

Hilma
af Klint

Art
Gallery
NSW

The Secret
Paintings

Children's
trail



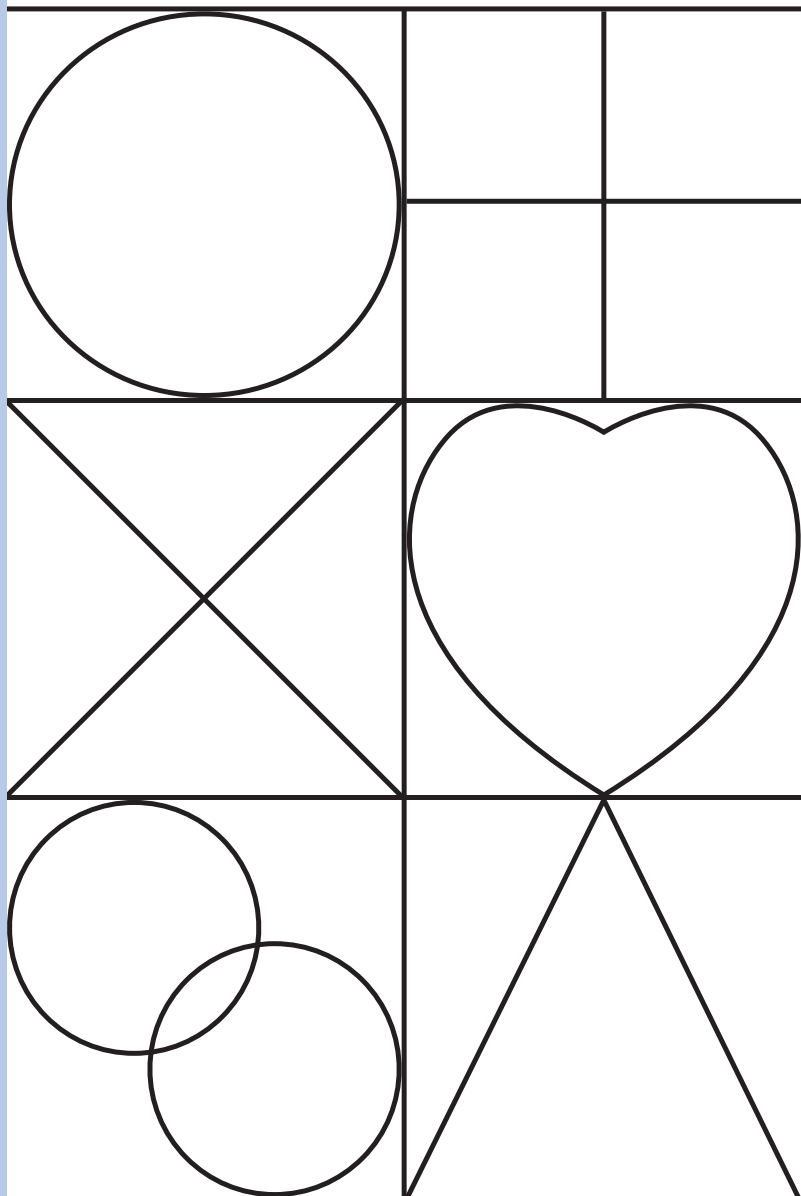
Swedish artist Hilma af Klint (1862–1944) is a pioneer of abstract art, but for many years her paintings were kept hidden from the public.

Af Klint experimented with shapes, colours and lines to paint artworks that were often inspired by developments in science and maths, or imagery from nature.

The artist trusted her inner feelings and even listened to messages from the spirit world to develop her unique style. She also invented her own language using letters, symbols, colours and words.

It was af Klint's wish that her paintings should remain hidden and secret until at least 20 years after her death. She believed that only future generations would be able to understand the artworks she had created.

Look closely at the artworks in the exhibition. Can you spot some of these shapes?



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Cover: *Group IV, The ten largest, no 3, youth 1907* (detail), HaK102

All reproductions of works by Hilma af Klint appear courtesy of The Hilma af Klint Foundation. All images of works by Hilma af Klint are from The Moderna Museet, Stockholm, Sweden
Photos: Albin Dahlström

Children's trail © Art Gallery of New South Wales 2021

Af Klint regularly met with four female friends, in a group they called 'The Five'. They lit candles, prayed and tried to communicate with the spirit world. The Five believed that they received messages from spirit guides. The women made 'automatic drawings' by letting their hands move freely across the page without thinking about what their drawings should look like.

- © Close your eyes and let your pencil move freely. Now open your eyes and look at the drawing. Does it remind you of anything?



The Five

- © At home, create automatic drawings and paintings using different materials.

Sacred images

In *The dove* series, af Klint uses religious symbols such as the dove and the cross to express themes such as good and evil, light and dark.

Can you spot the doves?
Are they always recognisable?

Look at the ways in which af Klint divides the layout of her paintings. She also uses geometric shapes, bursts of light and spirals.



© Design an artwork that includes a dove, spiral, circle and cube.

© At home, experiment with colours to create a series of paintings of geometric shapes with contrasting areas of light and dark.

Af Klint created these ten enormous paintings to show the different stages of life: childhood, youth, adulthood and old age.

- © Invent an artwork using patterns and shapes from nature that express how you feel and your current stage of life.



Cycle of life

Stand in front of each artwork and experience their size. How do you feel?

Look closely at the shapes, colours and lines. How many things from nature can you recognise?

- © At home, create an artwork made of patterns inspired by things from nature. How big will your artwork be?

In *The swan* series, af Klint represents opposites of light and dark, male and female, and life and death.

Describe the different swans you can see and how the artist uses symmetry to mirror their shapes.

- © Create two artworks of your favourite animals or birds. Use symmetry to mirror their shapes.

Perfect symmetry



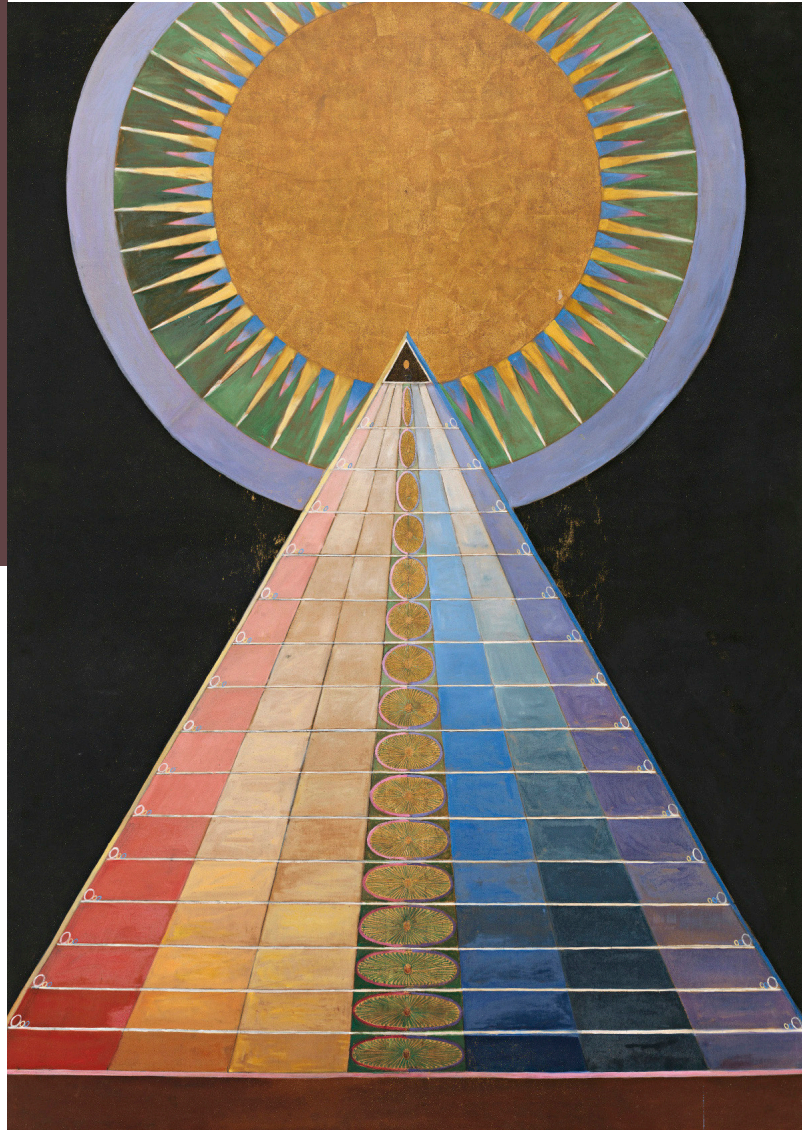
- © At home, find out more about stories that feature swans. Illustrate your favourite part of the story.

These three artworks are known as the *Altarpieces*. They were special to af Klint, and she used metallic leaf to emphasise the effect of light and energy radiating from the paintings.

New pathways

- © Draw a design that uses repeating geometric shapes inspired by the *Altarpieces*.

Describe the colours and shapes you can see. How does af Klint create a sense of upward or downward movement?



- © At home, find out more about Hilma af Klint's art and life.

Af Klint liked using watercolours and often combined colours on the paper while they were still wet.

Notice how the colours blend and run together. What shapes and things from nature can you spot?

- © Choose one of the watercolour pictures and invent a story about it. Write or draw what is going to happen next.

Wet-on-wet

- © At home, experiment with wet paint on wet paper and let your colours blend. What happens if you lift the paper while it is still wet?

