

**KLEE &
KANDINSKY**

KLEE & KANDINSKY

NEIGHBORS FRIENDS RIVALS

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FOREWORD

IN 1929, when Wassily Kandinsky and Paul Klee posed for a vacation photo in imitation of the Goethe-Schiller Memorial in Weimar, an element of irony may have been palpable. At the same time, the image displays the decided self-confidence so characteristic of these artists during the years spent at the Bauhaus in Dessau, a highpoint in the careers of both men. With their interlocked double handshake, Kandinsky and Klee appear as equals. The image reveals much about the complexity of one of the most remarkable and fruitful creative friendships in the history of art.

Today, the names Klee and Kandinsky are synonymous with “classical modernism.” Since the fifties, the two have been regarded as the founding fathers of abstract art. Yet this retrospective and idealized image of friendship and camaraderie obscures the reality that although their oeuvres and biographies display numerous parallels, they had markedly different personalities—both as individuals and as artists. And despite many convergences, their careers took very different paths.

Now, for the first time, the Zentrum Paul Klee and the Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus—the leading centers worldwide for research into the lives and works of Klee and Kandinsky—have joined forces to portray this pivotal artistic friendship in a comprehensive way and to trace the contours of its eventful history. This exhibition covers the

period from 1900 to 1940. The focus is on the various phases of Klee and Kandinsky’s personal interaction during the years of *Der Blaue Reiter* and of the Bauhaus, particularly the Dessau period beginning in 1926. While the main emphasis lies on the similarities and mutual “influences” between these two artists, their attempts to distinguish themselves from one another and their dissimilarities are also explored.

Even before becoming acquainted in 1911 within the scope of the activities of *Der Blaue Reiter*, Kandinsky and Klee were neighbors on Ainmillerstrasse in the artist’s quarter of Schwabing in Munich. Beginning in 1922, they were again neighbors at the Bauhaus in Weimar, and became especially close during the Dessau years, when they lived side by side in a semidetached house for the Bauhaus masters built by Walter Gropius. Their friendship and mutual esteem—which lasted more than thirty years—deepened once again during a brief reunion in Bern in 1937, both having emigrated from Germany in 1933. In a letter dated March of that year, Lily Klee wrote to Nina Kandinsky: “Just think of all that we’ve experienced together. Despite all the negative aspects, what rich years we had in Weimar and Dessau, and finally six years living right next door to one another. Despite everything, incredibly lively years. And we already lived right next door to your husband on

Ainmillerstrasse in Munich. All of us still young then, during those phenomenal last prewar years, before the world was turned upside down.”

The two artists competed for exhibitions and galleries, not just in Germany but in France as well, with Klee enjoying a distinct advantage over Kandinsky in terms of reception beginning in the twenties.

The exhibition and catalogue concept is based on the wide-ranging preparatory work of Christine Hopfengart, who has been developing the project since 2010, when she was still a curator at the Zentrum Paul Klee. A co-curator and a co-editor of this catalogue, she has supervised this endeavor continuously ever since, and has made a fundamental contribution to its realization, for which we extend our heartfelt thanks to her. Responsible for the project in our respective institutions are Michael Baumgartner, head of the department of Collection, Exhibitions, Research at the Zentrum Paul Klee, and Annegret Hoberg, Curator of the Blue Rider Collection and the Kubin Archive at the Lenbachhaus. Many thanks to both of them as well. Particularly with regard to Kandinsky, we have relied on the expertise and support of Vivian Endicott Barnett. All of the specialists from both partner museums contributed to this major project; we would like to make special mention of our registrars and research assistants:

Edith Heinemann and Kai-Inga Dost at the Zentrum Paul Klee, and Karin Dotzer and Monika Bayer-Wermuth at the Lenbachhaus.

We extend our thanks as well to the authors for their substantial contributions, and to the designers and publishing house staff for realizing this beautiful volume. Not least of all, our sincerest thanks are due to the lenders, including numerous private collectors, without whom this project would have been impossible, and who have allowed us to assemble marvelous and illuminating pairings of works by our two artists. In Bern, in addition to regular contributions from the Canton of Bern, we received valuable support from SWISSLOS/Kultur Kanton Bern, from the Paul Klee-Stiftung der Burgergemeinde Bern, Die Mobiliar, JTI, and the Artephila Stiftung, as well as from patrons who wished to remain anonymous.

In Munich, the Lenbachhaus owes a debt of gratitude to its main benefactor, the State Capital of Munich, and to all of its citizens, for allowing us to realize such an ambitious and demanding project. We hope that this catalogue publication and the exhibition will awaken substantial public interest in the artistic exchange between these two important personalities, whose biographies and fortunes reflect the momentous cultural and political upheavals of recent history.

PETER FISCHER

Director, Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern

MATTHIAS MÜHLING

Director, Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus, Munich

CHRONOLOGY

CHRISTINE HOPFENGART

* WASSILY KANDINSKY is born in Moscow on December 4, 1866, the son of the tea merchant Wassily Silvestrovich Kandinsky and his wife Lidia. His father heads a large tea company, and the family is affluent.

In 1871, the artist moves with his parents to Odessa. When his parents divorce, Kandinsky remains with his father. He receives a good education at a humanistic grammar school. He learns German, takes drawing lessons, and begins to play piano and cello.

1885–96 Kandinsky returns to Moscow and begins to study law and economics. In 1892, he marries his cousin Anja Shemiakina; in 1893, he passes his law exams and becomes an academic assistant. He begins a dissertation, which he however abandons in 1895. He instead takes over the artistic directorship of the Kušnerev Press in Moscow.

In 1896, an exhibition of French art becomes a key experience for him: there, he sees a painting from Claude Monet's *Haystacks* series and is overwhelmed by the expressive power of its colors. At the same time, through Richard Wagner's *Lohengrin* he becomes aware of a synaesthesia that joins painting and music. Subsequently, he turns down a

PAUL KLEE is born in Münchenbuchsee near Bern on December 18, 1879, the second child of Hans and Ida Klee. His father is a music teacher and a genuine patriarch—in his outer appearance as well. His mother is a trained singer. The family moves to Bern in 1880. Through his grandmother, Klee receives his first artistic instruction in drawing and colorization.

1886–97 Klee attends grammar school and later, secondary school. For his art lessons, but primarily independently, Klee practices copying printed images of landscapes and town-

scapes, but draws from nature as well. At the same time, he fills school exercise books with satirical drawings in the margins. In their mixture of irony and critical distance, these small-format pictorial commentaries already betray an essential trait of Klee's basic stance as an artist and as a man.

At the same time, Klee learns to play the violin. Given his rapid progress, he is permitted to perform as an extraordinary member of the orchestra of the Bern Music Society.

1898–99 After much vacillation between music and painting, Klee decides to study art and goes to Munich. He applies to the art academy on the basis of his landscape drawings, but is rejected due to insufficient fluency in figural drawing. In order to prepare for the admission exam, he attends Heinrich Knirr's private drawing school, where his individual talents are fostered. Klee begins to keep a diary.

teaching appointment at Dorpat University and resolves to study painting. Together with his wife, he moves to Munich in December of 1896 and begins his art studies “with the feeling of being reborn.” In Germany, as in Russia, Kandinsky strives to gain a foothold in the art scene.

1897–99 In Munich, Kandinsky attends the private art school of Anton Ažbe for two years. A number of students are compatriots, among them Alexei Jawlensky and Marianne von Werefkin. In Odessa, he takes part for the first time in an exhibition of the Association of Southern Russian Artists. He fails his first attempt to pass the admission exam for the Munich Art Academy. He writes art

Kandinsky (right) with his fellow students Nicolas Seddeler and Dmitry Kardovsky at the painting school of Anton Ažbe, ca. 1897

reviews for the Moscow newspaper *Novosti Dnja* (News of the Day).

1900–03 Kandinsky, now thirty-three years old, is admitted to the Munich Art Academy after a second attempt, and attends the class of the universally admired artist Franz von Stuck. There, he encounters Klee for the first time but does not get to know him.

Initially fascinated by Stuck, Kandinsky decides after one year to become artistically independent. He paints small oil studies from nature,

1900–02 After his second application, Klee is admitted to the class of the “painter prince” Franz von Stuck at the Munich Art Academy; however, he attends only until March of 1901. During this period, he encounters a number of emerging avant-garde artists and meets Kandinsky for the first time, albeit without getting to know him personally. “Kandinsky ... I can only remember dimly,” he writes later. “Kandinsky was quiet, and mixed his colors on his palette with great fluency and, it seemed to me at the time, a kind of erudition, looking very closely.”

Klee as a student in Munich, 1899

Klee (right) playing violin in a quintet at the drawing school of Heinrich Knirr, Munich, 1900

Klee’s lifestyle is bohemian. Alongside his studies, he goes to cafés and artist’s balls and seeks out erotic experiences. In 1901, he becomes engaged to the pianist Lily Stumpf. After breaking off his studies, he travels to Italy for six months. Unlike artists of earlier generations, he is not stimulated by the

and at the same time tempera pictures with traditional Russian scenes.

In May of 1901, Kandinsky founds the Phalanx exhibition association together with fellow artists; in the fall, he is elected president. In winter of 1901/02, Phalanx sets up a private painting school with the same name. Among the students are numerous women who were refused admission into the art academy at that time. One of them is the twenty-four-year-old Gabriele Münter, who enters into a profound love relationship with Kandinsky.

In the renowned St. Petersburg magazine *Mir Iskusstva* (World of Art), he publishes a correspondent's report on art life in Munich.

Kandinsky (front right) with members of the Phalanx School, including Gabriele Münter (rear center), Munich, 1902

abundance of artistic impressions, and instead enters a profound crisis. The skill of the “ancients” causes him to doubt himself and the art of his time, reinforcing his tendency toward satire and irony.

1902–06 Klee moves back into his parents' house in order to develop his personality and his unique form of expression at one remove from the centers of art. The rediscovery of his own childhood drawings opens up a path for him closer to “innate qualities.” In his works, Klee alternates between imagination and the study of nature. He reads satirical magazines and attempts—albeit unsuccessfully—to acquire commissions for illustrations from the German satirical magazine *Simplicissimus*.

In 1906, he takes part in an exhibition for the first time, presenting his *Opus I*, a series of satirical etchings dating from the years 1903–05, at the Munich Secession. The only press report that mentions Klee issues a devastating verdict, speaking of the “demented aberrations of these forms.”

Paul and Lily Klee with Klee's father on their wedding day (September 15, 1906) in the garden of Klee's parents' house in Bern

1904–08 Beginning in May of 1904, Kandinsky spends a number of years traveling together with Gabriele Münter in order to avoid private difficulties.

Their first trip takes them to the Netherlands; afterwards, they spend three months in Tunisia. In May of 1905, they travel to Dresden, and in October of the same year, Kandinsky goes to Odessa. After returning to Munich, he leaves for Rapallo together with Münter. This is followed by a one-year stay in Paris and a final stage in Berlin before finally returning to Munich in spring of 1908. Despite exhilarating experiences, the years abroad are burdened by feelings of guilt toward his wife, and his problematical relationship with Gabriele Münter.

As of early 1904, Kandinsky begins outlining a theory of color that will later be incorporated into his first book *On the Spiritual in Art* (1912). In his work as a painter, he continues to alternate between studies of nature and Russian fantasies; at the same time, a sense of artistic stagnation begins to make itself felt. His exhibition activities range from Moscow to Paris.

Kandinsky and Gabriele Münter in Sèvres, 1906/07

On September 15, 1906, Paul Klee marries his fiancée, Lily Stumpf, and moves from Bern to Munich. Their apartment is located in the rear building at Ainmillerstrasse 32, the street in the Schwabing artist's quarter where Kandinsky will take up residence two years later, and moreover just a few buildings away.

1907–08 Klee lives a withdrawn life as an artist and househusband. After the birth of his son Felix in November of 1907, Klee cares for the child while Lily supports the family by giving piano lessons. Klee continues elaborating his form of artistic expression. His medium is drawing; attempts at painting are rare. With considerable interest, he observes his son, taking notes on the small child's behavior and the noises he makes. Later, he will encourage Felix's attempts at painting and drawing.

1909–10 In 1909, Klee discovers Paul Cézanne, his "teacher par excellence." It is unclear whether he is aware of the founding of the Neue Künstlervereinigung München (New Artists' Associa-

tion of Munich, or NKVM). In any event, he does not attend the second exhibition of the NKVM in September of 1910, which generates vigorous protest from the press, since he is on vacation in Bern during the show. In summer of 1910, Klee's first solo exhibition takes place in Switzerland, with stops in Bern, Zurich, Winterthur, and Basel.

In the winter of 1910, Alfred Kubin addresses himself to Klee: "As a development, you are certainly the first among them all," he praises Klee, and purchases a first drawing for his private collection.

1911 Klee begins to maintain an accurate register of all of his works.

In June, he exhibits a selection of thirty works at the Galerie Thannhauser in Munich, although his show is confined to the corridor. On October 8, he meets Kandinsky through the mediation of his Swiss artist colleague Louis Moilliet. "He is somebody and has an exceptionally fine, clear mind," re-

1908 During an excursion, Kandinsky and Münter discover the village of Murnau among the foothills of the Alps. Together with Alexei Jawlensky and Marianne von Werefkin, they spend a productive period there painting, one that ushers in a breakthrough to an expressive painting style. In Munich, he rents an apartment at Ainmillerstraße 36 in the district of Schwabing; it soon becomes the center for the circle of friends around Der Blaue Reiter (The Blue Rider). Now, he lives just a few doors away from Paul Klee and his family.

1909–10 In January of 1909, inspired by their work together in Murnau, Kandinsky, Jawlensky, Münter, and Werefkin found the Neue Künstlervereinigung München (New Artists' Association of Munich, or NKVM) as a rendezvous point for avant-garde tendencies. The first exhibitions of the NKVM, held in December of 1909 and September of 1910, are discussed in the local press, to some extent dismissively. Indignant, the still unknown painter Franz Marc formulates a counterstatement, which leads to initial contacts with the group.

Kandinsky in traditional Bavarian costume, Murnau, 1910

During a renewed painting excursion to Murnau in the summer of 1909, Kandinsky discovers Bavarian folk art and religious reverse glass painting. In

marks Klee. Subsequently, he gets to know other artists from Der Blaue Reiter, in particular Gabriele Münter, Franz Marc, Alexei Jawlensky, and Marianne von Werefkin. Initially, his role in the artistic circle is minimal, but his drawings attract attention.

Klee does not participate in the first exhibition of Der Blaue Reiter, which features paintings almost exclusively. As a “correspondent” for the Swiss monthly *Die Alpen*, he writes a review in which he embraces the new movement.

1912 Klee receives a copy of Kandinsky’s recent *On the Spiritual in Art* from the author, bearing the dedication “To my dear friend Paul Klee, affectionately Kandinsky.” At the second Der Blaue Reiter exhibition, which shows works on paper exclusively, Klee is represented with a wide-ranging group of seventeen drawings. Stimulated by the exhibition, Klee undertakes a trip to Paris from April 2–18. Through Kandinsky’s intercession, he visits the studios of, among others, Henri Le Fauconnier and

First exhibition of Der Blaue Reiter, Galerie Thannhauser, Munich 1911/12

the fall of 1910, during a trip to Moscow and Odessa, he renews his contacts with the Russian art and music scene.

1911 On New Year's Eve 1911, Kandinsky meets Franz Marc, and an intense friendship and collaboration commences. He also discovers his intellectual affinity for the composer Arnold Schoenberg, and initiates a correspondence with him. That summer, he works with Marc on the artist's almanac *Der Blaue Reiter*. Tension builds within the NKVM between the conservative wing on the one hand and Kandinsky and Marc on the other. In December, Kandinsky, Marc, and Münter withdraw from the NKVM and within just two weeks organize the *Erste Ausstellung der Redaktion Der Blaue Reiter* (First Exhibition of the Blaue Reiter Edito-

rial Office), which runs from December 18, 1911, to January 1, 1912, at the Galerie Thannhauser in Munich. The show is a historic event. Shortly before, on October 8, Kandinsky gets to know Paul Klee. "There is something there in his soul," he writes to Marc. After years of preparation, his book *On the Spiritual in Art* is published in December. The publication date is 1912.

1912 Following the first exhibition of *Der Blaue Reiter*, the second one runs from February to April and showcases the latest tendencies in drawing and printmaking.

In March, the Berlin writer and publisher Herwarth Walden opens his gallery DER STURM with an exhibition of works by *Der Blaue Reiter* artists. In October, Walden devotes a wide-ranging solo exhibition to Kandinsky. In

Wassily Kandinsky's calling card with a greeting for Paul Klee, 1912

Robert Delaunay, whose text *La Lumière* he then translates into German (*Über das Licht*).

Through Marc, Klee gets to know Herwarth Walden, whose magazine and gallery DER STURM will play a decisive role in his career in coming years.

Like the other *Der Blaue Reiter* artists, Klee takes part in the exhibition of the Swiss association the *Moderner Bund* at the Kunsthau Zürich, and writes a review: in emphatic words, he praises Kandinsky's desire for freedom, his "spiritual strength," and the richness of his works.

1913 In Berlin, Klee has his first exhibition at Herwarth Walden's STURM gallery (February–March), and also participates in the latter's major exhibition *Erster Deutscher Herbstsalon*. Franz Marc searches without success for a publisher for Klee's drawings for Voltaire's *Candide*.

On Kandinsky's advice, the American collector Arthur Jerome Eddy contacts Klee, and acquires, among other works, the drawing *Steinhauer II* (Stonecutter II), which is illustrated in *The Blaue Reiter Almanac*.

Klee's son Felix visits Kandinsky regularly in order to paint according to his example.

Klee signs the STURM appeal "For Kandinsky," although he is opposed to responding to the verdicts of the press, "thereby giving the criticism in the dailies some kind of credibility."

Kandinsky and
Franz Marc with
the title woodcut
print for the
*The Blaue Reiter
Almanac*, Munich,
1911/12

Kandinsky at his writing desk at
Ainmillerstrasse 36, Munich, 1913

May, *The Blaue Reiter Almanac* appears. With its mixture of old and very recent art, ethnographic objects, art theoretical reflections, and reports from correspondents from various countries, it represents a singular document of Kandinsky's vision of an artistic culture that transcends time and nationality.

In summer, Kandinsky and Der Blaue Reiter, along with Klee, are invited to participate in a major exhibition by the Swiss avant-garde association *Moderner Bund* at the *Kunsthaus Zürich*.

1913 Kandinsky is exhausted from his numerous activities, and wants to dedicate himself mainly to painting. At the same time, he enjoys the glory earned from his inexhaustible commitments. In February and March, he participates

1914–15 In April, Klee travels with August Macke and Louis Moilliet to Tunisia, where he experiences an artistic breakthrough triggered by the architecture and culture of the Orient.

On the outbreak of World War I he remains in Bern, and is only peripherally aware of political events. When Kandinsky—who, as a Russian, has to leave Germany—contacts him, Klee is helpful concerning financial transactions, and visits him in his temporary Swiss lodgings.

In Munich, the artist's scene around *Der Blaue Reiter* dissolves. Marc is drafted into military service; Jawlensky and Werefkin must—like Kandinsky—leave the country. Klee, who found favor with this artist's association, feels increasingly isolated: "How alone I was," he recalls later, "Kandinsky in Moscow, poor Marc in some backwater on the Western front."

1916–18 On March 10, 1916, Klee is also drafted into military service; because his father is German, he is also a German citizen. He is not deployed to the front but instead sent to the hin-

Klee during his journey to Tunis, 1914

in the *Armory Show* in New York, which brings him to the attention of American collectors. Among these is Arthur Jerome Eddy, who visits Kandinsky in Murnau. Kandinsky calls Eddy's attention to other artists of his circle, including Klee.

The Piper Verlag publishes the album *Klänge* (Sounds), which contains woodcuts and poems by Kandinsky. Kandinsky is well-represented in Walden's major survey exhibition *Erster Deutscher Herbstsalon*. At the same time, the album *Kandinsky 1901-1913* is published by the STURM Verlag.

Between November 25 and 28, 1913, Kandinsky executes his masterpiece of the Munich years, *Composition VII*. To celebrate its completion, he invites Paul and Lily Klee to dinner on November 30. In response to a particularly hostile exhibition

critique, DER STURM initiates a signature campaign under the title "For Kandinsky."

1914-15 In March 1914, *The Blaue Reiter Almanac* appears in a second edition, and in April, an English translation of *Über das Geistige in der Kunst* is published.

The outbreak of World War I puts an end to these activities. As an "enemy alien," Kandinsky is obliged to leave Germany, and travels first to Switzerland, where he contacts Klee, before returning to his hometown of Moscow in November. Nearly all of his possessions, including his paintings, remain with Münter. She deposits everything with a transport firm, and travels to Stockholm in order to see Kandinsky again in a neutral country. She leaves two paintings, *Interior (With Two Women)*, 1910, and *Sketch I for "Composition VII,"* with Klee for safekeeping.

In Moscow, Kandinsky suffers from these disruptions to his work. In December, he travels to Stockholm in response to urgent appeals from Münter.

terlands and able to pursue his artistic activities during his free time. As counterimages to the war, he produces his "romantic watercolors" with mysterious landscapes and symbols, through which he acquires cult status on the art scene. The art magazines of the wartime and postwar period praise him as a singular case; among these authors are Adolf Behne, Theodor Däubler, and Wilhelm Hausenstein. Klee is furloughed in December of 1918 and released from military service the following February.

1919 Having returned to civilian life, Klee rents a studio in Suresnes Castle in Munich.

During the Bavarian Council Republic, he becomes a member of the Action Committee of Revolutionary Artists. The fame he acquired during the war bears fruit: at the Stuttgart Art Academy, Oskar Schlemmer and Willi Baumeister campaign for his appointment as professor.

In summertime, Klee returns to Bern for the first time since 1915. During a side trip to Zurich, he meets numerous art-

Klee as a soldier
in Landshut, 1916

1916–17 In March of 1916, Kandinsky returns to Moscow from Stockholm; the parting from Münter amounts to a final separation. Two months later, he meets the twenty-year-old Nina Andreevskaya. They marry in January of the following year. In September of 1917, their son Vsevolod is born, but dies in 1920. Following the outbreak of the Russian Revolution in October 1917 and the seizure of power by the Bolsheviks, all of Kandinsky's assets are expropriated.

1918–19 Although Kandinsky regards himself as an apolitical artist, he contributes actively to the reorganization of the Russian art world after the revolution. In early 1918, he becomes a member of the Department of Art (IZO) of the newly founded Narkompros (People's Commissariat for Enlightenment). He participates in the founding of the SVOMAS (Free State Art Studios), and is appointed head of the Moscow studio. As a

Kandinsky and members of Narkompros, Moscow, 1921

ist friends and becomes acquainted with members of the Dada circle. Among his contacts are Hans Arp, Marcel Janco, Hans Richter, Waldemar Jollos, Tristan Tzara, and the composer Ferruccio Busoni.

1920–21 Klee arrives at the first highpoint of his career as an artist. The Galerie Goltz in Munich organizes a major retrospective with 362 works, and in a brief period, three monographs appear, by Leopold Zahn, Hermann Wedderkop, and Wilhelm Hausenstein. On October 29, 1920, Klee is appointed by Walter Gropius to teach at the Bauhaus in Weimar.

In April of 1921, he takes up teaching duties at the Bauhaus. The Dresden art critic Will Grohmann takes an interest in his drawings.

Gabriele Münter requests the return of the two paintings she entrusted to Klee in 1915. Late in the year, Klee receives a letter from Kandinsky, who is now in Berlin, and sends news of his return to Germany.

1922 Within the scope of basic instruction at the Bauhaus, Klee teaches the “theory of pictorial form” and was temporarily assigned responsibility for the bookbindery; in the fall, he switches to the workshop for painting on glass.

In early May, Felix Klee becomes the youngest student to enroll at the Bauhaus, where he begins a course in wood-working.

Klee helps Kandinsky find an apartment in Weimar and meets with him before the summer break. He gets to know Nina Kandinsky and refers to her as a “child of five years.”

After Kandinsky bestows the disputed pictures on Klee rather than Münter, Klee seems to have returned the favor with two recent works, one of them the metaphorical portrait of Kandinsky, *KN the Blacksmith* of 1922 (cat. no. 155).

member of the international office of the IZO, he establishes contacts with German artists, among them Walter Gropius. In February of 1919, he becomes the director of the Moscow Museum of Painterly Culture. He publishes in numerous journals, among them the newly established German magazine *Das Kunstblatt*.

1920–21 In May of 1920, Kandinsky participates in the foundation of the Institute of Artistic Culture (INKhUK); in June, he presents a teaching program, which is however rejected as subjective by the advocates of Constructivism.

In May of 1921, he becomes chair of the founding committee of the Russian Academy of Artistic Sciences (RAKhN); however, he is not chosen as president because he is not a member of the Communist Party. Further disappointments follow, and Kandinsky feels artistically and intellectually isolated. The catastrophic supply situation also contributes to his decision to leave Russia. In late December of 1921, he arrives in Berlin together with Nina.

Wassily Kandinsky, passport photo, Berlin, Kaufhaus des Westens, 1921/22

Nina Kandinsky, passport photo, Berlin, Kaufhaus des Westens, 1921/22

1922 During his initial months in Berlin, Kandinsky is withdrawn, but then begins to reestablish old contacts.

1923 In February, Klee has his first museum exhibition in Germany, held at the Nationalgalerie in Berlin, and including 270 works.

For the large Bauhaus exhibition in summer, he organizes a concert program with works by Stravinsky, Busoni, and Hindemith. In the accompanying publication, he publishes the essay “Ways of Nature Study,” through which he positions himself in opposition to the new Bauhaus maxim “Art and technology—a new unity,” declaring nature as the foundation of his creative work.

On October 16, Klee and Kandinsky serve as witnesses at the wedding of Walter Gropius and Ise Frank.

A room devoted to Klee is installed in the Weimar Schlossmuseum.

Klee in his studio at the Weimar Bauhaus, 1923

In March, he receives a visit from Gropius, who secures his official appointment to the Bauhaus. On July 1, Kandinsky becomes a member of the faculty in Weimar. Like Klee, he is responsible for a part of the basic training. He teaches “color design theory” and “analytical drawing,” and becomes artistic director of the workshop for mural painting. Just a few weeks later, he is represented at the *Juryfreie Kunstschau* (Juryless Art Show) in Berlin with large-format wall designs produced by the workshop.

His print portfolio *Kleine Welten* (Small Worlds) appears toward the end of the year. In October, Katherine S. Dreier, founder of the Société Anonyme in New York, visits the Bauhaus and meets Klee and Kandinsky.

1923 The Société Anonyme appoints Kandinsky as first honorary vice president, and devotes a solo exhibition to his works.

In the summer, he works in various ways on the large-scale Bauhaus exhibition that takes place in Weimar from August 15–September

30 and is accompanied by numerous events, as well as by a catalogue publication: he delivers the lecture “On Synthetic Art” and contributes three texts to the publication. A multiyear correspondence with the art critic Will Grohmann begins.

Kandinsky (left) with Walter Gropius and J. J. P. Oud at the Weimar Bauhaus, 1923

Beginning in December as a regular exchange of artistic gifts between the two artists: Klee gives Kandinsky an annual birthday present on December 4, as well as at Christmas.

1924 Klee has an exhibition at the Kunstverein Jena early in the year. Urged by the director Walter Dexel, he delivers the only public lecture of his career, which is published in 1945 with the title “On Modern Art.”

In March, Klee receives a visit from Will Grohmann, who discusses future publications with him.

Klee’s first exhibition in the United States is held at the Société Anonyme in New York; later, his works are seen alongside those of Kandinsky at presentations by the collective Die Blaue Vier (The Blue Four), founded by Emmy “Galka” Scheyer.

The Bauhaus is under political pressure and dissolves as an institution on December 26.

1925 At the first exhibition of the Blaue Vier at the Daniel Gallery in New York, the critics are divided over whether Klee or Kandinsky is the best-known artist of the group in the United States.

The Weimar Bauhaus closes on April 1. Klee arrives in Dessau on June 23, rents a room from Kandinsky, and alternates weeks in Weimar and Dessau. Klee and Kandinsky join forces to demand the introduction of free painting classes.

Klee’s *Pedagogical Sketchbook* appears as second volume of the newly founded series of *bauhausbücher* (Bauhaus Books). He dissolves his contract with the art dealer Goltz and begins to orient himself independently on the art market. He enters into particularly close business contacts with Alfred Flechtheim. At the same time, he develops the idea of a society of friends with the Braunschweig-based collector Otto Ralfs, the Klee Society, in order to ensure regular revenues. It serves as a model for others, such as the Kandinsky and Feininger societies.

Klee’s growing fame now extends to Paris, and in late fall of 1925 he is represented there in two exhibitions. The Surrealists

On October 16, Kandinsky, together with Klee, is a witness at the marriage of Walter Gropius and Ise Frank.

A regular exchange of artistic gifts between Klee and Kandinsky begins in December: Kandinsky gives Klee an annual birthday present on December 18, as well as at Christmas.

1924 Kandinsky gets to know the art critic Will Grohmann personally when the latter visits the Bauhaus in March.

Kandinsky considers leaving the Bauhaus, and applies—without success—for a professorship at the Dresden Art Academy as Oskar Kokoschka's successor.

The exhibition collective Die Blaue Vier (The Blue Four) is founded on the initiative of the art

promoter Emmy “Galka” Scheyer. Its members include Klee, Kandinsky, Feininger, and Jawlensky. Scheyer attempts to establish her “blue kings” in the United States until the mid-forties.

The Bauhaus is under political pressure and dissolves as an institution on December 26.

1925 Early in the year, the Bauhaus negotiates with various cities concerning the school's future. Kandinsky undertakes a site survey in Dessau. On April 1, the Weimar Bauhaus closes and moves to Dessau. Kandinsky rents an apartment and sublets a room to Klee. They join forces to demand the introduction of free painting classes.

Kandinsky exhibits at the Kunstverein Jena and delivers a lecture at the opening on March 15.

At Wiesbaden's Neues Museum, Kandinsky—along with Klee—participates in the March exhibition of the Nassauischer Kunstverein, holding a lecture there as well. He publishes the essay “Abstract Art” in the journal *Der Cicerone*.

invite him to participate in their first art exhibition, *La Peinture surréaliste*, at the Galerie Pierre, and a solo show is devoted to him at the Galerie Vavin-Raspail.

1926 The Nationalgalerie in Berlin purchases Klee's painting *The Goldfish*, 1925, 86.

The Gesellschaft der Freunde junger Kunst in Braunschweig, under the chairmanship of Otto Ralfs, organizes a traveling exhibition of works by Klee, which—like the birthday presentation for Kandinsky that opens somewhat later—travels to a number of German cities.

Klee, like Kandinsky, writes the text for “Brochure No. III” by the dancer Palucca.

On July 10, Klee moves into the master's house in Dessau, built for himself and Kandinsky. This personal proximity intensifies the relationship between the two artists.

Like Kandinsky, Klee takes part in the *Internationale Kunstausstellung Dresden*. He lets Kandinsky take charge of negotia-

The semidetached Klee-Kandinsky house in Dessau, seen from the northwest, 1925/26
(photo: Lucia Moholy-Nagy)

He receives painful attacks from the critics. Particularly severe is the verdict of Carl Einstein, who dismisses his art as a “tasteful arrangement” in *Propyläen Kunstgeschichte* in 1926 while identifying Klee as a pioneering creator of new painterly realities.

The Braunschweig-based collector Otto Ralfs founds the Kandinsky Society along the lines of the Klee Society, established around the same time; the membership structure of the two societies is nearly identical.

1926 Kandinsky’s *Point and Line to Plane* appears as vol. 9 of the *bauhausbücher*.

For the occasion of his approaching sixtieth birthday, the Braunschweiger Gesellschaft der Freunde junger Kunst, under the chairmanship of

Otto Ralfs, organizes a jubilee exhibition. It opens in May, and is subsequently shown at the Galerie Arnold in Dresden and other venues. Klee contributes a text to the catalogue.

Kandinsky, like Klee, writes a text for “Brochure No. III” by the dancer Gret Palucca. He also publishes an essay on her “dance curves” in *Kunstblatt*.

In June, the Kandinskys move into one of the so-called master’s houses, semidetached homes built for two artists and their families. Kandinsky shares the house with Paul and Lily Klee.

Like Klee, Kandinsky takes part in the *Internationale Kunstausstellung Dresden* (June–October). When it concludes, he conducts negotiations concerning acquisitions for both himself and Klee; his painting *Several Circles* is purchased for the Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden.

After years of legal battles, he recovers some of his possessions from Gabriele Münter.

Kandinsky’s sixtieth birthday coincides with the inauguration of the Bauhaus building in Dessau. The magazine *bauhaus*, founded on the occasion of the reopening, devotes its first issue to Kandinsky. Klee’s birthday gift is the

ary. Klee, authorized by Kandinsky to make a joint response, resists resolutely, reproaching Gropius: “Apparently it is not granted to us to breathe apolitical air.”

The Klees and Kandinskys celebrate Christmas together. They ring in the New Year together as well, joined this time however by other couples from the Bauhaus circle.

1927 Shortly after Kandinsky does so, Klee also introduces a “seminar for free sculpture and painting production” alongside what he refers to as the “accursed basic course.” Nonetheless, his motivation to sustain the comprehensive program of instruction at the Bauhaus continues to dwindle, and he fails to return on time when the semester begins after the summer break. Taken to task, he defends his need for creative freedom.

1928 The Parisian art publisher Christian Zervos, founder of the magazine *Cahiers d’art*, visits Klee; he wants to promote Klee’s reputation in Paris.

The masters of the Dessau Bauhaus, 1926

tions for a purchase; the work selected is *Around the Fish*, 1926, 124.

Prompted by a financial crisis at the Bauhaus, Gropius requests the masters to accept a ten percent reduction in sal-

Letter-Paper Picture for 5 December 1927 (cat. no. 150), which alludes to their shared stages of life. The Kandinskys and Klees celebrate Christmas together in a small circle. They ring in the New Year together as well, although this time other couples from the Bauhaus circle are invited as well.

1927 In spring, Kandinsky begins with the “seminar for free sculpture and painting production,” a non-compulsory course that is renamed the “free painting class” in 1928.

The Kandinskys spend their summer vacation in Pörschach am Wörthersee in Austria. By chance, they meet Arnold Schoenberg there.

1928 In January, Kandinsky meets Christian Zervos, who is visiting Klee at the Bauhaus. His magazine *Cahiers d’art* and his Paris gallery serve Kandinsky as a forum until 1935.

The Bauhaus founder Walter Gropius, with whom Kandinsky has close relations, resigns his position as director. He is succeeded on April 1 by the Swiss architect Hannes Meyer, who orients the Bauhaus more strongly toward social issues. Kandinsky, who was opposed to Marxism ever since his experiences during the Russian Revolution, has a tense relationship with Meyer.

Gret Palucca, Nina Kandinsky, Kandinsky, and Herbert Trantow, Dessau 1928

The new Bauhaus director Hannes Meyer increases the teaching loads of Klee and Kandinsky in the area of basic training, and retains the “free painting classes.” Both masters serve as figureheads for the school, while internally, they are meant to provide a creative balance to the strictly organized training program. Klee cultivates a respectful but distanced relationship with Meyer. In February, Klee publishes his essay “exact experiments in the realm of art” in the magazine *bauhaus* in which he balances genius and rationality against one another.

In winter 1928/29, he undertakes a four-week trip to Egypt financed by the Klee Society on the occasion of his upcoming fiftieth birthday.

On March 8, the Kandinskys acquire German citizenship and throw a costume party to mark the occasion. In Dessau's Stadttheater Kandinsky stages a scenic version of Modest Mussorgsky's concert suite *Pictures at an Exhibition* (April 4 and 8, 1928) with mobile stage elements (*cat. nos.* 63–66). Kandinsky's assistant is Klee's son Felix, whose father discouraged from becoming an artist, and who now embarks on a career in theater.

1929 At the beginning of the year, one of Kandinsky's fervent desires is fulfilled when he has his first solo show in Paris at the small Galerie ZAK. In the company of Marcel Duchamp Katherine S. Dreier visits him in May at the Bauhaus.

In October, the first and only German exhibition of the Blaue Vier takes place at the Ferdinand Möller Gallery.

Naturalization celebration for Wassily and Nina Kandinsky, Dessau, March 11, 1928 (photo: Nachlass Scheper, Berlin)

1929 In March, Klee receives an offer from the Düsseldorf Art Academy to direct a class in painting. His decision arrives quickly, but negotiations are protracted, not least of all because Klee wants to build a studio-house on the model of the Dessau master's houses.

The Klees spend the summer in France, where they meet with the Kandinskys in Hendaye on the Atlantic coast. Numerous photographs are taken, including one of Klee and Kandinsky ironically staging Goethe and Schiller (see p. 4).

Klee turns fifty in December. He is celebrated by the Bauhaus students, and a number of galleries organize exhibitions. The largest of them is held at Alfred Flechtheim's Berlin gallery. Klee receives the watercolor *Towards Green* (*cat. no.* 101) and Karl Blossfeldt's photo volume *Urformen der Kunst* as gifts from the Kandinskys.

He is honored with a large-scale exhibition at the renowned Galerie Bernheim Jeune in Paris. A number of prominent artists—including Picasso, Braque, and Derain—are present at the

Klee and Kandinsky at a street café, Hendaye, August 1929

1930 Michel Seuphor invites Kandinsky to participate in the group Cercle et Carré. In summer, he receives a visit from the American collectors Solomon Guggenheim and Hilla von Rebay; the latter is assembling a collection of nonrepresentational art for the industrialist; they purchase three pictures.

As a result of intrigues in which Kandinsky has a hand, Hannes Meyer is dismissed as Bauhaus director. He is replaced by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe.

Will Grohmann publishes a monograph on Kandinsky in the *Editions des Cahiers d'art*; it follows the model of the monograph on Klee that appeared the previous year.

Irene Guggenheim, Kandinsky, Hilla von Rebay, and Solomon R. Guggenheim, Dessau, 1930

During summer vacation in Hendaye on the Atlantic coast of France, the Kandinskys meet the Klees, who are on vacation in the neighboring town of Bidart.

1931–32 Kandinsky publishes his first article in France, “Réflexions sur l’art abstrait,” in *Cahiers d’art*. The art dealer Alfred Flechtheim organizes his first and only exhibition of works by Kandinsky. In spring, Kandinsky is offered a teaching position at the Art Students League in New York, which he declines.

opening, and a monograph produced by the publisher *Cahiers d’art* is published at the same time. The author is the art critic Will Grohmann, who seeks to promote Klee’s reputation in France through other contributions as well and endeavors to position Kandinsky in Paris.

1930 Only three months after the major birthday show, Alfred Flechtheim organizes another exhibition with 160 works in Berlin, at the same time launching Klee in Düsseldorf. At Flechtheim’s instigation, the birthday exhibition from the preceding year is presented by the newly-founded Museum of Modern Art in New York.

Will Grohmann publishes the article “Une école d’art moderne” in *Cahiers d’art* on the teaching activities of Klee and Kandinsky at the Bauhaus. In October, the Kunstverein Jena organizes the exhibition *gruppe junger maler vom bauhaus dessau*, which features students from the free painting classes taught by Klee and Kandinsky.

Kandinsky and Klee
with Otto Ralfs, Dessau,
ca. 1930

Paul and Lily Klee with Nina and Wassily Kandinsky in a carriage
during an outing to Wörlitz, May 1932

At the German Building Exhibition in Berlin in 1931, Kandinsky creates a music room with ceramic wall cladding. In May, he edits a farewell issue of the magazine *bauhaus* for Paul Klee.

On August 22, 1932, the Dessau municipal council decides to close the Bauhaus in response to a petition from the National Socialists. The school is privatized, and continues operations beginning in October in Berlin under the direction of Ludwig Mies van der Rohe as the “Freies Lehr- und Forschungsinsitut” (Free Teaching and Research Institute). On December 10, 1932 Kandinsky moves to Berlin. During his final days in Dessau, Klee is also present and supervises his departure with neighborly attentiveness.

Wassily and Nina Kandinsky at the German Building Exhibition, Berlin, 1931
(photo: Lotte Jacobi)

1931–32 Against the background of his planned departure for Düsseldorf, Klee receives an offer from the city of Dessau for a new teaching contract that would relieve him of teaching responsibilities to a large extent. Had he agreed, Kandinsky would have received the same offer. But Klee leaves the Bauhaus and transfers in the winter term 1931 to the Düsseldorf Art Academy. On October 20, 1931, he begins teaching; a number of his students follow him from Dessau to Düsseldorf. Klee retains his apartment in the Dessau master’s house until April 1933, and commutes between the two cities. Klee arranges for Kandinsky to become acquainted with the Bern-based collector Hermann Rupf.

1933 In early April, after extended negotiations, Klee signs a rental lease for a house in Düsseldorf. He lives there for just a few months, however, because on April 21, he is at first suspended by the National Socialists, and then in October, dismissed officially from his teaching position.

Klee at the Düsseldorf Art Academy, 1931–33

1933 In Berlin a new chapter in life begins for Kandinsky, albeit one that lasts only one year. His apartment is in the Villa Henning in Berlin-Südende. He collects works from artist friends for an auction to benefit the Bauhaus. Klee authorizes him to “choose something from Flechtheim.” On April 11, shortly before the National Socialist seizure of power, the Bauhaus in Berlin receives a visit from the police and the Sturmabteilung, who search and seal off the building. On July 19, a faculty meeting resolves to dissolve the school.

Kandinsky spends the summer in France, and stays on in Paris in October. There, he also meets Klee, who is preparing to emigrate, and is busy rearranging his relations with art dealers. Back in Berlin, Kandinsky prepares his departure from Germany. On December 16, he and Nina leave Germany and arrive in Paris on December 21. Their travel route takes them

Kandinsky in front of his painting *Development in Brown*, 1933 (see cat. no. 168)
(photo dated 1938)

Kandinsky and Will Grohmann,
Berlin, 1933

Impelled by the political situation, Alfred Flechtheim gives up his galleries in Germany. Klee turns to Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler in order to transfer his relations with art dealers to Paris. In October, he travels to the French capital and concludes a general agency contract with Kahnweiler. On October 25, he meets Kandinsky, and they visit the Galerie Vavin-Raspail together. He visits Picasso’s studio the next day.

Back in Düsseldorf, Klee prepares to emigrate to Switzerland. On Christmas, he leaves Germany and returns with Lily to his hometown Bern, where Kandinsky had made a stop just a few days earlier after his departure from Germany.

The Bauhaus Dessau after its closure, 1932
(photo: Josef Tokayer)

through Bern, where he visits the collector Hermann Rupf, but just misses Klee.

1934–35 The Kandinskys furnish their new apartment in a recently constructed housing complex in Neuilly-sur-Seine. In February, Kandinsky begins to paint again. In late May, Christian Zervos organizes the first solo show of Kandinsky's work at his Galerie Cahiers d'art. Kandinsky cultivates contacts with some of the Surrealists and other artists on the Parisian art scene, most importantly Hans Arp and Sophie Taeuber-Arp, Alberto Magnelli, and André Breton. In February 1935 he is invited by Josef Albers, who has immigrated to the United States, to be an "artist in residence" at Black Mountain College. As in 1931, he decides not to go

Kandinsky's apartment building in Neuilly-sur-Seine, 1938
(photo: Josef Breitenbach)

1934–35 On June 1, 1934, after a temporary stay in his parents' house, Klee occupies a small apartment on Kistlerweg in Bern, where he lives until his death. That same month, he has his first exhibition at the Galerie Simon (Kahnweiler) in Paris.

Will Grohmann's book *Paul Klee: Handzeichnungen 1921–1930* (The Drawings of Paul Klee 1921–1930), the first volume of a planned catalogue raisonné, appears in Germany in November 1934. After a few months, however, it is seized by the National Socialists.

In Bern, the Klees establish contacts with old acquaintances, among them the family of his collector Hanni Bürgi, and the painter Otto Nebel.

In spring of 1935, the Kunsthalle Bern organizes a major Klee retrospective with 273 works.

The first signs of serious illness become noticeable; Klee is diagnosed the following year with scleroderma.

Klee with Effrossina and Felix Klee as well as Ruth Lotmar in the garden of his home in Düsseldorf, 1933

to America. He publishes numerous theoretical texts, particularly in France, but also in the Netherlands and Denmark.

1936–37 March 4, 1936, marks the twentieth anniversary of Franz Marc's death. Kandinsky publishes a memorial text in *Cahiers d'art* in which he recalls his time with Der Blaue Reiter. On December 4, he celebrates his seventieth birthday. The art dealer Jeanne Bucher organizes the first solo show in her gallery, with works from the years 1910–1935. In a birthday greeting, Klee wishes “that soon we could all to get together for a cozy little chat.”

In February 1937, when Kandinsky has a major exhibition at the Kunsthalle Bern, he visits Klee in his Bern apartment. This is the first reunion of the two artists since their emigration, and at the same time their final meeting before Klee's death in 1940. After the opening, Kandinsky vacations in the Bernese Oberland.

Kandinsky in Mürren in the Bernese Oberland, 1937

1936–37 As a consequence of his illness, in 1936 Klee's annual production reaches an absolute low point, with just twenty-five works.

In February 1937 he receives a visit from Kandinsky, then staying in the Swiss capital for the opening of his exhibition at the Kunsthalle Bern. Poor health prevents Klee from attending the opening, but he is able to visit the exhibition in its final days. According to a statement by Lily, he is impressed in particular by Kandinsky's new “Paris pictures.”

In Munich, the defamatory *Degenerate Art* exhibition opens on July 19, 1937, and includes seventeen works by Klee. A total of 102 works by Klee are confiscated from public collections by the National Socialists.

Paul and Lily Klee with their
cat Bimbo I on their balcony
in Bern, 1935
(photo: Fee Meisel)