

Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern

Benedikt Loderer, city wayfarer

The best way to approach the Zentrum Paul Klee is on foot from the west. You alight from bus no. 12 at the second-last stop—Schosshalde—and follow the overhead wires until you arrive at a low rise. The Center is almost opposite. You cannot see the freeway, but its buzz fills the air. Despite the noise of traffic, you have an image of traditional, middle Switzerland before you. On the right there is a village-like group of houses, while a dark line of trees marks the edge of the forest in the background; you have the feeling that the three hills are set in the middle of a huge carpet. They shimmer silver, catching the eye because they don't seem to be part of the familiar picture. They appear small and delicate—from the middle distance their size is hard to comprehend, since there is nothing in the optical memory against which to measure them. Even before you arrive at the site, its ambivalence becomes apparent. You cannot make a final judgment on something so indefinable.

And yet, you know this is it. The Zentrum Paul Klee already belongs to the country's stock of cultural images. Long before you have seen it, the optical equation $K = 3W$ is established in your head. The Klee museum is the one with the three waves.

When you arrive at the bridge over the freeway, the true picture emerges: The carpet drops away, and the noise-reducing walls and a moat full of traffic now dominate the scene. On the wall is a red symbol—the transmutation of a Paul Klee watercolor, Unstable Signpost, painted in 1937. An exclamation mark, originally invented as two-dimensional, now stands there three-dimensional. The observer wonders how it came to be on the wall. You continue past the enormous roofs of what were once farmhouses, and arrive at Villa Schöngrün, freshly renovated and restored as a little jewel case of the petty nobility. You note the word "restaurant" for later.

As you approach the three hills at an acute angle, you see the three waves one after another and gaze in amazement at the flowing double motion: the long, drawn-out, horizontal curve of the hills inclining gently away from us follows the fast-flowing arc of the freeway. This curve connects to the threefold up-and-down of the steel arcs of