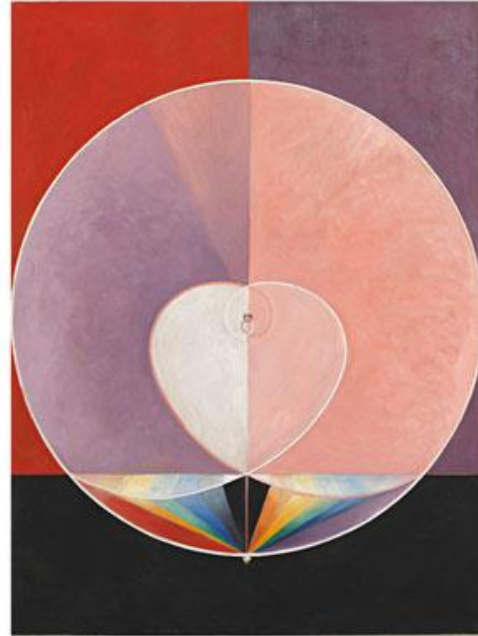


Media release

ART
GALLERY
NSW

SYDNEY: Thursday 4 February 2021



Hilma af Klint *The Ten Largest, Group IV, No. 3, Youth* 1907, tempera on paper mounted on canvas, 330 x 248 cm, courtesy of the Hilma af Klint Foundation, HAK104; *Group IX/UW, The Dove No.2* 1915, oil on canvas, 152 x 115cm, courtesy of the Hilma af Klint Foundation, HAK174. Photos: The Moderna Museet, Stockholm, Sweden

Hilma af Klint: The Secret Paintings

12 June – 19 September 2021

The Art Gallery of New South Wales is delighted to announce [*Hilma af Klint: The Secret Paintings*](#), the first major survey in the Asia Pacific region of visionary Swedish artist Hilma af Klint (1862–1944), whose remarkable body of abstract and mystical paintings bring new perspectives to the narratives of modern art and has become an international sensation.

When af Klint began creating her ambitious new works in 1906, no one had seen paintings like hers before – so monumental in scale, with such radiant colour combinations, enigmatic symbols and other-worldly shapes. Influenced by the spiritualist practices of her time, af Klint believed that her paintings contained messages for humanity communicated to her through the visions she received from spirits.

Stored away and scarcely known for decades, the startling re-discovery of af Klint's 'secret paintings' has captured the imagination of contemporary audiences, with a 2019 exhibition of her work at the Guggenheim Museum breaking attendance records and taking New York by storm.

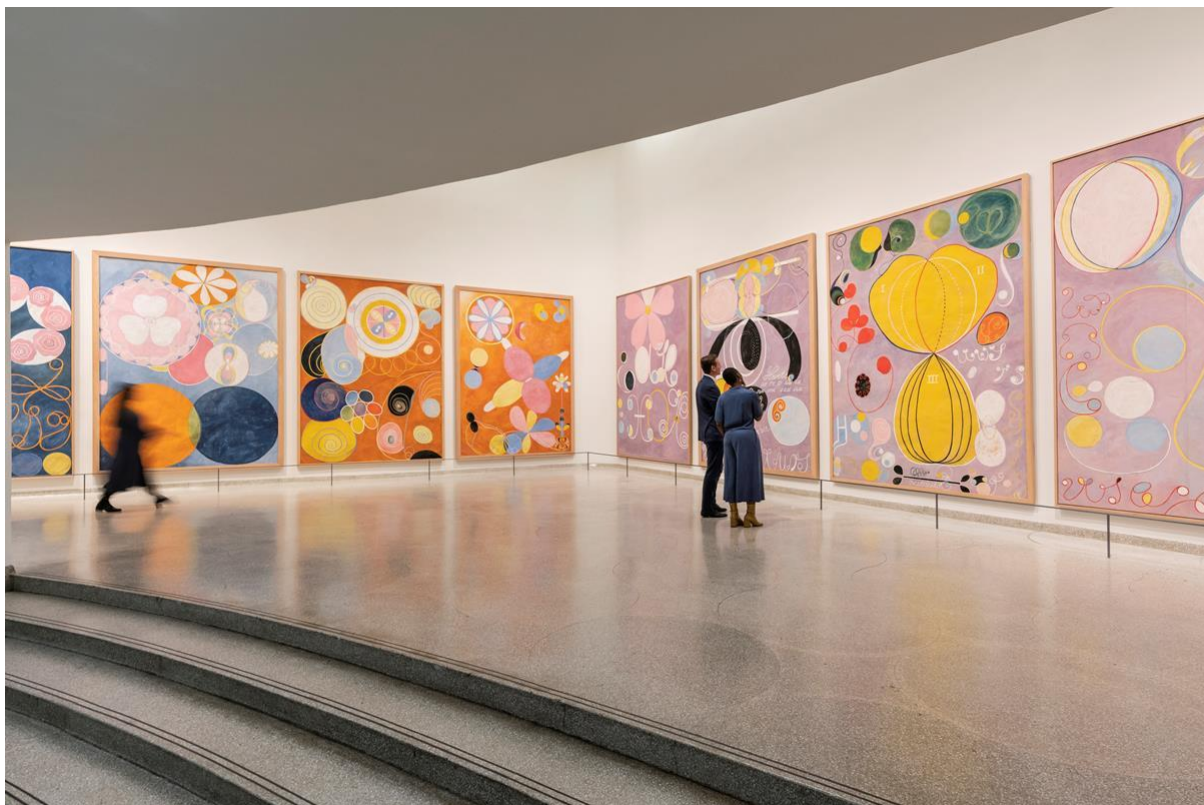
Opening in June, *Hilma af Klint: The Secret Paintings* is a new exhibition, featuring more than 100 works, curated by **Sue Cramer** from Heide Museum of Modern Art in Melbourne, who collaborated

with Art Gallery of NSW senior curator of modern and contemporary international art **Nicholas Chambers** for its presentation in Sydney.

Art Gallery of NSW director **Dr Michael Brand** said: "*Hilma af Klint: The Secret Paintings* is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to discover the extraordinary artistic achievements of this trailblazing artist who stood for too long outside the accepted story of European modernism.

"In an era of limited creative freedom for women, af Klint's secret paintings became an outlet for her prodigious intelligence, spiritual quest and ground-breaking artistic vision," said Brand.

"We are privileged to present this exhibition of af Klint's remarkably forward-looking paintings. Very few of them were exhibited during her lifetime, and only in the last decade have these works started to receive the detailed attention they deserve. Af Klint is at last taking her place in the canon of truly imaginative and innovative twentieth century artists."



Installation view: *Hilma af Klint: Paintings for the Future* October 12, 2018 - April 23, 2019, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York. Photo: David Heald

A centrepiece of the exhibition is *The Ten Largest* 1907, ten huge exuberantly colourful paintings, brimming with wondrous arrangements of shapes and motifs, through which the artist explores the four stages of human development.

Other highlights include af Klint's rarely seen early botanical watercolours; her experiments with the spiritualist group The Five; a large selection of works from the *Paintings for the Temple* cycle; more than 30 abstract watercolours from the last decades of the artist's life, several of which have never before been placed on public exhibition; and a selection of notebooks, which give fascinating insights into her influences and processes.

Hilma af Klint: The Secret Paintings is supported by the NSW Government through its tourism and

major events agency, Destination NSW and presented with the cooperation of The Hilma af Klint Foundation, Stockholm in association with Heide Museum of Modern Art, Melbourne.

Minister for Jobs, Investment, Tourism and Western Sydney **Stuart Ayres** said the Australian exclusive was an exciting addition to the state's cultural calendar.

"As identified in our recently launched Visitor Economy Strategy 2030, investing in world-class events is a key pillar in achieving our goal to be the premier visitor economy in the Asia Pacific," Mr Ayres said.

"When New York City's prestigious Guggenheim Museum presented a Hilma af Klint exhibition in 2018-19, it broke attendance records.

"*Hilma af Klint: The Secret Paintings* will be a must-see event when it opens in Sydney this June and will play an important role in attracting visitors and Sydneysiders to the heart of our Harbour City."

Born in Stockholm in 1862, af Klint was one of the first women to study painting at the city's Royal Academy of Fine Arts, graduating with honours in 1887. She established herself as a respected painter in Stockholm and, like many of her contemporaries, became deeply engaged with spiritualism, Rosicrucianism, and Theosophy, which had a profound influence on her practice.

In 1896, af Klint and four other like-minded women founded a spiritual group named The Five and studied esoteric texts, conducted séances, exercised automatic writing and mediumistic drawing. Following a traffic accident, Klint died in the autumn of 1944, aged almost 82, leaving behind more than 1,300 rarely seen works and 124 notebooks. Her works have since been displayed in major museums in New York, London, Stockholm and São Paulo.

The illustrated book *Hilma af Klint: The Secret Paintings* includes new writing by Sue Cramer (editor), Nicholas Chambers, Jennifer Higgie, Aaron Lister and Julia Voss.

Hilma af Klint: The Secret Paintings is presented at the Art Gallery of NSW from 12 June to 19 September 2021 with tickets on sale soon.

The Gallery will continue to be guided by the NSW Government's health guidelines. For more information, please visit our [website](#).

Join the conversation #HilmaAfKlint

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