

GUGGENHEIM

NEWS RELEASE

Guggenheim Museum Presents *Hilma af Klint: Paintings for the Future*

First Major Solo Exhibition in the United States Offers Historic Look at af Klint's Artistic Achievements

Accompanied by an exhibition of new work by R. H. Quaytman on Rotunda Level 6

Exhibition: *Hilma af Klint: Paintings for the Future*
Venue: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1071 Fifth Avenue, New York
Location: Rotunda Levels 1–5
Dates: October 12, 2018, to April 23, 2019

(NEW YORK, NY—October 11, 2018)—From October 12, 2018, to April 23, 2019, the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum presents the first major solo exhibition in the United States of the Swedish artist Hilma af Klint (1862–1944). When af Klint began creating radically abstract paintings in 1906, they were like little that had been seen before: bold, colorful, and untethered from recognizable references to the physical world. It was several years before Vasily Kandinsky, Kazimir Malevich, Piet Mondrian, and others would take similar strides to free their own artwork of representational content. Yet af Klint rarely exhibited her remarkably forward-looking paintings and, convinced the world was not ready for them, stipulated that they not be shown for 20 years following her death. Ultimately, her work was not exhibited until 1986, and it is only over the past three decades that her paintings and works on paper have received serious attention.

Hilma af Klint: Paintings for the Future offers an opportunity to experience af Klint's artistic achievements in the Guggenheim's rotunda more than a century after she began her daring work. Curated by Tracey Bashkoff, Director of Collections and Senior Curator, with the assistance of David Horowitz, Curatorial Assistant, and organized with the cooperation of the Hilma af Klint Foundation, Stockholm, the exhibition features more than 170 of af Klint's artworks and focus on the artist's breakthrough years, 1906–20. It is during this period that she began to produce nonobjective and stunningly imaginative paintings, creating a singular body of work that invites a reevaluation of modernism and its development.

In conjunction with *Hilma af Klint: Paintings for the Future*, the museum presents *R. H. Quaytman: + x*,

Chapter 34. In these new works, Quaytman engages af Klint's aesthetic language and spiritually charged subject matter, reexamining both through the lens of the Guggenheim Museum's founding ethos, which was indebted to the art and theories of Kandinsky and culminated with the commissioning of Frank Lloyd Wright to design "a temple of spirit." Quaytman's abiding interest in af Klint extends back to 1989, when Quaytman organized an exhibition on the Swedish artist at New York's P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center.

Hilma af Klint was born in Stockholm in 1862 and went on to study painting at the city's Royal Academy of Fine Arts, graduating with honors in 1887. She soon established herself as a respected painter in Stockholm, exhibiting deftly rendered figurative paintings and serving briefly as secretary of the Society for Swedish Women Artists. During these years, she also became deeply engaged with spiritualism, Rosicrucianism, and Theosophy. These forms of spirituality, which were also of keen interest to other artists, including Kandinsky, František Kupka, Malevich, and Mondrian, were widely popular across Europe and the United States, as people sought to reconcile long-held religious beliefs with scientific advances and a new awareness of the global plurality of religions.

Af Klint developed her new approach to art making together with her spiritual practice, outside of Stockholm's male-dominated art world. She had begun to regularly hold séances with four other women by 1896. During a meeting in 1906, one of the spirits that the group often channeled asked af Klint to create a cycle of paintings. Af Klint immediately accepted. She worked on the project between 1906 and 1915, completing 193 paintings and works on paper collectively called *The Paintings for the Temple*. These works, which included her first forays into nonobjectivity, were a radical break from the more staid paintings she produced as part of her public practice. Stylistically, they are strikingly diverse, utilizing biomorphic and geometric forms, expansive and intimate scales, and maximalist and reductivist approaches to composition and color. She imagined installing them in a spiral temple, but the building never came to fruition. Af Klint described the final group of *The Paintings for the Temple*, called the *Altarpieces*, as "the summary of the series so far." Recent research suggests this group of paintings was exhibited in 1928 at the World Conference of Spiritual Science and Its Practical Applications in London—the only known public display of *The Paintings for the Temple* during the artist's lifetime. After she completed *The Paintings for the Temple*, af Klint continued to test the limits of her new abstract vocabulary. In these years, she experimented with form, theme, and seriality, creating some of her most incisive works.

Exhibition Catalogue

Hilma af Klint: Paintings for the Future is accompanied by an illustrated catalogue representing her groundbreaking painting series while expanding recent scholarship to present the fullest picture yet of her life and art. Edited by Tracey Bashkoff, the volume includes contributions by Tessel M. Bauduin, Daniel Birnbaum, Briony Fer, Vivien Greene, Ylva Hillström, David Max Horowitz, Andrea Kollnitz, Helen Molesworth, and Julia Voss. Essays explore the social, intellectual, and artistic context of af Klint's 1906 break with figuration and her subsequent development, placing her in the context of Swedish modernism and folk art traditions, contemporary scientific discoveries, and spiritualist and occult movements. A roundtable discussion among contemporary artists, scholars, and curators considers af Klint's sources and relevance to art in the 21st century. The volume also delves into her unrealized plans for a spiral-shaped temple in which to display her art—a wish that finds a fortuitous answer in the

Guggenheim Museum's rotunda, the site of the exhibition. The hardcover edition is available for \$65 at guggenheimstore.org.

Public Programs

A series of public and educational programs is presented in conjunction with *Hilma af Klint: Paintings for the Future*. Program additions, information, and schedules are available at guggenheim.org/calendar.

Visionary: On Hilma af Klint and the Spirit of Her Time

Friday, October 12, 2–6 pm

This symposium explores how Theosophy—a religious movement that seeks to reconcile existing spiritual and philosophical teachings—and other esoteric belief systems that emerged at the turn of the century impacted the development of abstraction in the United States and Europe. Through short talks and moderated discussions, participants will consider how these currents converged in af Klint's visionary work. The international roster of speakers includes Kurt Almqvist (Axel and Margaret Ax:son Johnson Foundation, Stockholm), Tracey Bashkoff (Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York), Patricia Berman (Wellesley College, Massachusetts), Daniel Birnbaum (Moderna Museet, Stockholm), Linda Dalrymple Henderson (University of Texas at Austin), Isaac Lubelsky (The Open University of Israel), Marco Pasi (University of Amsterdam), artist R. H. Quaytman, and Julia Voss (Leuphana University of Lüneburg, Germany). The program is followed by a reception and viewing of *Hilma af Klint: Paintings for the Future*. A symposium is copresented by Ax:son Johnson Foundation together with the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum.

\$8, \$5 members, free for students with RSVP. For more information or to register, visit guggenheim.org/calendar.

Music for the Temple: A Tribute to Hilma af Klint by John Zorn

Thursday and Friday, November 29 and 30, 7 pm

Composer John Zorn presents new music in response to the visionary paintings of Swedish artist Hilma af Klint (1862–1944). Following the performance, audience members are invited to attend a private, after-hours viewing of the exhibition *Hilma af Klint: Paintings for the Future*.

\$30, \$25 members, \$20 students. For more information, visit guggenheim.org/calendar.

Curator's Eye Tours

These gallery tours of *Hilma af Klint: Paintings for the Future* and *R. H. Quaytman: + x, Chapter 34* provide an opportunity for visitors to explore the museum's exhibitions with an exhibition curator who shares expert knowledge of the work on view. Tours interpreted in American Sign Language (ASL) are available upon request. Free with museum admission. Limited capacity, advance on-site registration is required. Registration opens one hour before the tour at the Information desk. Check-in begins 15 minutes prior to the start of the tour. For more information, visit guggenheim.org/calendar.

Wednesday, December 12, 12 pm: David Horowitz, Curatorial Assistant

Wednesday, January 23, 12 pm: Tracey Bashkoff, Director of Collections and Senior Curator

Exhibition Support

Hilma af Klint: Paintings for the Future is supported by LLWW Foundation, the Juliet Lea Hillman Simonds Foundation, the Helen Frankenthaler Foundation, The Barbro Osher Pro Suecia Foundation, the Robert Lehman Foundation, and The American-Scandinavian Foundation. This exhibition is organized with the cooperation of the Hilma af Klint Foundation, Stockholm.

R. H. Quaytman: + x, Chapter 34 is supported in part by the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum's International Director's Council.

The Leadership Committee for these exhibitions, chaired by Maire Ehrnrooth and Carl Gustaf Ehrnrooth, Trustee, is gratefully acknowledged for its support, with special thanks to Fotene Demoulas and Tom Coté; Rafaela and Kaj Forsblom; Helena and Per Skarstedt; Johannes Falk; Miguel Abreu Gallery; Galerie Buchholz, Berlin/Cologne/New York; Katherine Farley and Jerry I. Speyer; Barbara Gladstone; Gilberto and Rosa Sandretto; Candace King Weir; and Charlotte Feng Ford.

About the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation

Founded in 1937, the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation is dedicated to promoting the understanding and appreciation of art, primarily of the modern and contemporary periods, through exhibitions, education programs, research initiatives, and publications. The Guggenheim network that began in the 1970s when the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, was joined by the Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Venice, has since expanded to include the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao (opened 1997) and the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi (currently in development). The Guggenheim Foundation continues to forge international collaborations that celebrate contemporary art, architecture, and design within and beyond the walls of the museum, including the Guggenheim Social Practice initiative, the Guggenheim UBS MAP Global Art Initiative, and The Robert H. N. Ho Family Foundation Chinese Art Initiative. More information about the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation can be found at guggenheim.org.

VISITOR INFORMATION

Admission: Adults \$25, students/seniors (65+) \$18, members and children under 12 free. The Guggenheim's free app, available with admission or by download to personal devices, offers an enhanced visitor experience. The app features content on special exhibitions as well as access to more than 1,600 works in the Guggenheim's permanent collection. Additionally, information about the museum's landmark building is available in English, French, German, Italian, and Spanish. Verbal Description guides for select exhibitions are also included for visitors who are blind or have low vision. The Guggenheim app is supported by Bloomberg Philanthropies.

Museum Hours: Sun–Wed, 10 am–5:45 pm; Fri, 10 am–5:45 pm; Sat, 10 am–7:45 pm; closed Thurs. On Saturdays, beginning at 5pm, the museum hosts Pay What You Wish. For general information, call 212 423 3500 or visit the museum online at: guggenheim.org or guggenheim.org/social

For publicity images, visit guggenheim.org/pressimages

Password: presspass

#HilmaafKlint

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