



Paul Klee, Poet/Painter (Studies in German Literature Linguistics and Culture)

K. Porter Aichele

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It is no coincidence that most of the artists at the vanguard of early 20th-century modernist art were poets as well as painters. Paul Klee (1879-1940) was among them. Known today almost exclusively as a visual artist, he was also a poet who experimented across a range of poetic forms. In 1901, while still vacillating between a career as a painter and one as a poet, Klee predicted he would end up expressing himself through the word, "the highest form of art." This first scholarly monograph devoted to Klee's poetry proposes that he lived up to that prediction. It considers poems he identified as such and visual images that are poetic in their compositional techniques, metaphorical imagery, and linear structures. It provides selected examples of Klee's poetry along with English translations that capture the spirit and literal meaning of the German originals. It places the poems and related images within the spectrum of contemporary poetic practice, revealing that Klee matched wits with Christian Morgenstern, rose to the provocations of Kurt Schwitters, and gave new form to the Surrealists' "exquisite corpses." Paul Klee, Poet/Painter is a case study in the reciprocity of poetry and painting in early modernist practice. It introduces a little-known facet of Klee's creative activity and re-evaluates his contributions to a modernist aesthetic. Kathryn Porter Aichele is Associate Professor in the Art Department at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

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