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THE PHILLIPS PRESENTS *TEN AMERICANS: AFTER PAUL KLEE*

Spring Exhibition the First to Explore Paul Klee's Impact on Mid-20th-Century American Art



WASHINGTON—Opening in the spring and co-organized with the Zentrum Paul Klee, The Phillips Collection will present *Ten Americans: After Paul Klee*. The first exhibition to explore the seminal role of Swiss-born artist Paul Klee in the development of mid-20th-century American art, the exhibition includes more than 60 works from collections in the United States and Switzerland.

Shedding new light on important figures in American Abstract Expressionist and Color Field painting, *Ten Americans* illustrates how these individuals adapted aspects of Klee's art and ideology into their own creative language. The exhibition is the first to feature works by Klee in dialogue with William Baziotes, Gene Davis, Adolph Gottlieb, Norman Lewis, Robert Motherwell, Kenneth Noland, Jackson Pollock, Theodoros Stamos, Mark Tobey, and Bradley Walker Tomlin. These artists either acknowledged the importance of Klee's work to their own artistic development or learned of his artistic approach through other figures.

"In assembling a fine collection of 13 works by Klee between 1930 and 1953, Duncan Phillips played a pivotal role in bringing Klee to the attention of American artists and audiences," **said Phillips Director Dorothy Kosinski**. "I am thrilled that The Phillips Collection will host this groundbreaking spring exhibition co-organized with the Zentrum Paul Klee, which offers visitors fresh insight into Klee's profound significance on a young generation of postwar abstract artists in America."

Ten Americans juxtaposes Klee's art alongside that of the American artists to consider affinities across four common themes: archaic signs and symbols, nature and myth, polyphonic rhythms, and pictorial writing. By considering the wide networks through which the Americans made contact with Klee's art and philosophy, *Ten Americans* reveals the broader context of global cultural exchanges between the United States and Europe in the decades after World War II.

“Klee’s contribution to postwar American art has been understudied by comparison with such giant figures as Pablo Picasso and Henri Matisse,” said **Phillips curator Elsa Smithgall**. “We hope this exhibition stirs continued research and study to further enrich our understanding of Klee’s lasting significance across the Atlantic in the visual as well as the performing and literary arts.”

Coming to the Phillips after its presentation at the Zentrum Paul Klee this fall, *Ten Americans: After Paul Klee* is on view February 3 through May 6, 2018.

DUNCAN PHILLIPS AND PAUL KLEE

A successful artist and inspirational teacher in Germany, Paul Klee (1879–1940) first found acclaim at the Bauhaus and later at the Düsseldorf Academy of Art, but he did not follow his peers to the United States after the Bauhaus closed due to pressure from the Nazis. In 1933, Hitler’s newly appointed Academy director dismissed Klee from his post and the Third Reich labeled him a “degenerate” artist due to the avant-garde nature of his work. Escaping oppressive conditions in Germany, Klee and his wife, Lily, left Düsseldorf for his hometown of Bern, Switzerland, where they remained until his death in 1940. There, Klee created a prolific body of mature work despite suffering from scleroderma in his later years.

As a result of the purge of so-called “degenerates” from Germany’s public art collections and the emigration of many German gallerists to New York, Klee’s late work was primarily exhibited on the other side of the Atlantic. Though he never traveled to the United States, Klee’s art suddenly appeared there en masse and was quickly and enthusiastically embraced by a group of emerging American abstract painters. The freedom of Klee’s non-didactic, stylistically open-ended work—whether abstract or figurative, tied to universals of experience or to the banal encounters of everyday life—provided an inspiring example that helped stimulate exciting new directions in postwar American art.

Museum founder Duncan Phillips became a stalwart champion of Klee’s work in the United States. Between 1930 and 1953, he assembled 13 of Klee’s finest works in oil and watercolor spanning the artist’s career—a strong unit that remains one of the cornerstones of the museum’s permanent collection. Committed to bringing Klee’s art to a larger audience, Phillips placed his work on nearly continuous view after 1948 in what came to be known as the “Klee room at the Phillips.” After its christening, this space at the Phillips served as an abiding source of inspiration for the generation of American painters working during midcentury, such as Mark Tobey, Kenneth Noland, and Gene Davis.

Ten Americans builds on the 2006 exhibition presented at The Phillips Collection, *Klee and America*, which explored the presentations and collections that contributed to Klee’s powerful rise during the first half of the 20th century.

IMAGE GALLERY

High-resolution press images for *Ten Americans: After Paul Klee* are available by request. For access, please contact Amy Wike, awike@phillipscollection.org.

CATALOGUE

The exhibition is accompanied by a scholarly catalogue, *Ten Americans: After Paul Klee*, in English and German language editions. Published by The Phillips Collection and Zentrum Paul Klee in association with Prestel, the 239-page catalogue includes color plates and essays by the curatorial team and outside scholars Katy Siegel, Eugene V. and Clare E. Thaw Endowed Chair in Modern American Art, Stony Brook University, and Elke Seibert, Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the German Center for the History of Art (DFK) in Paris.

SPONSORS

Ten Americans: After Paul Klee is co-organized by The Phillips Collection and the Zentrum Paul Klee.

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ABOUT THE PHILLIPS COLLECTION

The Phillips Collection, America's first museum of Modern art, is one of the world's most distinguished collections of Impressionist and Modern American and European art. Stressing the continuity between art of the past and present, it offers a strikingly original and experimental approach to Modern art by combining works of different nationalities and periods in displays that change frequently. The setting is similarly unconventional, featuring small rooms, a domestic scale, and a personal atmosphere. Artists represented in the collection include Pierre-Auguste Renoir, Vincent van Gogh, Edgar Degas, Henri Matisse, Pierre Bonnard, Paul Cézanne, Pablo Picasso, Paul Klee, Claude Monet, Honoré Daumier, Georgia O'Keeffe, Arthur Dove, Mark Rothko, Milton Avery, Jacob Lawrence, and Richard Diebenkorn, among others. The permanent collection has grown to include more than 1,000 photographs, many by American photographers Berenice Abbott, Esther Bubley, and Bruce Davidson, and works by contemporary artists such as Anselm Kiefer, Wolfgang Laib, Whitfield Lovell, and Leo Villareal. The Phillips Collection regularly organizes acclaimed special exhibitions, many of which travel internationally. The Phillips also produces award-winning education programs for K–12 teachers and students, as well as for adults. The University of Maryland Center for Art and Knowledge at The Phillips Collection is the museum's nexus for academic work, scholarly exchange, and interdisciplinary collaborations. Since 1941, the museum has hosted Sunday Concerts in its wood-paneled Music Room. The Phillips Collection is a private, non-government museum, supported primarily by donations.

ABOUT THE ZENTRUM PAUL KLEE

The **Zentrum Paul Klee**, designed by world famous architect Renzo Piano opened its doors in 2005. Zentrum Paul Klee has the largest and most significant collection worldwide of paintings, watercolors, and drawings by Klee and is the leading repository of archival and biographical material from all the periods of the artist's life. A principal task of the museum is to ensure that the artistic, pedagogic, and theoretical work of Klee, as well as its importance within the cultural and social context, is scientifically developed. By organizing exhibitions that raise topical questions, present new scholarly interpretations, and embrace innovative forms of communication, Zentrum Paul Klee aims to bring Klee's artistic legacy into the present.

LEFT IMAGE: Paul Klee, *Young Moe*, 1938. Colored paste on newspaper on burlap, 20 7/8 x 27 5/8 in. The Phillips Collection, Washington, DC, Acquired 1948

RIGHT IMAGE: Kenneth Noland, *In the Garden*, 1952. Oil on hardboard, 19 1/2 x 30 in. The Phillips Collection, Washington, DC, Acquired 1952 Art © Estate of Kenneth Noland/Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY