's masterpieces permanently and prominently in the museum, for all the world to see. Hence, many of the works on paper have suffered severe light damage. The accumulation of hours of light exposure has led to fading of a few of the ink drawings in the collection. The mounts have also been affected. Often, a work's margins (where the secondary support was protected by a window mount) are lighter than the exposed image area. Discoloration has also appeared on mounts that were covered by acidic mats, which were removed in 1999. As it is unlikely that these disfigurements can be reduced, the works will be displayed with mats covering the discolored margins in order to minimize distraction for the viewer.

ALTERATIONS TO KLEE'S ORIGINAL PRESENTATION FORMATS

While Klee's cardstock mounts are intimately related to their artworks, they have also been especially prone to alterations by third parties. It seems that once the works left Klee's studio, his official presentation formats for the pieces—their mounts—ceased to be viewed as integral parts of the artworks.

The most common alteration found in the Kunstsammlung's Klee collection is the cropping of the original mounts to new proportions, probably to allow the works to be placed in smaller frame formats. Trimming the mount to the edges of the primary support is less common in the Kunstsammlung's collection. Since Klee sent his works on paper to his dealers unframed, it seems likely that trimming was carried out when works were framed for exhibition in commercial galleries. Framers were also prone to leaving marks such as notations, tapes, or even glue on the original mounts. In some instances, margins around the primary support were toned with a wash of watercolor. This seems to be especially common in works that passed through the hands of Galka Scheyer and Karl Nierendorf.[17] Cropping and toning may have been attempts to remove damaged edges or hide stains or discoloration. Another theory is that paint was added "in an attempt to visually suppress the appearance of a work as a work on paper by toning back the lightness of the mount and concealing the marginal lines that are typical for works on paper."[18]

Another modification by third parties consisted of taking works off their original mounts in order to reapply them to new backings. This is referred to as the "alteration of presentation format" (*Typveränderung*) by the Klee Estate, and is considered a most substantial form of damage.[19] It can be surprisingly hard to identify, as the works that suffered this abuse were often, but not always, paintings on scraps of textile, which were then carefully adhered to a new secondary support and, in some instances, even embedded in chalk grounds. Only through close visual examination and comparison to the entries in the *Catalogue Raisonne Paul Klee* are these interventions able to be uncovered.

Interim around Easter (*Zwischenzeit gegen Ostern*), 1938.342, a watercolor on a chalk ground on jute, is one example. Today, the work is lined with a secondary canvas and mounted on a stretcher (fig. 13). However, a fragment of the original mount bearing the title and date of the work has been adhered to the back of the stretcher. This evidence indicates that the work was originally mounted on cardstock (fig. 14). When the *Catalogue Raisonne* was consulted, these suspicions were confirmed:

Fig. 13. Paul Klee, *Interval around Easter* (*Zwischenzeit gegen Ostern*), 1938.342. Watercolor on chalk and paste ground on jute, mounted on canvas on stretcher (not by the artist), 29.7/32.5 x 66.5 cm. Courtesy of the author, Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen

Fig. 14. Verso of *Interval around Easter* (*Zwischenzeit gegen Ostern*) with a fragment of the original mount bearing the title and the date attached to the lower bar of the stretcher. Courtesy of the author, Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen

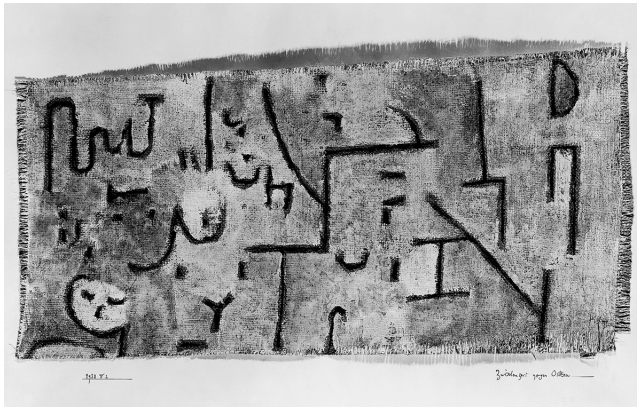

Fig. 15. Archival photograph of *Interval around Easter* (*Zwischenzeit gegen Ostern*) before it was altered. Courtesy of Archiv Zentrum Paul Klee

Fig. 16. Paul Klee, *Thoughts in the Snow* (*Gedanken bei Schnee*), 1933.32. Watercolor on plaster ground on tulle on cardboard, mounted on plaster-coated Masonite (not by the artist), 45.5 x 46.5 cm. The work appears in its current presentation format, mounted onto a plaster-coated sheet of Masonite. Courtesy of the author, Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen

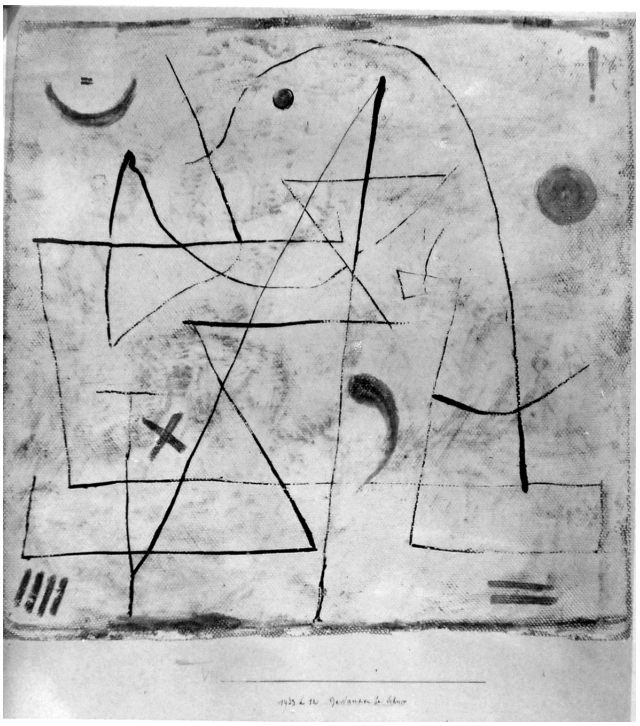

Fig. 17. This archival photograph shows *Thoughts in the Snow* (*Gedanken bei Schnee*) before it was altered. Photo by Cauvin, courtesy of Archiv Zentrum Paul Klee

Fig. 18. Detail of *Thoughts in the Snow* (*Gedanken bei Schnee*) showing the original compound support embedded in the toned plaster substrate. Courtesy of the author, Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen

the work had been classified in Klee's oeuvre catalogue as a "multicolored sheet," indicating a work on paper. Finally, the archival photograph of the work showed the primary support mounted on cardstock, with the typical inscriptions along the bottom (fig. 15). Originally, the work must have been spot-adhered rather than lined to the cardstock mount, judging by the shadows that its edges are casting.

Another striking example of complete alteration can be studied when one compares the current condition of the work *Thoughts in the Snow* (*Gedanken bei Schnee*), 1933.22, (fig. 16) with its original condition as revealed in an archival photograph (fig. 17). Here, the support, a delicate compound of plaster and tulle lined with cardstock, was cropped to the edges of the image area, mounted onto Masonite, and embedded in a layer of plaster. The plaster margins and the edges of the primary support alongside them were toned a light grey (fig. 18). Again, attached to the reverse of the Masonite panel is a fragment of the original mount bearing the artist's inscription.

These type-altering modifications appear extremely baffling from today's point of view. In one case at least, it is documented that a transfer onto a different kind of secondary support was carried out as a conservation treatment by Petra Petitpierre, a former student of Paul Klee, on behalf of Lily Klee.[20] Since the Kunstsammlung's altered works did not pass through Petitpierre's hands, it is possible that the original mounts were removed and the works transferred to canvas or Masonite for financial reasons, to upgrade them from "work on paper" to "painting" status.

In order to shed more light on this issue, research involving the Klee Estate, the Klee scholars at the Zentrum, and conservators and curators at United States institutions with Klee holdings would certainly be worthwhile. As the Düsseldorf Klee works have passed through the hands of various American owners, it seems likely that similar alterations have been made to works that are still held in the United States. So far, only a few American collections have been approached with questions about alterations to Klee's original presentation formats. Collections that acquired Klee's works early on, such as the Museum of Modern Art, appear to have works that remain largely untouched. By contrast, collections that contain works that changed ownership several times before acquisition are likely to have works whose mounts were altered. A number of works that were part of Galka Scheyer's collection and are now held by the Norton Simon Museum have been taken off their mounts, while pieces of the cardstock bearing the title were retained. In one case, however, the files contained information that the primary support of *Plants in the Courtyard* (*Pflanzen im Hof*), 1932.25, was taken off its cardstock mount and pasted onto a piece of cardboard covered with Japanese or Chinese grass paper, and the fragment of cardstock with the artist's inscriptions was adhered to the back of this cardboard.[21]

Conservators at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York are researching whether two works from the Karl Nierendorf estate may also have been removed from their original mounts prior to entering the museum's collection in 1948. Klee classified both these works as "multicolored sheets" (*Blatt mehrfarbig*), but one is now on plaster-coated Masonite and the other on painted and textured cardboard. In both cases, there is no evidence of original cardstock fragments or inscriptions.[22] Although the *Catalogue Raisonne* states that they were both removed from their original mounts, further research is needed to determine their current status.

Although both works were part of Nierendorf's estate, the five works in the Kunstsammlung's collection with similar alterations did not pass through Nierendorf's hands. In fact, they have only one common factor in their provenance: the Thompson collection. Judging from the similarity of the alterations, it appears that the same person may have been working for certain dealers and collectors of Klee's works.

FINDING A NEW PRESENTATION FORMAT FOR KLEE'S WORKS ON PAPER

Early photographs showing framed works on paper remain few and far between. Some do exist, though, such as the one showing Klee in his Bauhaus studio in Dessau in 1926, with a group of small works hung on the wall (fig. 19). Though the photograph is blurry, it seems that what is displayed on his studio walls are works on paper, apparently in very simple frames.

In order to come up with an alternative solution to the gilt frames in which the colored works on paper have been presented so far, Kunstsammlung curators and conservators

Fig. 19. Paul Klee in his Bauhaus studio in Dessau, 1927. The framed small-scale works on the studio walls are thought to be works on paper. Photo by Lucia Moholy, courtesy of Bauhaus Archiv, Berlin, and VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn, 2012

spent considerable time poring over various archival photographs and frame samples. The task of finding a single, appropriate frame style that would help balance Klee's highly individualized imagery and surfaces within a grouping—a task that was previously made more difficult by varying frame types—proved fairly grueling, as all frame samples supplied by Düsseldorf's major frame manufacturer felt simply wrong. Hence, experiments with a custom-made frame commenced. Modeled on a very simple Bauhaus-era frame with a triangular profile, the custom frame was aesthetically pleasing, but its gilt finish was off-putting. This too felt "historicizing," and even with a simple brown stain, the frame seemed too interpretive. In the end, it seemed that the more simple and less elaborate the frame, the better it allowed the subtleties of Klee's works on paper to speak for themselves (fig. 20). The museum settled on the frame that was already being used for the black-and-white drawings: a band-frame made from North American walnut (fig. 21). Its simple profile also seemed to mirror the unadorned wooden frames found in early photographs, which helped the decision along considerably.

While Klee's works hang on the white walls of today's galleries, a simple wooden frame seems to offer maximum serenity and simplicity for the appreciation of the art. Yet the Kunstsammlung's decision—to present its visitors with a more "authentic" display by liberating the works on paper from their ornate gilt frames—is itself a product of the sentiments of the present time and may be regarded as such by future generations.

REVISED PRESENTATION FORMATS FOR PANELS

The Kunstsammlung's Klee panels will not receive a single frame style. In acknowledgement of Klee's eclectic frame

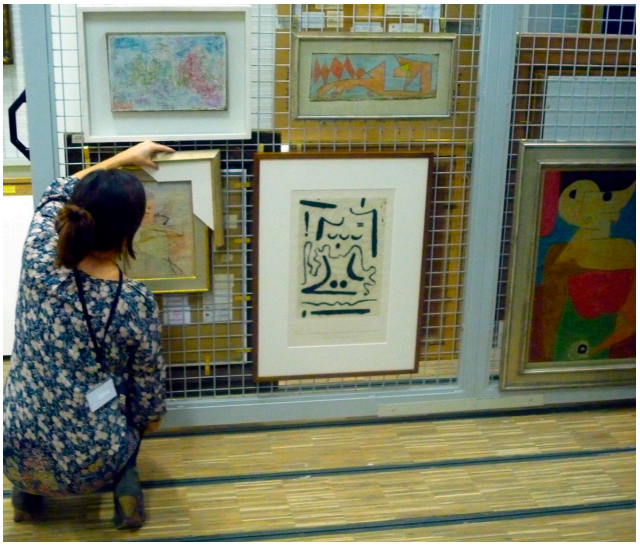

Fig. 20. Experimenting with the custom-made Bauhaus frame sample. Compared to the simple frame visible on the black-and-white drawing on the right, the frame sample seemed too interpretative. Courtesy of Mina Rikitake, Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen

Fig. 21. Paul Klee, *The Important Package* (*Das Wert-Paket)*, 1939.858. Ink, pencil, and colored paste on paste ground on paper, mounted on cardboard (cardboard toned later, not by the artist), 45.5 x 32.7 cm. This 2011 mockup shows the work floated in the type of frame it will receive in 2012. Courtesy of the author, Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen

choices, an individual solution will be found for each piece. A recent trend for his panels seems to be the reconstruction of frames and strip-frames with the aid of archival photographs. The Zentrum Paul Klee is very much ahead of the curve in this, as are some American institutions, and it is hoped that the Kunstsammlung may be able to follow their lead.[23] For the Klee exhibition in 2012, a number of works are presented unframed in showcases that allow the viewer to appreciate the works front and back, in order to do Klee's compound works of art justice.

CONCLUSION

Artworks in fine-art institutions have whole histories that may never be known, ranging from changes in presentation format to changes in ownership. It is fascinating to trace the alterations that Klee's works have undergone; the process helps to explain how, with changes in ownership, some elements of artistic intent were subordinated to individual aesthetics. This project offered rare glimpses of how Klee's scrupulous attention to detail extended to all aspects of the presentation of his works. As guardians of the world's art collections, curators and conservators should remember to consider aspects such as the artist's original vision of display. Even more importantly, they can seek to preserve evidence of the artwork's display history through diligent documentation, preservation of historic records, and sensitivity not only to the artwork but also to its accompanying materials and structures.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The presentation of this study was supported by the Christa Gaehde Award from the Foundation of the American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works. This research would not have been possible without the help of a number of people. The author is deeply indebted to Stefan Frey (Estate Paul Klee, Bern) for answering many questions and for reading the text and making valuable comments. Thanks also go to Marion Ackermann, Anette Kruszynski, Anne Skaliks, and Mina Rikitake (Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen); Myriam Weber, Patrizia Zeppetella, and Eva Wiederkehr (Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern); Werner Müller (Kunstmuseum, Basel); Jessica Lunk, Diana Blumenroth, and Gunnar Heydenreich (University of Applied Sciences, Cologne); Jens Baudisch (Staatliche Kunsthalle Karlsruhe); Jeffrey Warda and Gillian McMillan (Guggenheim Museum, New York); Scott Gerson (MoMA, New York); Leah Lehmbeck (Norton Simon Museum); Suzanne Penn (Philadelphia Museum of Art); and Amanda Hunter Johnson (SFMoMA), who have all helped greatly with this project. Special thanks to Victoria Binder for her comments and, of course, to Debra Evans (Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco) for her interest in the project and her continuous support and encouragement. Heartfelt thanks to both Debbie and Renée Wolcott for their thorough editing of this text (all remaining mistakes are the author's own, as a few passages had to be squeezed in at the last minute). This paper is dedicated to the author's husband, Cornelius—also a painter—who good-naturedly deigns to discuss his framing choices with his interfering wife!

NOTES

1. In his 2006 article "G. David Thompson: An Art Collector Snubbed by Pittsburgh's Social Elite" (*Pittsburgh Quarterly* Spring/Summer), Graham Shearing writes: "His collecting practice was in direct opposition to that of the connoisseur. He liked to buy in bulk: 'What isn't selling, late Klee maybe? OK, I'll take the lot.'" www.pittsburghquarterly.com/index.php/Art-columns/missing-links.html (accessed 08/20/2012).
2. It is known that Karl Nierendorf implemented new frames for Klee works that passed through his hands. However, the records of Nierendorf's gallery are thought to be lost, so photographic evidence is unavailable.
3. Internal memos between Werner Müller, the former head of conservation, and Armin Zweite, the former director, relate that the old frames, the acrylic glazing, and the acidic mats were replaced with sturdier frames, acid-free mats, and Mirogard Protect Magic glazing.
4. This project was carried out in close collaboration with Anette Kruszynski, head of collections, and Marion Ackermann, artistic director of the Kunstsammlung.
5. For a detailed account of Klee's framing of paintings, see Bradford Epley and Christa Haiml (2006), "Paul Klee's Frames: Documenting Choices and Changes," in *Klee and America*, Houston: Menil Collection, pp. 253–263.
6. Stefan Frey pointed out that Klee repeatedly bought the latter type of frame at Farbwaren Schneider, Bern. Original frames and stretchers sometimes show a company stamp on the reverse.
7. Stefan Frey at the Estate Paul Klee and Patrizia Zeppetella, Myriam Weber, and Eva Wiederkehr at the Zentrum Paul Klee were very generous with their time and their resources, both during visits to Bern and when receiving calls or e-mails with questions.
8. In his book *Paul Klee* (1960, Zürich: Diogenes Verlag), Felix Klee compiled documents and recollections about his father. See p. 70 for his comment on Paul Klee's detail-orientated approach to working. The translation of this passage is the author's.
9. It is of interest for paper conservators that, for his paintings, Klee often used cardboard as the primary support, which he nailed onto wooden strainers to achieve extra thickness. As Klee referred to his paintings as panels (*Tafelbilder*), this is the term that will be used for paintings in this paper.
10. The Paul Klee Foundation, 1998–2004, *Catalogue Raisonne Paul Klee*, vols. 1–9.
11. Thanks to Patrizia Zeppetella for bringing this detail to light.
12. The landmark paper on the subject of treating Klee's compound works on paper was published by Margaret Holben-Ellis, Antoinette

King, and Elisabeth Kaiser Schulte in 1986: "An Approach to the Treatment of Paul Klee Drawings," *Book and Paper Group Annual* 5, pp. 19–32. This quotation appears on page 19.

13. Myriam Weber, 2006, "Materialität und Fragilität der Papierarbeiten von Paul Klee" in *Ad Parnassum: Auf dem Prüfstand*, Bern, pp. 99–116.

14. See note 11, p. 20.

15. Anette Kruszynski interviewed both the former head of collections and the Kunstsammlung's first conservator about the treatment of *Boulevard of the Abnormal Ones*. In the interviews, the revelation of the possibility that the buckling might have been inherent to the design was received as rather shocking news.

16. See Wolfgang Kersten and Anne Trembley (1990), "Malerei als Provokation der Materie," in *Paul Klee: Das Schaffen im Todesjahr*, ed. Josef Helfenstein and Stefan Frey, Stuttgart: G. Hatje, pp. 79–80. The translation of this paragraph is the author's.

17. This notion came to the author's attention via the Klee Estate, and is confirmed by a letter from the custodians of the Kunstmuseum Bern to Rolf Bürgi, listing 28 works that had decreased in value due to alterations that had occurred while the works were in Nierendorf's possession. At the Norton Simon Museum, when one consults editor Fronia W. Simpson's 2002 catalogue *The Blue Four Collection*—which includes technical notes for many works—one repeatedly finds the following remark: "The original mount was trimmed and the remaining margins toned, apparently by Scheyer" (see for example *The Tree of Houses,* p. 268).

18. See note 5, p. 263.

19. Personal communication with Stefan Frey, Klee Estate.

20. Petra Petitpierre carried out a number of treatments after the death of the artist. The Klee Estate files contain a list entitled "Restoration of Damaged Paintings (*Restaurierung defekter Bilder*)" compiled by Petitpierre. A few works she treated are described by Nathalie Bäschlin, Beatrice Ilg, and Patrizia Zeppetella (2000) in the essay "Beiträge zur Maltechnik von Paul Klee" in *Paul Klee: Kunst und Karriere*, Bern: Stämpfli, p. 199.

21. In this particular case, the work underwent treatment in the 1960s, when the grass paper–covered mount was removed and exchanged with Masonite. All this was unveiled by Leah Lehmbeck at the Norton Simon Museum, who went sleuthing in the accession files and looked at a number of objects.

22. The author would like to thank Jeffrey Warda and Gillian McMillan for their time and enthusiasm when, at rather short notice, a visit to New York City became possible. They kindly unframed, examined, and confirmed the similar constructions of *Severing the Snake*, 1938.262, and *Rolling Landscape*, 1938.409.

23. The Zentrum Paul Klee has successfully implemented reconstructions for lost frames that were documented in its files. Currently, a project concerning the collection of reverse glass paintings is under way. At the Philadelphia Museum of Art, a new strip-frame based on archival photographs was constructed for the painting *Fish Magic* (*Fischzauber*), 1925.85, in 2006. This information was kindly supplied by Suzanne Penn, Philadelphia Museum of Art.

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