

PICASSO AND KLEE IN THE HEINZ BERGGRUEN COLLECTION

Works from the Museum Berggruen, Neue Nationalgalerie, Berlin

28 October 2025 to 1 February 2026

Curators: Paloma Alarcó and Gabriel Montua

The Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza is presenting *Picasso and Klee in the Heinz Berggruen Collection*, an exhibition organised in collaboration with the Museum Berggruen in Berlin that reveals the artistic connection between two geniuses of modern art, Pablo Picasso and Paul Klee. Curated by Paloma Alarcó, chief curator of Modern Painting at the Museo Thyssen, and Gabriel Montua, director of the Museum Berggruen, the exhibition pays tribute to the legacy of Heinz Berggruen, one of the most important art dealers and collectors of the 20th century, through fifty works, the majority from the collection of the museum in Berlin. The exhibition is also supported by the Comunidad de Madrid.

In conjunction with the renovation of its building, since 2022 the Museum Berggruen has been organising a series of international exhibitions in Japan, China, Australia and Europe in order to present the most important works from its collection. In the case of the Museo Thyssen, the exhibition proposes a visual and intellectual dialogue between these two artists, who were the collector's favourites.

Images: Pablo Picasso. *Dora Maar with Green Fingernails*, 1936; Paul Klee. *The Sealed Lady*, 1930. Museum Berggruen, Neue Nationalgalerie, Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin

More information: Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza. Press Office. Paseo del Prado, 8. 28014 Madrid. Tel. +34 913600236 / +34 914203944. prensa@museothyssen.org
<https://www.museothyssen.org/en/private-area/press/dossiers/picasso-and-klee-heinz-berggruen-collection>



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Neue Nationalgalerie
Staatliche Museen zu Berlin

MUSEUM
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With the collaboration of



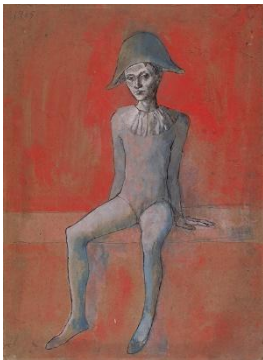
The Heinz Berggruen Collection

Heinz Berggruen (Berlin, 1914 – Paris, 2007) first became interested in modern painting during his years in exile in San Francisco where he was working for the San Francisco Museum of Art and shortly assisted the Mexican artist Diego Rivera. Following his return to Europe after World War II, Berggruen became involved in the art market and opened his first gallery in Paris in 1948. Years later he acquired another location that would become the Galerie Berggruen & Cie. Although Paris was no longer the centre of the art world, Berggruen played a decisive role in the international art market in the second half of the 20th century, focusing on obtaining important works from prestigious collections and attracting major patrons of modern art as clients.



From 1980 onwards he devoted himself exclusively to collecting works by 20th-century masters, primarily Picasso and Klee, whom he described in his memoirs as "the two fundamental creators of the first half of our century." In 2000, his extraordinary collection of works was acquired by the German government, leading to the creation of the Museum Berggruen as part of the Nationalgalerie. This fulfilled Berggruen's wish not only to preserve his collection for posterity but also to share it and make it accessible to the general public. As such, the process can be considered very similar to that undertaken by Hans Heinrich Thyssen-Bornemisza and the Spanish government in 1993.

Picasso and Klee



Pablo Picasso. *The Seated Harlequin*, 1905. Museum Berggruen, Neue Nationalgalerie, Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin

Picasso and Klee had very contrasting personalities: the former more down-to-earth, excessive, southern and sensuous and the latter more introspective, Nordic, spiritual and intellectual. They were nonetheless interested in each other, and their creative processes and works reveal numerous similarities. The two shared a spirit of experimentation, a facility for drawing, an interest in the same genres and themes, an inclination for satire and sarcasm as a means of transgression, and the use of distortion of forms and the human body. Through a radical visual language they contributed to transforming the way we see and approach the world, leaving a profound mark on the development of modern and contemporary art.

These similarities are reflected in the exhibition through four sections dedicated to the themes and genres that they shared: *Portraits and masks*, *Places*, *Objects* and *Harlequins and nudes*. Each section also includes works from the collection of the Museo Thyssen, some of which belonged to Berggruen in the past, thus highlighting the ties that united the artists and the two collectors.

Portraits and masks

Picasso and Klee played a decisive role in the paradigmatic shift in modern portraiture. Through caricatural distortion and masking they contributed to redefining the genre, each with their own style and different meanings. In their works apparent identity gives way to a deeper and more revealing one.

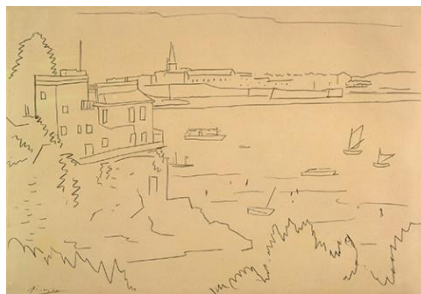
The two studies of *Nude with Drapery* by Picasso, together with *Head of a Woman* (1906-1907) and *Female Nude (Study for "Les Femmes d'Alger")* (1907) reveal the influence that masks from non-Western cultures had on the artist, who did not see them merely as a formal resource but also grasped their magical and transformative dimension. Picasso's talent for caricature is also reflected in his Cubist portraits, such as *Man with a Clarinet* (1911-1912), and in his depictions of Dora Maar, for which he made use of distortion and deconstruction of the human body.



Paul Klee. *Mrs. R. Travelling in the South*, 1924. Museum Berggruen, Neue Nationalgalerie, Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin

Klee also experimented with reduction and distortion, as well as with the concealment offered by masks, influenced by his fascination with the exhibits in the Ethnographic Museum in Munich and puppet theatre masks. In his portraits he transcended external appearances to reflect what lay beneath the surface, employing an apparently simple graphic approach and techniques typical of caricature. This is evident in works such as *Mrs. R. Travelling in the South* (1924), in which the figure acquires a ghostly air, and in *The Sealed Lady* (1930), in which the subject stands out for the paleness of her skin and red, sealing wax lips from which a black line that defines her femme fatale features emerges.

Places



Pablo Picasso. *View of Saint-Malo*, 1922. Museum Berggruen, Neue Nationalgalerie, Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin

Landscape was a fundamental theme in the early years of Picasso and Klee. For the former it was key to the development of numerous experiments, particularly in the development of Cubism. His panoramic views of Horta del Ebro, with their multiple viewpoints and fragmented surfaces, were considered by Gertude Stein to be his first works in this style. In the exhibition this interest in landscape is evident in *Still Life in front of a Window, Saint-Raphaël* (1919) and *View of Saint-Malo* (1922). However, Picasso did not cultivate it with the same intensity as Klee, for whom it occupied a central place in his output. His trip

to Tunisia in 1914 had an impact on his style and he began to move away from mimesis and engage in dialogue with nature in order to discover its inner workings and structure.

Although the exhibition only includes a small number of landscapes by Picasso they nonetheless reflect the thematic connection between the two artists, which dates back to 1912 when Klee encountered a number of paintings by Picasso in the second exhibition of The Blue Rider group in Munich. The Cubist language would significantly influence his work, as evident, for example, in *Dream City* and *Revolving House* (both 1921).

Paul Klee. *Dream City*, 1921. Museum Berggruen, Neue Nationalgalerie, Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin



Objects



Pablo Picasso. *Still Life with a Bunch of Grapes*, 1914. Museum Berggruen, Neue Nationalgalerie, Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin

Still life was established as a pictorial genre in the Netherlands in the 17th century. During this period the elements depicted acquired a symbolic meaning linked to a reflection on human existence and vanity. In the 20th century, attention shifted towards formal exploration, locating the object at the centre of artistic creation. Picasso and Klee shared a desire to understand the essence of things and the genre of still life offered a terrain in which to play, fragmenting and reconstructing reality.

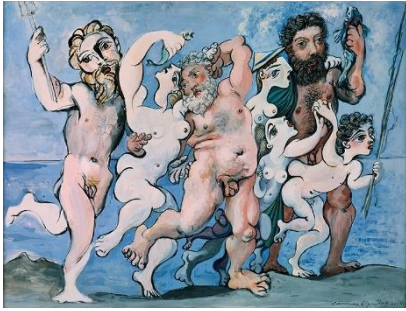
With a profound understanding of the pictorial tradition and influenced by the geometric reduction of Cézanne's painting, Picasso constantly experimented with still life throughout his career. Through the fragmentation of matter and space, he challenged established norms. From 1912 onwards he went a step further by introducing objects such as newspapers, sawdust and playing cards, as in *Still Life with a Bunch of Grapes* (1914), thus laying the foundations of Synthetic Cubism, in which reality is unified with representation.

Klee's approach to Cubism is evident in his abandonment of perspective. Rather than deconstructing bodies, however, he created dreamlike architectural structures by fusing smaller elements and allowing the forms to float in an undefined space. Still life offered him the means to investigate the true essence of things and the relationships between them, imbuing them with symbolic and metaphorical meanings. In his essay *Wege des Naturstudiums* (Ways to study nature) he argued that the essence of an object goes beyond its external appearance, which led him to investigate the internal structure of living and inanimate beings in order to include dynamic forms in his works that evolved like those of nature, as in *Chinese Porcelain* (1923) and *Flower and Fruit* (1927).



Paul Klee. *Chinese Porcelain*, 1923. Museum Berggruen, Neue Nationalgalerie, Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin

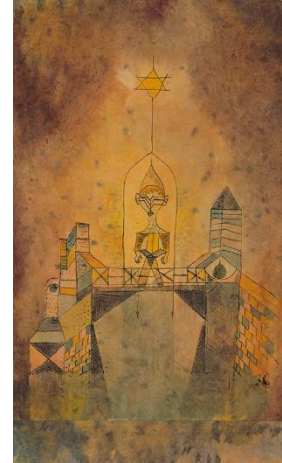
Harlequins and nudes



Pablo Picasso. *Silenus in dancing Company*, 1933. Museum Berggruen, Neue Nationalgalerie, Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin

Picasso was fascinated by the human body and painted men and women in numerous different ways and with different approaches, from his naturalist period to his final phase and encompassing the development of Cubism. This section reveals his interest through two themes: the nude, exemplified in *Two Bathers* (1921), *Reclining Bather* (1920) and *Silenus in dancing Company* (1933), and the world of the circus, seen in *The Seated Harlequin* (1905), *The Circus* (1968-1969) and *Harlequin with a Mirror* (1923), a work that once belonged to Heinz Berggruen and is now in the permanent collection of the Museo Thyssen. These two themes come together in some of the artist's works, for example *Young Man with a Mirror and Studies of Female Nudes* (1923), in which a nude woman is shown next to a man wearing a Harlequin collar and holding a mirror in his right hand.

Klee was also inspired by the circus and painted works on this subject a number of times, although his approach to the body differed from Picasso's, as he conceived of it as an extension to the architecture in which it is located. This idea is evident in *Harlequin on the Bridge* (1920), in which both the structure of the bridge and the figure share geometric patterns and a similar palette which fuses them into a single whole, and in *Awakening* (1920), in which the reclining silhouette is integrated into the background through similar shapes and chromatic ranges.



Paul Klee. *Harlequin on the Bridge*, 1920. Museum Berggruen, Neue Nationalgalerie, Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin

EXHIBITION DETAILS

Title: *Picasso and Klee in the Heinz Berggruen Collection. Works from the Museum Berggruen, Neue Nationalgalerie Berlin*

Organised by: Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza in collaboration with Museum Berggruen, Neue Nationalgalerie Berlin.

With the collaboration of: Comunidad de Madrid

Venue and dates: Madrid, Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza, 28 October 2025 to 1 February 2026.

Curators: Paloma Alarcó, chief curator of Modern Painting at the Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza, and Gabriel Montua, director of the Museum Berggruen.

Associate curators: Marta Ruiz del Árbol, senior curator of Modern Painting at the Museo Thyssen, and Natalie Zimmer, curator at the Museum Berggruen.

Number of works: 50.

Publications: Catalogue with texts by Paloma Alarcó, Gabriel Montua, Marta Ruiz del Árbol and Natalie Zimmer, and an introduction by Olivier Berggruen, the collector's son.

VISITOR INFORMATION

Address: Paseo del Prado, 8. 28014, Madrid. Postpop galleries

Opening hours: Lunes, de 12 a 16 horas (entrada gratuita); de martes a domingo, de 10 a 19 horas.

Ticket prices: Combined entry: Permanent collection and temporary exhibitions. Standard ticket: €14; reduced admission: €10 (visitors aged over 65, pensioners and students); groups (7 or more): €12 per person; free entry: visitors aged under 18, officially unemployed Spanish citizens, visitors with disabilities, Large Families, active teaching staff, and holders of the Youth Card and European Youth Card. Advance ticket sales from the box office, on the museum's website, and on tel: +34 91 791 13 70.

More information: <https://www.museothyssen.org/>

PRESS INFORMATION

<https://www.museothyssen.org/en/private-area/press/dossiers/picasso-and-quee-heinz-berggruen-collection>