

TimeOut New York

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**Paul Klee, "Klee:
The Late Years"**
Metropolitan Museum of Art,
through Jun 27 (see Museums).

The current Paul Klee show at the Met, devoted to the 15 years prior to his death in 1940, is so broad and represents so many diverse stages of the artist's career that it seems like little more than a slender excuse to host yet another exhibition of the artist. (According to the museum, the Met has installed three Klee shows a year for the past 15 years). But given the artist's considerable gifts for depicting urban spaces paradoxically steeped in primordial menace, there are still some real gems to be found.

Foremost among them is *Stricken City* (1936), a heavily worked oil-on-gypsum painting that resembles a carving, with deeply grooved marks on a muddy brown field. Small, childish but deliberate hatches arranged in horizontal bands culminate in a massive black arrow. Close inspection reveals a thin line demarcating a central mound—a Tower of Babel of sorts—

whose doomed fate the ominous arrow indicates. (Nazis terminated Klee's teaching position at the Dusseldorf Academy in 1933, the same year they closed the Bauhaus where he had taught for 11 years; these events no doubt contributed to his sense of social stagnation).

In Memory of an All-Girl Band (1925) showcases Klee's more humorous (but still eerie) vision of the metropolis as a disaffecting place where anything goes. Bizarre figures, composed of countless tiny pen scratches, give a loopy performance in a topsy-turvy cabaret scene, where something that might be a distant door frame doubles as a freakishly elongated hat.

Klee's move in the late 1930s away from his signature hatched repetitions



Paul Klee, *North German City*, 1930.

to more open, expressive paint handling fares less well in the show. These late works evoke the idylls of Matisse rather than Klee's own, earlier portents of the estranging contradictions of the city.—*Eva Diaz*