

From the Arrow to the Fish: Paul Klee's Architectural Thinking

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Abstract

The Swiss artist Paul Klee (1879 – 1940) worked largely in paper, experimented with various techniques, and produced over ten thousand paintings. His works are dense with signs, letters, numbers, and motifs that are cryptic in nature yet, as I hope to show, comprise a lexicon of specific meaning. Three key groups of symbols (the arrow, the “blueprint” and the fish) have been narrowed to a body of works that Klee produced during his teaching at the German Bauhaus (1921-1931): the influential school created by Walter Gropius. The aim of my research is to explore how these symbols belong to Klee’s “architectural” turn of mind. While these symbols have been examined from the standpoint of primitivism (because of Klee’s cultivation of naïveté) as well as sophisticated methodologies involving structuralism and semiotics, my contention is that they are linked specifically to his pedagogy.

My intent is to use Klee’s Bauhaus teachings found in his seminal publications, *The Pedagogical Sketchbook* (1925) and *The Thinking Eye* (1956), as well as paintings Klee completed while teaching at the Bauhaus, to better understand the use of specific symbols in his paintings. I am particularly concerned with examining how the dialogue between Gropius’ principles - that a combination of fine arts and applied arts should be reached resulting in the final product of architecture - inspired Klee to take a more architectural approach to painting. I hope to show that Klee’s paintings completed during his years at the Bauhaus express an interest in spatial concerns similar to those being explored by contemporary architects. My thesis provides a place for Klee within the context of the formation of modern architecture to which he has never been ascribed. As a painter who grappled with the same spatial concerns as contemporary architects at the Bauhaus, it seems reasonable and appropriate to examine him from this perspective.

Symbols

In the decade (1921-1931) that Paul Klee was a master-teacher at the German Bauhaus, he produced a series of paintings infused with a primordial aura and marked by an artistic topos: the arrow. The arrow usually has a recognizable function, but in Klee's 1922 painting *Good Place for Fish* (Private Collection Germany; Fig. 1) the arrow is puzzling. Several of Klee's various arrows, some articulated in pen-thin lines, feathered like an arrow shot from a bow and others stouter and bolder, like the arrows of indication found in the urban environment, are placed in deep green and blue bands of color amongst several fish-like forms. Though resembling attack arrows, the feathered arrows in Klee's painting are not directed at the fish, but rather they are pointed downward and, because of the way their points and feathers align with the bands of color, they appear to be motionless, suspended in the watery ground. Likewise, the bolder arrows resist their typical role, one of a precisely comprehensible indication. Klee's arrows are confusing: they show motion, indicate direction, and guide the viewer's eye. In this painting, and in many more by Klee, the arrow functions not in the ways it does in daily life by showing purposeful direction, but rather in a manner that is wholly unique to Klee's artistic production and enters into the realm of metaphysics and phenomenology.

What specific role *does* the arrow symbol play in Klee's art? How do symbols work in his painting? The arrow is but one symbol that is ubiquitously present in the Klee's *oeuvre*. His idiosyncratic "blueprint" symbol and the fish symbol, seen in *Good Place for Fish* are equally compelling. The "blueprint" consists of repetitive line-formations which weave in and out and through one another as silken threads in a lace. While the "blueprint" is never exactly the same in each painting, it is a recognizable crisscrossed configuration and is often placed on a washed ground. Klee's fish symbol also appears in many forms, but generally appears as a schematized

outline of a Carp-like fish seen from the side. There is typically a defined head with two (despite the side view) cartoon eyes. Often the fish will be the subject of the painting while at other times it is simply a motif. Klee's paintings, especially those he completed while teaching at the Bauhaus, are teeming with the arrow, "blueprint" and fish symbols.

To understand the way these symbols function in Klee's Bauhaus paintings, an explanation of the school and Klee's role there is necessary. The Bauhaus was conceived as a place for the fine arts and the applied arts to combine into a single curriculum aimed toward the creation of architecture. Klee taught at the school from 1921 to 1931 while continuing to produce his paintings. He taught several courses, but it was for the basic design course that he created the extensive, precisely prepared lessons on line, form, composition, color, and general art theory that influenced his pupils. It would seem impossible for an artist to devote so much to a curriculum without it affecting his art or artistic thinking to some extent. As an artist working at the Bauhaus, Klee would not only be continually faced with modern architecture, but would be able to engage with the new concerns of spatial construction outlined in contemporary architectural experiments. An investigation of the relationship between Klee and the Bauhaus, particularly between Klee and modern architecture as formulated at the Bauhaus, seems to be an appropriate and useful approach to considering the artist's work.

In such an examination, Klee's pedagogy naturally becomes a key concern. Not only does it provide the means through which to understand the artist's development as a painter concerned with architectural concepts, but it serves as the apparatus for investigating the intractably enigmatic symbols that inhabit Klee's paintings. Indeed, an exploration of Klee's ubiquitous arrow, flat-bound "blueprint" and floating fish symbols, will prove valuable in the

understanding of Klee's development as an architectural thinker. The symbols will be shown to function as the tools for Klee's architectural experiments.

The study of symbols, and Klee's in particular, is not uncommon; various methodologies offer readings of Klee's symbols. One paradigm used repeatedly in the study of Klee's symbols is rooted in primitivism and its semiotic significance. Artists engaged with primitivist ideas utilized forms inspired by folk, African, Oceanic, Pre-Columbian and children's art in order to produce works that are anti-illusionistic, non-academic, and not aligned with the traditions of the Renaissance and the figurative tradition. The relationship between these categories of art and Klee's paintings was the topic of James Smith Pierce's dissertation *Paul Klee and Primitive Art* (1976). By tracing the primitive sources of some elements found in Klee's art, Pierce reached the conclusion that primitive art acted as a guide to Klee's creation; by freeing the artist from tradition, primitive art allowed Klee to pictorialize certain truths and mental states that would otherwise be impossible to represent. And indeed, this was a stated goal for Klee: in his *Creative Credo* he asserts that "art does not reproduce the visible; rather it makes visible."¹

Despite Klee's empathetic comment that seems to support Pierce's lucid assessment, the scholar's research does not answer the question of what Klee's symbols actually mean. Pierce's discourse is centered more on specific formal and expressive devices utilized by the artist in individual works and how these devices may relate to forms found in primitive art. The use of specific forms, or symbols, throughout Klee's art is not illuminated by Pierce's inquiry and therefore his method and his otherwise groundbreaking dissertation cannot be utilized for the inquiries posed by this investigation. Furthermore, while Pierce is insistent on using Klee's own words to support his argument, his paradigms do not extend to Klee's pedagogical sketches and Bauhaus lessons. Yet, as this thesis will show, the pedagogy is of critical interest to the task at

hand for it is the contention of the author that it is through his teachings that Klee's symbols acquire meaning. It is also notable that Klee himself denied using primitive forms: "If my pictures sometimes make a primitive impression, it is because of my discipline in reducing everything to a few steps. It is only economy, or if you like, the highest professional sensitivity; in fact the precise opposite of true primitivism."²

Semiotics, which seems to offer a likely paradigm for the study of Klee's symbols, proves to be problematic in offering an analytic model.³ At its basis, semiotics is a linguistic theory. The methodology works to dismantle signs in hopes of understanding the relationship between them as signifiers (typically words and phrases) and an abstract concept, the signified. A complicated dissymmetry persistently exists between the signifier and the signified; as the signified is always represented by the signifier, "whenever one goes in search of the signified, the signifier appears in its place."⁴ For the abstract concept to be specified, signifier replaces signified and "because of the continual flight of the signified, the object of semiotics is the structure of the signifier."⁵ Rainer Crone uses this linguistic method in his analysis of Klee's paintings *Cosmic Fragments of Meaning: On the Syllables of Paul Klee*. Crone's discussion is compelling. He begins by questioning the appropriateness of applying a linguistic model to the visual arts. He realizes that in painting, unlike in language proper, "the traditional concepts of both system and sign oscillate,"⁶ and so offers a slightly less strict version of semiotic discourses, one based in iconism. In a close investigation of some of Klee's architecture-paintings and paintings involving language, Crone highlights semiotic notions within individual paintings and supports them with examples from Klee's pedagogy. Through the investigation, Crone finds a consonance between "linguistic and iconic articulation."⁷ According to Crone, Klee combines the articulation of the linguistic and the iconic in *Einst dem Grau der Nacht enttaucht...*(1918)

by creating a descriptive tableau (the basic “characteristic of the language of painting”)⁸ in the form of a grid that contains each of the letters (iconic elements) of the poem. The linguistic grid and the iconic letters meld into one in Klee’s poem-painting.

Crone’s analysis seems appropriate for the task at hand; he works with a theory of signs and explores the architecture-paintings of Klee’s *oeuvre*, but his analysis only allows for an exploration of single paintings. The meaning of various symbols Klee utilized throughout his body of work is not addressed by Crone. Rather, Crone’s application of semiotic criticism shows each of Klee’s paintings to contain its own individual language. Hence, the primary goal of this thesis - to understand Klee’s language, and therefore the development of his architectural mind through his symbols - is something that is not satisfactorily accomplished in Crone’s iconism.

Klee never develops a system for his artistic production,⁹ and so it is tempting to explore and analyze the artist and his works by applying a pre-conceived paradigm. Such a process provides a means for a richer understanding and functions as a form of translation. If we take for granted that the artist produces a work in one language (which the viewer does not understand) the viewer must rely on a mediating mechanism: the translation. However, translation is never exact but is always one-step removed from the original; colloquialisms and the more subtle meanings of words cannot be conveyed authentically. Likewise, by applying a methodological paradigm, an artificial separation comes between the artist and his *oeuvre*. With Klee’s collected pedagogical writing, access to the artist’s mind is provided. It seems unlikely that an artist would devote so much effort in constructing a teaching model if he had no personal stake in having it illuminate the process of his thinking. Given the extensive body of Klee’s writing, there is great value in attempting to understand the artist through his personal language instead of depending on an interlocutor.

This critical body of writing containing Klee's language consists of the artist's personal diaries (1957), his *Creative Credo* (1920), *The Pedagogical Sketchbook* (1925) and *The Thinking Eye* (1956).¹⁰ The primary sources that shall be utilized in analysis of Klee's works completed during his Bauhaus years are *The Pedagogical Sketchbook* and *The Thinking Eye*. These texts were produced during the artist's Bauhaus tenure and are integral to this thesis.¹¹ *The Thinking Eye* includes Klee's actual lecture notes for three semesters at the Bauhaus during the years 1921 and 1922 as well as 2500 folio pages of notebooks up to the year 1925.¹² Furthermore, Klee's exploratory essays *Ways of Nature Study* (first published in 1923) and *Exact Experiments in the Realm of Art* (first published in 1928) are transcribed in the volume along with the seminal Jena lecture of 1924.¹³ Clearly, *The Thinking Eye* is dense with Klee's discourse. This book provides a rich understanding not only of Klee's pedagogy but offers insight into his conception and production of art. It is this that makes *The Thinking Eye* an essential component for deciphering Klee's art of the Bauhaus years. It should be noted however that not every lesson in *The Thinking Eye* can be utilized for the purpose of deciphering Klee's paintings. The book is far too dense for such an undertaking since *The Thinking Eye* consists of lessons spanning five years and is directed at students at all levels of proficiency. Simply put: the book is not a dictionary. Its extensive discussions of perspective, color theory, rhythm and balance, while insightful, still do not provide answers to the kinds of questions the author is posing.

Furthermore, the book cannot be seen as something produced exclusively by Klee; while one wants Klee's teachings to speak for themselves, it must be remembered that the required editing could not but result in interpretation instead of pure presentation. Noting this rather unavoidable outcome, it is nonetheless important to remind the reader that it was Klee's wish that his teachings appear in published form. In fact, some of the artist's teachings, published as

The Pedagogical Sketchbook, function as a sort of abbreviation of *The Thinking Eye*. Published in 1925, *The Pedagogical Sketchbook* is a selection and synthesis of Klee's Bauhaus lecture notes up to that point in time. It would seem, then, that *The Thinking Eye* should suffice as the only necessary and pertinent source for this study; after all, *The Pedagogical Sketchbook* simply summarizes issues that are explored with more depth in *The Thinking Eye*. However, there is more to consider. For one thing, *The Thinking Eye* was compiled after Klee's death; *The Pedagogical Sketchbook*, by contrast, was published by the artist himself during his tenure at the Bauhaus. Therefore, it can be assumed that *The Pedagogical Sketchbook* offers Klee's thoughts and discourse in precisely the manner that he intended for it to be understood and that the weight of evidence would be drawn largely from this source.

While several themes seem to thread through both *The Thinking Eye* and *The Pedagogical Sketchbook*, the one of particular interest is that of "formation"¹⁴ in reference to "form". To clarify, Klee sees form not as the purpose of creation but as part of the process of discovery; "formation" as it relates to the development of "form" holds more interest for the artist than the actual forms produced. For example, in the section from the *Pedagogical Sketchbook* entitled "Synthesis of spatio-plastic representation and movement" Klee states:

The way to form, dictated no doubt by some inward or outward necessity, is higher than its own end and goal. The way is essential and determines the conclusive or concluded character of the work. Formation determines form and is therefore the greater of the two. Thus form may never be regarded as solution, result, end, but should be regarded as genesis, growth and essence.¹⁵

If, in investigating Klee's symbols (which is the task at hand) this statement seems to be a less than satisfactory discovery about Klee's artistic process, one needs to ask then: how could a

set of symbols created by the painter be determined and deciphered if form was largely deemed a secondary concern for Klee? Finding a one-to-one correspondence between Klee's teachings and his art is not possible; the appearance of a fish in one of Klee's paintings will not necessarily hold the same meaning in another of Klee's pictures. However, the symbols are still pregnant with meaning if seen as Klee intended. They are not an end in itself; rather they sustain individualized and essential meanings throughout. *The Thinking Eye* and *The Pedagogical Sketchbook* cannot therefore answer the question of what precisely the many symbols mean, but rather, they provoke the following issues: What essence is represented in this symbol? How did this sign come into being? What motivated its appearance? The responses to such a line of questioning shed a different perspective on his specialized interests. The image of a fish provides examples. With fish in an aquarium, Klee might be representing the essence of space, for instance. In another picture, the image of a fish may have resulted from an exploration of the essence of organic structure. A fish could, in yet another painting, represent the idea of movement. It seems obvious that the many recurring motifs and signs in Klee's paintings do not constitute a cryptic message but are, in fact, representations of artistic investigation and truth. *The Thinking Eye* and *The Pedagogical Sketchbook* are thus crucial to this type of understanding of Klee's paintings, especially those completed during his tenure at the Bauhaus.

The Thinking Eye and *The Pedagogical Sketchbook* are useful for creating a condition of meaning and essence. The books do not offer direct answers about the meaning of Klee's many symbols but rather provide a new, discursive way to explore them in his paintings of the Bauhaus years.

¹ James Smith Pierce, *Paul Klee and Primitive Art*, (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1976), pp. 69-70.

² Paul Klee, *The Thinking Eye* (New York: George Wittenborn Inc, 1961), p. 451.

³ A discussion of structuralism could also provide an approach to Klee's signs. This theory is, after all, concerned with how sign systems operate according to a profound structure. However, structuralism is so closely related to semiotics that in the discourse on Klee through these paradigms a distinction between semiotics and structuralism is not clearly defined. Therefore, only the semiotic paradigm will be discussed.

⁴ Rainer Crone and Joseph Leo Koerner, *Paul Klee: Legends of the Sign* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), p. 11.

⁵ Ibid, p. 12.

⁶ Ibid, p. 13.

⁷ Ibid, p. 38.

⁸ Ibid, p. 6.

⁹ Klee did, rather systematically, number and date his works, including those he created during his childhood, and his biographer Will Grohmann classifies Klee's paintings according to chronology, motifs, and techniques.

However, neither of these are attempts to offer a system for understanding Klee's process

¹⁰ The dates given are the years in which these writings were published. They are listed in the order of production: the diaries consist of entries until the year 1918, the *Creative Credo* was completed in 1920, *The Pedagogical Sketchbook* was created in 1925 and *The Thinking Eye* was compiled posthumously in 1956.

¹¹ The diaries are too personal in nature to answer questions concerning the manifestations of Klee's teachings in the artist's paintings. The *Creative Credo*, while it may be helpful, was completed in 1920, the year before Klee joined the Bauhaus. This source predates the chronological focus of this paper and so is of limited use to this study.

¹² These are elaborated upon by his student Petra Petitpierre's notes from his classes at the Dessau Bauhaus and through minor, noted additions and explanations by Jürg Spiller, the editor of *The Thinking Eye*.

¹³ This lecture, entitled "On Modern Art," is regarded not only as the quintessential outline of Klee's concept of art but also as a helpful paradigm for understanding twentieth-century art in general. Klee delivered the lecture at Jena Kunstverein for an exhibition on January 26 1924.

¹⁴ "Formation" is a problematic word in the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century. It relates to the esoteric influences on the artists in this era and is also part of their formalist interest in essential quality of form.

¹⁵ Klee, *The Thinking Eye*, p. 169.

The Bauhaus and Modern Architecture

To provide a context for Klee's production of his pedagogy and his symbol-dense paintings, the history of the Bauhaus needs to be considered. The literature available on the Bauhaus itself and Klee's affiliation with the school is extensive. To attempt to consult it all would not only be impractical but, more importantly, except for signaling out a few pertinent publications, a general survey of the literature would prove to be futile as it would detract from the investigation at hand. Instead, it is more prudent to weed through the literature, excise the irrelevant, and utilize only that which highlights the interchange between the philosophy and culture of the Bauhaus and Klee's use of symbols.

How can the philosophy and culture of the Bauhaus be defined? A general history is needed. The Bauhaus was founded by the architect Walter Gropius in 1919 and was dissolved by the pressures of the Nazi regime in 1933. It began in Weimar, Germany, with Gropius uniting the Weimar Art Academy with the Weimar Arts and Crafts School to become a government-subsidized institution intent on providing equivalent instruction in both fine art and applied art.¹⁶ In *The First Proclamation of the Weimar Bauhaus* (1919), the goal of the school was clarified by its reference to the transparent and multi-faceted aspects of an organic crystal:

The complete building is the final aim of the visual arts. Their noblest function was once the decoration of buildings. Today they exist in isolation, from which they can be rescued only through the conscious, cooperative effort of all craftsmen. . . . Together let us conceive and create the new building of the future, which will embrace architecture and sculpture and painting in one unity and which will rise one day toward heaven from the hands of a million workers like the crystal symbol of a new faith.¹⁷

The Bauhaus Manifesto of 1919 further states that the goal of his new art and crafts school is to “combine everything – architecture and sculpture and painting – in a single form which will one day raise towards the heavens from the hands of a million workers as the crystalline symbol of a new and coming faith.”¹⁸ It is often accepted that architecture was treated as the supreme art at the Bauhaus: the name “Bauhaus,” which literally translates to “building-house,” attests to the elevated status of architecture as compared to other media, although various genres of art – from painting to weaving – constituted Bauhaus products. The Bauhaus credo is best described in the concentrically-structured curriculum, where “building: practical building experience – building experiments” and “design: building and engineering sciences” occupies the largest, innermost circle – the “heart” and spirit of Bauhaus activities (Fig. 2).

In 1924 the local government in Weimar, having never embraced the school and its ideals, closed the Bauhaus. Gropius was forced to find a new location for his groundbreaking institution. In contrast to Weimar, which lingered covetously in its romantic past, the industrial City of Dessau offered the potential for the Bauhaus to engage art in the city’s residential and urban development.¹⁹ In 1925, the Bauhaus moved its home to Dessau, where the school was appropriately housed in a modernist building designed by Gropius. Three years later, Gropius resigned and left the Bauhaus in the hands of Hannes Meyer. Meyer had come to the Bauhaus in 1927 as the head of the new architecture department and during his year of professorship had provoked resentment from many of the students and faculty.²⁰ Disillusioned by his appointment, the Bauhaus core of personnel began to disperse. Eventually, in 1930, Meyer was forced to resign. Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, yet another architect by trade, took up the post. When the Nazi party came into power in Dessau, it was not long until the Bauhaus was forced to move

again. The Dessau Bauhaus was closed in 1932. Mies van der Rohe attempted to establish a third Bauhaus in Berlin, but this privately-funded institution was too modernist to survive under the Nazi government. The Bauhaus was disbanded ultimately in August 1933.²¹

The Bauhaus's curriculum naturally saw many changes with the shift of location and with each new director. However, the basic concentric structure envisioned by Gropius remained as the foundation of the school. Each student, called a "journeyman," began his (or her) studies in the so-called *Vorkurs*. As a result, this preliminary course was rather broad in its scope, but unambiguously clear in its objectives. The exact material to be covered and the manner in which it was taught varied from workshop to workshop, depending on the master instructor, but the intent was to introduce the journeyman to "the experience of proportion and scale, rhythm, light, shade, and color and at the same time to pass through every stage of primitive experience with materials."²² The course provided the skills needed for every student at the Bauhaus including, most importantly, the skill to think in constructive, productive terms. After six months, the journeyman had to take formal and practical training under two masters (the name given to the instructors at the Bauhaus): a craftsman and an artist.²³ This formal and practical instruction was offered in the various workshops. The workshops differed in objectives and character, depending on which masters were present and how much funding was allocated. Over the years, the following workshops were offered: carpentry, stained glass, pottery, metal, weaving, stage, wall-painting, architecture, typography and layout, furniture, sculpture and bookbinding. Courses on such subjects as form, color, and life-drawing were also provided. Upon completion of three years of such strict exposure, the journeyman was examined and certified in a medium by the masters of the Bauhaus. If desired, the journeyman could continue on in the program to a direct study of building and construction (i.e., architecture).²⁴

This Bauhaus hierarchy was a complex one. Gropius was a practicing architect before, throughout, and after his engagement with the Bauhaus, but, due to funding problems, he was not able to fully establish an architecture department at the Bauhaus until April of 1927.²⁵ Economic difficulties notwithstanding, Gropius managed to disseminate his architectural ideas. In the 1923 publication, *The Theory and Organization of the Bauhaus*, Gropius's elevation of architecture is implicit in and central to the organization of the discussion. His explanation of the development of the Bauhaus is framed by the idea that architecture is the epitome of an epoch, because it is not currently fulfilling this role, a "new architectural spirit" is required. This need, according to Gropius, "demands new conditions for all creative effort."²⁶ He discusses the failure of the "academy" in providing these conditions and offers the Bauhaus as a solution, outlining the exact structure of its curriculum. Gropius's expectation was that his Bauhaus curriculum would create the conditions needed to bring about a "new architectural spirit." Architecture was the final goal of Bauhaus training. The constant metaphor of "building" in Gropius's conception of the Bauhaus reinforced this central idea. "The Bauhaus strives to coordinate all creative effort, to achieve, in a new architecture, the *unification of all training in art and design*. The ultimate, if distant, goal of the Bauhaus is the *collective work of art* – the Building – in which no barriers exist between the structural and the decorative arts."²⁷ The highest diploma offered at the Bauhaus could only be attained by completing "the last and most important stage of Bauhaus education...the course in architecture with practical experience in the Research Department."²⁸ Clearly, the final goal that Gropius intended for his students was to enter into architectural work; indeed, one-fifth of those involved with the Bauhaus became architects.²⁹ It cannot be overstated that Gropius's architectural ideas constituted a formidable aspect of life at the Bauhaus.

Gropius's architectural notions are best understood in his Bauhaus building in Dessau (1926). This concrete and glass curtain structure was conceived as a multi-functional building to house the classrooms, studio, and student living quarters of the Bauhaus. Disdainful of architecture of the last centuries for its insistent ornamentation, conventions, concealment of structure and individualism, Gropius envisioned a new architecture. It seems his vision was realized in the Dessau Bauhaus: ornamentation entirely disappeared; conventional materials were replaced by the modern materials of glass, steel and concrete; structural elements were laid bare through a veil of glass; and individual conception was replaced by "active cooperation" with the "whole body of teachers and students" of the Bauhaus.³⁰ The concept of space, however, was the primary focus and the area of key concern. In summarizing "New Architecture," Gropius's term for his architectural philosophy, Gropius states:

The liberation of architecture from a welter of ornament, the emphasis on its structural functions, and the concentration on concise and economical solutions, represent the purely material side of that formalizing process on which the *practical* value of the New Architecture depends. The other, the aesthetic satisfaction of the human soul, is just as important as the material. . . . What is far more important than this structural economy and its functional emphasis is the intellectual achievement which has made possible a new spatial vision. For whereas building is merely a matter of methods and materials, architecture implies the mastery of space.³¹

In the latter part of the twentieth century, the architectural historian Sigfried Giedion produced an analysis of architecture *Space, Time and Architecture*, which has some resonance with Gropius's ideas. Giedion's proposition regarding the spatial constructions in modern

architecture revolves around the inclusion of the element of time to space constructions. It is through this notion that he traces the development of modern architecture. His discussion of spatial construction begins with the invention of perspective in the *quattrocentro*, noting that perspective is literally “clear-seeing.”³² Giedion elucidates this point by claiming that perspective is where: “the modern notion of individualism found its artistic counterpart. Every element in a perspective representation is related to the unique point of view of the individual spectator.”³³ The focus on the individual shifts and changes with the Cubist movement. Instead of seeing an object from one side, Cubists took on many vantage points at once; no longer was there a privileged viewpoint of the object, but rather many views of it and all at once.³⁴ For the first time since the invention of perspective, the conception of space was called into question through the consideration of the element of time. When the Cubists sought to see an object from many sides simultaneously, time became a factor in spatial construction. Giedion continues with this point of view on space-time construction with a short discourse on the Futurist movement in Italy. In the Futurists’ paintings and sculptures, motion is articulated by presenting the viewer with, for instance, repeating and overlapping legs of a figure in stride. Time is depicted by representing each step simultaneously. From these observations of both Cubism and Futurism, Giedion concludes: simultaneity and interpenetration both act to “enlarge optical vision”³⁵ allowing space-time to be depicted. It is towards this goal that modernist architects strive.

Giedion further explores this architectural objective by considering Gropius’s Bauhaus design, for which he had a strong affinity and respect. Giedion expanded on Gropius’s ideas by placing the building in the ideological context of his history of architecture. Though never implicitly involved with the school, he admired it and its leader Gropius and worked to perpetuate its goals.³⁶ It therefore seems logical that his analysis of the Dessau building would

coincide with Gropius's intentions. The glass curtain wall seems of particular importance to Giedion. Since it wraps seamlessly around the building, it produces the simultaneity called for in Giedion's time-space conception allowing for the interior and the exterior to be seen at once, to interpenetrate one another.³⁷

While not expressly stated, Giedion is concerned with transparency; the interpenetration of interior and exterior can only occur, in Giedion's paradigm, through a dematerialization of the boundary that separates them. Essential to his thinking is that the line of separation ought not to be apparent. Colin Rowe and Robert Slutzky in *Transparency: Literal and Phenomenal Part I* and *Part II*, problematizes Giedion's paradigm. These architectural theorists maintain that architecture should try to achieve not "literal transparency" (having to do with clear materials, such as glass) but "phenomenal transparency." They see "phenomenal transparency" as lucidity in organization. It is this type of legibility, elaborated by György Képes, toward which architects should strive: Képes wrote:

If one sees two or more figures overlapping one another, and each of them claims for itself the common overlapped part, then one is confronted with a contradiction of spatial dimensions. To resolve this contradiction one must assume the presence of a new optical quality. The figures are endowed with transparency: that is, they are able to interpenetrate without an optical destruction of each other. Transparency however implies more than an optical characteristic; it implies a broader spatial order. Transparency means a simultaneous perception of different spatial locations. Space not only recedes, but fluctuates in a continuous activity. The position of the transparent figures has equivocal meaning as one sees each figure now as the closer, now as the further one.³⁸

The “figures overlapping one another” is what Rowe and Slutzky define as “literal transparency.” Anthony Vidler explains that the problem of transparency is that it “quickly turns into obscurity (its apparent opposite) and reflectivity (its reversal).”³⁹ The use of materials like glass, which was so central to Gropius and admired by Giedion’s analysis of Gropius’s Bauhaus, confuses space rather than clarifying it. Rowe and Slutzky elucidate the reasons for the continual use of transparent materials in modern architecture:

[In painting] literal transparency. . .tends to be associated with the *tromp l’oeil* effect of a translucent object in a deep, naturalistic space; while phenomenal transparency seems to be found when a painter seeks the articulated presentation of frontally aligned objects in shallow, abstracted space. But, in considering architectural rather than pictorial transparencies, inevitable confusions arise. For, while painting can only imply the third dimension, architecture cannot suppress it.⁴⁰

Modern architects aim for “phenomenal transparency” but often cannot realize their goal and so resolve to use transparent materials. This is what Rowe and Slutzky thought that Gropius did with the Bauhaus. Gropius was occupied with “literal transparency.” He failed to account for the fluctuation in space necessary for “phenomenal transparency.” Indeed, one might regard this as Gropius’s weakness, however for Klee it provides a point of entrance into the world of architecture. This shifting in space required by Képes can be seen to play out in Klee’s art.

¹⁶ Herbert Bayer, Walter Gropius and Ise Gropius, ed., *Bauhaus* (Boston: Charles T. Bradford Company, 1959), p.12.

¹⁷ Bayer, Gropius and Gropius, p. 16.

¹⁸ Hilton Kramer, “At the Bauhaus: The Fate of art in ‘The Cathedral of Socialism,’” *The New Criterion*, Vol. 12, Issue 7 (March 1994), p. 6.

¹⁹ Magdalena Droste, *Bauhaus* (New York: Taschen, 2002), p. 120.

²⁰ Frank Whitford, *Bauhaus* (London: Thames and Hudson Ltd, 1985), pp. 184-185.

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- ²¹ Whitford, pp. 195-196.
- ²² Herbert Bayer and Peter Wehr, ed., *50 Years Bauhaus*, exh. cat. (London: Royal Academy of Arts, 1968), p. 15.
- ²³ Bayer, Gropius and Gropius, pp. 24-25.
- ²⁴ Bayer and Wehr, pp. 16-17.
- ²⁵ Droste, p.121.
- ²⁶ Bayer, Gropius and Gropius, pp. 20-21.
- ²⁷ Ibid, pp. 22-23.
- ²⁸ Ibid, pp. 24-27.
- ²⁹ Bayer and Wehr, p.309.
- ³⁰ Walter Gropius, *The New Architecture and the Bauhaus* (Cambridge: The M.I.T. Press, 1965), p. 96.
- ³¹ Ibid, p. 24.
- ³² Sigfried Giedion, *Space, Time and Architecture: the Growth of a New Tradition* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1959), p. 31.
- ³³ Ibid, p. 31.
- ³⁴ Ibid, p. 432.
- ³⁵ Ibid, p. 440.
- ³⁶ Eckhard Neumann, ed., *Bauhaus and Bauhaus People*, (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1993), p.84.
- ³⁷ Giedion, p. 489.
- ³⁸ Colin Rowe and Robert Slutzky, "Transparency: Literal and Phenomenal Part I," in Todd Gannon, ed., *The Light Construction Reader*, (New York: The Monacelli Press, Inc, 2002), p. 92
- ³⁹ Anthony Vidler, "Transparency," in Todd Gannon, ed., *The Light Construction Reader* (New York: The Monacelli Press, Inc, 2002), p. 269.
- ⁴⁰ Rowe and Slutzky, p. 95.

Klee's *Cathedral*: An Architectural Experiment

Before delving into the more complex architectural themes of Klee's art, it is necessary to trace the formation of Klee's ideas of architecture.⁴¹ Early in his career, Klee displayed some interest in the subject of architecture, producing simple pen-and-ink drawings of familiar cityscapes (Fig. 3 and 4). Soon he began to realize the potentiality of thinking architecturally. During his year in Italy (1901-1902), Klee took special note of architecture and developed an interest in essentialized architectonic forms. Concentrating mostly on observed structural relationships, he wrote in his journal that, "now, my immediate and at the same time highest goal will be to bring architectonic and poetic painting into a fusion, or at least to establish a harmony between them."⁴² In a later diary entry he clarified the term "architectonic" and analyzed its effect on his development as an artist:

When I learned to understand the monuments of architecture in Italy, I won an immediate illumination. . . .Its spatial organism has been the most salutary school for me; I mean this in a purely formal sense. . . .Because all the interrelations between their individual design elements are obviously calculable, works of architecture provide faster training for the stupid novice than pictures or "nature". . . .Our initial perplexity before nature is explained by our seeing at first the small outer branches and not penetrating to the main branches or the trunk. But once this is realized, one will perceive a repetition of the whole law even in the outermost leaf and turn it to good use.⁴³

This new understanding of the formal relationships between parts and their whole allowed Klee to start exploring space in his art. It was not until after his trip to Tunisia, however, that these spatial concerns took on a truly architectural character. After returning from his

sojourn on the northern African coast, where he “began the synthesis of urban architecture and pictorial architecture,” architectural thinking, in combination with architectural subjects, begins to appear more and more readily in Klee’s paintings.⁴⁴ This new-found fascination with a new form of art can be seen in Klee’s adoption of architecture as a literal subject for his art. For example, mosque-like structures dominate *Hammamet with its Mosque* (1914 Metropolitan Museum of Art New York) and *Red and White Domes* (1914 Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen Dusseldorf); modest structures are the subject of *Villa “R”* (1922 Kunstmuseum Basel) and *Rotating House* (1921 Thyssen-Bornemisza Collection Madrid); the city and urban edifices are addressed in *The Temple District of Pert* (1928 Sprengel Museum Hannover) and *Garden Settlement* (1922 Kunsthalle Mannheim).

Northern Village (1923 Sammlung Berggruen Berlin; Fig. 5) is yet another architecturally-themed painting. The subject of the watercolor is specifically a cityscape. Unlike the cityscapes of Klee’s early career, however, this one is not so easily understood. Instead of a horizontally-oriented skyline that punctuates an empty ground vertically, Klee presents the viewer with what, at first glance, resembles a patchwork of variously-colored watery rectangles. Soon, the viewer notices the smaller black rectangles as windows interspersed throughout the muted tones. They are scattered among the buildings and remind one of a densely built-up village. So packed is it with buildings at varying heights that they seem to sit atop one another, creating a dizzying patchwork effect. Space is a complicated element in the work; while the checkerboard composition of watercolor at first seems to insist on flatness, the varying degrees of opacity and transparency of the patches implies different depths. The blocks of color come into contact with each other and appear to bob in a weightless realm, sometimes sinking deep into the background and at other times floating to the foreground. A defined background and

foreground do not exist. It is as if Klee is playing with space, insisting on spatial relationships that simply cannot co-exist.

Space is explored by Klee in *Urban Perspective* (1928 Private Collection Germany; Fig. 6) not only with the quality of the paint, but also with color and line. Opacity and transparency in this watercolor confuses a reading of the space much in the same way as it did in *Northern Village*. It is hard for the viewer to tell which elements are the closest and which are the farthest. The color composition, combined with line, creates the same ambiguous effect. An emphatically articulated gradation of color functions to highlight the near-center of the composition. With yellows, mauves, and a grey-blue in the middle of the work, the viewer would generally perceive the center as being closer than the black-brown edges. Indeed, dark colors recede while light colors advance. The linear composition of this watercolor, constructed according to the principles of scientific perspective, produces numerous cubes. With an implied meeting of the orthogonal lines being at the very spot inhabited by the lightest colors, once again the effect creates spatial confusion. Klee is evidently using different painterly tools to investigate space, and continues to do so repeatedly in a number of works.

However, it is Klee's 1924 work *Cathedral* (1924 Phillips Collection Washington, D.C.; Fig. 7) -- in combination with a close examination of Klee's pedagogy -- that provides an exemplary paradigm for exploring Klee's inordinately close relationship to modern architecture and its concerns. As the title suggests, the watercolor and oil wash painting depicts a cathedral.⁴⁵ One can pick out a gallery with arches, a bay, vaulted ceilings, windows, and roof -- all created with thin, light lines. Both the interior and exterior of the cathedral are shown concurrently. Visible are a tower and its roof, while (as if acting on the principles of transparency and temporality articulated by Giedion), the interior coloristic effects of stained-glass windows also

present themselves at will. As the glass of the Dessau Bauhaus permits an interpenetration of the interior and the exterior, so too does Klee present his spectator with a conflation of time and space.

A certain affinity exists between Klee's, Gropius's and Giedeon's thinking. Support for this can be found in Klee's teachings, where he expresses, as Giedion did in *Space, Time and Architecture*, the need to move beyond central perspective: "It is only recently that we have been free to deviate from the rules [of perspective]. What do we gain by it? We gain the possibilities of spatio-plastic representation and movement that were limited under earlier methods."⁴⁶ Klee is thinking in the same historical-minded way typical of Giedion, realizing how the more recent artistic experiments of the cubists and futurists have allowed the artist/architect to move beyond perspective and begin probing the relationships between time and space.

Furthermore, the "phenomenal transparency" called for by Rowe and Slutzky is also at work in Klee's painting. In *Cathedral*, the brightness and thickness of the lace-like lines vacillates ever so subtly between the forefront and the background of the picture plane. The bolder, brighter lines appear to be closer to the front while the lighter, duller lines to be farther towards the back of the pictorial space. Yet the density of each line does not remain the same. For example, in one area of the painting a line may be bold but as it moves through the pictorial space it becomes duller and thinner (Fig. 8). It is impossible to decipher which line or form is closer and which is farther. The space is further complicated within the bottom left-hand corner where Klee utilizes orthogonal perspective (Fig. 9). Whereas the rest of the piece could be interpreted as flat (and almost purely decorative) the perspectival rendering of space forces the viewer to question the pictorial determinants of spatial arrangement to be able to decipher what precisely belongs to the foreground and what is part of the background. Without the emphasis

on perspective, it would be easy to assume that the color wash comprises the ground upon which the lines lie. Yet as a copper patch of color advances, the wash becomes part of the foreground. Foreground and background become interchangeable, if not abandoned altogether. Either way, there is a definite shifting in space throughout the work. With *Cathedral*, Klee presents the “simultaneous perception of different spatial locations” necessary for “phenomenal transparency” by playing with the viewer’s perception of the pictorial space.

In the consideration of Rowe and Slutzky’s paradigm,⁴⁷ Klee would appear to move beyond the “literal transparency” of Giedion and enter the field of “phenomenal transparency” as the painting *Cathedral* clearly demonstrates. The vagueness of the term “phenomenal transparency” however, raises other concerns that resonate in Klee’s painting. Rowe and Slutzky never offer a precise definition of their term “phenomenal transparency.” The closest they come to providing an explanation is in the second part of their discourse where they explain that “phenomenal transparency might be perceived when one plane is seen at no great distance behind another and tying in the same visual direction of the first.”⁴⁸ This insistence on planes is emphasized with their discussions of buildings designed by Le Corbusier in particular, specifically his villa at Garches. Le Corbusier accomplishes Képes’s goal of interpenetration “without optical destruction” through the play of glass and concrete planes. Between the parallel planar surfaces a tension is created that implies interpenetration without the translucent effects of the glass curtain of the Dessau Bauhaus.⁴⁹

If planes are required for “phenomenal transparency,” then the “phenomenal transparency” of *Cathedral* must be called into question. There are no parallel planes to be found in the painting that would correspond to this critical structural emphasis in Le Corbusier’s building. Instead, the way in which Klee conceives of planes can be surmised in his teachings

(Fig. 10). For the artist, planes are formed through the tension between passive lines. As discussed previously, the lines in *Cathedral* are, by contrast, in a subtle, but constant motion; they shift through the pictorial space and cannot, as a result, constitute planes.⁵⁰ The planes that can be found in *Cathedral* are neither parallel to each other nor to the picture plane; they are arranged perspectively. Here Klee's pedagogy is highly instructive (Fig. 11). The articulation of "perspective horizontal planes" and "perspective vertical planes" in *The Thinking Eye* describes specific configurations of shapes found in several places in the painting (Fig. 12). Although it might be possible to argue that these "planes in perspective" are parallel to one another (after all, they occur in bands), nonetheless the "planes in perspective" are formed by lines that seem to connect to one another, making it impossible to tell where one plane ends and the next begins. As a result, one cannot decipher which planes are "perspective *horizontal* planes" and which are "perspective *vertical* planes" [my emphasis]. Therefore, one cannot determine whether the planes are parallel to one another. Certainly, planes are depicted in *Cathedral*, but by looking at these forms in combination with Klee's pedagogy, it becomes clear that they function in a very different way than they do in Le Corbusier's buildings.

The question then arises: Does *Cathedral* work within the "phenomenal transparency" paradigm described by Rowe and Slutzky? The word "phenomenal" implies something that is known through the senses; it comes from a Greek word *phainesthai* meaning "to appear".⁵¹ From simply looking at *Cathedral*, Klee comes to reveal his phenomenal world: the image is imbued with the sensual effects of being in a cathedral. Arch and window shapes consume the picture; lines weave and overlap as do the many delicate features of a Gothic cathedral; a restrained luminosity recalls the effects of stained glass windows. Notwithstanding this reading,

Klee's pedagogy rejects the fascination with the phenomenal. As shown by his lectures, appearance is merely a consequence of creation, not the goal.

Form as phenomenon is a dangerous chimera. Form as movement, as an action, is a good thing, active form is good. Form as rest, as end, is bad. Passive, finished form is bad. Formation is good. Form is bad; form is the end, death. Formation is movement, act. Formation is life. . .and the sections must fall into a definite structure; with all their widening development, one must be able to encompass them at a single glance.⁵²

It seems then that Klee, by the example of *Cathedral*, rejects the pervading notions of spatial conception that concerned modern architects of his era. Instead of an interest in the "literal transparency" of Giedion or the "phenomenal transparency" of Rowe and Slutzky, Klee is concerned with spiritual (and not material) transparency. "Spirit" at its root means "breath" and implies a certain ineffable immateriality. Klee's sketch of "the three dimensions combined in [a] cube" bears a striking resemblance to line configurations found in *Cathedral* (Fig. 13 and 14). That the cube itself is omitted in the space renderings in *Cathedral* implies the immaterial nature of the work; never is the viewer presented with the appearance of a structure (the phenomenal) but rather the fundamental essence of a structure (the spiritual). Furthermore, in the introduction to the *Pedagogical Sketchbook*, Sibyl Moholy-Nagy explains that Klee worked in the spiritual realm through an exploration of the dynamic element.⁵³ A concern with dynamism certainly occupied modern architects; the need for shifting perspectives and other movements in space has already been discussed in some depth. However, such architectural thinking failed to enter into the spiritual realm, which was an equally viable quest in modern art,

and therefore modern architects could not reach their goals: “Pure dynamic action within a limited sphere is only possible on the spiritual plane.”⁵⁴

To go even further, it may be that Klee is rejecting architecture altogether, or at least he seems to be responding directly to the Bauhaus’s elevation of architecture as the ultimate goal of artistic training. He states:

Our means of investigating natural structures by means of cross-sections and longitudinal sections is no doubt applicable to architectural structures, but we should never find an example in which ground-plan and elevation were not fundamentally different. Which again means that there is no example of the purely dynamic in this field. Consequently we must situate architectural works in the purely static sphere, though there may be a certain inclination towards the dynamic. . .in the more ideal realms of art, such as painting, the greatest mobility of all is possible, an actual development from the static to the dynamic.⁵⁵

It is impossible to know if Klee is truly rejecting the supremacy of architecture at the Bauhaus; in the end, Klee’s personal attitude toward this hierarchy is of little consequence. What remains important, however, is the re-thinking of space and the artist’s engagement with spatial experiments. Through the examination of Sigfried Giedion’s *Space, Time and Architecture* and Colin Rowe’s and Robert Slutzky’s essays on “phenomenal transparency,” one discovers that alongside Klee’s pedagogy, works such as *Cathedral* and others point much more clearly to Klee’s investigation of space in architectural terms. At the very least, we can begin to recognize that Klee was working with the very same spatial goals as modern practicing architects and contemporary architectural theorists. What follows then is an exploration of Klee’s use of certain symbols in his paintings that constitute a kind of architectural experiment.

⁴¹ For a complete biography, see Appendix.

⁴² Paul Klee, *Diaries of Paul Klee* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1964), p. 125.

⁴³ Ibid, pp. 146-147.

⁴⁴ Ibid, p. 287.

⁴⁵ Klee's choice of the cathedral as a subject, which he depicts in several other Bauhaus paintings, requires some comment. The Bauhaus Manifesto (1919) was accompanied by Lyonel Feininger's woodcut of a cathedral, which acted to encapsulate the philosophy of the Bauhaus as a symbol of social unity and of a combination of painting, sculpture, and architecture. It would seem that Klee's choice in depicting a cathedral may be inspired by the Bauhaus's use of it as a symbol and points to his interest in architecture in terms of the Bauhaus.

⁴⁶ Paul Klee, *The Thinking Eye* (New York: George Wittenborn Inc, 1961), p. 152.

⁴⁷ The paradigm of "phenomenal transparency" introduced by Rowe and Slutzky is explained in *Transparency: Literal and Phenomenal Part I* and *Part II* and is discussed earlier.

⁴⁸ Rowe and Slutzky, p. 103.

⁴⁹ Ibid, pp. 96-97.

⁵⁰ Passive lines, as designated by Klee, cannot create the parallel planes needed for the "phenomenal transparency" as conceived by Rowe and Slutzky in their discussion of Le Corbusier.

⁵¹ *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2006, <http://dictionary.oed.com> (3 March 2006) defines "phenomenal" and "phenomenon" as such.

⁵² Klee, *The Thinking Eye*, p. 169.

⁵³ Paul Klee, *The Pedagogical Sketchbook* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1953), pp. 10-11.

⁵⁴ Klee, *The Thinking Eye*, p. 191.

⁵⁵ Ibid, p 187.

The Arrow, the “Blueprint,” and the Fish

Cathedral is but one of many paintings executed by Klee that touches upon issues of phenomenology. Yet phenomenology does not represent a full realization of Klee’s process. The analysis of *Cathedral* serves to establish the terms of Klee’s architectural thinking, namely the conflation of time and space through simultaneity and interpenetration *and* the fluctuation of space with the intent of realizing pure dynamism. However, since the task at hand is to gain an understanding of Klee’s architectural thinking beyond single works, the discussion will now turn to the arrow, “blueprint,” and fish symbols that appear time and time again in Klee’s Bauhaus paintings. By examining these works alongside a close reading of Klee’s writings, *The Thinking Eye* and *The Pedagogical Sketchbook*, an alternative understanding of what these symbols represent in terms of Klee’s engagement with the spatial concerns of modernist architects will come to light.⁵⁶

Because Klee is concerned not with forms but with “formation” it seems appropriate to re-assert how the symbols function. Klee’s idea about “formation” is that it begets form and thus “form may never be regarded as solution, result, end, but should be regarded as genesis, growth and essence.”⁵⁷ One can see this attitude expressed in his 1927 painting *Plant Seeds* (Norton Simon Museum of Art; Fig. 15). A vaporous black dot expands into a burnt orange and golden ground on which can be found several organic forms. Placed within the bottom three-fourths of the painting in a space evocative of primordial beginnings, these shapes consist of no more than thin ink lines. Most notable are the five forms that resemble inverted cones: the shapes are made of several straight lines that begin at a single point and radiate outwards to connect to a spiral at different points. Though these scattered forms bear little visual resemblance to plants or other vegetation, nearly identical images found in *The Thinking Eye* provide an explanation of their

possible meaning. In Klee's pedagogical notes, the forms are titled "synthesis of plant growth in cross section and longitudinal section" (Fig. 16).⁵⁸ The title of the painting suggests that Klee was interested in making visible the process of plant growth, but not in the specificity of the plants themselves. Instead of looking at the symbols as specific and concrete forms, it would be more revealing to see them as representations of Klee's investigations. They offer the essence of what's being currently explored by the artist and what preoccupies his mind. In effect, they function as heuristic devices.

The arrow is a common, recognizable symbol that is frequently present in the paintings that Klee produced during his Bauhaus years. It figures prominently in, among other paintings, *Affected Place* (1922 Zentrum Paul Klee), *Possibilities at Sea* (1932 Norton Simon Museum), and *Rose Wind* (1922 Zentrum Paul Klee). Moreover, the arrow is ubiquitous in Klee's pedagogy as both a subject for elucidation and elucidating a didactic tool.⁵⁹ It makes its first appearance in *The Pedagogical Sketchbook* as an activator (Fig. 17). Here, and repeated throughout the pedagogical writings, the arrow acts as energy that activates elements in the diagram. Klee explains the illustration as "passive lines which are the result of an activation of planes (line progression)."⁶⁰ Arrows are used to show this activation. They can be seen performing the same energy-infusing role in Klee's paintings. Entering the painting from above as if it were a heavenly ray of energy, the massive black arrow in *Affected Place* appears to set in motion the miniature world beneath it (Fig. 18). The forms below imply buildings, ships and even a little person (the summary legs and torso are evident though no head or arms are apparent) all slightly off-kilter to indicate activity. The tiny pair of legs is in mid-stride and the boat-like form to the right of the legs emits steam from a thin stack as it propels forward. These two gliding movements towards the right side of the picture are underscored by the other arrow

in the painting. Disguised as part of the micro-world, it points directly at the figure's back as if transmitting the energy from its larger companion arrow. Energy can also be classified as "stress," in that it contains forces that oppose one another. Indeed, in the summary of Klee's exploration of basic forms, the stresses that generate the forms are indicated by arrows (Fig. 19). The concentration of stress points and their directional arrangement as fixed by arrows is directly linked to the creation of rectilinear shapes. Alternatively, as seen in *Affected Place*, Klee's diagram of the watermill, part of his exploration of "the natural organism of movement as kinetic will and kinetic execution," shows the arrow as consolidating the forces of energy that create motion (Fig. 20).⁶¹ The arrow as activator is the representation of energy and also implies motion.

In Klee's pedagogy the arrow is more often than not the indicator of direction. This job is a matter of life and death with the spiral, for instance; if the arrow indicates the direction of movement as outwardly-directed, the spiral infers a living and growing process; if the arrow indicates the opposite direction, the spiral is shown to be expiring, waning in its ability to generate energy, and dying.⁶² This display of extremes, the life-and-death role prescribed to the arrow is born out pictorially in *Possibilities at Sea*, an encaustic and sand painting that Klee completed in 1932 while teaching at the Düsseldorf Academy (Fig. 21). Here, a sailboat-like structure of red and white lines floats on water (indicated by elongated blue rectangles and a brown squiggle) between the sun and the moon. As implied by the title of the work, the sailboat is provided with two possibilities of direction. The white arrow next to the structure points to the right edge of the picture representing the life-giving direction: onward. The weightier black arrow to the left of the structure, however, points downward toward the water. It indicates the direction of sinking and death. The sailboat, floating ever so precariously, is subject to both

arrows and their life-giving or life-ceasing directions simultaneously. The arrow emphatically specifies direction. Klee reinforces the arrow's defined role: "the symbolic arrow is direction with point and feathering combined as point-rudder."⁶³ Not only does Klee provide a material equivalency for the arrow as a point-rudder, but by doing so, he introduces yet another element: dimension. Klee explains:

"If we consider direction or movement, we obtain the following result:

1. Dimension: left-right, movement each way
2. Dimension: above-below, parallel movement
3. Dimension: front-back, movement and countermovement."⁶⁴

A schematic representation of this concept of dimension can be seen in *The Pedagogical Sketchbook*, where the front-back dimension is indicated by a double-sided arrow (Fig. 22).

Multi-dimensional movement is implied by the many arrows in yet another of Klee's works, his *Rose Wind* (Fig. 23). Pink and white brushstrokes dominate the painting in a dynamic representation of wind. The black arrows that appear on the tumultuous ground give direction to the wind, indicating multi-directional movement. To assert the relationship between multi-directionality and multi-dimensionality, the arrows appear in varying degrees of definition. One arrow has a clearly defined outline and is solid black while the rest are rendered with imprecise outlines and in shades of grey; it is as if some arrows are placed deeper in the picture plane than others, giving them a hazier, distant appearance. Klee uses the arrow in *Rose Wind* to represent depth. The arrow then is not just an energy-instilling activator that provides the means for motion but, it is also

the indicator of dimension through directional movement. With this dual use, the arrow becomes a tool for exploring the architectural problem of dynamism.

But dimension and dynamism are also concerns in the flat, planar realm of painting in which Klee worked. It would be too simplistic to claim that Klee was interested in architecture by virtue of the fact that he was experimenting with space and movement. Klee's interest in architecture extends to structure as well. Structure, to Klee, implies three-dimensional space and often comes about from overlapping and interpenetration.⁶⁵ His unique "blueprint" symbol encompasses his experiments with spatial constructions. In addition to the previously discussed *Cathedral*, this symbol tends to appear in architecturally-themed paintings, such as "*Florentine Residential District* (1926 Centre Pompidou), which is filled with stairs, façades and palazzi (Fig. 24 and 25). These paintings are replete with repeating, delicate line formations, which at times resemble such architectural units as windows or arches and evokes the very qualities of an architectural blueprint showing thin lines placed atop a non-descript ground. Klee also inscribes this "blueprint" symbol on single objects in his paintings that are pronouncedly non-architectural. In *Strong Dream* (1929 Private Collection USA; Fig. 26), a figure lies beneath a massive yellow moon and red circle, his head resting upon a pillow (or a rock). The blanket-like object pitched over him is decorated with the "blueprint." Similar patterning adorns the head-dress of the figure in the subtly-articulated *Arabian Bride* (1924 Norton Simon Museum; Fig. 27). It is evident that the "blueprint" is utilized on elements that provide a kind of structure: be it a tent-like blanket or vestment that envelops the body, or the semblance of a city plan with districts, single buildings, and neighborhoods. The use of the "blueprint" symbol in Klee's painting points to the symbol's function as an indicator of structure – a concept supported by Klee's pedagogical writings, even if obliquely.

The “blueprint” symbol does not surface as visibly and directly in Klee’s pedagogy as does the arrow. References to the “blueprint” symbol are fragmentary and scattered about his texts. Nonetheless, the paradigm can be fairly easily reconstructed based on some readily identifiable features. Klee’s structural characters are rooted in the repetitive element as seen in the band of line formations and diamond shapes found near the top of *“Florentine” Residential District* (Fig. 28). A group similar to the “blueprint” symbol is labeled in Klee’s summary of structural types as “formation of intermediate units by structural overlapping or interpenetration” (Fig. 29).⁶⁶ While this cluster is not exactly translated into any painting, its parts are common to the “blueprint” symbol. This is made evident in the sandy and orange-colored strip at the bottom right of *“Florentine” Residential District* (Fig. 30), whose title alone implies that the symbol is related to architecture and whose repeating formation, overlapping and interpenetration relate to the “blueprint” structure.

Time is also represented by this structural symbol in the same way that music, as an abstract form of expression, is determined by a temporal aspect. The musician in Klee relates rhythm to structure and uses musical concepts as analogies. In representing three- and four-part time, Klee creates illustrations that, if turned on their sides, could be read like a musical staff, or a band of the “blueprint” symbol (Fig. 31). This formulaic or “blueprint” principle is transposed onto the already coloristically rhythmic *“Florentine” Residential District*. Time, in terms of rhythm at least, is represented by the “blueprint” symbol.

The relationship between architectural concepts and the “blueprint” symbol is most emphatic, though it only appears briefly, and only in an analysis of a composition that was found in Klee’s pedagogical notes (and therefore included in *The Thinking Eye*; Fig. 32). In the lesson sketches, larger parts of the “blueprint” symbol are introduced and not limited to single bands

but, rather, incorporate several clusters that include architectural items features (windows, arches and stairs). Klee states that “the parts work together in a way that suggests the multidimensional simultaneity of architectonic elements.”⁶⁷ It is evident therefore that the “blueprint” symbol represents the essence of architectonic structure.

As previously suggested, Klee uses these symbols as heuristic devices aimed at investigating architectural concepts; the arrow explores dynamics within a space while the “blueprint” explores architectonic structure. Neither the arrow nor the “blueprint” symbol, however, investigates architectural concepts as a whole. Instead, Klee conducts this holistic experiment - one that includes all of these architectural concepts - with his fish symbol. Like the arrow and the “blueprint,” the fish appears time and again in Klee’s Bauhaus paintings. Klee’s fish are not illusionistically-rendered creatures covered in translucent scales, rather, they generally remain as fish-shaped outlines endowed with nothing more than simple eyes to give the form its identity as a fish symbol.

The fish relates most emphatically to the arrow. On one level, the fish’s head, like the arrow is pointed and its movement is always directional. Moving left and right, above and below, and front and back, the fish functions as an arrow that penetrates the picture-plane to indicate direction and dimension, as seen in the recent discussion of the arrows in *Rose Wind*. Its schematized tail – a hallmark of Klee’s rendering – takes on the appearance of an arrowhead, or in Klee’s terms, the “point-rudder.” It is almost as if an invisible arrow is pushing the fish from behind. The relationship between the arrow and the fish is prominently engaged in the work entitled, *Good Place for Fish* (Fig. 33). In this watercolor, three (or perhaps four) fish symbols are seen amongst several arrows; wave-like shapes and circular forms are set in a water-like gradated ground of blues and greens. One ichthyoidal symbol, the largest one, is only slightly

evocative of a fish, if only for its schematized vertebrate tail. Visually broken from the body of the fish with a black line and acting as the other point-rudders being aligned with the gradient lines, the tail is understood as both a rudder and an arrow activating right-left movement. A recognizable arrow emerging from the mouth of the fish further defines the fish's movement (this time as front-back, or perhaps, above-below). Aside from eliciting movement, the presence of the fish engages a perception of depth in the picture. Together, the arrow and the fish allow Klee to address and explore dimension and dynamics.

Unlike the arrow however, the fish symbol may also be an analytical device for analyzing structure in the same symbolic way carried out by the "blueprint" symbol. Klee's discussions of this property assert the notion of individual and "dividual" structures. Simply put, with "dividual" structures "parts can be taken away or added without their rhythmic character, which is based on repetition, being changed."⁶⁸ Individual structures, on the other hand, cannot be divided (often because these structures are living beings).⁶⁹ With this distinction in mind, the fish symbol provides a tool for looking at the relation between the individual and the "dividual."

To quote Klee:

. . .The fish seen as an individual, breaks down into head, body, tail, and fins. Seen dividentally, it breaks down into scales and the structure of the fins. The individual proportion is determined by the relation between [the head, body and fins] and cannot be essentially changed; in any case, nothing can be omitted. A few scales may be missing from the body, but we cannot do without the head, the eye, or any of the fins. The dividual structure of this fish is variable in so far as it matters much less whether it has 330 or 350 scales than whether it has a

head...But is the fish always an individual? No, not when it occurs in large numbers, not when 'it's teeming with fish,' as the saying goes.⁷⁰

Although in this explanation Klee's attention is focused primarily on organic structures, it is this author's contention that the fish be seen as an equally important discursive tool that can engage a paradigmatic and theoretical discussion that would apply to all structure. A case in point is the painting entitled *Aquarium* (1927 Private Collection Switzerland; Fig. 34). Here, inscribed on many of the fish symbols is the "blueprint," a decidedly clear symbol of architectonic structure. The rest of the fish engages yet another architectural concept: interpenetration. The outside and inside of the fish are simultaneously visible, revealing as if in an x-ray projection, the simple skeletal structure and general shape of the aqueous creature.

It is now possible to consider the implications of the fish as a symbol in Klee's paintings. As a heuristic device Klee used it to experiment with the notions of architecture that abounded in the Bauhaus and permeated every aspect of its teaching program. By combining the functions of the arrow and the "blueprint" symbols to explore dimension and movement the investigation of structure became central to Klee's thinking. Moreover, the fish may also provide Klee with a means to explore the spiritual realm, an interest harbored since his pre-war days and affiliation with Der Blaue Reiter. As had already been mentioned in the analysis of *Cathedral*, Klee's evolution at the Bauhaus may have been moving beyond "literal transparency" and "phenomenal transparency" toward the spiritual plane, where the goal of modern architects could be realized. Indeed the fish symbol may be Klee's way to move towards this spiritual world where pure and essentialized dynamism can exist unhampered, where "there are regions with different laws and new symbols, signifying freer movement and dynamic position. Water and atmosphere are transitional regions."⁷¹ By taking the form of a water-bound creature, the fish symbol comes to

define this transitional region. This is the space where architecture can come closest to the spiritual realm. Klee explains:

It seems very likely that there is no such thing as a purely dynamic architecture, and here we must attach importance to the slightest hint in that direction. . . Our means of investigating natural structures by means of cross-sections and longitudinal sections is no doubt applicable to architectonic structures, but we should never find an example in which ground-plan and elevation were not fundamentally different. Which again means that there is no example of the purely dynamic in this field. Consequently we must situate architectural works in the purely static sphere, though there may be a certain inclination towards the dynamic. At best we shall find an intermediate sphere somewhere between the static and the dynamic. In more ideal realms of art, such as painting, the greatest mobility of all is possible, an actual development from the static to the dynamic.⁷²

As Gropius had outlined in the Bauhaus manifesto, architecture was to become the embodiment of a dynamic (spiritual) sphere within the modern world, but all must first pass through a transitional, developmental period. Klee uses the aquatic reference then to assert that his paintings (at least those containing the fish symbol) are located in this transitional sphere. By working in the “ideal realms of art, such as painting” Klee makes clear that he has the ability to move fully into the spiritual world. By operating in the transitional zone, he could devote himself fully to an investigation of space in the same way as architects approach the subject. In other words, by limiting himself to the same sphere in which the theory of architecture functions, Klee was forcing himself to think like an architect. This became part of Klee’s investigatory spirit: to challenge himself by confronting a seemingly intractable separation of two traditionally

distinct genres of creative activity. As he said: “an artistic step is taken only when complication arises.”⁷³

Taken together and combined as part of a single problematic, the use of symbols, specifically of the arrow, the “blueprint” and the fish, became the tools that Klee used to explore architectural ideas. By limiting the freedom that the two-dimensional medium of painting allows for, Klee is able to use these symbols to experiment and work-through the same spatial problems that faced architects. In his concluding remarks to his class at the Bauhaus, Klee stated:

The picture has no particular purpose. It only has the purpose of making us happy. . . We want to see an achievement in our picture, a particular achievement. It should be something that preoccupies us, something we wish to see frequently and possess in the end. It is only then that we can know whether it makes us happy.⁷⁴

During Klee’s Bauhaus years, his preoccupation was architecture; the proliferation of the arrow, “blueprint,” and fish symbol are evidence of this lingering fixation. But after leaving the Bauhaus in 1931, the architectural symbols drift out of his paintings.⁷⁵ Indeed, there is a distinct shift in Klee’s production of art once he returns to Bern. Human-like figures begin to take center stage as a simplified, definitive, and freer style takes over. There are many reasons to account for such a change: Klee was forced to emigrate, his art was displayed in the Nazi’s *Degenerate Art*, he was without a stable income for the first time in twelve years, and he began to struggle with a debilitating disease, scleroderma. Perhaps though, in light of the argument made in this thesis, the shift occurred because Klee’s preoccupation with architecture had come to an end. He left the Bauhaus and so his architectural experiments came to a close. To go even further, the artist’s gradual desire to leave the Bauhaus that developed in his last years there and prompted

his move to Düsseldorf may have been the result of a waning interest in modern architectural ideas or, based on his remarks to his students, of a sense of achievement.

⁵⁶ *The Thinking Eye* and *The Pedagogical Sketchbook* were produced during Klee's tenure at the Bauhaus and therefore cannot offer insight to Klee's artistic process before or after his time at the school; it cannot be certain that Klee was working in the same way outside the Bauhaus. It is more appropriate that the investigative tool (*The Thinking Eye* and *The Pedagogical Sketchbook*) and its subject of investigation (the symbols found in Klee's paintings) come from the same source (the Bauhaus).

⁵⁷ Paul Klee, *The Thinking Eye* (New York: George Wittenborn Inc, 1961), p. 169.

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, p. 23.

⁵⁹ There are limited points where Klee discusses the arrow outright in his pedagogy. In *The Thinking Eye* (p. 403), the arrow is the subject of the lesson: "Cause, effect, and the figuration of dynamic forces. The organism of movement and the synthesis of differences with a view to producing a whole characterized by mobile calm and calm movement. The solution of endless movement." The arrow is also a topic in *The Pedagogical Sketchbook*, where it occupies most of section "IIII" (pages 54-61). However, the arrow is present throughout the pedagogy as an element in explanatory diagrams and it is this use of the arrow on which I shall focus.

⁶⁰ Paul Klee, *The Pedagogical Sketchbook* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1953), p. 19.

⁶¹ *Ibid*, pp. 27-31.

⁶² *Ibid*, p. 53.

⁶³ *Ibid*, p. 54.

⁶⁴ Klee, *The Thinking Eye*, p. 45.

⁶⁵ *Ibid*, p. 117.

⁶⁶ *Ibid*, p. 243.

⁶⁷ *Ibid*, p. 263.

⁶⁸ *Ibid*, p. 227.

⁶⁹ *Ibid*, p. 229.

⁷⁰ *Ibid*, p. 264.

⁷¹ Klee, *The Pedagogical Sketchbook*, p. 47.

⁷² Klee, *The Thinking Eye*, p. 187.

⁷³ *Ibid*, p. 454.

⁷⁴ *Ibid*, p. 454.

⁷⁵ Some of the symbols do appear in later works, but in a very different form. The fish, for instance, appears in *Picture Album* (1937 Philips Collection Washington, D.C.), but is larger, less defined, and has an entirely different function than in the Bauhaus paintings.

Klee in the World of Modern Art

Klee continues to remain an enigma in the early twentieth-century art world of Europe. Stylistically diverse, his paintings are not easily allied with his contemporaries' work. Ideologically, too, Klee hardly ever entirely embraces a single mode of thought. Although at times it seems that he was working within the same framework of ideas and theories that propelled modern art, he simply does not fit in with any of the directions pursued by his fellow artists. Notwithstanding this anomaly and given that one of the qualities of early twentieth-century modernism is its resistance to classification, then Klee most assuredly can be seen as one of modernism's most enigmatic exponents.

Klee's interest in architecture was shared with many of his contemporaries. One can find resemblances between Klee's marrying of the genres of painting and architecture and the ideas of the De Stijl group, Constructivism and Purism and Klee's interest in architecture. What is found in Klee (and in these movements) is an overall interest in a dialogue between painting (and sculpture) and architecture. Piet Mondrian's principles of Neo-plasticism organized a diverse group of Dutch painters and architects under the rubric of De Stijl; Theo van Doesburg, Bart van der Leek and Gerrit Rietveld were all members. This group called for a synthesis of architecture, painting, sculpture, and interior decoration. A subtle shifting in space through overlapping surfaces combined with a simplicity created by straight horizontal and vertical lines defined the aesthetic goal of De Stijl. Though not engaged in the same aesthetic of horizontals and verticals, Klee's interest in dynamism, as seen in the fluctuation of space in, for example, *Cathedral* and *Rose Wind*, links the thought of De Stijl with Klee's artistic processes.

Constructivist artists were likewise involved with dynamic concerns as were Klee and the De Stijl artists. Constructivist Naum Gabo proclaims the importance of time and space, which is

the very basis of dynamism, in the *Realistic Manifesto* (1920): “Space and time have been reborn for us today. Space and time are the only forms on which life is based, and they are the starting point from which art must be constructed.”⁷⁶ Vladimir Tatlin, Antoine Pevsner, and Alexander Rodchenko took up Gabo’s proclamation in their art, creating such works as *Monument to the Third International*. This building/sculpture was designed to be a constantly moving spiral and would have been (had it been built) a realization of time and space brought together in architecture/sculpture. Klee’s fish symbol allowed the artists to achieve this same goal in painting. Unlike the associative playfulness and primordial references of Klee’s symbols, Russian Constructivism was ideologically committed; its proponents were, for the most part, deeply involved in political revolution. The artists were first and foremost concerned with the socialization of art. Though the Bauhaus was similarly seen as a socializing project, aside from Gropius’s manifestational stance, the faculty’s personal political views, including Klee’s, are never stated outright. Nothing in Klee’s writing, lectures, or art would expose his political views. Like the Constructivists who were interested in consciousness-raising, Purism, too, through its journal *L’Esprit nouveau* saw this social reform through functionalism; art was meant to answer human needs. Its founders, painter Amédée Ozenfant and painter/architect Charles-Edouard Jeanneret (later to be known as Le Corbusier) regarded architecture in terms of efficient spatial organization. Architectural thinking, in its rationality and functionality, was central to Purism.

In contrast to Klee, the art of De Stijl, Constructivism, and Purism can be generally described as rationally articulated, demonstrably assertive. The works are generally large-scale, both in scope and format. Klee’s paintings are resolutely intimate, with a subtlety of expression containing cryptic, idiosyncratic, and refreshingly playful elements. The pictorial disparities

between Klee's conceptions and those of his contemporaries stem from a very personal world; indeed, for Klee the individual artist's experience, his private understanding of the world, was of key importance. Architecture is constitutive to this line of thinking because it functions on a philosophical level. In contradistinction to Klee, the artists of De Stijl, Constructivism and Purism formulated their investigations around pre-established theories. For them, their stated manifestos and self-perpetuating journals came first in creating art; their art fulfilled the group's pre-articulated aims. For Klee, however, theory could only ever take a secondary place in the production of art. He made this clear to his students: "I warned you against calculation, for theory after all only means arranging things that are present in feeling and plays only a secondary role in the creative process, namely the role of criticism."⁷⁷ Klee created out of an act of discovery, and was guided by intuition; there is no evidence of his having a predetermined theory about his art. Naturally, Klee's artistic thoughts coincided at times with his contemporaries' aesthetic orientations, but only briefly. Klee's resistance to the movements that surrounded him left him open to pursue experimentation freely, and he did not restrict himself to any one thought or technique. His experimentation with architecture, inspired directly by his involvement at the Bauhaus, is just one of the many investigations Klee was free to explore.

The question remains: Does an investigation into Klee's architectural experimentations at the Bauhaus contribute to an understanding of Klee's art during his years of teaching at the Bauhaus? The scholarship on Klee and the Bauhaus is extensive. There is a sufficient accounting of the work the artist produced while teaching, but a surprising paucity, with the exception of a few works, of a truly informative analysis about the interplay between these two activities. Will Grohmann's foundational work on the artist, titled simply *Paul Klee*, is one such study. In terms of the relationship between Klee and the Bauhaus itself, the discussion concerns

the general idea that because of Klee's teaching, evolved systematically and sustained remarkable growth as an artist. However, as scholar and critic, Grohmann separates entirely the artist's paintings from his teachings and avoids discussing the two in any relationship whatsoever one to another. One would assume from the mere title of Christian Geelhaar's book, *Paul Klee and the Bauhaus*, that his study would shed light on the dialogue between Klee's painting and the Bauhaus. Alas, the dialogue is scant, limited to mere resemblances between Klee's work and the work of others at the Bauhaus, particularly László Moholy-Nagy. Moreover, the relationship between Klee and his pedagogy is hardly touched upon in Geelhaar's book. Marcel Franciscono acknowledges this weakness in his broad-based, yet scholarly book, *Paul Klee: His Work and Thought*. He notes accurately that Klee's "pictures from the Bauhaus period have often been discussed, whereas the complex and absorbing content of his teaching and its relation to his work have lacked detailed study."⁷⁸ Franciscono devotes only a chapter to Klee and his pedagogical career. However, offers no insight on the relationship between the artist's paintings and pedagogy claiming that Klee's lecture notes do not "especially illuminate his individual pictures" and instead the author discusses the pedagogy separately as "the most subtle, elaborate, and ingenious body of precepts and analysis to come from an artist" in the twentieth century.⁷⁹ All in all then, it seems that while the scholarship on Klee as a whole is vast, only a limited amount has been devoted to understanding Klee's art in terms of the felicitous match between Klee's pedagogy, his paintings, *and* the Bauhaus atmosphere.

Although a likely place for exploring Klee's art in context would be to look at the works of his students, this avenue is left virtually untappable since there are no known direct students of his art.⁸⁰ His influence nonetheless was far-reaching, if indirect. Artists have naturally used Klee as an inspiration and critics have found him to be a source for artistic creation. Klee's early

graphic work is often cited as a source of the cartoon styles of Saul Steinberg and William Stieg.⁸¹ However, the experimentation with architectural concepts conducted by Klee at the Bauhaus through his paintings and pedagogy, which have been the focus of this thesis, has no tangible legacy. It seems doubtful that Klee's art and teaching would not have had some effect on his students. The Bauhaus was intended to produce designers and architects whose work would be utilized in industry. Klee's courses were meant to lay an artistic foundation for these future designers and architects; his objective as a master at the Bauhaus was to build an analytical mind and a skilled eye.⁸² By constantly engaging himself in artistic investigation, such as he did with his experimentation with architecture, Klee created a rich environment for such learning.

This thesis has presented an investigation that demonstrates that the Bauhaus affected Klee's thinking, both in his teaching and his creation of art. Although his work implies a certain intimacy, Klee was never a recluse, nor isolated in working methods. Instead, he used the arrow, "blueprint," and fish symbol as tools to engage with his contemporaries' architectural work at the Bauhaus. The arrow hints at the dynamism architects strive to achieve, the "blueprint" asserts the architectonic interests of the painter, and the fish combines the two, signaling a realm somewhere between painting and architecture, where Klee can conduct his architectural experiments.

Klee's predisposition for the measured practice basic to architecture had naturally been instilled in him through his earliest exposure to the abstract art form of music. Where measure, rhythm, and phrasing would be critical to the musician, so too Klee, the life-long violinist, would find a complementary world in the methodical approach to architecture that the Bauhaus put forth. Gropius wanted to resurrect architecture as an all-embracing art form, including music;

Klee and his emersion in pictorial symbols becomes the perfect exemplar of the paradigm sought by the Bauhaus.

⁷⁶ Quoted in: Willy Rotzler, *Constructive Concepts: A History of Constructive Art from Cubism to the Present* (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, Inc., 1989), p. 46.

⁷⁷ Paul Klee, *The Thinking Eye* (New York: George Wittenborn Inc, 1961), p. 295.

⁷⁸ Marcel Franciscono, *Paul Klee: His Work and Thought* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991), p. 10.

⁷⁹ Ibid, p. 244.

⁸⁰ Klee did have a distinct impact on others at the Bauhaus. Josef Alber's glass painting workshop was marked by a Klee aesthetic, as was the textiles that came out of the weaving workshop.

⁸¹ Arthur Danto, *Encounters and Reflections: Art in the Historical Present* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), p. 82.

⁸² Franciscono, p. 244-258.

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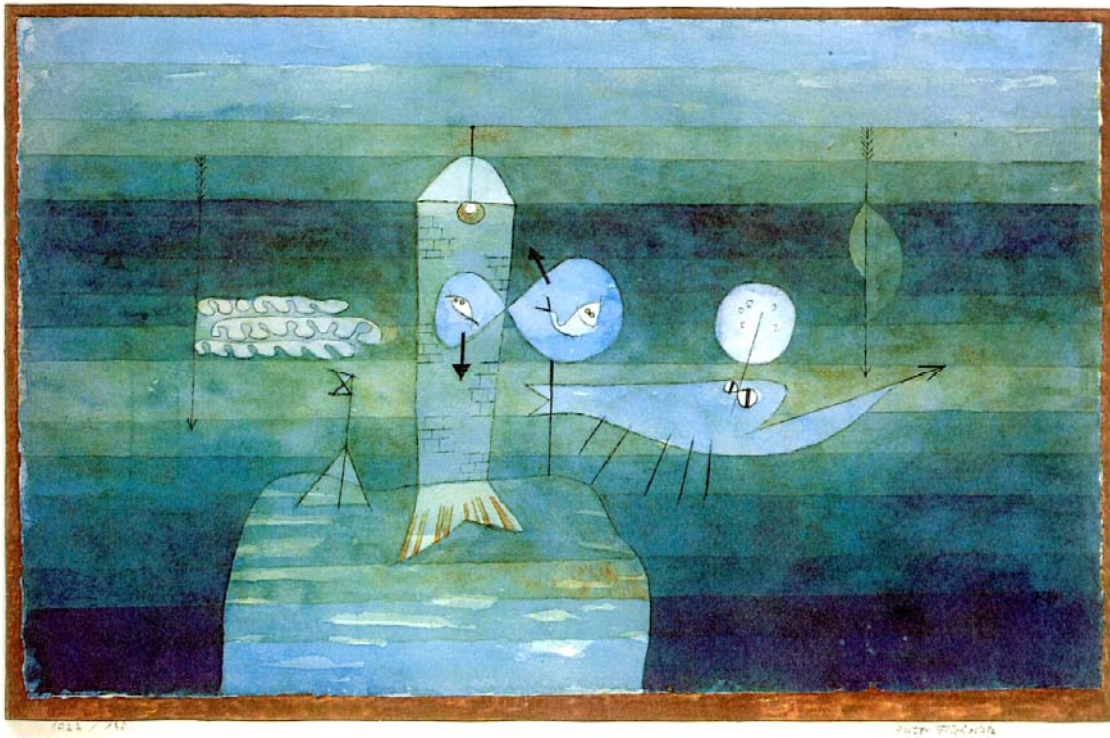


Figure 1.

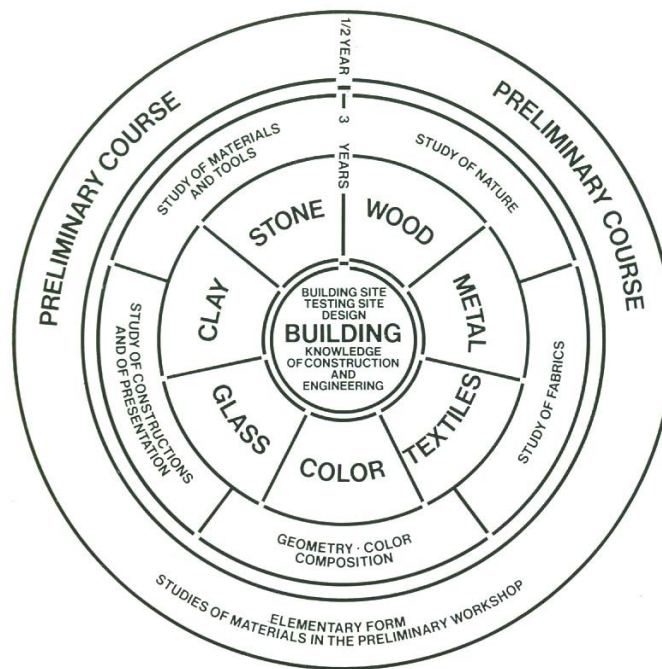


Figure 2.



Figure 3.



Figure 4.



Figure 5.

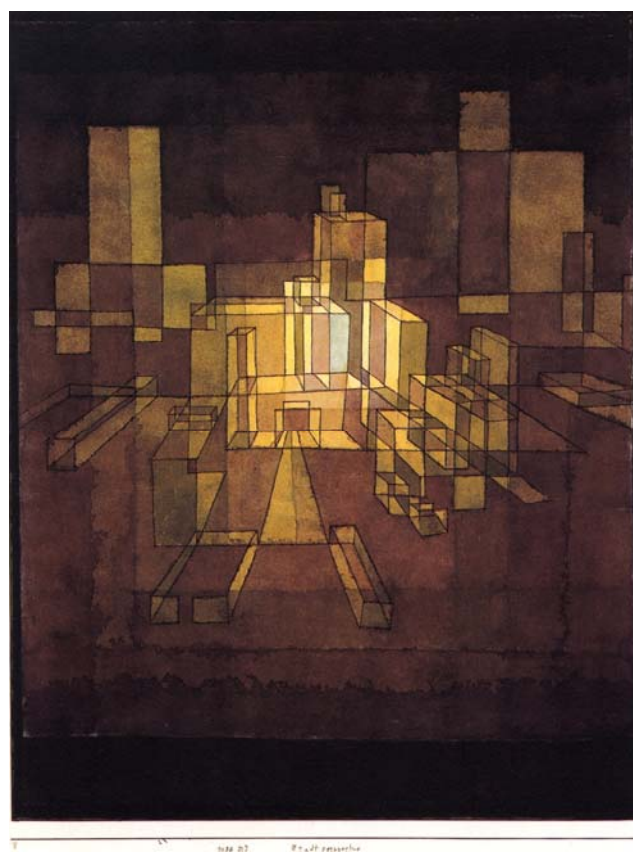


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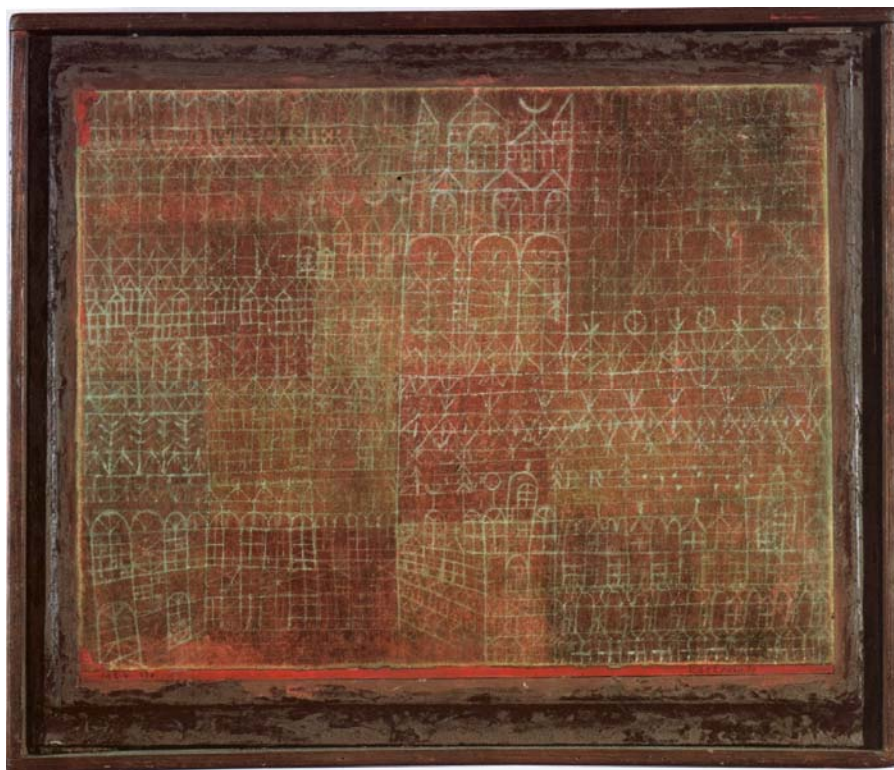


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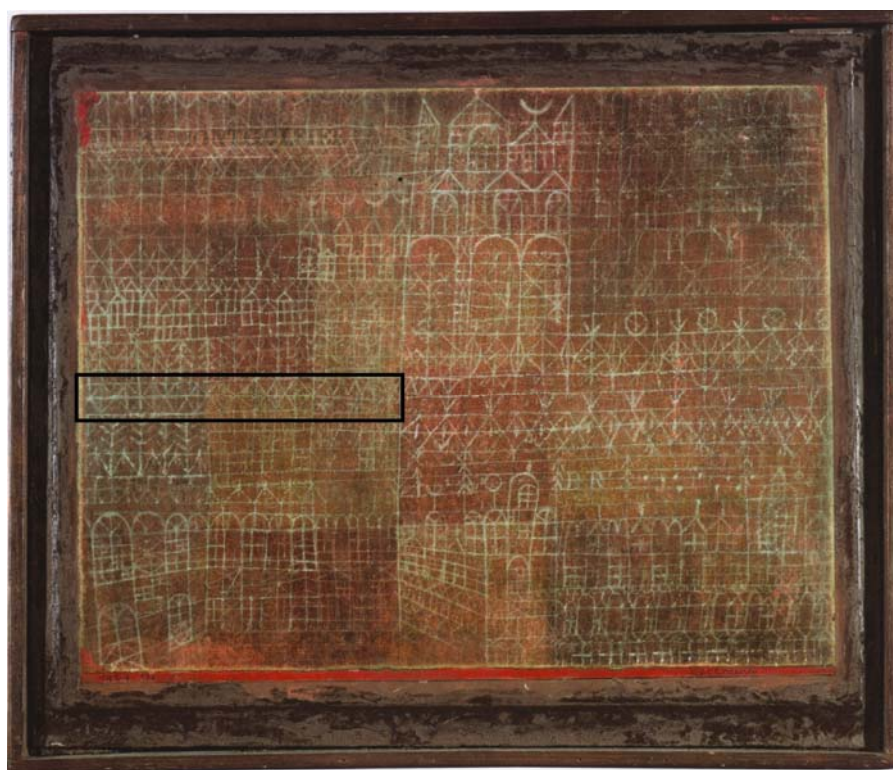


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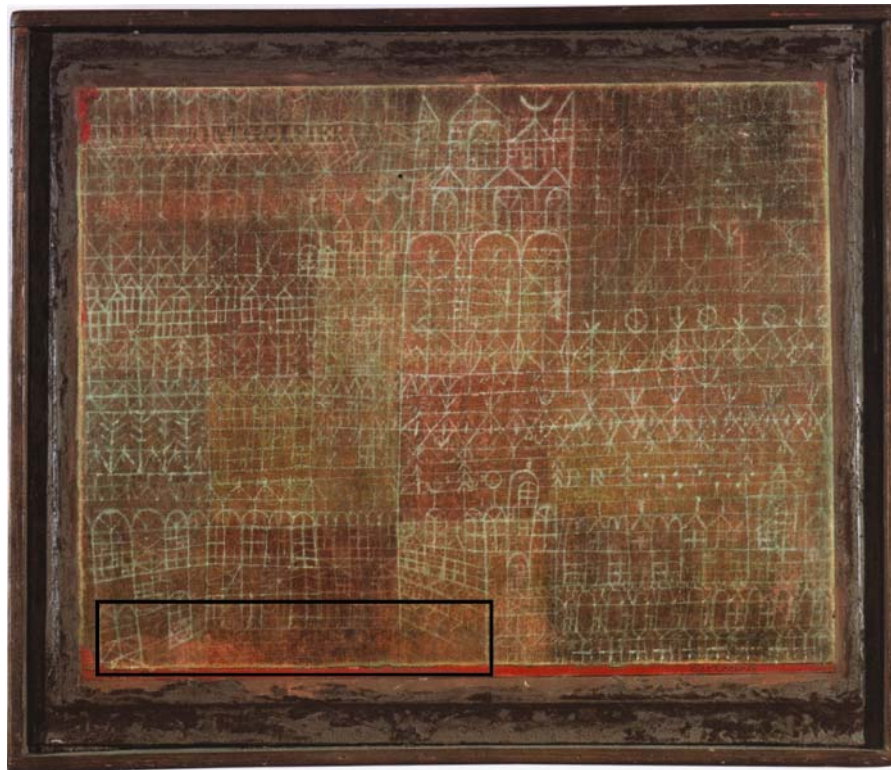


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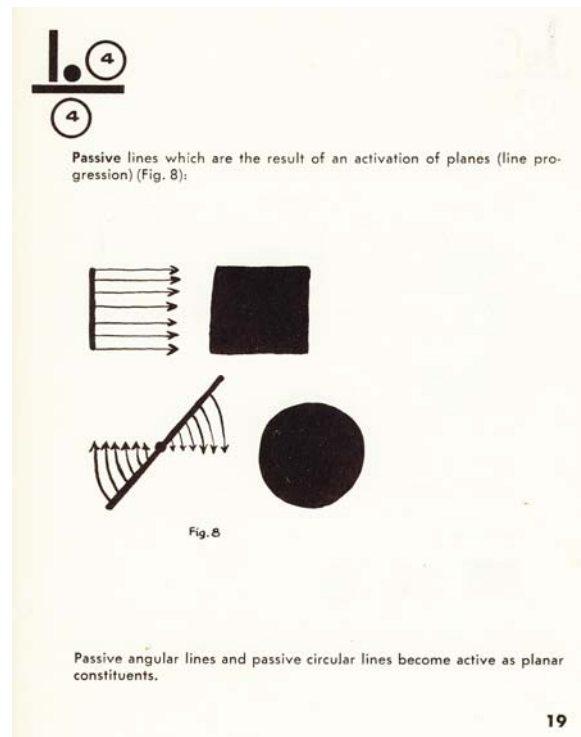


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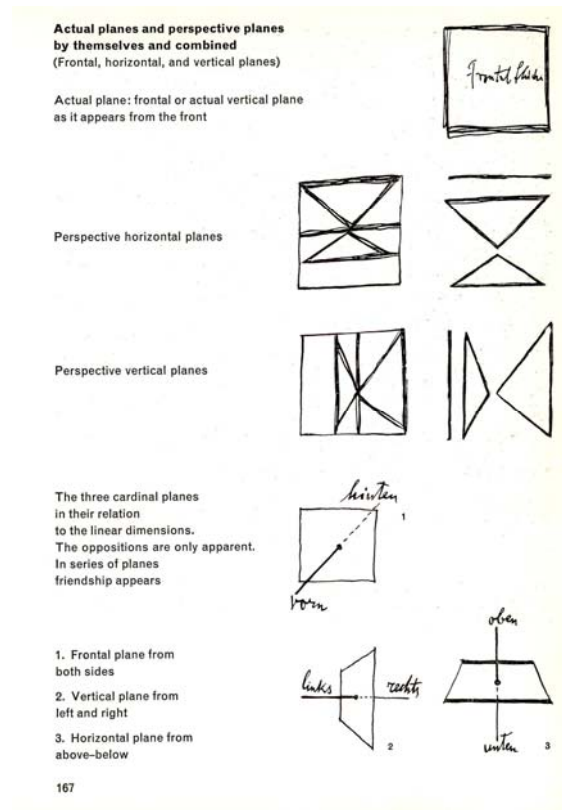


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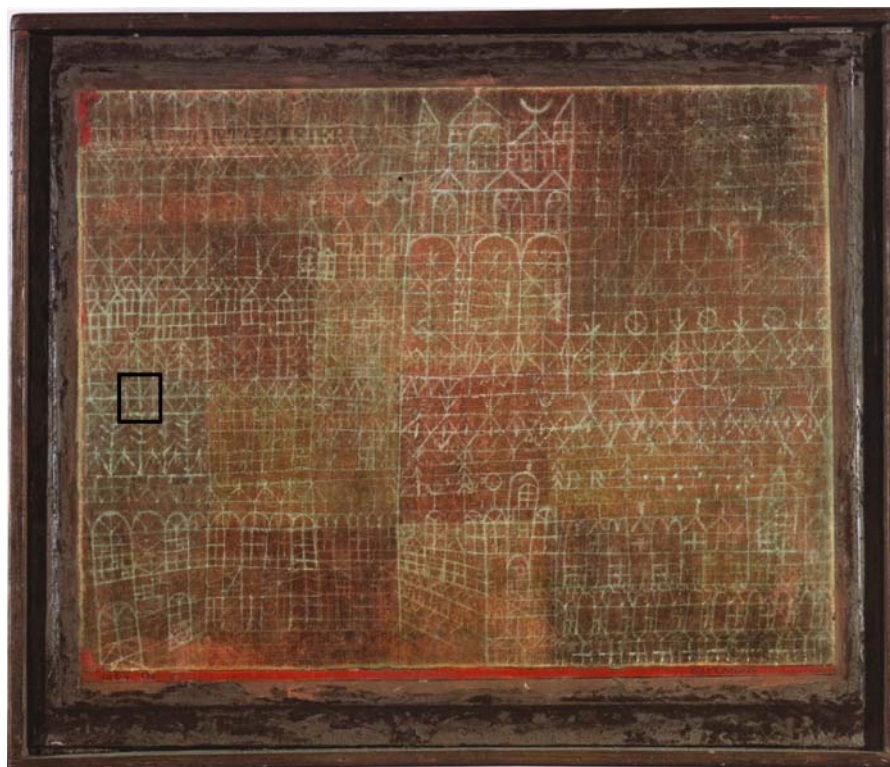


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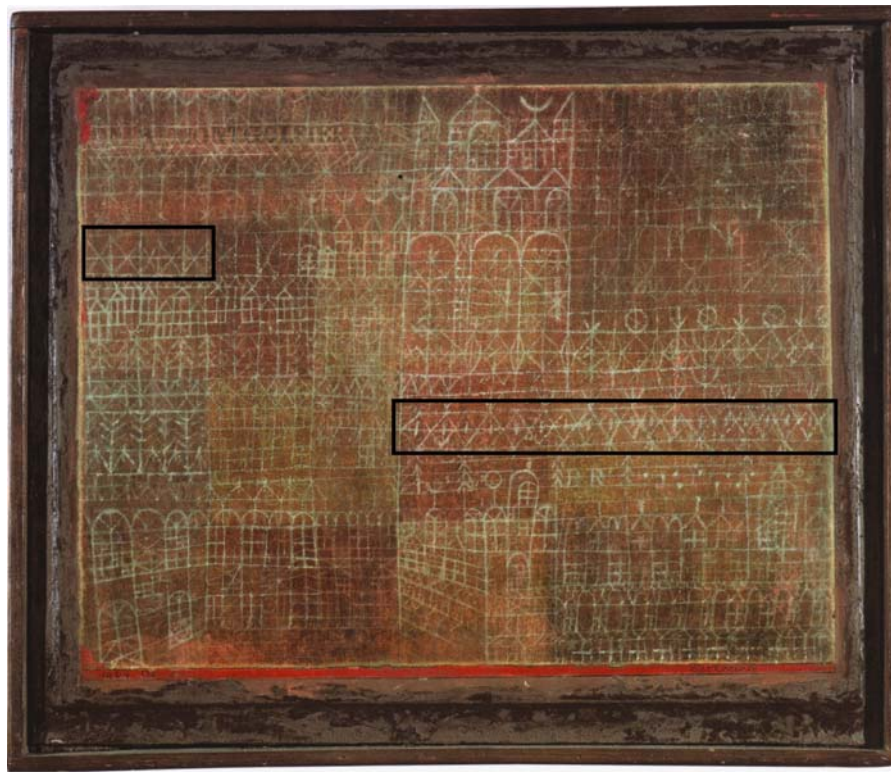


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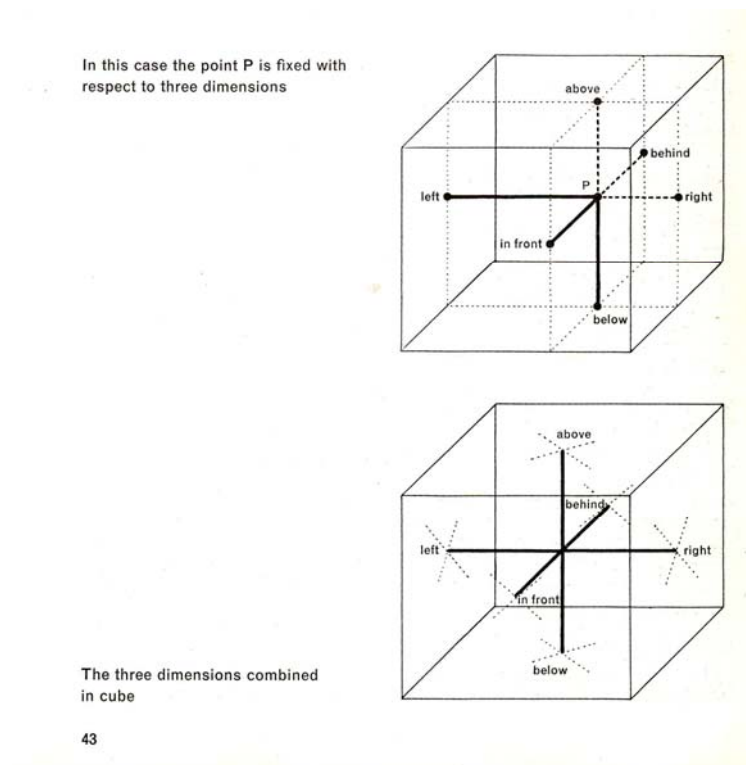


Figure 14.

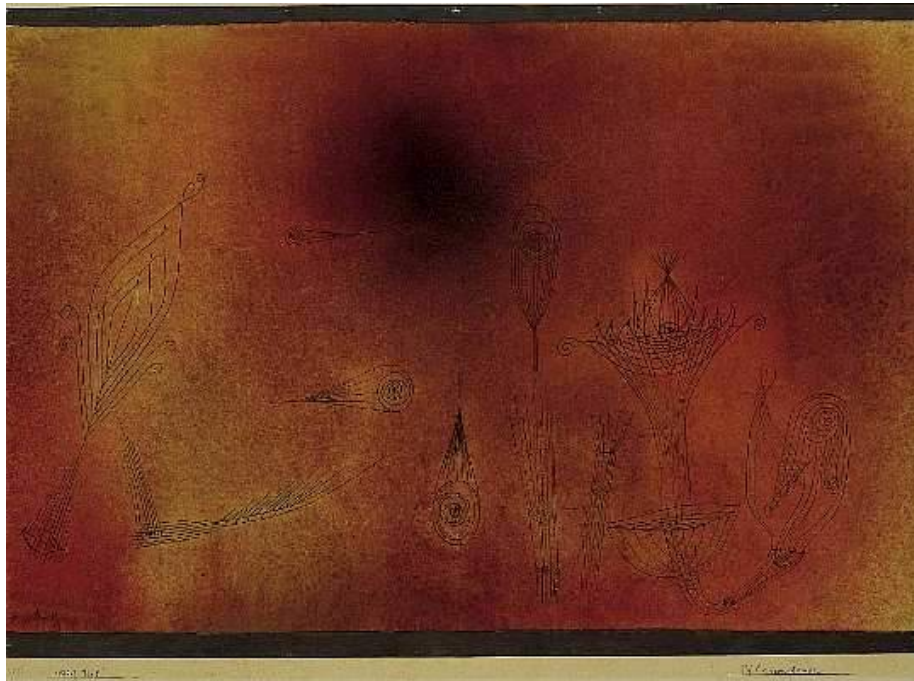


Figure 15.

Plants: growing in partial cross section [1].
 Growing in longitudinal section [2].
 Plant growth in longitudinal section is partial and centripetally oriented.¹
 Might be called 'feminine' [3].
 Plant growth in diametrical section is wholly and centrifugally oriented.
 Might be called masculine [4].
 Syntheses of plant growth in cross section and longitudinal section [5, 6, 7].

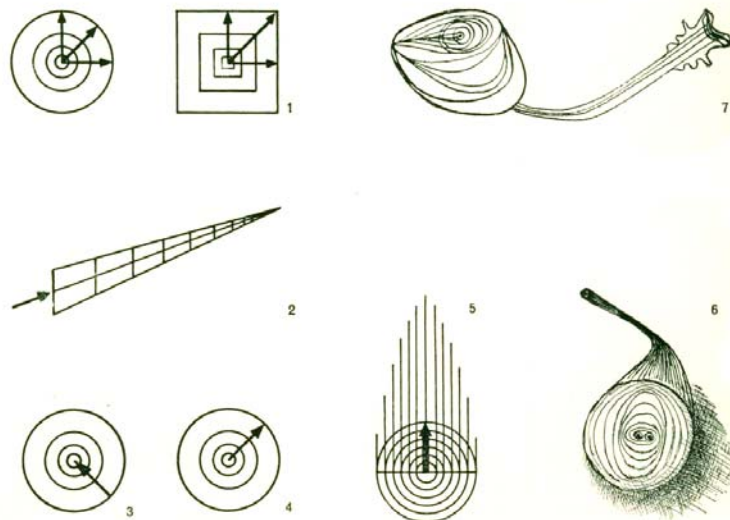


Figure 16.



Passive lines which are the result of an activation of planes (line progression) (Fig. 8):

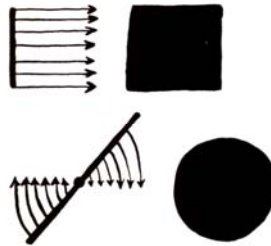


Fig. 8

Passive angular lines and passive circular lines become active as planar constituents.

19

Figure 17.

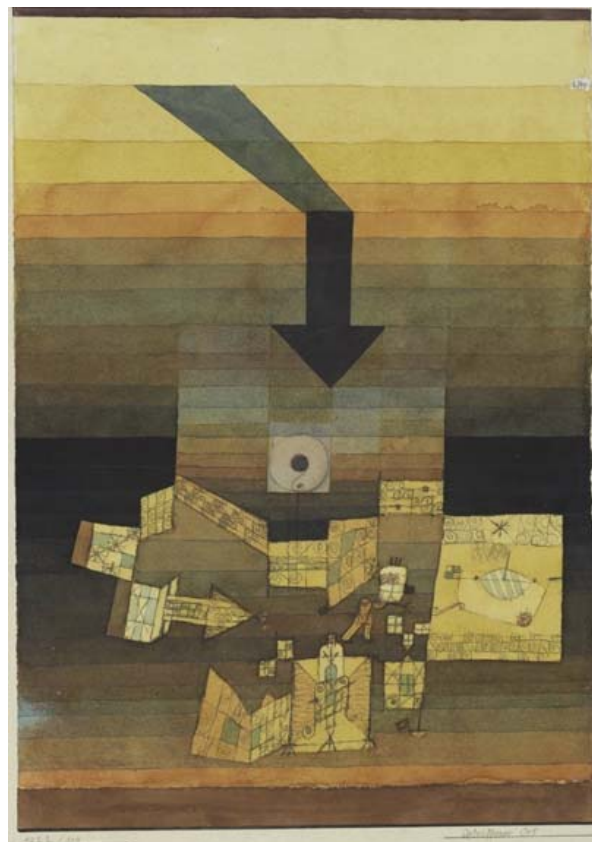


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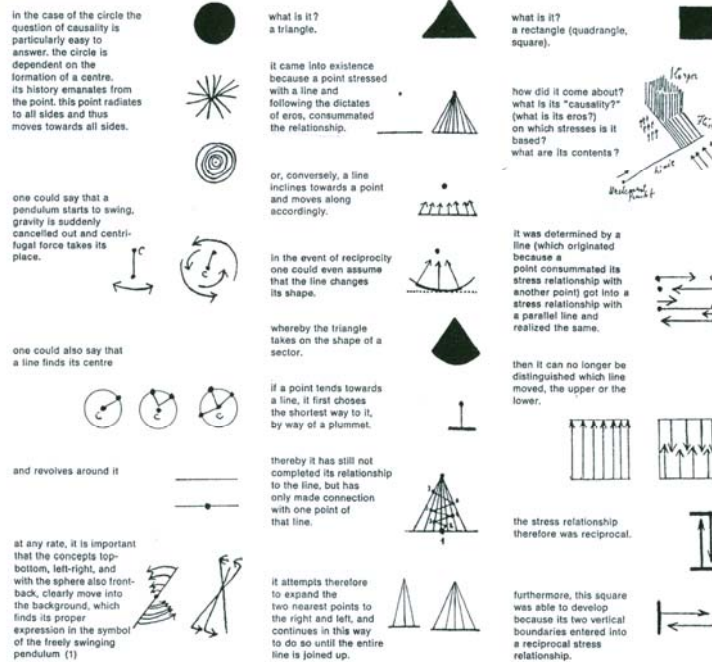
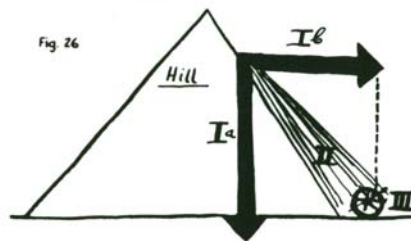


Figure 19.



b) The Watermill (Fig. 26):



- I Two energies: a) gravity, b) the obstructing mountain (active).
- II Diagonal force to energies 1a and 1b: The Waterfall (medial).
- III The turning wheel (passive).

Figure 20.



Figure 21.

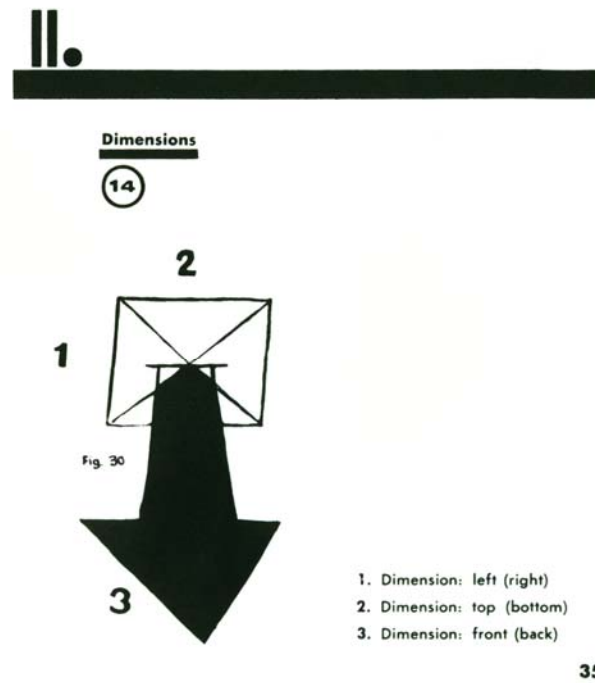


Figure 22.



Figure 23.

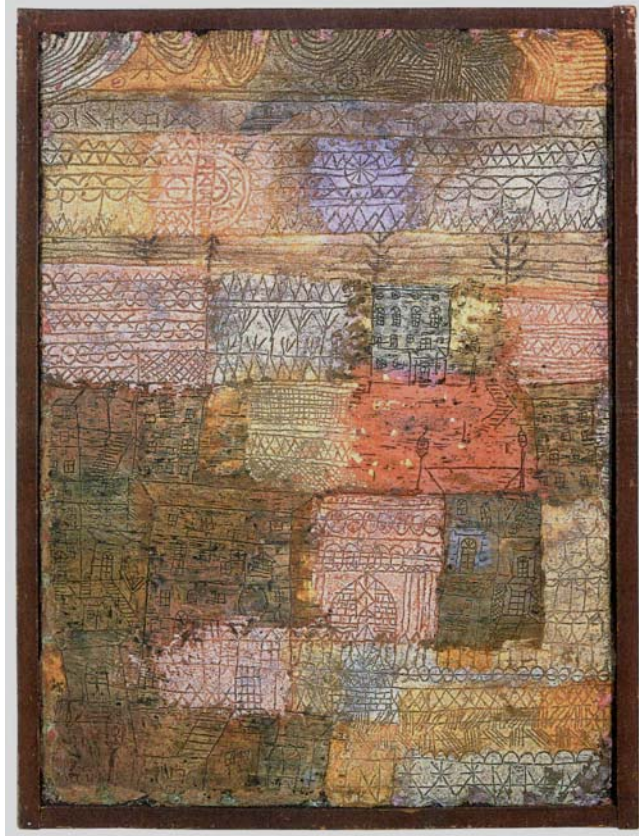


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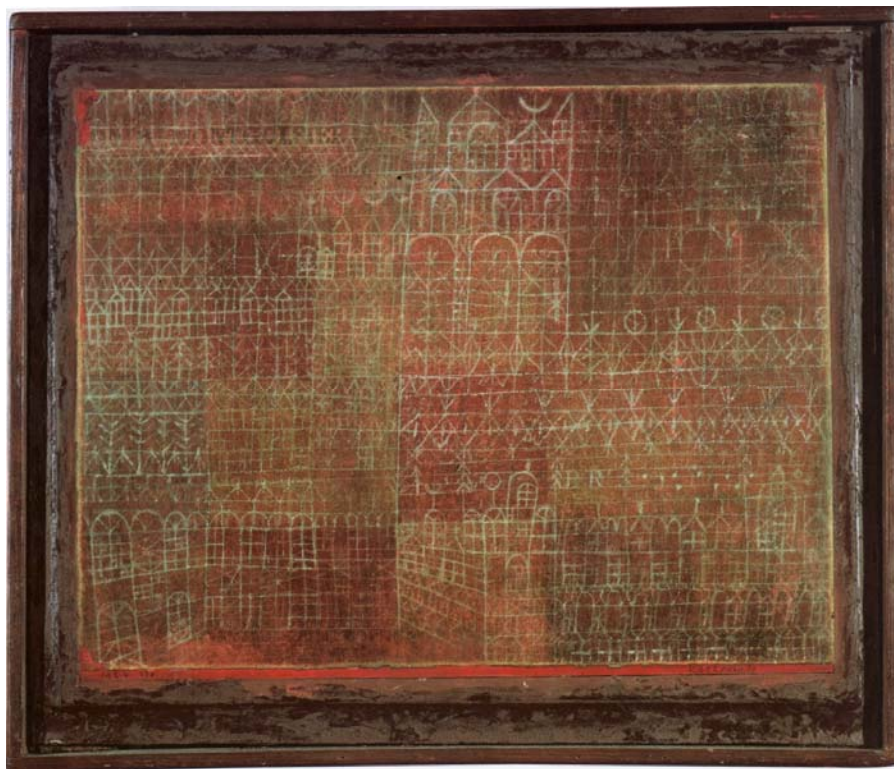


Figure 25.

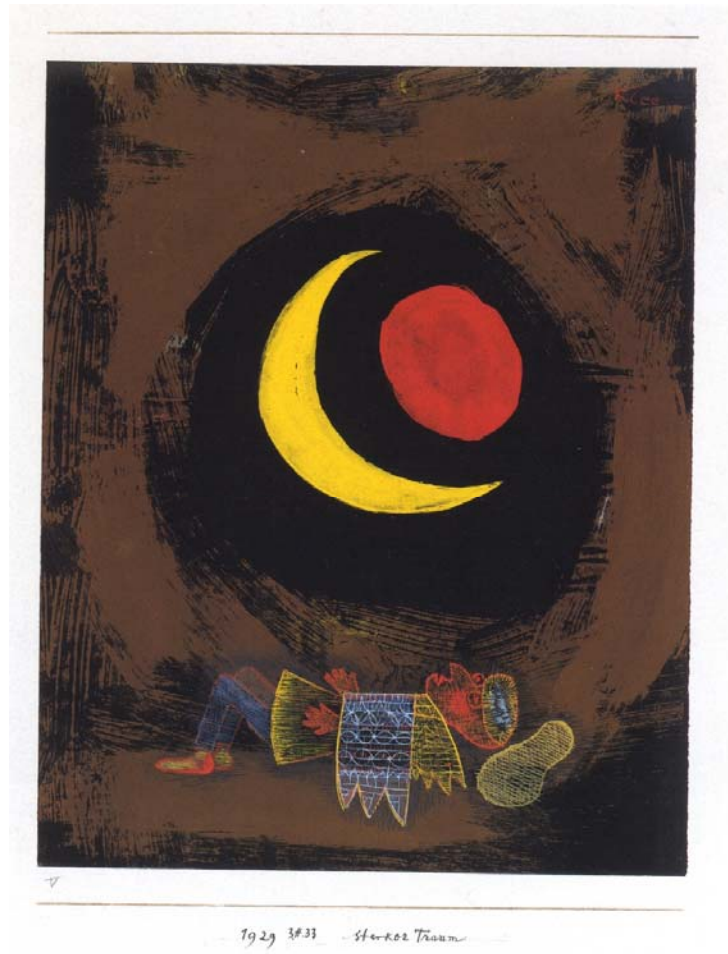


Figure 26.



Figure 27.



Figure 28.



Figure 29.

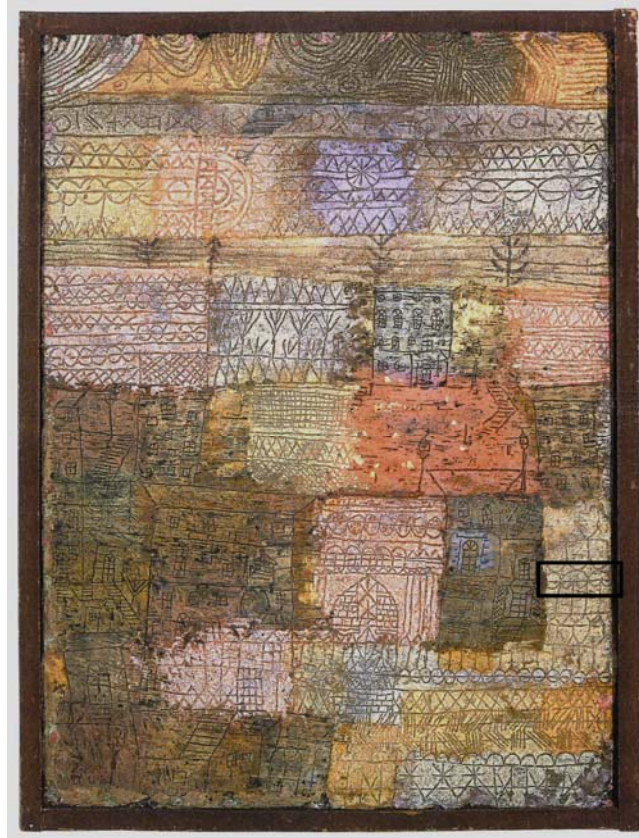


Figure 30.

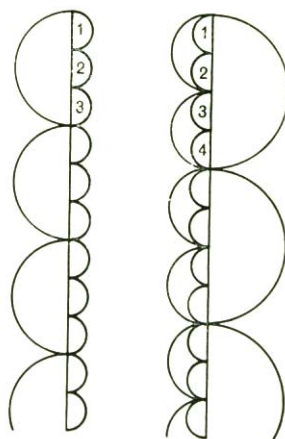


Figure 31.

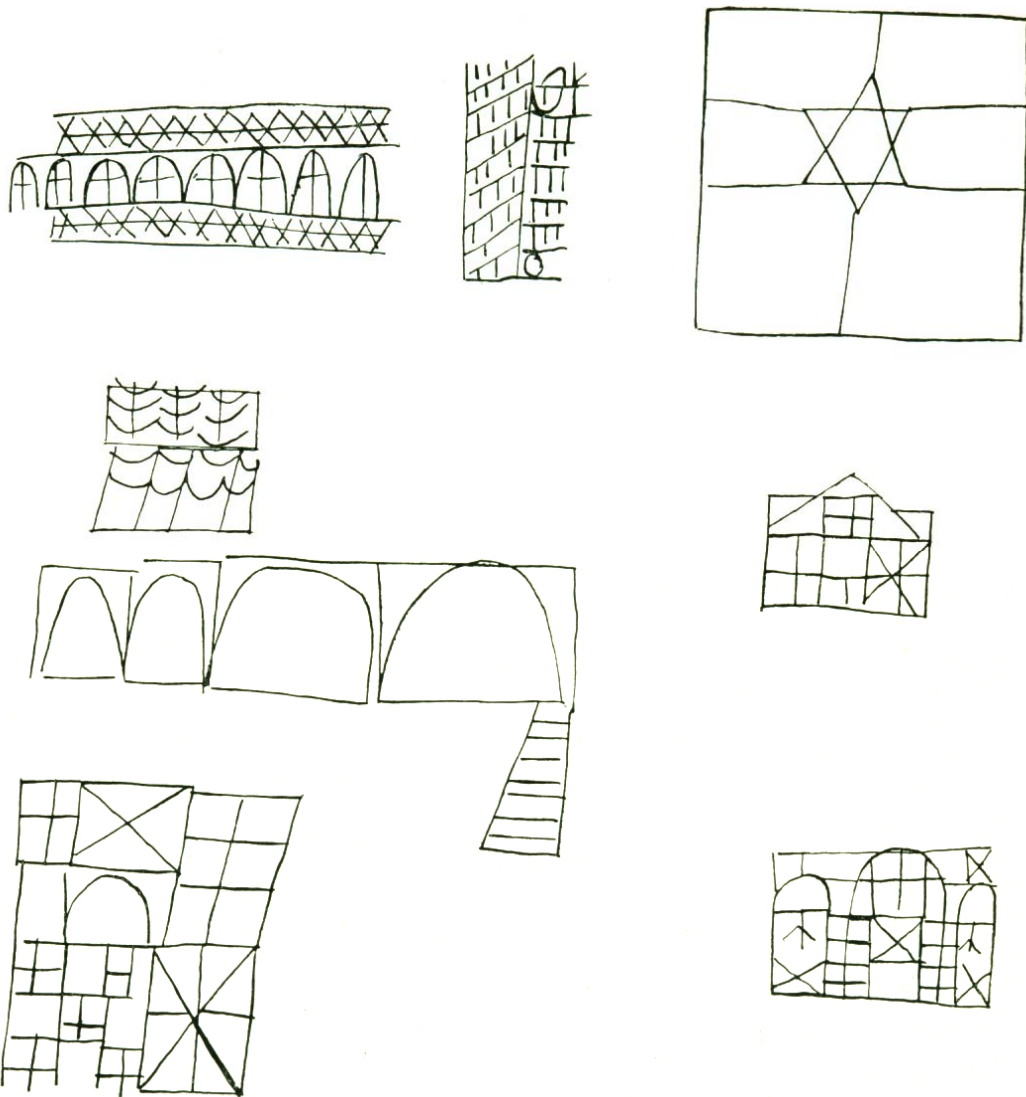


Figure 32.

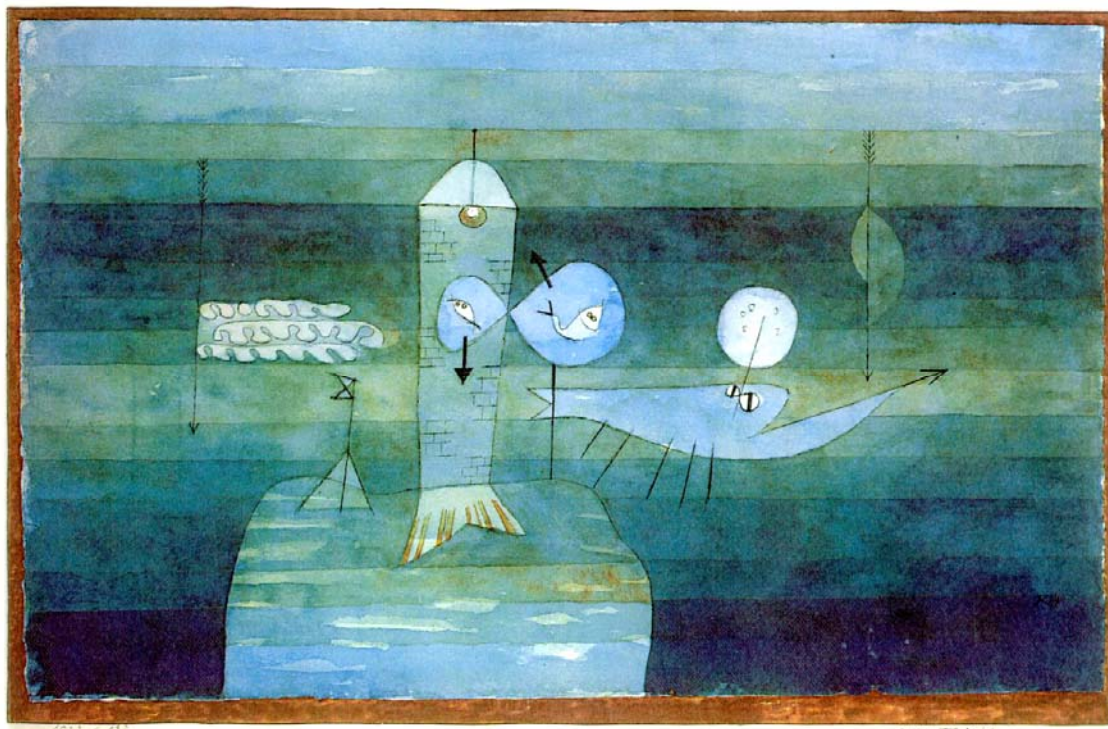


Figure 33.



Figure 34.

Appendix

Born in 1879 near Bern, Switzerland, Klee's interest in art was overshadowed early on by his involvement with music; he was an accomplished violinist. This musical interest and skill had a great impact on Klee's thinking as an artist. (Music, after all, is an abstract form of expression that involves an understanding of symbols and composition.) In 1889 Klee began studying art at the Munich Academy. It was there, in 1900, that he first met Wassily Kandinsky, an artist whose presence would be felt through much of Klee's life, first as a member of the Blaue Reiter circle of artists and then at the Bauhaus. Klee left the academy in 1900 and spent the next year in Italy. This was the first of many trips that aided in the development of Klee's thinking about art. In Italy, Klee came to the conclusion that art was subject to the same laws as nature and that, like nature, art was an organism.⁸³

After his return from Italy, Klee joined Der Blaue Reiter. Apart from the friendships established with the artists in this group, Klee's decision to join the association was initially motivated out of a desire to become more involved with the international art scene. However, Klee shared in many of the group's ideas and it is through his interaction with this circle of artists "that Klee finally succeeded in integrating those formal and theoretical concepts of his earlier years (39)." Klee found the Blaue Reiter's fascination with the primitive as the "purest manifestation of artistic creativity" especially useful (54). His work from this period and long afterwards would be marked by a child-like approach. It was the Blaue Reiter that helped Klee to develop his thinking about symbols as tools for artistic expression. Blaue Reiter member Wassily Kandinsky, for instance, states in his *Concerning the Spiritual* (1911) that "the coming treatment and change of the organic form aims at uncovering the *inner* sound. The organic form here no longer serves as direct object but is only an element of the divine language which needs

human expression because it is directed from man to man (68).” While Klee did not share Kandinsky’s spiritual optimism, he did learn from Kandinsky’s thinking the importance of semi-abstract signs for expression. The eponymous arrows seen throughout Klee’s paintings capture this quality; they symbolize invisible forces in much of Klee’s paintings. Apart from contributing ideas to Klee’s artistic development, the Blaue Reiter members also provided Klee with important friendships, especially with Franz Marc, Wassily Kandinsky, August Macke, and Louis Moilliet. The latter two artists traveled with Klee to Tunisia. Though this trip is perhaps most mentioned in terms of Klee’s use of colors (after all it was here that the artist exclaimed “color and I are one”), Tunisia also set Klee on the path of thinking about architecture (94).

Through the war, Klee managed to produce some minor, mostly graphic, works. He wrote about art in his diaries and correspondences. At the end of the war, Klee was in the position to disseminate his artistic ideas. In 1918, he completed the first draft of *Creative Credo*. This text, published in 1920, contains Klee’s first systematic study of graphic representation and its symbolic relationship to creation. Klee’s predilection for teaching led him to seek a position at the Stuttgart Academy, but he was rejected despite great support from students and artist Oskar Schlemmer. Soon after, however, Klee was invited to the Bauhaus. The ideals of the Bauhaus about combining the fine arts and craft arts into cooperative projects (with architecture as the ultimate end) seemed to suit the artist: he wrote to a friend in 1919 that “individualist art is. . .capitalist luxury” and that a new kind of art “could enter the crafts and produce great results. For there would no longer be academies, only art schools for craftsmen.”⁸⁴

Klee taught at the school for ten years, from 1921 to 1931. Initially, he was appointed master of the book-binding workshop; when it was dissolved in 1922, he took over the stained-glass workshop. Despite these official appointments, Klee could most often be found in the

weaving workshop, where Klee explored the interconnectivity between painting and weaving. For Klee, the line in painting is analogous to the thread in weaving. The line moves through an area much in the same way as a thread weaves through loom. Klee was insistent upon making this connection between the fine art of painting and the functional, decorative art produced by a mechanical loom. The artist would often use coarse ground such as burlap to paint upon and, when he used traditional canvas, he rarely prepared it. Klee allowed the pigment to soak into the ground, permitting the weave of the canvas or burlap to show though, creating a textile aesthetic. The grid-like composition of textiles was especially inspiring to Klee. Paintings such as *Pictorial Architecture Red, Yellow, Blue* (1923 Zentrum Paul Klee Bern) very closely resemble textiles that came out of the Bauhaus' weaving workshop and provide an interesting hinge between Klee's architectural thinking and interest in the weaving workshop.

Klee's greatest influence, however, was in his basic design course. From all accounts, Klee's classroom was orderly and rational. Each of his lectures was prepared with great detail (this is one reason why his pedagogy is available to us and so useful), followed by exercises that challenged the students to creatively apply the theories taught.⁸⁵ Klee defined his method thus: "when I came to teach I was obliged to make precisely clear to myself what I did for the most part unconsciously (91)." As a painter, Klee's lessons naturally involved a great deal of painting and drawing. Paradoxically, this was the art the Bauhaus officially regarded as antithetical to their philosophy. Klee used painting and drawing to aid in the understanding of basic principles, noting the special affinity between a picture and a building: A painting he stated, 'is built up piece by piece, no different from a house.'⁸⁶

Amidst the changing climate of the Bauhaus (Walter Gropius left the school in 1928, Hannes Meyer acted as the director of the school from 1928 to 1930 and Mies van der Rohe

became the director in 1930), Klee continued to teach. The shift of personnel in the Bauhaus environment left many of the masters disaffected. Klee himself took several trips during this time (Ravenna in 1926, Brittany in 1928, Egypt in 1928/1929, in addition to several excursions to Sicily) and returned feeling no longer able to produce art and to teach according to the original intents of the Bauhaus. He soon began negotiations for a position at Düsseldorf Academy. There he taught a class on free painting from 1930 until he was dismissed in 1933, due to the rising ideological pressures that increasingly affected educational institutions at that time.⁸⁷ He returned to Bern and died there in 1940.

⁸³ Beeke Sell Tower, *Klee and Kandinsky in Munich and at the Bauhaus* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press), p. 14. Most of the details of Klee's biography in the appendix were confirmed by this work. Tower's book was instrumental as a reference while writing and any quotations, unless otherwise noted are Tower's words. Henceforth, it will not be footnoted because many of the facts can be found in other sources as well.

⁸⁴ Frank Whitford, *Bauhaus* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1984), p. 91.

⁸⁵ Klee, *The Thinking Eye*, p. 33.

⁸⁶ Whitford, p. 91-94.

⁸⁷ Klee, *The Thinking Eye*, pp. 37-40

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