

HILMA AF KLINT

1862 – 1944

*A visionary pioneer
of abstraction who
painted the future*



TIMELINE

- 1862**
Born in Solna, Sweden
- 1880s**
Studies art at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts, Stockholm
- 1896**
Co-founds 'The Five', a spiritual group dedicated to higher ideals
- 1906–1915**
Creates her largest series of abstract paintings in vibrant colour and symbolic form
- 1915**
Stops painting abstract art
- 1928**
Her abstract works are exhibited publicly for the first time at the World Conference on Spiritual Science, London
- 1944**
Dies in Danderyd, Sweden

THE ARTIST

Hilma af Klint was a Swedish artist, mystic and pioneer of abstraction. Deeply spiritual, she believed she was guided by higher forces to create works that would reveal unseen realities. Between 1906 and 1915 she produced hundreds of abstract paintings in vibrant colour and symbolic form—years before Kandinsky, Malevich or Mondrian. She documented her work meticulously, confident that it would only be understood by future generations.

A SUCCESSFUL CAREER

- Respected in spiritualist circles
- Financially independent throughout her life
- Produced over 1,000 paintings and 26,000 pages of notes
- Left strict instructions that her work should not be shown for 20 years after her death
- Recognised today as a pioneer of modern art

HER ART

Hilma af Klint's work moves between the visible and the invisible. She explored themes of the sublime, spirituality, science and nature. Her abstract compositions—often called 'paintings for the Temple'—use geometric forms, luminous colour and enigmatic symbols. Her work was radical for its time and continues to inspire artists and audiences around the world.

LOOKING BEYOND THE MYTH

Hilma af Klint is sometimes overshadowed by the male pioneers of abstraction. Yet her work predates theirs and is among the most original and ambitious of the early 20th century. We should remember her because she had the courage to follow her inner calling and create a new visual language for the future.

MASTERPIECES: SIX WORKS THAT SHOW HER GENIUS

- The Ten Largest, No. 7, Group IV, 1907
- Primordial Chaos, No. 16, Group IV, 1906
- The Swan, No. 17, Group IX, 1915
- The Ten Largest, No. 1, Group IV, 1907
- The Dove, No. 1, Group IX, 1915

WHY ART HISTORY OVERLOOKED HER

- She worked in abstraction before it was accepted by the art world.
- Her deeply spiritual outlook was not understood at the time.
- She chose not to exhibit her abstract work during her lifetime.
- The art world was slow to recognise women innovators.
- Only recent scholarship has restored her rightful place in art history.

Art history did not deliberately erase her.

Shifting priorities and gender bias pushed her into the background.

★ WHY HER WORK MATTERS

- She was a pioneer of abstract art.
- Her work explores spirituality, nature and the unseen.
- She created a new visual language ahead of her time.
- She challenges us to see art as more than what is visible.
- Her legacy continues to inspire artists today.



DID YOU KNOW?

Hilma af Klint created her first abstract paintings in 1906—several years before Kandinsky's first abstract work.



WHERE TO SEE HER WORK

- The Hilma af Klint Foundation, Stockholm
- Moderna Museet, Stockholm
- Guggenheim Museum, New York
- Tate Modern, London
- Private collections worldwide



CONTEMPORARIES FOR CONTEXT

- Wassily Kandinsky 1866–1944
- Kazimir Malevich 1878–1935
- Piet Mondrian 1872–1944
- Sonia Delaunay 1885–1979

Hilma af Klint was painting abstraction years before they were widely recognised.

“The pictures were painted directly through me, without preliminary drawings and with great force. I had no idea how they were to come out.”

— HILMA AF KLINT

FORGOTTEN WOMEN ARTISTS IS NOT ABOUT REWRITING HISTORY. IT IS ABOUT COMPLETING IT.