

APRIL 2019

## SIGNS



Our world is full of signs, symbols, icons, signals, signets and pictograms.

They show us the way, give clues and information, they advertise and inform, they can make us happy but also fearful. A cross can be understood as a religious symbol, a cross, a double cross or a crucifix; the White Cross, the Red Cross, - crosses in all colours and shapes including the symbol of terror, the swastika.

Signs also represent things or ideas. The star as in the star of David is more than just a symbol of a state, this sign is full of religious meanings, represents an ideology and identity. The Mercedes Star is a sign of recognition of a car make but also stands for affluence or ostentation. The stars on an officer's uniform indicate his degree and significance and the stars in show business remind you of transiency of fame and glory.

But signs are also the origin of script. In ancient Egypt a haulm of reed meant 'reed' but also stood for the sound of 's'; in the Hebrew script a small square 'Beit' is called 'house' and also means 'house' and it stands for the letter 'B'.

Signs are abstraction and play a big part in modern painting.

Even a child is using this technique. In a square with a triangle on top we recognise a house, trees are represented with mostly trunk and top and a human being first as a cephalopod, and only a little bit later their arms start growing from the belly. They are signs and want to be read as that.

When Paul Klee reduced his houses to simple squares and painted a tree in the shape of a leaf, he deliberately wanted to put 'signs'. If he would have wanted to paint a tree with all its details he could have done better. But he wanted to show only the concept of 'tree', 'trees' or 'woods'. One reads these signs in the entirety of the composition, recognises its meaning and forms ones own idea based on the picture, and it leads to a dialog in between the nocturnal woods of the artist and ones 'own' woods.

Many modern artists developed their own picture script over the course of their lives, each one in his own personal way. And it is now up to the viewer to read into this interesting world of colour and sign languages.