

# DOEPAK



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## Paul Klee: a ghost and a big-eared clown

Try it yourself? Another exciting activity from the *Puppetry Museum*. Visual artist *Paul Klee* (1879 – 1940) was a contemporary of, among others, Theo van Doesburg, Wassily Kandinsky, August Macke and Piet Mondriaan. He also taught at the Bauhaus in Weimar for some time. From 1916 to 1925, Klee created almost fifty *hand puppet theatre characters* for his son Felix (1907 – 1990). They originated in the kitchen at their home in Munich. *Felix Klee* told the following story: 'I often went to see performances with *Kasperl Larifari* at "Papa Schmid's" *Munich Marionettes Theatre*. At home I kept whining about my own set of puppets. When I was nine, I was given eight puppets hand-painted by my father. Their heads were made of plaster of Paris and papier-mâché. He had sewn clothes from old rags.

My father gave me at least fifty puppets. He also made puppets from matchboxes, wood, tin, brushes, bones, nuts and a socket. Thirty puppets survived the ravages of time, including *Kasperl* and *Gretl*, the *police constable*, the *devil*, a *scoundrel*, the *Barber of Bagdad*, a *monk*, a puppet that resembles my father, and *caricatures* of other friends and acquaintances. If I wanted to hold a performance, my father would hang up a wooden picture frame between the living room and bedroom. Our cat *Fritzi* was usually the only spectator and sometimes my father would watch the show. He would sit down comfortably with a pipe in his mouth and laugh at my jokes.'

The pictures above show the *big-eared clown*. In the way the puppet's head has been painted you recognise the influence of the 'The Style Movement'. Typical of this style are the geometric lines and bright colours. Somehow the figure resembles *Harlequin*, one of the *jesters* from the *commedia dell'arte*, improvisational theatre that originated in Italy during the sixteenth century. The 'Zentrum Paul Klee' (Switzerland) has developed four do-it-yourself kits with which five replicas of Paul Klee's hand puppets can be put together. Hetty Paërl (Amsterdam) created these copies (Mr and Mrs *Death*, the white-haired *Eskimo* and the depicted *ghost* and *clown*) for the *Puppetry Museum* (*Poppenspe(e)lmuseum NL*).

Would you like to learn even more about international *folk and mainstream puppet theatre figures* and about *artists* who were inspired by puppet theatre? Then refer to our websites on [www.geheugenvanederland.nl/poppenspel2](http://www.geheugenvanederland.nl/poppenspel2), [www.poppenspelmuseumbibliotheek.nl](http://www.poppenspelmuseumbibliotheek.nl) or [www.poppenspel.info](http://www.poppenspel.info). In our *web shop* and *museum shop* we have family board games based on a puppetry theme and documentation that invites you to explore the *Try it yourself?* activity. Illustrations: head of *Zündholzschachtelgeist* and a *Swiss stamp* - issued on the occasion of the opening of the 'Zentrum Paul Klee' in 2005 - with a picture of the 'Monument im Fruchland' water colour painting and the *Breitohrclown* (Big-eared Clown). The white, wavy lines on the stamp represent the contours of the Bern landscape, and the centre designed by the Italian architect Renzo Piano, where exhibitions and performances are being held.

Would you like to create your own puppet theatre character? Take an empty matchbox. Decorate it, glue a passport photo or draw a face in the bottom part. Put a feather on the puppet's head. Slide the box open and stick one or two fingers through it. Now your finger puppet is ready and the performance can start.  
Text and realisation: Otto van der Mieden © (2007). Pictures of characters: Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern ©. Have fun. Applause!

Doepak presents some unusual theatre forms, far beyond the confines of our own fantasy! Doepak is a cheerful, educational and colourful Dutch-language newsletter packed with background information about folk and mainstream puppet theatre. In this newsletter and scribblings you can also read about all kinds of activities in the Puppetry Museum such as which exhibitions are on show, whether new books were issued, and how the website is developing. The Dutch verbs of 'doen' (do) and 'pakken' (take) are hidden in the name of the Doepak newsletter. This name was composed for good reason, because you are supposed to 'do' and 'take' things yourself. The name 'Doepak' is also the phonetic transcription in Dutch of the Czech word dupák. A dupák is a rod marionette and trick puppet. Where the dupák swings his arms wide as he twirls around, Doepak embraces the international world of puppetry and related arts with its hints and tips, questions and answers, illustrations and DIY activities. In Slovakian and Hungarian puppet theatre the dupák is called Paprika Jancsi.