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## THE ART OF SEEING THE INVISIBLE – ON HILMA AF KLINT AND OTHER VISIONARIES

May 24<sup>th</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> 2013  
At Moderna Museet, Sweden

A SYMPOSIUM ARRANGED BY  
AXEL AND MARGARET AX:SON JOHNSON FOUNDATION  
TOGETHER WITH MODERNA MUSEET

# THE ART OF SEEING THE INVISIBLE

## – ON HILMA AF KLINT AND OTHER VISIONARIES

This international, interdisciplinary symposium aims at examining the zeitgeist during the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century with its dramatic interplay between the revolutionary new expressions within the arts on the one hand and scientific breakthroughs on the other. Both these developments carried a fascination with and were inspired by the ideas coming from the occult currents at the time such as Spiritualism, Theosophy and Anthroposophy.

What were the causes for this eruption of creative visionaries at this particular point in time? What are the commonalities behind their ideas and expressions and in what ways did they give shape to the new forms of art as well as views of humanity in the new century? How can we understand the occult roots of modernity, the idea of the individual, modernity and the beginnings of abstract art? How was the cultural, historical and physical reality changed in a time of radical technological breakthroughs as the X-ray, electromagnetic waves and the telegraph? What can we learn of this intriguing interplay between the artistic, scientific, cultural and spiritual spheres? Who were Hilma af Klint’s contemporaries and in what way did these ideas influence both her and their work?

The symposium is arranged together with Moderna Museet in order to create a dynamic discussion about Hilma af Klint and her historical context as well as to further the understanding of the influences upon art and science during the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as a part of the Foundation’s ongoing effort to further the dissemination of scholarly knowledge.

FRIDAY 24 <sup>TH</sup> OF MAY		
A HISTORICAL VIEW OF THE IDEAS AT THE TURN OF THE 20 <sup>TH</sup> CENTURY		
15:30	REGISTRATION	
16.00	Welcome	<b>Daniel Birnbaum</b> , Moderna Museet
16.05	Welcome	<b>Louise Belfrage</b> , Ax:son Johnson Foundation
16.10	Introduction	<b>Mark Isitt</b> , moderator
16.15	<b>Wouter J. Hanegraaff</b>	From Late Antiquity until Today: The History of Occult Ideas in the West and Their Reception
16.35	<b>Raphael Rosenberg</b>	How to Depict Invisible Things? Amimetic Images before Abstract Art
16.55	<b>Gary Lachman</b>	Modernity and the Occult
17.15	<b>Helmut Zander</b>	Rudolf Steiner and the Zeitgeist around 1900 Theosophy and Anthroposophy as the Contexts of Hilma af Klint’s Oeuvre
17.35	Discussion	<b>Wouter Hanegraaff, Raphael Rosenberg, Gary Lachman and Helmut Zander</b> led by moderator
18.05	Closing remarks	

SATURDAY 25 <sup>TH</sup> OF MAY		
ELECTRICITY, AVANT-GARDE AND ABSTRACTION NEW INFLUENCES IN SCIENCE AND ART		
10.15	Introduction	<b>Mark Isitt</b> , moderator
10.20	<b>Stephen Kern</b>	Fin-de-Siècle Europe and Hilma af Klint: Technology, Nihilism and Abstraction
10.40	<b>Marco Pasi</b>	Western Esotericism and the Problem with Modern Artistic Creativity
11.00	COFFEE BREAK	
11.30	<b>Tessel Bauduin</b>	The Automatic Message - Automatism and the Avant-Garde
11.50	<b>Victoria Ferentinou</b>	Theosophy, Women Artists and Modernism: The Case of Ithell Colquhoun
12.10	Discussion	<b>Stephen Kern, Marco Pasi, Tessel Bauduin and Victoria Ferentinou</b> led by moderator
12.40	LUNCH BREAK	
HILMA AF KLINT AND HER CONTEMPORARIES		
14.15	Introduction	<b>Mark Isitt</b> , moderator
14.20	<b>Christoph Wagner</b>	Occultism and Abstract Art: Kandinsky, Itten, Malevich
14.40	<b>Andrei Nakov</b>	The Symbolist Foundations of Suprematism
15.00	<b>Marty Bax</b>	Mondrian and the Legacy of Western Esotericism
15.20	COFFEE BREAK	
15.50	<b>David Lomas</b>	The Meaning of “Life”: Biology and Abstraction
16.10	<b>Iris Müller-Westermann</b>	Hilma af Klint and the Spirit of Her Time
16.30	<b>Briony Fer</b>	Abstraction and Hilma af Klint
16.50	Respondent	<b>Thierry de Duve</b>
17.05	Discussion	<b>Christoph Wagner, Andrei Nakov, Marty Bax, David Lomas, Iris Müller-Westerman, Briony Fer and Thierry de Duve</b> led by moderator
17.35	Concluding remarks	