

Paul Klee "Head of a Man"



#### Artwork Overview:

"Head of a Man" by Paul Klee seems to be a picture of what the artist may have wanted to depict what a man's head looks like. The colors used in this painting are warm and the shapes are simple. This is a man's head reduced to the most basic form. The artist painted this using oil paint on a canvas stretched over a wooden frame. The brush strokes are obvious and very bold. This shows the very direct way in which the artist painted this piece.

Topics for Discussion:

1. Do you think this painting looks like a man's head? Why or why not?
2. What shapes have the artist used?
3. How did the artist arrange the shapes to make a man's head?
4. How would you arrange these shapes to make a picture of your head?
5. Let's talk about how our face is the same on each side this is called symmetry and your body is the same. (Allow children to feel their faces and notice the bi-symmetrical quality of their bodies.) They could stand and notice that their body is the same on the left and right sides.
6. How does the color in this painting make you feel, warm or cold?
7. Let's talk about color warm colors are reds, yellows and oranges while cool colors are blues, greens and violets. What colors are your hair, eyes and skin?

About the Artist:

Paul Klee (1879-1940)

Paul Klee was born near Bern, Switzerland to Hans Klee who was a musician and music professor and his mother was a singer. Klee started playing the violin when he was seven, and at eleven was already a member of the Bern Music Society. Klee was an excellent violinist, and continued to play for the rest of his life.

He was never interested in music to the extent that he was interested in painting. He established himself as an artist after moving to Munich, Germany, where in 1898 he began to study painting. During this time he divided his time between Bern and Munich where he met his wife and was married in 1906. He became friends with painters Wassily Kandinsky and Franz Marc and exhibited with Der Blau Reiter (The Blue Rider) group just before World War 1. His association with this group influenced his movement toward abstraction and interest in the use of color. His interest in nature is evident in the frequent references to representational elements such as people, objects and trees and ideograms. He maintained the sensory experience of nature throughout his painting career.

Klee taught at the Bauhaus School of Design from 1920-1929. He left Germany in 1933 when the Nazis came to power. He moved to Switzerland and spent the rest of his life there. Klee is considered one of the most famous and original masters of modern painting. Klee's thousands of paintings, drawings, and prints are masterpieces of fantasy and invention. His paintings are usually small filled with childlike symbols and inventions. Line was very important in his art, expressing movement and tension on his painted, printed and drawn surfaces. Line also creates shapes, some representational and others ideographic. Klee's paintings, drawing watercolors and ink masterpieces are in public and private art collections around the world.

## Hands on Art Activity

**Teacher Preparation:** Trace oval for face on manila tagboard for children to cut out. Provide tracers of geometric shapes for children to trace with a pencil. Provide small, manageable pieces of construction paper or cardstock for children to trace on.

**Materials:** 12 x 18 Construction paper  
Manila tagboard for oval  
Construction paper/cardstock pieces for shapes  
Mirrors  
Scissors, pencils, glue sticks, & crayons (kids supply)

## Directions:

1. Discuss the shape of their head, their eyes, nose etc. They may want to look in the mirrors and touch their faces to get a better sense of the shapes.
2. Before they cut and glue anything, show them the position of these shapes on the face by holding them up to your own face. Show them how to place them on the oval.
3. First glue the oval shape for the face onto a background 12 x 18 sheet of paper.
3. Have the children use a pencil to trace the geometric shapes on construction paper.
4. Cut the shapes and then glue onto the oval for the face.
5. Please allow the children to figure the arrangement of the shapes with as little assistance as possible. (They learn by doing.)
6. Details can be added with crayons when shapes are glued.
7. Make sure the names appear on the front of the portrait.