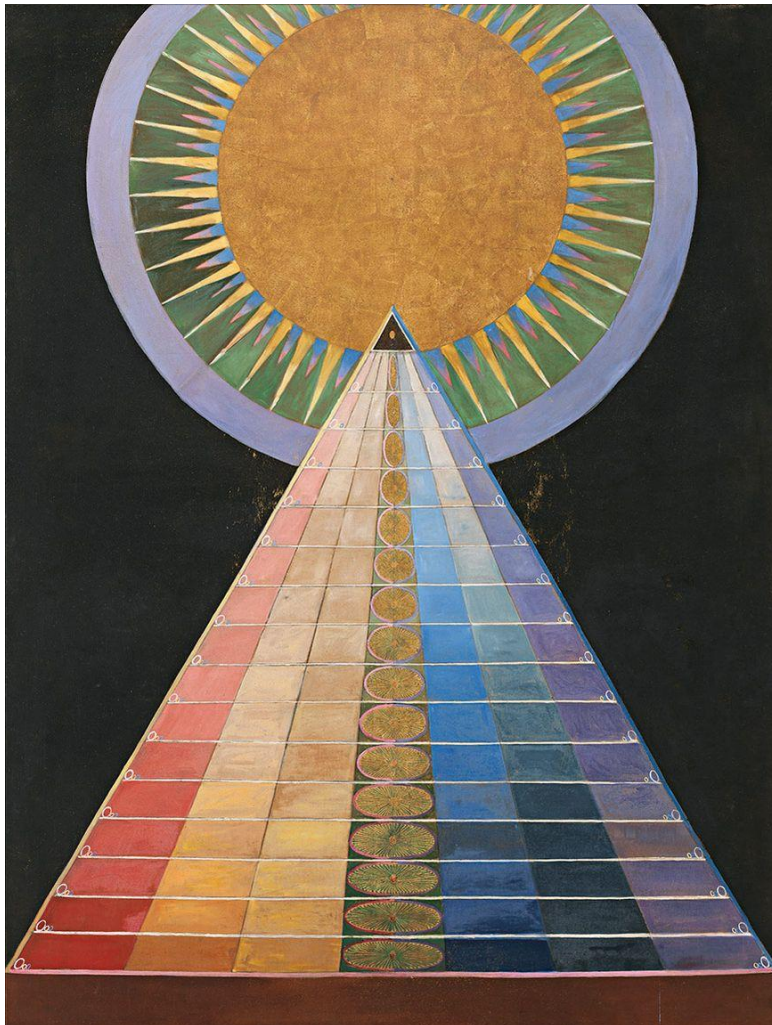


BO ZAR

Swedish Ecstasy

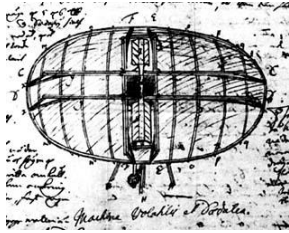
From Swedenborg to Hilma af Klint and beyond

17 February > 21 May 2023



Hilma af Klint, Altarpiece no.1, Group X, 1915, The Hilma af Klint Foundation

Centre for Fine Arts, Brussels
www.bozar.be



Swedenborg 1714 Flying Machine

CONTEXT

From January till July 2023, Sweden will hold the Presidency of the Council of the European Union. At this occasion and in partnership with the Nationalmuseum Stockholm, Bozar presents the ambitious exhibition project 'Swedish Ecstasy. From Swedenborg to Hilma af Klint and beyond'. The exhibition is curated by Daniel Birnbaum and will be on view from February 17 through May 21, 2023.

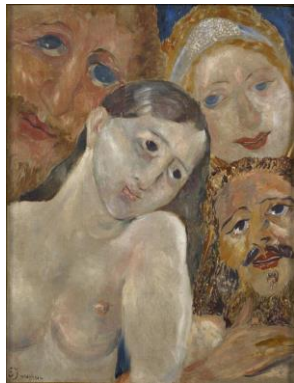


August Strindberg, *Wonderland*, 1894, Nationalmuseum Stockholm

THE EXHIBITION

*Taller than the others, this man
Walked among them, at a distance,
Now and then calling the angels
By their secret names. He would see
That which earthly eyes do not see:
The fierce geometry, the crystal
Labyrinth of God and the sordid
Milling of infernal delights.*

'Swedenborg', Jorge Luis Borges



Ernst Josephson, Nationalmuseum, Stockholm

Sweden is a protestant nation of great engineers and pragmatic entrepreneurs. Yes, that is true. But there is also a less official aspect of the nation's spiritual life, visible in its art and literature rather than in the worlds of technology and industry. Mysticism and esoteric speculation runs like a red thread through the writings of some of Sweden's most important literary figures, from Emanuel Swedenborg to August Strindberg and beyond. In the visual art of the nation one finds visionaries like C.F. Hill, Ernst Josephson and Hilma af Klint.

Strindberg's multidisciplinary practice involved alchemical experiments, occult photography and the production of expressionist paintings that verge on abstraction.



Hilma af Klint, photographed circa 1890, was guided by seances with four female friends from art school.

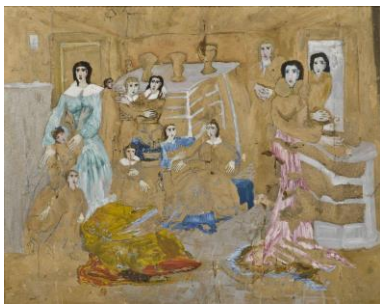
Interestingly, af Klint, whose works are widely appreciated today, was surrounded by a group of lesser-known female artists, all exploring otherworldly spheres through occult techniques. At the Academy of Fine Arts, af Klint befriended Anna Cassel, one of the four women with whom she established *The Five* (De



Anna Cassel, Untitled, The Hilma af Klint Foundation



August Strindberg, Little Water, Daläro, 1892, Nationalmuseum Stockholm



Carl Frederik Hill, Figures on Golden Ground, Nationalmuseum, Stockholm



Hilma af Klint, Group IX/SUW, The Swan n° 7, 1915, The Hilma af Klint Foundation

Fem), a group exploring spiritual realms through meditation and séances. The other members were Cornelia Cederberg, Sigrid Hedman, and Mathilda Nilsson, all of whom had been members of the Edelweiss Society, a Stockholm association that combined Christian ideas, theosophical teachings and spiritualism. *The Five*, active between 1896 and 1908, recorded messages from higher spirits referred to as The High Masters. In trancelike states, the group believed they could communicate with mystic beings with names such as Amaliel, Ananda, and Gregor — understood to be intermediaries of the High Masters — transcribing their messages via automatic writing and drawing. It seems that all the members were active in this collective mediumistic practice. It is therefore often difficult to say whose hand actually drew an individual drawing although some of them are marked with initials. Recently, a large number of works by Anna Cassel were discovered at the Anthroposophical Society outside Stockholm.

An exhibition of groups of works by these key figures — Strindberg, Hill, Josephson, af Klint, Cassel and the group 'The Five' — could be presented together with drawings, sketches and manuscripts by Swedenborg and artists inspired by him — for instance William Blake.

Swedenborg famously made a sketch of a futuristic 'flying machine' which could possibly be reconstructed as part of the exhibition architecture. An additional element in the exhibition could be the ambitious version of Hilma af Klint's temple realized in virtual reality, a project currently in production (a collaboration between the Hilma af Klint Foundation and digital laboratory Acute Art in London).

To this exhibition of works from the years around 1900 one could add an additional section with works by contemporary Swedish artists reacting to relevant themes. Numerous well-known Swedish artists today — Christine Ödlund, Cecilia Edefalk, Carsten Höller and others — are inspired by the ecstatic art of C F Hill and Hilma af Klint.



ABOUT THE CURATOR

Daniel Birnbaum is a Swedish art critic, theoretician, and curator. He was the director of the Museum of Modern Art (Moderna Museet) in Stockholm from 2010 to 2018 and currently directs the VR company Acute Art in London.

Birnbaum studied at Stockholm University, Freie Universität Berlin in Germany and Columbia University in New York. In 1998, he completed his doctorate in philosophy at Stockholm University.

Before joining Acute Art in January 2019, Birnbaum curated the 1st Moscow Biennale (2005), "Airs de Paris" (with Christine Macel) at the Centre Pompidou (2007) the 2nd Yokohama Triennial (2008), and "Zero" (with Tijs Visser) at Martin-Gropius-Bau in Berlin (2015). In 2009 he was director of the 53rd Venice Biennale.



Hilma af Klint, *The Swan, Group IX/SUW, no. 12*, 1915, The Hilma af Klint Foundation

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Location and Dates

Centre for Fine Arts, Brussels
17 February – 21 May 2023

Contact

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Catalogue

At the occasion of the exhibition, an English catalogue will be published.

ABOUT THE VENUE



Centre for Fine Arts Brussels

The Centre for Fine Arts boasts unparalleled facilities accommodating a rich programme encompassing multiple artistic domains. The building itself constitutes an extraordinary component of Belgium's architectural heritage. Imagined by the architect Victor Horta in the 1920s, the edifice's daring modernity – welcoming all artistic disciplines beneath a single roof – still surprises visitors.



Henry Le Boeuf Hall

Since 2002, the institution has presented a vast and varied programme beneath the BOZAR banner, comprising BOZAR EXPO (pre-modern, modern and contemporary art), BOZAR MUSIC (classical music, jazz, world music, electronic music, etc.), BOZAR CINEMA, BOZAR THEATRE and BOZAR LITERATURE. The philosophy powering Horta's project was and remains unique in Europe. As a fertile centre of European culture and public discourse, BOZAR was honoured to welcome President Barack Obama in 2014.



Horta Hall

With over 4,000 m² of exhibition space, a magnificent concert hall seating 2,100, a chamber music room seating 480, two small theatres, three new spaces dedicated to multimedia projects, and the world-renowned Royal Cinema Archives, BOZAR has grown into an exceptionally dynamic art centre welcoming nearly 1 million visitors yearly