Paul Klee – Temple Garden

Dear Parents,

Today, your child learned about the artist Paul Klee and his journey to become an artist. For their project, they experimented with drawing and painting as Klee did, using dots, lines, and color.

Paul Klee (pronounced like “clay”) was born in Switzerland, on December 18, 1879. The son of a music teacher, Klee was a talented violinist, receiving an invitation to play with the Bern Music Association at age 11. In his early years, following his parents’ wishes, he focused on becoming a musician; but he decided on the visual arts during his teen years. Nonetheless, both arts played an important role in his artistic growth. He felt that music was gone as soon as it stopped playing, while you could capture a picture with canvas and color. At the same time, you could close your eyes, and listen to music, and create pictures in your head that did not exist otherwise.

During his school years, Klee avidly drew in his school books, in particular drawing caricatures, and already demonstrating skill with line and volume. He has been quoted as saying “a line is a dot that goes for a walk” and was skilled at creating almost anything with a single line. With his parents' reluctant permission, in 1898 he began studying art at the Academy of Fine Arts in Munich. He excelled at drawing but seemed to lack any natural color sense and feared he would never learn to paint. By 1905, he had developed some signature experimental techniques, including drawing with a needle on a blackened pane of glass, but had not yet found his way as a painter.

In 1911, Klee met Wassily Kandinsky, another abstract artist who had both drawing and musical talents. Kandinsky is even believed to have had synesthesia cognate – the ability to hear color and see sounds. In 1914, after a trip to Tunisia with Kandinsky, Klee had his artistic breakthrough. Inspired by the light in Tunisia, he fell in love with color, and by 1915 he had devised the unique style of abstracted forms and symbols that characterized much of his later work. Upon returning to Munich, Klee painted his first pure abstract, *In the Style of Kairouan,* composed of colored rectangles and circles. And at that point, he felt he had truly become a painter.

The colored rectangle became Klee’s basic building block, which some scholars associate with a musical note. Klee combined this with other colored blocks to create a color harmony analogous to a musical composition. Some say his selection of a particular color palette emulates a musical key. Sometimes he used complementary pairs of colors, and other times "dissonant" colors, again reflecting his connection with musicality. Simpler and larger designs, using heavier lines and mainly geometric forms with fewer but larger blocks of color, enabled him to keep up his output in his final years. In 1939 he created over 1,200 works, a career high for one year. Paul Klee died on June 29th, 1940.

To Bring:

* Klee book, Picasso book, Family Circus Cartoon
* Potato Eaters, Four Marilyns, Temple Garden
* Paper, Copies of writeup, art from Canada

Enjoy coming, as each time I do a presentation, I choose something from the collection that I don’t know, and learn about the artist and his work.

Currently, the collections are **Scenes from Daily Life** – Mostly oil paintings done prior to 1900. While some of these are very famous, like Van Gogh’s the ***Potato Eaters***, I prefer more modern, colorful art. That is what we find in the **Pop and Related Movements Category**.

In this collection, the most famous is probably ***Four Marilyns*** by Andy Warhol, but my favorite is ***Temple Garden*** by Paul Klee. It was created in *1920*, and is gouache (as special kind of paint – like an opaque watercolor) and traces of ink on paper. Today we will talk about his journey to becoming an artist.

Paul was born in **Switzerland in 1897**, in a household of musicians, no one drew or painted. He spent a lot of time studying drawing and music. ***How are music and painting similar and different?*** He felt that as soon as a note had been played or sung, it disappeared, and it isn’t possible to capture sound like you can capture lines and colors of a picture. However, to listen to music, you only need your ears, and can close your eyes. And if you close your eyes, you can often see a scene that the music is trying to create. And once the music dies away, the picture disappears as well. So music can describe pictures that don’t actually exist.

Another artist, **Wassily Kandinsky**, created a piece called Improvisation 31 (Sea Battle)?. **Show page 50**. He and Klee were good friends. He had synesthesia cognate – the ability to hear color and see sounds. So he too combined drawing and music. Like Klee, subject matter played a secondary role to color in his painting, and reality and fairy tale seemed to blend together. Kandinsky used lots of circles, half circles, angles, straight lines and curves. Their pictures showed what was not easily described – the inside essence of things – not real-life objects. (Cameras do that.) **Show page 63.** He stated “Art does not reproduce the visible, rather it makes visible.”

But Klee was much more comfortable with drawing than with painting. He would sometimes draw with a single line. **Show page 71.** Picasso who also created abstract art was also very skilled at creating an entire drawing from a single line, and the drawings I just showed by Klee reminded me of some drawings by Picasso. **Show Picasso pages 14 and 72/73.** He also did some new cool stuff, like reverse glass scratch painting (painting glass black, putting white paper behind it, and then scratching away the ink to make a painting. **Show page 19.**

He also believed that “a line is a dot that goes for a walk.” ***What do you think that means?*** **Show pages 72 and 73.** Show the motion suggested in the painting, and the story the writer tells in his depiction. Also, reminds me of the Family Circus **show cartoon** – the dots show all the things you don’t see.

While Klee seemed very comfortable with the dots, lines and drawings, he did not always consider himself a painter. ***What do you think he felt was missing?*** It was not until he went to Tunisia (in Northern Africa) with Kandinsky that Klee began to get comfortable with color – experimenting and studying it in depth. He started playing with different color combinations – **Show page 59** – reds – **What do these colors make you think of? And then page 83. How do these colors make you feel?**

Some people would even say that his art had a musical component – the individual rectangles are like notes particular color palette emulates a musical key. Sometimes he used complementary pairs of colors, and other times "dissonant" colors.

As he got older, and became ill, he used simpler and larger designs, with heavier lines and mainly geometric forms with fewer but larger blocks of color allowing him to keep up his output. In 1939, he did over 1,200 works. **About how many works of art is that per day?** (more than 3) He was 60 when he died in 1940.

Exercises

1. Draw a single line painting p.93
2. A dot on a journey p. 94
3. Using geometric shapes, draw a castle or other building (use Castle and Sun example)