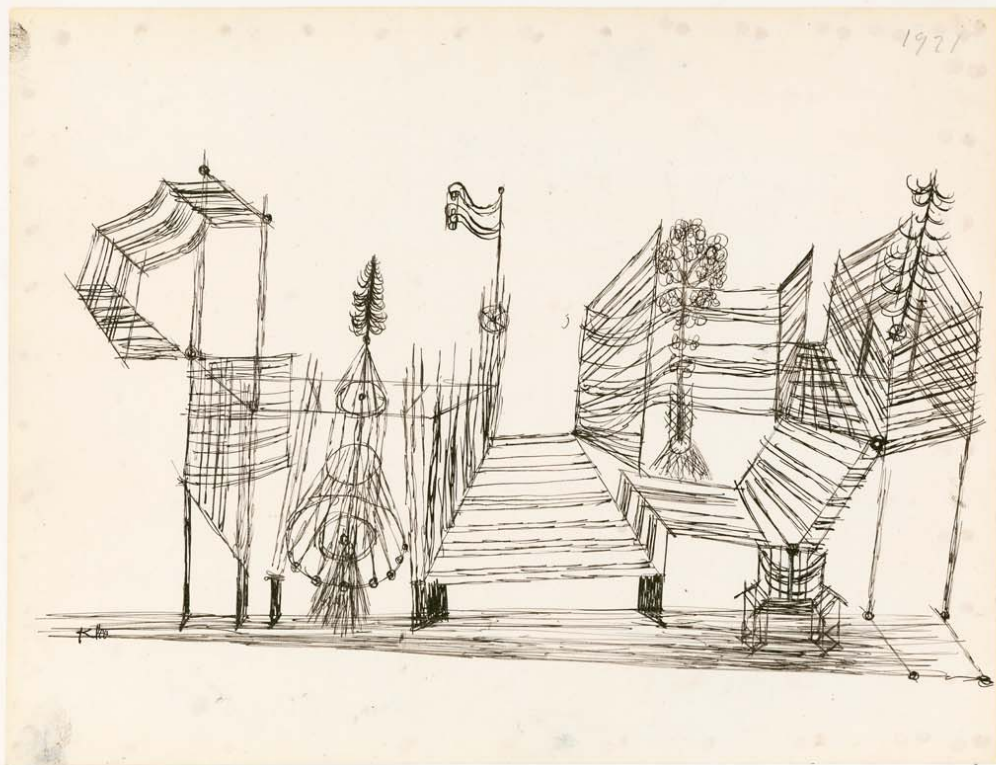


# LE CLAIRE

SEIT 1982

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1921/148 Heim-garten anlage

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PAUL KLEE

1879 Münchenbuchsee - Muralto 1940

*Heimgartenanlage* [Home Garden Plot / Allotment Estate]

Pen and black ink on paper, incised, laid down with dabs of glue on the artist's mount; 1921.

Signed: *Klee* lower left, dated upper right: 1921; on the artist's mount inscribed with the work number: 1921/148 and title: *Heimgartenanlage*.

Image: 220 x 287 mm; artist's mount: 340 x 395 mm

PROVENANCE: Pierre Janlet, Brussels (by 1999) – Patrick Derom Gallery, Brussels (by 2002) – Private collection, Brussels – Acquired from the above by the previous owner in 2016

LITERATURE: Will Grohmann, *Paul Klee. Handzeichnungen 1921-1930*, Berlin 1934, p. 17, no. 24 – Paul-Klee-Stiftung and Kunstmuseum Bern (eds.), *Catalogue Raisonné Paul Klee*, III, Bern 1999, p. 333, no. 2739, repr.

EXHIBITIONS: *Paul Klee*, Nationalgalerie, Kronprinzenpalais, Berlin 1923 – *Paul Klee*, Palais des Beaux-Arts, Brussels 1957, no. 30 b – *Panorama de l'œuvre de Paul Klee*, Palais des Beaux-Arts, Charleroi 1980, no. 18 – *Works on Paper of the XIXth and XXth Centuries*, Patrick Derom Gallery, Brussels 2002, p. 52, repr. p. 53 – *Mompò: L'Espagne Claire*, Instituto Cervantes, Paris 2015

This sheet depicts an architectonic construction on different levels, a kind of pilework structure with planked walkways and platforms, fencing, stanchions, a sun blind and a fluttering flag. Inside this man-made 'allotment garden' are three small trees. They are supported by scaffolding and protected by fences which at the same time pen them in and almost crush them. Within the construction the plants have a good supply of air and light but their roots are far away from the soil, the source of energy and the element through which they draw nourishment. That Klee was concerned with such subjects as the conditions for growth of plants is evidenced by the pen-and-ink drawing *Pflanzen / Erd- und Luftreich* [Plants / Realms of Soil and Air] (1920/205) and the watercolour over oil-transfer drawing of the same title (1921/77) [Fig. 1]. Here, he depicts a group of healthy plants on a mound which is shown in cross-section. The roots of the plants have forced themselves far down into the soil, and the plants grow tall in the air and flourish in the light of the blue sky.

The present drawing is closely related to Klee's similarly titled *Heimgarten-Anlage* [Allotment Estate], a watercolour over oil-transfer drawing on paper [Fig. 2]. The usual progression from preparatory drawing to finished painting is found only in relatively small numbers in Klee's work. However, he used preliminary pen and ink drawings to prepare his oil-transfer drawings. They were produced using a tracing technique. He would coat a thin sheet of paper with black oil paint and when the paint was sufficiently dry, place the coated sheet face-down over a blank 'host' sheet. He would then either draw directly on the back of the painted sheet using an etching needle, or place a pen-and-ink drawing over the painted sheet and trace its contours through with the needle – as in the case of the present drawing. The pressure of the needle on the back of the painted sheet transferred the contours of the drawing to the blank sheet beneath. Close examination of the outlines of the present drawing shows the marks of the needle used in the tracing. The smudged fingerprints in black oil

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paint in the two left corners inadvertently show where Klee placed his hand during the working process. In his own hand-written 'oeuvre catalogue' Klee assigns the oil-transfer drawing with watercolour version the number 1921/74 – a lower number than the number assigned to the present drawing, which is numbered 1921/148. This demonstrates that his 'oeuvre catalogue' is not entirely chronological. In the present pen-and-ink drawing he has clearly laid out the design and subject in preparation for the oil-transfer drawing with watercolour.

Klee was invited to join the teaching staff of the Staatliches Bauhaus in Weimar by Walter Gropius in October 1920. He was offered a post as *Meister* and began work in the spring of 1921. The year was to mark a turning point in his drawing practice. It was also the year in which he executed the present drawing. Key factors in his move towards abstraction had been his encounter with Cubism, his contact with the artists of 'Der Blaue Reiter' and his growing friendship with Kandinsky.

The depiction of gardens and parks, the study of the processes of growth in plants and the analysis of the principles of plant morphology all play an important role in Klee's *oeuvre*. As a boy, he found a quiet source of inspiration in his parents' garden in Obstberg, a residential district of Bern with garden-city character overlooking the steep banks of the river Aare. Later, he would collect plants on his travels, nurture them in specially made frames and small boxes and even preserve and categorise specimens in herbaria. However, the naturalistic representation of their visual appearance soon failed to satisfy him. In an essay written in 1918 and published two years later in a slim anthology of writings titled *Schöpferische Konfession* he laid out his artistic credo: 'Art does not reproduce the visible; rather, it makes visible.'<sup>1</sup> In order to capture the inner essence of existing things, he turned to a highly personal form of abstraction in which the representational was pared down to the symbolic or a system of signs.

The intensive study of nature nevertheless remained a basic tenet of his artistic approach. He concluded: 'For the artist, dialogue with nature remains a *conditio sine qua non* [an essential prerequisite]. The artist is a human being, himself nature, and a part of nature within nature itself.'<sup>2</sup> His study of nature was a prerequisite for the creation of imaginary flora and fauna. His gardens – magical and fantastic, exuding a strange, sometimes uncanny exoticism – are the products of an exceptional artistic imagination. A vast botanical panopticon emerges from the sheer variety of his pictorial vocabulary and the rich poetry and provocative ambiguity of his titles.

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<sup>1</sup> Cited after Will Grohmann, *Paul Klee*, Stuttgart 1954, p. 160.

<sup>2</sup> Paul Klee, 'Wege des Naturstudiums', in *Staatliches Bauhaus Weimar 1919-1923*, Weimar and Munich 1923, pp. 24-5, reprinted in Geelhaar (ed.), op. cit., Cologne 1976, pp. 124-6.



Fig. 1: *Pflanzen – Erd- und Luftreich* [Plants – Realms of Soil and Air], 1921/77, Watercolour over oil-transfer drawing on paper, mounted on cardboard, inscribed with the work number and title, 287 x 243 mm.

Graphische Sammlung Albertina, Vienna, on permanent loan from the Österreichische Ludwigstiftung [inv. DL 79] (*Catalogue Raisonné*, III, op. cit., Bern 1999, no. 2668)

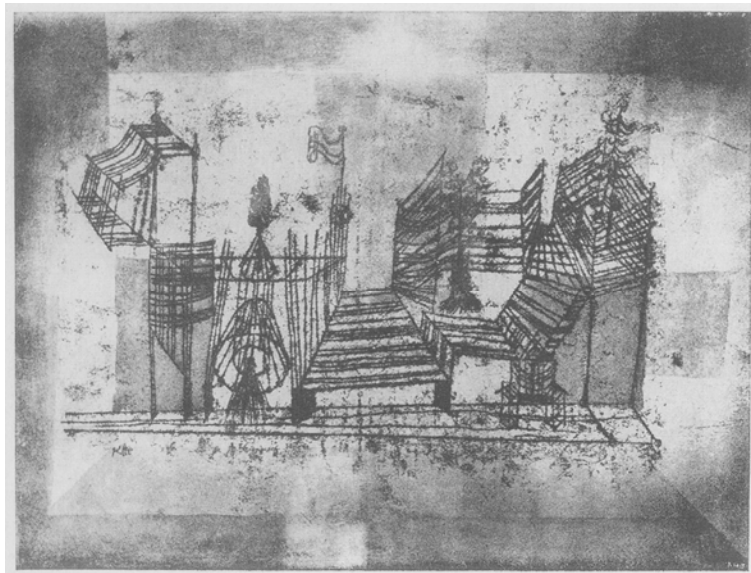


Fig. 2: *Heimgarten-Anlage* [Home Garden Plot / Allotment Estate], 1921/74, watercolour over oil-transfer drawing on paper, mounted on cardboard. Signed: Klee. Size and location unknown.

(*Catalogue Raisonné*, III, op. cit., Bern 1999, no. 2665)