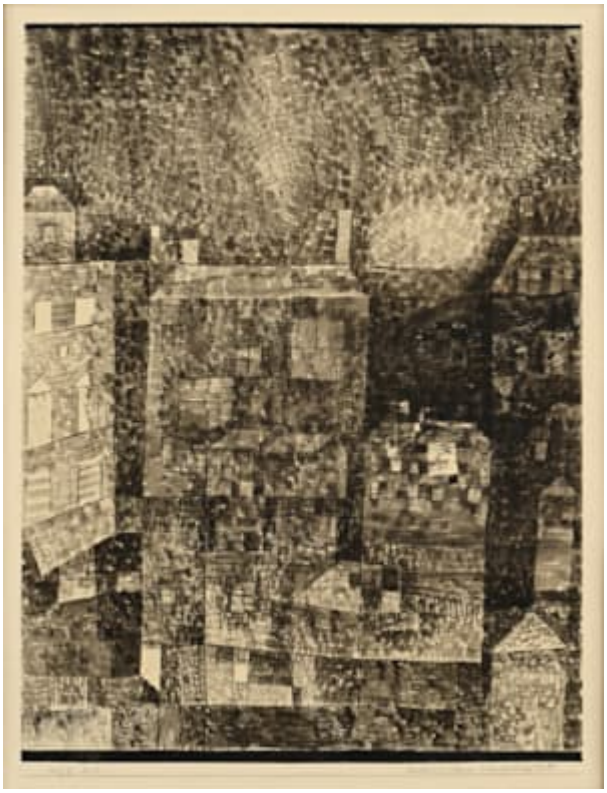


Paul KLEE (Münchenbuchsee 1879 - Muralto 1940)

Nacht-Eindruck einer südlichen Stadt (Night Impression of a Southern Town)

Pen, brush and black (India) ink and black and grey wash, on paper laid down onto the artist's mount.

Signed Klee at the lower left.

Dated and numbered 1925 n.3 and titled Nacht-Eindruck einer südlichen Stadt by the artist in the lower margin.

301 x 226 mm. (11 7/8 x 8 7/8 in.) [image]

411 x 326 mm. (16 1/8 x 12 7/8 in.) [mount]

RECENTLY ACQUIRED BY THE ISTITUTO CENTRALE PER LA GRAFICA, ROME.

Nacht-Eindruck einer südlichen Stadt (Night Impression of a Southern Town) reflects Paul Klee's experiences of the landscape of the island of Sicily. The artist had made his first visit to Italy in April 1914, on his way back from a trip to Tunisia. His steamship sailed along the coast of Sicily, and he spent a day in Palermo, noting in his diary the facades of the buildings and the striking appearance of the hillside towns of the area. Memories of this brief visit inspired him to return to Sicily ten years later, in the summer of 1924. Klee and his wife took lodgings at Mazzarò, a town on the sea below Taormina, for two weeks. The trip resulted in more than two dozen watercolours of Sicilian subjects, mostly of landscapes, which are characterized by intense and vibrant colours.

Klee remained under the spell of Sicily – which he described as 'pure landscape in the abstract' - for much of the next year. In a letter to his wife Lily in November 1924, written from Weimar a few days before the enforced closing of the Bauhaus there, Klee noted that 'Here everyone is in feverish activity in anticipation of the great crisis about to happen in eight days. I am still so filled with Sicily that it hardly touches me.' A few days later he wrote again, 'I experience nothing, don't even want to. I carry the mountains and the sun of Sicily within me. Everything else is boring.'

This drawing is dated early in 1925, and must reflect Klee's memories of his trip to Sicily the previous summer. Colour is extraneous in this nocturnal view of a southern town, which depicts the anonymous village in rich detail, with an arrangement of delicately washed grisaille tones applied in small, tesserae-like blocks that verge on pointillism. Although drawn in the artist's Weimar studio rather than on the spot, the use of a mosaic-like technique in this drawing could well reflect Klee's close study of the rich mosaics of the churches of Palermo and nearby Monreale.

The monochrome grisaille technique of Nacht-Eindruck einer südlichen Stadt (Night Impression of a Southern Town) is also seen in only one other major work on paper of 1925; a pen and ink wash drawing entitled Kind im Asterngarten (Child in the Aster Garden), formerly in a Swiss private collection, which appeared at auction in Switzerland in 2005. In the same year of 1925, Klee used a similar mosaic technique in a handful of colour works executed in watercolours and oils, as well as in some mosaic-like paintings in which the colour squares are larger and more prominent.

As one modern scholar has written, 'Klee was a gardener in a little piece of paradise. Under his direction his charges blossomed beautifully, full of harmony and grace. His motifs seem to develop with consummate ease, almost – it would seem – of their own accord, and whatever basic note he strikes, his colours contrast in such a way that their sound blends in inevitable harmony. Even when he compresses his pictorial resources to the utmost, he never slips into anything uncontrolled or random. Klee formulates subtly sensitive offerings for the viewer's eye, offerings so cautious and gentle that they readily elide consumption in this day and age. Paul Klee's art demands undivided attention – and it is also capable of opening one's eyes to something that lies beyond the image itself.'

The present sheet, although not a watercolour per se, was regarded by Klee as finished and complete work of art, rather than a drawing or study, and as such was released to his dealer Hans Goltz for sale. Shortly after it was drawn, Nacht-Eindruck einer südlichen Stadt (Night Impression of a Southern Town) was exhibited at Goltz's gallery in Munich in May and June of 1925, as part of an exhibition of some 214 works by Klee.

Exhibitions

Munich, Galerie Neue Kunst - Hans Goltz, Paul Klee, Zweite Gesamtausstellung 1920-1925, May-June 1925, no. 202; Tokyo, Fuji Television Gallery and Osaka, Gallery Kasahara, Paul Klee, 1981; New York, Acquavella Galleries, XIX & XX Century Drawings, Watercolors, Pastels, Gouaches, Collages, October-November, 1982, no.16; Munich, Kunsthalle der Hypo-Kulturstiftung, Das ewige Auge – Von Rembrandt bis Picasso: Meisterwerke aus der Sammlung Jan Krugier und Marie-Anne Krugier-Poniatowski, 2007, no.163.

Literature:

Paul Klee, Oeuvre-Katalog, MS., 1925, no.43 (N3); Du, October 1948, illustrated p.24; Bern, Paul Klee Foundation, Paul Klee. Catalogue Raisonné, Vol.IV 1923-1926, 2000, p.300, no.3724 (1925.43); Christiane Lange and Roger Diederen, ed., Das ewige Auge – Von Rembrandt bis Picasso:

Meisterwerke aus der Sammlung Jan Krugier und Marie-Anne Krugier-Poniatowski, exhibition catalogue, Munich, 2007, pp.342-343, no.163; Paris, Société du Salon du dessin, 25e Anniversaire du Salon du Dessin 1991-2016, 2016, illustrated p.218.

Artist description:

'Klee was a gardener in a little piece of paradise. Under his direction his charges blossomed beautifully, full of harmony and grace. His motifs seem to develop with consummate ease, almost – it would seem – of their own accord, and whatever basic note he strikes, his colours contrast in such a way that their sound blends in inevitable harmony. Even when he compresses his pictorial resources to the utmost, he never slips into anything uncontrolled or random. Klee formulates subtly sensitive offerings for the viewer's eye, offerings so cautious and gentle that they readily elide consumption in this day and age. Paul Klee's art demands undivided attention – and it is also capable of opening ones eyes to something that lies beyond the image itself.' (Roland Doschka)

A painter, draughtsman and writer, Paul Klee was born near Bern and studied in Munich under Franz von Stuck. His first independent works date from around 1903, and three years later he settled in Munich, where he met Wassily Kandinsky and became a member of the Neue Künstlervereinigung (New Artist's Association) and the Blauer Reiter (Blue Rider) group. He had his first one-man exhibitions at Herwarth Walden's Berlin gallery Der Sturm in March 1916 and February 1917, the success of which established his reputation. Shortly after leaving military service in 1919, Klee signed an exclusive sales contract with the Munich dealer Hans Goltz. In May and June of 1920 Goltz mounted the first substantial exhibition of Klee's work in his Galerie Neue Kunst in Munich. This was followed in 1923 by another major exhibition of Klee's work, numbering 270 works, at the Nationalgalerie in Berlin. Appointed to a teaching post at the Bauhaus in Weimar in 1920, Klee continued to work there with the move of the school to Dessau in 1925.

An exhibition of Klee's work at the newly opened Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1930 cemented the artist's reputation outside Germany. In 1931 Klee resigned from the Bauhaus to take up a position as professor of painting at the Düsseldorf Akademie, a post he only held for two years before being banned from teaching - as a 'degenerate artist' - by the Nazis in 1933. By the end of that year he had moved to Bern in Switzerland. Although Klee produced relatively little work between 1934 and 1936, another large exhibition was mounted at the Kunsthalle in Bern in 1935. The same year he began showing signs of scleroderma, the disease that would eventually kill him five years later. Klee died in June 1940 at the age of sixty-one, three months after the closing of a final major solo exhibition, devoted to his late work of the previous five years, at the Kunsthaus in Zürich.