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Albert Anker

Albert Anker (1831-1910) has been called the Swiss national painter because of his enduringly popular depictions of 19th century Swiss village life.

- Born in Ins as the son of veterinarian Samuel Anker, he attended school in Neuchâtel and later in Bern. He studied theology, but was inspired by the great art collections in Germany, and in 1854 he convinced his father to agree to an artistic career.

Anker moved to Paris, where he attended the Ecole Impériale et Spéciale des Beaux-Arts in 1855-60. Back in Switzerland, he installed a studio in the attic of his parents' house and participated regularly in exhibitions in Switzerland and in Paris. Anker married Anna Rüfli in 1864, and they had six children; four of his children appear in some of his paintings.

In 1870-74 he was a member of the Grand Council of Bern, where he advocated the construction of the Kunstmuseum Bern.



Die Andacht des Grossvaters

Apart from his regular wintertime stays in Paris, Anker frequently travelled to Italy and other European countries. In 1889-93 and 1895-98 he was a member of the Swiss Federal Art Commission and in 1900 he received a honorary doctorate from the University of Berne.

His paintings depict his fellow citizens in an unpretentious and plain manner, without idealising country life, but also without the critical examination of social conditions that can be found in the works of contemporaries such as Daumier.

Anker created hundreds of commissioned watercolours and drawings, mostly portraits and illustrations, including for an edition of Jeremias Gotthelf's collected works. To provide for a steady income, Anker also decorated more than 500 faience plates.

Many Swiss postage stamps and other media have incorporated Anker's work. His studio in Ins has been preserved as a museum by the Albert Anker Foundation. One of Anker's greatest admirers and collectors is former Federal Councillor Christoph Blocher.

from the internet

Paul Klee

Paul Klee was born in Münchenbuchsee near Bern on 18 December 1879 into a musical family. In his early years Klee focused on becoming a musician; but he decided on the visual arts during his teen years.



Southern (Tunisian) Gardens 1919, by Paul Klee

In 1898 he decided to move to Munich, where he studied etching, drawing and painting. His first travels took him to Rome in 1901/02 and, in 1905, to Paris. In 1908 Klee met Wassily Kandinsky, Franz Marc and Hans Arp, who would exert the formative influences on his work. After a two years' stay in Tunisia, Klee returned to Germany, where he was invited in 1920 by Walter Gropius to teach at the Bauhaus in Weimar. In 1924 he showed work in New York; in 1925 he took part in the first group show of 'peinture surréaliste' in Paris, where he shared the honours with Max Ernst, Joan Miró and Pablo Picasso. In 1933, pressure from the National Socialists brought about Klee's dismissal from the Düsseldorf Academy and he moved to Bern. In 1937 the National Socialists removed his works from German museums, and 17 of his works were shown at the notorious exhibition of 'Degenerate Art'.

He died in Locarno, on June 29, 1940 without having obtained Swiss citizenship, despite his birth in that country. His art work was considered too revolutionary, even degenerate, by the Swiss authorities, but eventually they accepted his request six days after his death.

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