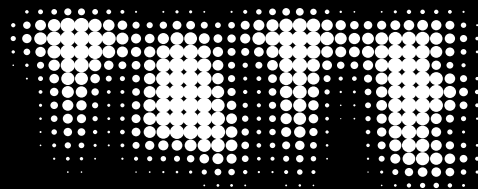
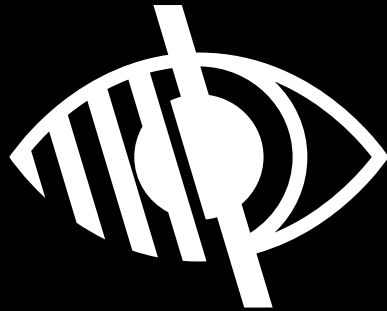


HILMA AF KLINT & PIET MONDRIAN: FORMS OF LIFE

20 APRIL – 3 SEPTEMBER 2023

LARGE PRINT GUIDE



Inside front cover

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All information is correct at the time of publication

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CONCOURSE

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Concourse

HILMA AF KLINT AND PIET MONDRIAN: FORMS OF LIFE

presented in the Eyal Ofer Galleries

Supported by

The HUO Family Foundation

With additional support from the Af Klint

and Mondrian Exhibition Supporters Circle:

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Large format images, left to right:

**Hilma af Klint No. 3a, Buddha's Standpoint
in Worldly Life 1920**

Piet Mondrian Composition in line, second state 1916-17

Kröller-Müller Museum Otterlo, The Netherlands

Exhibition organised by Tate Modern
and Kunstmuseum Den Haag

Exhibition is curated by Frances Morris, Director, Tate Modern, Nabila Abdel Nabi, Curator, International Art, Tate Modern, Briony Fer, Professor of Art History, UCL, Laura Stamps, Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art, Kunstmuseum den Haag, and Amrita Dhallu and Genevieve Barton, Assistant Curators, International Art, Tate Modern

This exhibition has been made possible by the provision of insurance through the Government Indemnity Scheme. Tate would like to thank HM Government for providing Government Indemnity and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and Arts Council England for arranging the indemnity.

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FIND OUT MORE

For more information about the exhibition events and to book, visit **tate.org.uk** or call **020 7887 8888**.

Large print texts are available at the entrance and on the exhibition pages of **tate.org.uk**

Let us know what you think: **#AfKlintAndMondrian**

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ROOM 1

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Room 1

Quotes above artworks, clockwise from room entrance

'Nature or, that which I see, inspires me, puts me, as with any painter, in an emotional state so that an urge comes about to make something, but I want to come as close as possible to the truth and abstract everything from that...'

Piet Mondrian, 1914

'The more we discover the wonders of nature, the more we become aware of ourselves.'

Hilma af Klint, 1917

Room 1

Clockwise from room entrance

ROOTED IN NATURE

Hilma af Klint (1862–1944) and Piet Mondrian (1872–1944) began their careers as academically trained landscape painters in the late nineteenth century, before developing radically new models of painting in the twentieth century. Although they did not know each other – or of the other’s work – this exhibition explores how they both developed the possibilities of abstract art, moving away from the conventions of representation they were taught.

During their careers, new technologies such as the microscope, radiography and photography were challenging human perception. The evidence of worlds invisible to the human eye catalysed shifts across science, spirituality and the arts. Rather than seeing af Klint and Mondrian’s abstract paintings as simply a violent rejection of natural appearances, their processes of making art are presented here as a way of thinking **through** nature. In their own ways, each artist was creating an abstract language that could express art’s interconnectivity with all forms of life.

Seen from today's perspective of environmental and planetary crisis, their close attention to such fragile relationships is even more relevant.

The exhibition dedicates rooms to the individual artists as well as uniting them through shared themes or motifs. At the centre of the exhibition is 'The Ether', inspired by the nineteenth century notion of an invisible energy connecting all things. Here, you are invited to immerse yourself in the artists' cultural contexts and reflect on the creative circles that surrounded them. Seismic social, technological and artistic advancements in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries encouraged many to question the nature of the universe. This is a space to consider how developments across different spheres of knowledge were taken up by the artists, fuelling their own artistic developments and outlooks on the world.

Hilma af Klint in her studio at Hamngatan, Stockholm 1895,
The Hilma af Klint Foundation

Piet Mondrian in his studio at Rembrandtplein 10,
Amsterdam, c. March 1906, photographer unknown,
RKD – Netherlands Institute for Art History

LANDSCAPE PAINTERS

In 1882, af Klint joined the Academy of Fine Arts in Stockholm, where she studied for five years. Women had only begun to be accepted at the academy in 1864 and often still faced barriers to their careers. While studying, af Klint became well known for her landscape and portrait paintings, establishing herself as a respected artist. She would continue to produce paintings in this tradition even as she was making her abstract works. Later, in 1910, she joined the Swedish Society of Women Artists, serving as its secretary.

Mondrian studied at the Rijksakademie van Beeldende Kunsten in Amsterdam, from 1892 to 1897. He was associated with the 'Hague School' of realist painters during a period of renewed energy and experimentation in Dutch painting in the second half of the nineteenth century. Their work was characterised by muted colours, loose brushwork and textured surfaces.

Piet Mondrian 1872–1944
Geinrust Farm in the Haze

1906–7
Oil paint on canvas

Kunstmuseum Den Haag – bequest Salomon B. Slijper
X84573

Piet Mondrian 1872–1944
The Gein: Trees Along the Water

c. 1905
Oil paint on canvas

Kunstmuseum Den Haag
X84574

Piet Mondrian 1872–1944

Haystack Behind a Row of Willows

c. 1905

Oil paint on canvas

Kunstmuseum Den Haag – acquired with support of the
Society of Friends of Kunstmuseum Den Haag

X84575

Piet Mondrian 1872–1944

Evening Landscape with Cows

1906

Oil paint on canvas mounted on panel

Kunstmuseum Den Haag

X83909

Hilma af Klint 1862–1944

Spring Landscape from Lomma Bay

1892

Oil paint on canvas

Hernborn Collection

X86235

Hilma af Klint 1862–1944

Lake Scene

Undated

Oil paint on canvas mounted on panel

Private collection

X86236

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ROOM 2

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Room 2

Clockwise from room entrance

EVOLUTION

This room brings together works by both artists, exploring the theme of spiritual and artistic evolution. In their **Evolution** works, af Klint and Mondrian experiment with symbolism through their choice of motif, colour and form.

Domburg, on the island of Walcheren in the Dutch province of Zeeland, became an artists' community, known for its distinctive landscape and the quality of light. Mondrian first visited in 1908 and spent every summer there until 1914. This was an important phase in his quest to find his own visual language, involving experimentation with colour, style and technique. Domburg's towers, in combination with dune scenes and seascapes, eventually led Mondrian to the focus on horizontal and vertical principles that are characteristic of his later abstract work. During this period, he painted the **Evolution** triptych. It has been seen to represent humanity's progress from the physical towards the spiritual realm using symbolism from Theosophy, an esoteric movement that interested both artists.

Af Klint's works in this room from 1908 represent humanity's ascent to a higher spiritual state. She employed a colourful symbolism which recurs in her other works, including the spiral or snail to represent evolution. This series demonstrates how af Klint experimented with several visual languages within a single work, from symbolism and organic forms to abstraction. The titles are based on a system she was developing, where numbers correspond to certain geometric shapes, which refer to different aspects of the world and the cosmos.

THE PAINTINGS FOR THE TEMPLE

The **WUS/Seven-Pointed Star Series, Group VI, The Evolution** are part of **The Paintings for The Temple**, which af Klint referred to as her 'greatest commission'. Between 1906 and 1915, af Klint created works that she believed were commissioned by her spiritual guide, Amaliel. Amaliel was one of the five guides, or 'High Masters' – beings thought to exist on a higher plane of consciousness – who communicated with af Klint and her spiritual collective, The Five, or in Swedish, 'De Fem'. The commission eventually consisted of 193 works in several series, many of which are displayed in this exhibition.

Piet Mondrian 1872–1944

Sea After Sunset

1909

Oil paint on cardboard

Kunstmuseum Den Haag

X84110

Piet Mondrian 1872–1944

Dune III

1909

Oil paint on cardboard

Kunstmuseum Den Haag – bequest Salomon B. Slijper

X83912

Hilma af Klint 1862–1944

The Evolution, The WUS/Seven-Pointed Star Series, Group VI

Top row

No. 1

No. 2

No. 3

No. 5

No. 6

No. 7

No. 8

1908

Oil paint on canvas

The Hilma af Klint Foundation

X84009, X84010, X84011, X84013, X84014, X84015, X84016

Hilma af Klint 1862–1944

The Evolution, The WUS/Seven-Pointed Star Series, Group VI

Bottom row

No. 9

No. 10

No. 11

No. 12

No. 14

No. 15

No. 16

1908

Oil paint on canvas

The Hilma af Klint Foundation

X84017, X84018, X84035, X84039, X84042, X84043, X84044

Writing about this series, af Klint described how 'humanity first descends to the coarsest form of "the material" before being able to expand its view'. This idea is illustrated in the fifth painting of the series, where the human soul is in the body of a dog, while in the eighth painting it resides in a snail. After that, the soul embarks on the journey upwards.

Piet Mondrian 1872–1944

The Red Cloud

1907

Oil paint on cardboard

Unlike Mondrian's other paintings in this room, this work was made in Oele, a village close to Winterswijk, where the artist grew up. The clearly visible brushstrokes reveal the painter's hand, implying a quick oil sketch. A pencil drawing, probably a preliminary sketch, suggests that Mondrian painted the picture in his studio. The work shows the fleeting moment when a cloud is coloured red by the setting sun, which is either hanging low in the sky or has just vanished behind the horizon.

Kunstmuseum Den Haag

X83914

Piet Mondrian 1872–1944

Dune IV

1909

Oil paint on cardboard

Kunstmuseum Den Haag – bequest Salomon B. Slijper

X87161

Piet Mondrian 1872–1944

Lighthouse at Westkapelle

1910

Oil paint on canvas

Kunstmuseum Den Haag – bequest Salomon B. Slijper

X83915

Piet Mondrian 1872–1944

Evolution

1911

Oil paint on canvas

Mondrian wrote of this painting: 'It's not so bad, but I'm not there yet.' The figures represent the stages in evolution from the physical to the spiritual realm, as promoted in Theosophy. The triangular nipples and navels of the women, which point upwards and downwards, symbolise their spiritual and earthly orientation. The central figure embodies the fulfilment of the evolutionary process, to the spiritual realm. The flowers on the left panel are symbols of purity, while those on the right symbolise tragic suffering.

Kunstmuseum Den Haag – bequest Salomon B. Slijper

X83910

Piet Mondrian 1872–1944

Dune Landscape

1911

Oil paint on canvas

Kunstmuseum Den Haag – bequest Salomon B. Slijper

X83913

ROOM 3

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Room 3

Clockwise from room entrance

METAMORPHOSIS

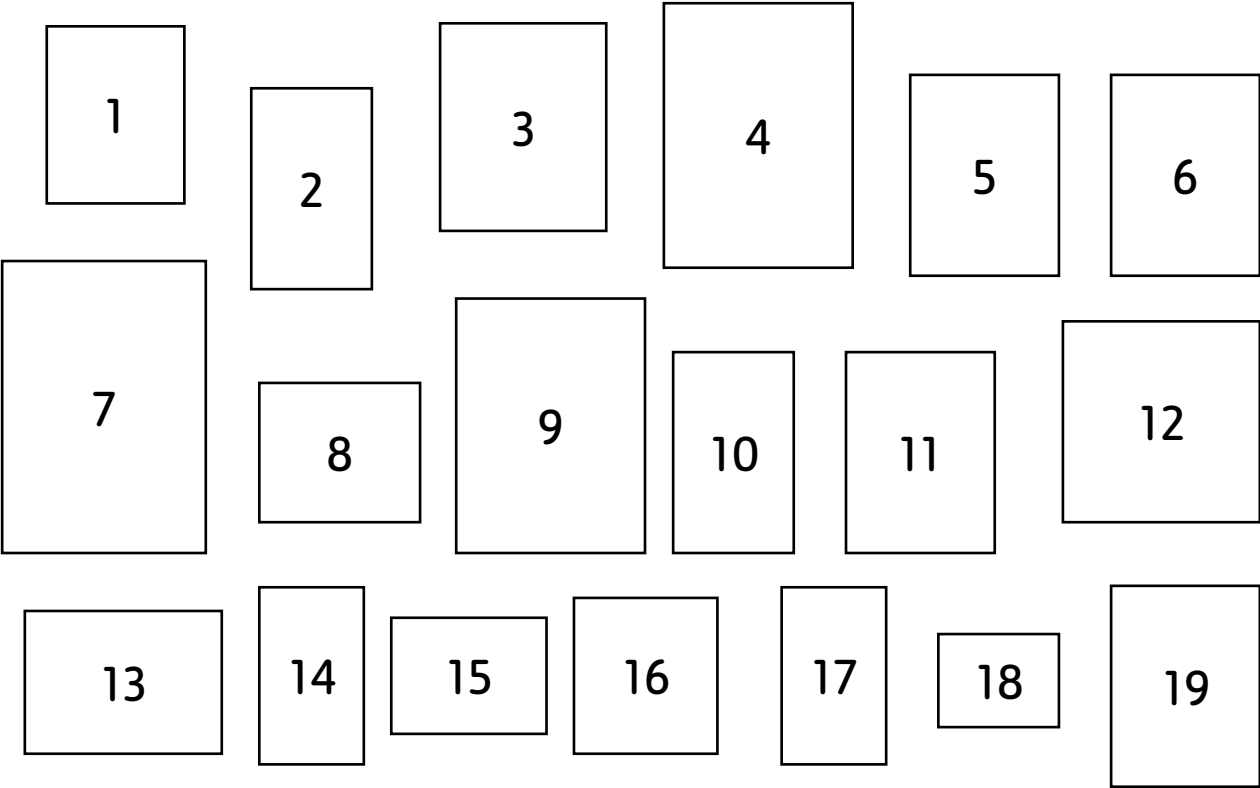
The depictions of flowers in this room demonstrate each artist's close observation of nature and its biodiversity. From the late 1890s, Mondrian was mostly drawing, painting and exhibiting single flowers. He would paint blooming and wilting flowers as a way of tracing natural processes over time. Af Klint sometimes depicted a plant at two stages of its life, in spring and summer – her own meditation on cyclical patterns in nature. The 'unfinished' state of drawings by both artists resonates with the transience of their subject matter.

Mondrian's preference for painting cultivated flowers, like lilies and chrysanthemums, contrasts with af Klint's interest in plants native to the Nordic countries, such as cornflower and sea thrift. Her choice of watercolour on paper, as well as the arrangements of the plants on the sheet, show her familiarity with the conventions of botanical drawing. In the nineteenth century, botanical illustration was one of the few professional artistic activities open to women, and many, like af Klint, became skilled in this area.

Both artists moved beyond realistic representations of flowers. While de Kooning would continue to engage with their deeper spiritual meanings, Mondrian explains 'I enjoyed painting flowers, not bouquets, but a single flower at a time, in order that I might better express its plastic structure'. Their early immersion in the language of plants and the vegetal world offered each artist a means to articulate correspondences between microcosm and macrocosm – the idea that the structure of the cosmos is mirrored in the smallest living entity.

Wall diagram

Artworks are labeled 1–19, left to right, top to bottom



Hilma af Klint 1862–1944

1. **Cottonsedge, Sedge and Horsetail**

Watercolour, ink and graphite on paper

2. **Rose**

Watercolour, ink and graphite on paper

3. **Juniper Berries**

Ink and watercolour on paper

4. **Golden Marguerite, Yarrow, Dropwort and Lady's
Bedstraw**

Watercolour and graphite on paper

5. **Wheat and Barley**

Watercolour, ink and graphite on paper

6. **Rye**

Watercolour, ink and graphite on paper

7. **Poppy**

Watercolour and ink on paper

8. **Common Cow-wheat**

Watercolour and ink on paper

9. Cornflower and Sea Thrift

Watercolour, gouache and graphite on paper

10. Meadow Saxifrage

Watercolour and graphite on paper

11. Thistle

Watercolour and ink on paper

12. Apple Blossoms

Watercolour, ink and graphite on paper

13. Christmas Rose

Watercolour and graphite on paper

14. Buttercup

Watercolour and graphite on paper

15. Gherkin

Watercolour, ink and graphite on paper

16. Nasturtium

Watercolour and ink on paper

17. Nasturtium

Watercolour and ink on paper

18. **Biting Stonecrop**

Watercolour, ink and graphite on paper

19. **Oak**

Ink and watercolour on paper

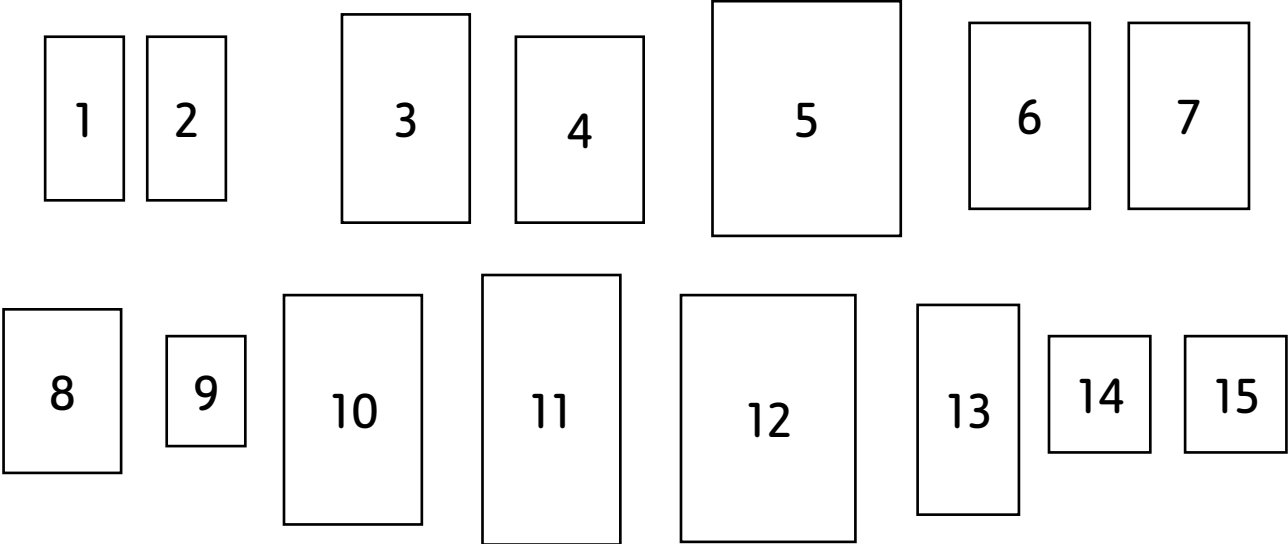
All works undated

The Hilma af Klint Foundation

X84050, X85586, X85372, X85585, X84058, X84057, X84059,
X84052, X84055, X85373, X84049, X85370, X85374, X85371,
X84048, X84047, X84063, X84051, X85375

Wall diagram

Artworks are labeled 1–15, left to right, top to bottom



Piet Mondrian 1872–1944

1. **Dying Sunflower I**

1908

Oil paint on cardboard

2. **Dying Sunflower II**

1908

Oil paint on cardboard

3. **Chrysanthemum in a Bottle**

c. 1917

Watercolour on paper

4. **Chrysanthemum**

1909

Charcoal, chalk, gouache on paper



5. **Two Arum Lilies**

1918

Charcoal on paper

6. Two Arum Lilies

1918

Oil paint on canvas

7. Study for Arum Lily; Blue Flower

1908–9

Charcoal on paper

8. Little Chrysanthemum

c. 1899

Pencil, watercolour and opaque white
on paper

9. Two Chrysanthemums

1899–1900

Oil paint on canvas on cardboard

10. Chrysanthemum

1917

Charcoal and crayon on paper

11. Chrysanthemum

1908

Gouache on paper

12. Metamorphosis

1908

Oil paint on canvas

13. Chrysanthemum

c. 1916

Watercolour and gouache on paper

14. Chrysanthemum

1908–9

Pencil and chalk on paper

15. Arum Lily; Blue Flower

1909

Oil paint on canvas

Kunstmuseum Den Haag – bequest Salomon B. Slijper. X83989, X83990, X83966; Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam. X84090; Kunstmuseum Den Haag – bequest Salomon B. Slijper. X83984, X83985, X83983, X83979, X83986, X83922, X83923, X83916, X83964; Private collection. X84857; Kunstmuseum Den Haag – bequest Salomon B. Slijper. X83917

Many of these paintings and drawings of flowers that Mondrian made in 1908–9 are full of symbolism, mainly relating to Theosophy. Shortly afterwards, he moved away from symbolist representations, but continued to portray flowers until his death, selling them for income at times of financial difficulty. He repeatedly returned to the same varieties, such as chrysanthemums and arum lilies. Mondrian was known to trace some of his drawings of flowers, using carbon paper, to create multiple versions. The same elements are repeated in endless variations – also a distinctive feature of Mondrian’s neo-plasticism.

Mondrian’s paintings of dying sunflowers and chrysanthemums draw on Vincent Van Gogh’s paintings of wilting sunflowers. **Metamorphosis** is one of several based on the observation of a chrysanthemum over a period of days. A ghostly essence seems to seep away from the withered flower head. Theosophy was based on the idea of higher planes of existence, beyond the physical world and scholars have suggested that the white-yellow halo can be interpreted as an artistic re-creation of the flower’s etheric shell, or aura. Such ideas that were promoted by figures like Rudolf Steiner – a prominent Theosophist and founder of Anthroposophy – who emphasised that plants share the same spirit as humans.

Piet Mondrian 1872–1944

Red Amaryllis with Blue Background

1909–10

Watercolour on paper

Golden-Banded Lily

1909–10

Ink and watercolour on paper

Private collection

X84094, X84858

Piet Mondrian 1872–1944

Top row

Rose

after 1921

Pencil on cardboard

Roses in a Vase

1938–40

Watercolour on paper

Flowering Tree

1917–18

Crayon on paper

Kunstmuseum Den Haag – bequest Salomon B. Slijper.

X83988

Victoria and Albert Museum. Given by Count G. Benningesen.

X85342 Private collection. X84101

Piet Mondrian 1872–1944

Bottom row

Foxtail Lily, Sketch I (Sketchbook VI – folio 3)

c. 1914

Crayon on paper

Foxtail Lily, Study II

1908–9

Charcoal on paper

White Chrysanthemum

1906

Watercolour and gouache on paper

Kunstmuseum Den Haag – acquired with the support of the
Rembrandt Association. X83968

Kunstmuseum Den Haag – bequest Salomon B. Slijper.

X83975

Museum Voorlinden, Wassenaar, The Netherlands. X84089

ROOM 4

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Room 4

Quote above artworks

'Those granted the gift of seeing more deeply can see beyond form, and concentrate on the wondrous aspect hiding behind every form, which is called life.'

Hilma af Klint, 1906

Clockwise from room entrance

THE TREE

The tree became a focal point for Mondrian and af Klint. Mondrian painted a series of trees between 1908 and 1911, and af Klint spent two years working on **The Tree of Knowledge** from 1913.

Af Klint's series draws on a concept common to many mythological and religious traditions. The 'axis mundi', often described as the 'world tree', is a form that connects every

part of the universe, from microcosm to macrocosm. In Norse mythology, the Yggdrasil is an ash tree at the centre of the cosmos, reaching to the heavens as its roots extend deep underground. In this series, af Klint combined the precision of botanical and scientific diagrams with ornamentation inspired by art nouveau – a decorative movement that used fluid, sinuous lines based on vegetal forms.

After travelling to Paris in 1911 and encountering cubism, Mondrian began reworking drawings and paintings of trees. Cubism was a radical new visual approach of breaking up objects and figures into distinct planes, emphasising the two-dimensional surface of the canvas. In **The Red Tree**, Mondrian painted a tree not as an element of the real world but as a 'plastic expression' – the energetic brushwork of the branches appears to celebrate the act of painting itself. In later trees, the trunk and branches are condensed to a network of verticals and horizontals, as Mondrian focused on distilling the image to the tree's essential forms.

In many cultures and thought systems, trees are connected to mystical forces beyond the visible world. Focusing on the structure of the tree enabled the artists to explore these delicate life forces in their own ways.

Piet Mondrian 1872–1944

Evening: The Red Tree

1908–10

Oil paint on canvas

When Mondrian visited Domburg for the first time in 1908, he stayed at the summer residence of art collector Marie Tak van Poortvliet and her partner, the artist Jacoba van Heemskerck. Here, Mondrian made sketches of a distinctive tree in their garden. These served as preliminary studies for **The Red Tree**, which he rendered in the intense red and blue that appear just before nightfall. The tree was the subject he returned to while experimenting with painting techniques and forms over the next few years.

Kunstmuseum Den Haag

X83992

Hilma af Klint 1862–1944

The Tree of Knowledge, The W Series

No. 1

No. 2

No. 3

No. 4

No. 5

No. 6

No. 7a

No. 7b

1913–15

Watercolour, gouache, graphite, and ink on paper

The Hilma af Klint Foundation

X84069, X84070, X84071, X84072, X84073, X84074, X84075,
X85887

Piet Mondrian 1872–1944

Flowering Apple Tree

1912

Oil paint on canvas

Kunstmuseum Den Haag

X83994

Piet Mondrian 1872–1944

The Blue Tree

1908–9

Tempera on cardboard

Kunstmuseum Den Haag – bequest Salomon B. Slijper

X83993

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ROOM 5

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Room 5

Quote above artworks

'The natural does not have to be a certain depiction. At the moment I am working on a reconstruction of a starry sky, but without its natural ingredients.'

Piet Mondrian, 1919

Clockwise from room entrance

DYNAMIC COLOUR

Mondrian and de Klint experimented in distinct ways with the dynamic relationships of form and colour to express the 'universal'.

During summers spent in Domburg, Mondrian gradually refined his depictions of the towers and sea views until they dissolved into complete abstraction. He saw the verticals

as the 'male' principle, representing the spiritual, and the horizontal as expressing the 'female', material principle. From 1914, Mondrian's work consisted of horizontals and verticals that did not intersect, as seen in the paintings in this room. His ultimate goal was to 'plastically express' a universal harmony based on the balance of oppositional forces.

Af Klint painted the **The Eros Series** in 1907. She used light, pastel colours and elegant lines accompanied by letters and text. Linear diagonals evolve into dynamic forms reminiscent of flowers, leaves, or ovals. All the elements in this series appear to be designed to balance opposing 'male' and 'female' forces: the use of the contrasting colours blue and yellow, the letters AO (alpha and omega), and the Swedish words Asket (ascetic) and Vestal. Af Klint often used these names interchangeably in reference to herself and her collaborator Anna Cassel in her notebooks, suggesting a fluidity of gender or a unity between masculine and feminine. She may have taken the series title from Greek mythology, where Eros is the god of love. In the Roman poet Ovid's text 'Metamorphoses', we encounter Eros in the tale of Cupid and Psyche, which is about overcoming obstacles to eventually achieve the ultimate union in a sacred marriage.

Piet Mondrian 1872–1944

**Composition with Grid 9: Checkerboard Composition
with Bright Colours**

1919

Oil paint on canvas

In his checkerboard compositions of 1918 and 1919, Mondrian set out a regular grid but created irregularities within it using colour. This creates a sense of rhythm and liveliness in what at first appears to be a static painting. Writing about these paintings, which are intended to transmit the experience of seeing a starry sky, Mondrian referred to the 'deconstruction of the natural and a reconstruction according to the spirit'.

Kunstmuseum Den Haag – bequest Salomon B. Slijper
X84001

Piet Mondrian 1872–1944

Composition in Oval with Colour Areas II

1914

Oil paint on canvas

Kunstmuseum Den Haag – bequest Salomon B. Slijper

X86861

Piet Mondrian 1872–1944

Composition No. 3 with Colour Planes

1917

Oil paint on canvas

Kunstmuseum Den Haag

X84000

Piet Mondrian 1872–1944

Composition in Colour B

1917

Oil paint on canvas

Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo, The Netherlands

X83408

Piet Mondrian 1872–1944

Composition in Line, Second State

1916–17

Oil paint on canvas

Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo, The Netherlands

X83400

Hilma af Klint 1862–1944

The Eros Series, The WU/Rose Series, Group II

No. 1

No. 2

No. 3

No. 4

No. 5

No. 6

No. 7

No. 8

1907

Oil paint on canvas

The Hilma af Klint Foundation

X84196, X84197, X84199, X84201, X84202, X84203, X84205,
X84211

ROOM 6

Blank page

Room 6

Clockwise from room entrance

WORLD RELIGIONS

In 1920 af Klint created **Series II**, a group of works on different world religions. In a reduced abstract language of segmented circles, she visualises various religions at particular points in their development. Circles and crosses orbit, collide with and bisect larger geometries. **Series II** can be seen as part of af Klint's ongoing project to work out the relationships between external forms and their underlying forces.

The Theosophical Society was an extensive transnational network that made the translation and dissemination of texts a key part of their expansion. Their publishing technologies were often based on new channels of communication used to support Britain's imperial activities in India. In keeping with the theosophical principle that all religions are connected by a core spiritual truth, affiliated periodicals like **The Theosophist**, **The Path**, **The Lamp** and **Lucifer** regularly published articles on world religions. The ideas moving through these networks proved compelling to many artists and writers who encountered them. In 1904, af Klint joined

the Stockholm lodge of the Theosophical Society, Adyar (named after the place where it was headquartered) and Mondrian joined the Theosophical Society in Amsterdam in 1909.

In his sketchbooks of 1912–14 Mondrian wrote, 'All religions have the same fundamental content; they differ only in form. The form is the external manifestation of this content and is thus an indispensable vehicle for the expression of primary principles'. This resonates with af Klint's own exploration in this series.

Hilma af Klint 1862–1944

Left to centre

Series II

No. 1, Starting Picture

No. 2a, The Current Standpoint of the Mahatmas

No. 2b, The Jewish Standpoint at the Birth of Jesus

No. 3a, Buddha's Standpoint in Worldly Life

1920

Oil paint and graphite on canvas

The Hilma af Klint Foundation

X84213, X84219, X84249, X84250

Hilma af Klint 1862–1944

Right to centre

Series II

No. 3d+, The Christian Religion

No. 3d-, The Teachings of Buddhism

No. 3c, The Mohammedan Standpoint

No. 3b, The Standpoints of Judaism and Heathendom

1920

Oil paint and graphite on canvas

The Hilma af Klint Foundation

X84523, X84522, X84521, X84463

ROOM 7

Blank page

Room 7

Quote above artworks

'Thought defines the universe in geometrical figures.'

Hilma af Klint, 1916

Clockwise from room entrance

NEW OLD GEOMETRIES

In 1912, af Klint returned to painting after a pause of four years. Now she claimed to no longer be directed by her spiritual guides or 'High Masters'. **The Swan** series dates from 1914, when af Klint was living in Stockholm and much of the world was consumed by the First World War. Across the series, there is a shift between figurative imagery and abstract forms. Two swans engaged in conflict, rendered in opposing black and white, metamorphose into a series of interlinked cubes. The series marked a development in

af Klint's visual language from organic tendrils, spirals and symbolic forms to increasingly geometric shapes and planes of solid colour.

Af Klint would have encountered the notion of an invisible, fourth dimension of space through Theosophy and the work of a prominent member and philosopher, Rudolf Steiner. Her depiction of dematerialised forms, such as the see-through cubes, suggest her familiarity with these theories. Such ideas largely disappeared after Albert Einstein's theory of relativity was popularised, transforming understandings of space and time.

The swan was a popular occult symbol of unity, discussed extensively by leading Theosophist Helena Blavatsky in her book **The Secret Doctrine**, which af Klint owned. The visual arc towards an eventual state of reconciliation in **The Swan** might have been af Klint's response to political and social upheaval. She said, 'where war has torn up plants and killed animals there are empty spaces which could be filled with new figures, if there were sufficient faith in human imagination and human capacity to develop higher forms'. Af Klint continued to use geometry in her search for 'primordial images' and to convey her philosophical message of unity in **Series III and Series V**.

Hilma af Klint 1862–1944

Series V

No. 2b

No. 3a

No. 3b

No. 3c

No. 3d

No. 4

No. 5

No. 6

No. 7

1920

Oil paint and graphite on canvas

Oil paint, metallic paint and graphite on canvas

The Hilma af Klint Foundation. X84546, X84547, X84552,
X84551, X84554, X84555, X84556, X84557, X84558

Hilma af Klint 1862–1944

Series III, No. 3

1920

Oil paint and graphite on canvas

The Hilma af Klint Foundation

X84542

Hilma af Klint 1862–1944

The Swan, The SUW/UW Series, Group IX: Part I

No. 1

No. 8

No. 10

1914–15

Oil paint on canvas

The Hilma af Klint Foundation

X84559, X84560, X84561

Hilma af Klint 1862–1944

The Swan, The SUW/UW Series, Group IX: Part I

No. 13

No. 14

No. 16

No. 17

No. 18

1915

Oil paint on canvas

The Hilma af Klint Foundation

X84562, X84563, X84564, X84565, X84566

Hilma af Klint 1862–1944

The Swan, The SUW/UW Series, Group IX: Part I, No. 19

1915

Oil paint on canvas

The Hilma af Klint Foundation

X84567

ROOM 8

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Room 8

Quote above artworks

'By the unification of architecture, sculpture and painting a new plastic reality will be created.'

Piet Mondrian, 1917–18

Clockwise from room entrance

SPACE AND RHYTHM

From 1914, Mondrian was interested in how space could be brought to life through the experience of painting. This room features some of his neo-plastic paintings, comprising horizontal and vertical lines, primary colours and grey, white and black.

Mondrian developed his theory of neo-plasticism – a visual language of 'pure relationships' – around 1920. He had

abandoned any form of symbolism: his paintings became irregular grids and are often described as 'jazz rhythms'. Before this, in 1918, he had discovered the spatial impact of the lozenge shape, which appears in much of his later work such as **Picture No. III: Lozenge Composition with Eight Lines and Red**, featuring double and triple lines. He referred to 'dynamic equilibrium' to explain how a composition is produced through spatial relationships of lines and colour planes.

Mondrian intended neo-plasticism to function as a pictorial language. He set out to reduce painting to its basic principles, removing individual aspects (which he called 'tragic') to express the 'universal'. As a result, his work is often regarded as detached from life, but this oversimplifies the complex relationship his paintings have to the world. To Mondrian, the 'deepest essence of art' always remained the same; it was to make 'the beauty of life' visual, tangible and, most of all, perceptible.

Vitrine against wall

Piet Mondrian 1872–1944

Stage Model for Michel Seuphor's 'L'éphémère est éternel'

1926/1964

Painted wood

Michel Seuphor was a writer and critic and friend of Mondrian, later becoming his biographer. After reading the script for his play **L'éphémère est éternel** (The Ephemeral is Eternal) Mondrian surprised Seuphor with a model of a stage set, comprising three interchangeable screens. The play does not have a consistent plot: the actors lose themselves in an experiment where anything can happen. Seuphor believed the 'ephemeral' – from fashion to jazz – represented the gateway to the eternal. Mondrian's set design can be seen as an expression of the universal that forms the backdrop to the ephemeral.

Collection Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven

X83411

Piet Mondrian 1872–1944

Composition B (No.II) with Red

1935

Oil paint on canvas

Tate. Accepted by HM Government in lieu of tax with additional payment (General Funds) made with assistance from the National Lottery through the Heritage Lottery Fund, the Art Fund, the Friends of the Tate Gallery and the Dr V.J. Daniel Bequest 1999

Daniel Bequest 1999

T07560

Piet Mondrian 1872–1944

Composition with Red, Black, Yellow, Blue and Grey

1921

Oil paint on canvas

Kunstmuseum Den Haag

X83999

Piet Mondrian 1872–1944

Composition with Yellow, Blue and Red

1937–42

Oil paint on canvas

Tate. Purchased 1964

T00648

Piet Mondrian 1872–1944

Composition with Grid 3: Lozenge Composition with Grey Lines

1918

Oil paint on canvas

Composition with Grey Lines is a regular grid of horizontals, verticals and diagonals. The thickness of the grey lines vary and contrast with the otherwise white painting, creating a flickering effect. Mondrian decided to hang it from a corner so the lines appear to extend beyond the edges of the canvas. This is a characteristic shared by all his abstract work, but perhaps most evident in this painting, which dominates the space. Mondrian never sold this piece, but always hung it in a high position, giving it a sense of prominence. He eventually gave it as a gift to a childhood friend.

Kunstmuseum Den Haag

X83996

Piet Mondrian 1872–1944

Composition with Lines and Colour: III

1937

Oil paint on canvas

Kunstmuseum Den Haag – acquired with support from the
Rembrandt Association

X83997

Piet Mondrian 1872–1944

**Lozenge Composition with Eight Lines and Red (Picture
No.III)**

1938

Oil paint on canvas

Fondation Beyeler, Riehen/Basel, Beyeler Collection

X83397

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ROOM 9

Blank page

Room 9

Clockwise from room entrance

CONFLUENCES

Much of this room is dedicated to a series that Af Klint named **Parsifal**, which may be titled after the opera by Richard Wagner. The subtitles of individual works include 'Ether' and 'Astral'. These are terms used by leaders of the Theosophical Society, Annie Besant and Charles W. Leadbeater. In their books, **Thought Forms** and **Occult Chemistry**, they refer to unseen forces that can only be accessed by gaining higher consciousness. Af Klint's occult beliefs became a framework for her to experiment beyond the limits of her artistic training.

Af Klint created **Parsifal** in 1916 in her studio on the island of Mönso, Sweden. She had become less interested in the city of Stockholm, despite its growing international art scene. She imagined building a residential and research community on Mönso, where she and friends could spend years researching plants, animals and minerals.

Two later works by Mondrian are also displayed. **Composition with Yellow Lines** exemplifies Mondrian's neo-plastic art. The relationship between horizontal and vertical lines evokes a grid that expands beyond our field of vision, suggesting an all-encompassing environment. **Rose in a Glass** is painted on a brilliant yellow background with the delicate rhythms of the petals delineated by a soft, radiating line. While Mondrian was ambivalent towards his flower works and scholars have suggested they were largely a commercial venture, he continued to produce them late into his career, even without a commission.

Hilma af Klint 1862–1944

Parsifal Series

Group I, No. 50

Group III, No. 122

Group III, No. 117

Group III, No. 119

Group III, No. 121

Group III, No. 118

1916

Watercolour, pencil and metallic paint on paper

Watercolour and graphite on paper

The Hilma af Klint Foundation

X84148, X84126, X84122, X84124, X84125, X84123

Piet Mondrian 1872–1944

Rose in a Glass

after 1921

Watercolour, pencil and stencil ink on paper

**Lozenge Composition with
Yellow Lines**

1933

Oil paint on canvas

Kunstmuseum Den Haag – bequest Salomon B. Slijper.

X83918

Kunstmuseum Den Haag – gift of the admirers of the artist
represented by Charley Toorop. X83995

Hilma af Klint 1862–1944

Parsifal Series, Group II

Top row

The Convolute of the Mental Plane, No. 77

The Convolute of the Astral Forces, No. 68

The Ether Convolute, No. 65

The Convolute of the Astral Forces, No. 72

1916

Watercolour and graphite on paper

The Hilma af Klint Foundation

X84128, X84127, X84137, X84130

Hilma af Klint 1862–1944

Parsifal Series, Group II

Middle row

The Convolute of the Astral Forces, No. 71

The Ether Convolute, No. 63

The Ether Convolute, No. 64

The Convolute of the Mental Plane, No. 81

1916

Watercolour and graphite on paper

The Hilma af Klint Foundation

X84129, X84136, X84138, X84131

Hilma af Klint 1862–1944

Parsifal Series, Group II

Bottom row

The Convolute of the Astral Forces, No. 69

The Convolute of the Astral Forces, No. 70

The Ether Convolute, No. 62

The Ether Convolute, No. 61

1916

Watercolour and graphite on paper

The Hilma af Klint Foundation

X84132, X84133, X84135, X84134

Hilma af Klint 1862–1944
Parsifal Series, Group I

No. 38

No. 39

No. 40

No. 41

1916

Watercolour and graphite on paper

The Hilma af Klint Foundation

X84118, X84119, X84120, X84121

Hilma af Klint 1862–1944

Untitled Series I, No. 22

1917

Watercolour, graphite and metallic paint on paper

Apple

Undated

Watercolour on paper

The Hilma af Klint Foundation

X84139, X85888

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ROOM 10

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Room 10

Clockwise from room entrance

THE FUTURE

'My mission, if it succeeds, is of great significance to humankind. For I am able to describe the path of the soul from the beginning of the spectacle of life to its end.'

Hilma af Klint, 1917

The Ten Largest are part of **The Paintings for The Temple**, a body of works af Klint believed was commissioned by her spiritual guides. They represent the stages of life, from childhood to old age. Af Klint animates this cycle using organic motifs and abstract geometries. For example, the snail is reflected in the logarithmic spiral – a form deeply connected with processes of growth and evolution. Botanical forms morph into abstract ones as the imagery veers from microscopic to cosmic.

Af Klint dreamed of building a temple in the form of a spiral, where her paintings could be hung together as a 'beautiful wall covering'. To ascend through the temple meant to move towards a higher state of being. Despite their large

scale, af Klint worked quickly to produce **The Ten Largest** in a few months in 1907. She was completely overturning contemporary conventions of artmaking in terms of scale, colour and form.

Af Klint and Mondrian used art to make laws of nature visible – laws that Mondrian believed underpinned the natural environment as well as architectural design. Neo-plasticism was a visual model for an equitable and harmonious future. Both artists believed their visual languages would be better understood by generations to come. In fact, af Klint stipulated that many of her works should not be shown for twenty years following her death. In their own ways, they challenged the separation between art and life. Art became their process for reflecting on universal patterns, and a way to make visible the fragile connectedness between forms of life.

Hilma af Klint 1862–1944
The Ten Largest, Group IV

No. 10, Old Age

1907

Tempera on paper mounted on canvas

The Hilma af Klint Foundation
X84117

Hilma af Klint 1862–1944
The Ten Largest, Group IV

No. 1, Childhood

No. 2, Childhood

1907

Tempera on paper mounted on canvas

The Hilma af Klint Foundation. X84076, X84077

Hilma af Klint 1862–1944
The Ten Largest, Group IV

No. 3, Youth

No. 4, Youth

1907

Tempera on paper mounted on canvas

The Hilma af Klint Foundation. X84080, X84111

Hilma af Klint 1862–1944
The Ten Largest, Group IV

No. 5, Adulthood

1907

Tempera on paper mounted on canvas

The Hilma af Klint Foundation
X84112

Hilma af Klint 1862–1944
The Ten Largest, Group IV

No. 6, Adulthood

No. 7, Adulthood

1907

Tempera on paper mounted on canvas

The Hilma af Klint Foundation. X84113, X84114

Hilma af Klint 1862–1944
The Ten Largest, Group IV

No. 8, Adulthood

No. 9, Old Age

1907

Tempera on paper mounted on canvas

The Hilma af Klint Foundation. X84115, X84116

Blank page

THE ETHER

Blank page

The Ether room

Quotes above, clockwise from room 2 entrance

‘Vertical and horizontal lines are the expression of two opposing forces; they exist everywhere and dominate everything; their reciprocal action constitutes ‘life’. I recognised that the equilibrium of any particular aspect of nature rests on the equivalence of its opposites.’

Piet Mondrian, 1937

‘What is this phenomenon, you ask? Well, beloved, it is that which we want to call the secret growing. How often have we heard you say that everything is futile, that nothing comes of all your labors. Yet like amorphous buds your endeavors sprout in all directions. You see everything as formless and you forget that this is a sign of life. Gradually the formlessness takes on more precise contours and the steadily growing roots feed an ever stronger plant, which will one day explode with an abundance of leaves and flowers.’

De Fem, notebook, 16 September 1903

'Firstly, I shall try to understand the flowers of the earth, shall take as my starting point the plants of the world; then, I shall study, with equal care, that which is preserved in the waters of the world. Then it will be the blue ether with all its various animal species ... and finally, I shall penetrate the forest, shall study the moist mosses, all the trees of the forest and all the animals that dwell among the cool dark masses of the trees ... Everything is contained within the black cube: The greenery of the earth is the bottom of the cube, the blue air is its roof, and the water-filled part is situated at that section of the cube that I rest my back against.'

Hilma af Klint, notebook, 1917

The Ether room

Entering the room clockwise, from room 2

THE ETHER

You are now in The Ether. Taking its title from the early nineteenth century view that an invisible energy connected everything visible, this is a place where discoveries, beliefs and creativity converge. Explore objects and images reflecting the cultural context and creative circles that surrounded af Klint and Mondrian in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These materials reveal af Klint and Mondrian's deep-rooted connection to ecology – that is, an immense but fragile network of connections between all living things. They show their workings out and ways of thinking **through** nature that underpin their abstract paintings.

During their lifetimes, popular conceptions of the world were shifting, as significant discoveries and developments from various fields of knowledge came to public attention. This room asks how such shifts were taken up by the artists and their peers – how art intersected with other cultural, scientific and spiritual inclinations of the day.

The room is structured by three interconnecting themes that you can view in any order: Vegetal Knowledge, Inner Lives, and Invisible Worlds. Sketchbooks, notes and books belonging to the artists are presented amongst resonant objects from other spheres. It is a visualisation of the ideas circulating **in the ether** – the work of scientists, spiritual guides and cultural thinkers whose impact extended beyond their fields to cross-pollinate the thinking of others. Writing and images related to nature, science, spirituality and art shaped of Klint and Mondrian's artistic evolution and broader worldviews. Artworks by their close contemporaries are also displayed, reflecting shared interests in these areas of knowledge.

INNER LIVES

The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries marked a significant shift in concepts of spirituality as a reaction against materialism. The religious belief in the world's creation by a single God had been destabilised by Charles Darwin's theory of evolution, set out in **On the Origin of Species** (1859). Theosophy, an eclectic spiritual movement, absorbed evolution into its ideology. Many promoters of occult beliefs drew on scientific and technological discoveries of the time. These spiritual movements, often enigmatic, were seen by some to be at the cutting edge of what it meant to be modern. Theosophy was concerned with the idea that everything in the universe is interconnected. Helena Blavatsky, the founder of Theosophy, described an invisible energy underlying everything.

The Ether room

Entering the room, clockwise from room 2

Hilma af Klint 1862–1944

The Atom Series

No. 12

No. 13

No. 14

1917

Watercolour, graphite and metallic paint on paper

The Hilma af Klint Foundation

X84539, X84540, X84541

No. 12

The atom's strength increases as it senses and admits its dependence upon Divine energy, it is: 'inexhaustible and incomprehensible life itself'.

No. 13

The atom is on its way to freely and deliberately transform itself in observance with the Lord Jesus, who has paved the way for all humanity.

No. 14

The atom has found the first means to release itself from downward-pulling forces; they are: 'Reliability and Dutifulness'.

Following the discovery of subatomic particles in 1898, the atom was widely discussed in popular literature as akin to a solar system with orbiting electrons. One drawing in the series is annotated: 'Every atom has its own midpoint, but every midpoint is directly connected to the midpoint of the universe.' This outlines af Klint's view of the universe as an interconnected whole. The smaller square at the upper left represents the atom on the ether plane. The larger square at lower right signifies the atom on the physical plane. On each sheet, af Klint's notes provide observations on the atom and the relationship of the physical world to the energy fields of the etheric world.

Hilma af Klint 1862–1944

Group 2, No. 14a–21

1919

Watercolour, graphite and metallic paint on paper

Group 3, No. 10–17

1919

Watercolour and graphite on paper

The Hilma af Klint Foundation

X84189, X84190

Jan Toorop 1858–1928

Sea and Dunes at Domburg

1908

Oil paint on cardboard

Kunstmuseum Den Haag

X85883

Piet Mondrian 1872–1944

Pollarded Willows

1902–4

Oil paint on canvas

Kunstmuseum Den Haag – bequest Salomon B. Slijper

X85881

Jacoba van Heemskerck 1876–1923

Composition No.10

Undated

Composition XII

Undated

Composition (Tree)

1915

All woodcut on paper

Kunstmuseum Den Haag

X85884, X85885, X85886

In the early 20th century the coast of Zeeland, particularly Domburg, was popular with painters, including Jan Toorop (shown nearby), Piet Mondrian and Jacoba van Heemskerck. The landscape and the phenomenal light inspired them. They shared concerns over the painterly effects of colour and form, experimenting with bright colours to transmit the experience of vibrant light. In 1909 and 1910, Mondrian tutored Jacoba van Heemskerck. She believed in the connections between microcosm and macrocosm, between humans and the universe. Her use of thick lines, creating fragmented planes of colour, resonates with some of Mondrian's tree works.

Piet Mondrian 1872–1944

Ditch near Landzicht Farm (recto); Water Lily (verso)

1900

Crayon on paper

Kunstmuseum Den Haag – long-term loan Cultural Heritage

Agency of the Netherlands

X85706

Hilma af Klint 1862–1944

Untitled

Undated

Ink on paper

The Hilma af Klint Foundation

X85871

Vitrine (5) against the wall

Piet Mondrian 1872–1944

Dunes and Sea (Sketchbook III – folio 14)

1909

Pencil on paper

By this point in his practice, Mondrian was experimenting with distilling the forms of trees almost to abstraction. But he still needed the visual impression as a point of departure for his work. These sketches probably grew out of two trips he made in 1912, first to Domburg on the coast of Zeeland for his customary summer stay, and then in October to Amsterdam.

Kunstmuseum Den Haag - acquired with support of the
Rembrandt Association

X85700

Piet Mondrian 1872–1944

Trees (recto); Branches (verso) (Sketchbook IV - folio 6)

1912

Graphite on paper

Kunstmuseum Den Haag - acquired with support of the
Rembrandt Association

X85705

Piet Mondrian 1872–1944

**Tree (Sketchbook IV – folio 3) (recto);
Sketch (Sketchbook IB – folio 3) (verso)**

1913

Graphite on paper

Kunstmuseum Den Haag - acquired with support of the
Rembrandt Association

X85699

Piet Mondrian 1872–1944

Dunes and Sea (Sketchbook III – folio 11)

1912

Pencil on paper

Kunstmuseum Den Haag - acquired with support of the
Rembrandt Association

X85701

Piet Mondrian 1872–1944

Sea (Sketchbook I - folio 22)

1914

Graphite on paper

Kunstmuseum Den Haag - acquired with support of the
Rembrandt Association

X85702

Georg Ehret 1708–1770

Illustration of Linnaeus' Method of Plant Classification

1736

Facsimile

Permission of the Linnean Society of London

Z76700

The Swedish founder of modern botany, Carl Linnaeus, separated nature into three kingdoms: plant, animal, and mineral. He developed a classification system based upon the number and arrangement of pistils and stamens of flowering plants. Georg Ehret drew the original illustration of Linnaeus' sexual system, published in the first edition of **Genera Plantarum** in 1737. Af Klint spent her early years creating images of plants that drew on conventions of botanical illustration which originated with Linnaeus and continued in modern books of Swedish flora. Linnaeus saw us as part of nature rather than its master and included humans in his classification system. He determined four 'varieties' of human based on geography and skin colour, each with their own behavioural traits.

Hilma af Klint 1862–1944

Dornach Nature Studies, Violet Blossoms with Guidelines

1919

Watercolour, graphite, ink and metallic paint on paper

The Hilma af Klint Foundation

X84053

Hilma af Klint 1862–1944

Morel

A Work on Cereals: Wheat

A Work on Cereals: Oats

Undated

Watercolour and graphite on paper

The Hilma af Klint Foundation. X84056, X84061, X84060

VEGETAL UNIVERSE

The Swedish botanist Carl Linnaeus developed a system of classification which encompassed plants, humans, animals and minerals. His influential published works demonstrated new ways of ordering all plants and included botanical illustrations of specimens imported from their native regions by European colonisers. Studies of organic forms by botanists and biologists, such as Ernst Haeckel, provided inspiration for artists. For example, the organic curves and sinuous lines of the art nouveau movement were clearly inspired by botanical illustration. Ideas of growth and plant life may also indirectly contribute to our understanding of an artwork itself as a living organism.

Vitrine (6) against the wall

Hilma af Klint 1862–1944

Index for each plant included in 'On Flowers, Mosses, Lichen'

1919–20

In her notebooks and drawings from 1917 to 1920, af Klint used a combination of scientific and spiritual methods to describe the observable world. This is the index for the notebook **On Flowers, Mosses, Lichens** (in this vitrine), where she focusses on the close study of nature – the basis of her spiritual system. She used a mixture of text and image to articulate relationships between entities of the natural world, including scientific classifications of plants, character traits and emotions.

The Hilma af Klint Foundation

X85869

Carl Linnaeus 1707–1778

Lapland Journey Diary

1732

Permission of the Linnean Society of London

X85363

Ernst Haeckel

Artistic Forms Occurring in Nature

1899–1904

Wellcome Collection, London

Z76556, Z76557

Ernst Haeckel was a zoologist and naturalist who is said to have coined the term 'ecology'. His **Art Forms in Nature**, published between 1899 and 1904, is an intricate observation of life forms, that has been seen to bridge the gap between art and science. Haeckel illustrated the evolution of living forms through detailed renderings of natural structures, which had significant influence on the art nouveau movement. His interest in evolutionary science led him to create elaborate genealogical trees, demonstrating the evolution of various species including humans. In his highly problematic theory, Haeckel believed that humanity is made up of various human species, or 'races', that are at different stages of evolution – some closer to pre-human ancestors, others more evolutionarily advanced.

Continuing clockwise on the wall

Piet Mondrian 1872–1944

Forest (Study for The Trees)

1912

Crayon on paper

Kunstmuseum Den Haag

X85704

Piet Mondrian 1872–1944

Composition Trees 1

1912–13

Oil paint on canvas

Kunstmuseum Den Haag – bequest Salomon B. Slijper

X84003

Piet Mondrian 1872–1944

Composition Trees 2

1912–13

Oil paint on canvas

Kunstmuseum Den Haag – bequest Salomon B. Slijper

X84193

Piet Mondrian 1872–1944

Self-portrait

1908

Charcoal on paper

Kunstmuseum Den Haag – bequest Salomon B. Slijper

X85882

Piet Mondrian 1872–1944

Composition No. IV

1914

Oil paint on canvas

For this painting, Mondrian turned his attention away from the tree motif to focus on his immediate surroundings: advertisements on the façades of buildings in Paris. He believed that urban environments, especially classical architecture, followed the eternal laws of nature, and this could be expressed through his modern approach to painting. In January 1914 Mondrian wrote, 'Nature (or that which I see) inspires me but I want to come as close as possible to the truth, and thus abstract everything until I arrive at... an outward foundation of things.'

Kunstmuseum Den Haag – bequest Salomon B. Slijper
X85880

Vitrine 7

Piet Mondrian 1872–1944

Le Néo-Plasticisme

1920

In 1921, Mondrian published his **Le Néo-Plasticisme: Principe général de l'équivalence plastique**. The essay explains neo-plasticism as an approach to representing the 'universal' through balancing oppositions of the most basic elements of painting: position, size and colour. Mondrian believed that neo-plastic principles were destined to define the world around us.

RKD – Netherlands Institute for Art History
Z76596

Piet Mondrian 1872–1944

**Le Néo-Plasticisme: Principe général de l'équivalence
plastique**

1920

RKD – Netherlands Institute for Art History
Z76597

Piet Mondrian 1872–1944

Letter to Aletta de longh

1910

Facsimile

Excerpt:

**I've been here for four or five weeks now, drawing
microscopic specimens for a professor. It's nice work, but
I'm only doing it to earn money from time to time.**

Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo, The Netherlands
Z76702

Piet Mondrian 1872–1944

Letter to Aletta de longh

1910

Facsimile

Excerpt:

I studied the dunes and the churches most. If one did not concentrate on just a few things, one would not be able to do anything with all the beauty that exists, eh?

Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo, The Netherlands

Z76701

Piet Mondrian 1872–1944

Letter to Aletta de longh

1910

Facsimile

Excerpt:

I think, as you do, that when you're alone in nature, you can immerse yourself in it most profoundly. Aren't the flowers in Zeeland lovely, eh? Did you notice that? I think it's because they stand out so beautifully against those little white houses and because they grow together in clumps of one species. I think there's something extraordinarily delightful about flowers.

Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo, The Netherlands

Z76703

Anonymous

Portrait of Piet Mondrian

1909

Photograph, facsimile

RKD – Netherlands Institute for Art History. X86083

Reinier Dreksraan 1874–1959

**Portrait of Piet Mondrian in his Studio, Sarphatipark 42,
Amsterdam**

1908

Photograph, facsimile

RKD – Netherlands Institute for Art History
Z76598

Piet Mondrian 1872–1944

**Notebook Containing Handwritten Notes About Art and
Some Addresses**

Undated

RKD – Netherlands Institute for Art History
X86081

Piet Mondrian 1872–1944

**Manuscripts and Photocopies for the Essay 'The Necessity
for a New Teaching in Art, Architecture and Industry'
by Piet Mondrian, Second Draft, English**

Undated

RKD – Netherlands Institute for Art History
X86082

Wall text introduction repeated

THE ETHER

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Hilma af Klint 1862–1944

Untitled Series I

No. 4, 5

No. 6, 7

No. 1, 2a

1917

Watercolour, graphite and metallic paint on paper

Graphite on paper

The Hilma af Klint Foundation

X85611, X85612, X85583

Vitrine (8) against the wall

Hilma af Klint 1862–1944

Spiritual Diary

Undated

The Hilma af Klint Foundation

X85870

Emanuel Swedenborg 1688–1772

Manuscript page from Diarium Spirituale, Vol. II

1905

Facsimile The Swedenborg Society

Z76719

Annie Besant 1847–1933

C. W. Leadbeater 1854–1934

Thought Forms

The Intention To Know

In the Six Directions

The Appreciation of a Picture

Explosive Anger

An Aspiration to Enfold All

Radiating Affection

1905

Facsimile

Images courtesy of Sacred Bones Books

Z76715, Z76716, Z76717, Z76714, Z76718, Z76713

Annie Besant and C.W. Leadbeater took over from Helena Blavatsky as leaders of the Theosophical Society based in Adyar. The pair claimed that these 'thought forms' emerged from states of heightened consciousness, where they viewed auras, astral projections and other expressions from the unseen worlds. They described these to visual artists who translated them into paintings. The forms of thoughts are determined by three principles: '1. Quality of thought determines colour. 2. Nature of thought determines form. 3. Definiteness of thought determines clearness of outline.'

Vitrine 9 against the wall

Helena Blavatsky 1831–1891

**The Secret Doctrine: the Synthesis of Science, Religion and
Philosophy, Vol.1**

1895

The Hilma af Klint Foundation
Z76588

Annie Besant 1847–1933

C. W. Leadbeater 1854–1934

Thought Forms

1905/2020

Tate Library and Archive
Z76704

Helena Blavatsky 1831–1891

**The Secret Doctrine: the Synthesis of Science, Religion and
Philosophy, Vol.II**

1898

The Hilma af Klint Foundation

Z76705

Hilma af Klint 1862–1944

Blue Book 10: Altarpieces

1915

Photograph, pencil and watercolour on paper

The Hilma af Klint Foundation

X85832

Anonymous

Portrait Photograph of Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, Founder of the Theosophical Society

1888

Daylight gelatin silver print

This portrait of Helena Blavatsky was found among Mondrian's possessions on his death. In 1875, Blavatsky co-founded the Theosophical Society with former US military officer Henry Steel Olcott in New York. She wrote **Isis Unveiled** (1877) and **The Secret Doctrine** (1888), claiming that all the world's religions emanated from a single source of ancient wisdom. In 1879, Blavatsky and Olcott moved to India with the intention 'to form the nucleus of a universal brotherhood of humanity, without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste, or colour'.

RKD – Netherlands Institute for Art History. Z76599

Hilma af Klint 1862–1944

Sketch of the forms of Amaliel, Ananda, Georg and Gregor

1933

In this notebook, af Klint visualises the 'thought forms' of her different spiritual guides Gregor, Amaliel, Ananda and Georg. The signs + and x are written in nearly all of her notebooks. She explained, 'All works which are to be opened 20 years after my death bear the above sign.' With this notation, the artist was sealing her work for the future, as she felt the world was not yet ready for her message to humanity.

The Hilma af Klint Foundation

X85866

Hilma af Klint 1862–1944

Series 1, No. 5

1919

Oil paint and graphite on canvas

The Hilma af Klint Foundation

X84156

Rudolf Steiner 1861–1925

Blackboard-drawing from a lecture held on 29 December 1922 in Dornach, Switzerland on 'The Relationship of the World of the Stars to the Human Being, and the Human Being to the World of the Stars. The Spiritual Communion of Humanity'

1922

Chalk on black paper

Rudolf Steiner Archive, Dornach, Switzerland

X85436

Alongside 'Anthroposophy as Cosmosophy', Steiner stated, 'To grasp the world, look into your inner self. To grasp the human being, look into the world.' Like Theosophy, Steiner's Anthroposophy adapted Charles Darwin's ideas on evolution within a spiritual context. He was particularly devoted to Ernst Haeckel's racialised evolutionary model. In some writings and lectures, Steiner would equate racial and spiritual evolutionary status, though his ideas on the subject are complex and, at times, contradictory.

Rudolf Steiner 1861–1925

Blackboard-drawing from a lecture held on 9 October 1921 in Dornach, Switzerland on 'Anthroposophy as Cosmosophy'

1921

Chalk on black paper

Rudolf Steiner Archive, Dornach, Switzerland

X85437

Rudolf Steiner was a prominent member of the Theosophical Society, acting as the general secretary of the German chapter from 1902. Having developed a distinct approach and terminology in this role, Steiner left Theosophy and founded the Anthroposophical Society, a 'spiritual science' movement. Steiner travelled throughout Europe delivering lectures on a range of subjects, using blackboard sketches to explain his ideas. During his lecture on 'The Relationship of the World of the Stars to the Human Being', he drew 'winter and summer at the same time' to describe the physical and spiritual dualities of the human body through the form of the spiral.

Hilma af Klint 1862–1944

On the Viewing of Flowers and Trees

Untitled

Untitled

Untitled

Untitled

Untitled

1922

Watercolour on paper

The Hilma af Klint Foundation

X84191, X84569, X84570, X84571, X84192

Towards the end of her career, af Klint shifted her painting to a 'wet on wet' technique encouraged by Rudolf Steiner. Areas of watercolour paint are left to bleed into one another on the paper. She made plants her meditative focus, expressing her spiritual and emotional bond with the more-than-human world.

Steiner stated that plants participate in a spirit that permeates all of nature, reflecting his engagement with Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's theories. Goethe's **The Metamorphosis of Plants** (1790) describes plant life as a dynamic, primordial force.

Vitrine 10 against the wall

Piet Mondrian 1872–1944

Letter to Rudolf Steiner

1921

Mondrian sent his **Le Néo-Plasticisme** pamphlet and an accompanying letter to Rudolf Steiner. Steiner never responded. In reaction, Mondrian apparently suggested that while Steiner might understand the spiritual world, he understood very little about art.

Rudolf Steiner Archive, Dornach, Switzerland

Z76553



No photography

Hilma af Klint 1862–1944

Letter to Rudolf Steiner

1908

Rudolf Steiner Archive, Dornach, Switzerland

Z76554



No photography

Hilma af Klint 1862–1944

Letter to Rudolf Steiner

1924

Mr. Dr. Steiner

Should the paintings, done by me from 1906 to 1920 and of which you once saw some, be destroyed or are they of any use somewhere?

With great reverence

Hilma af Klint

Rudolf Steiner Archive, Dornach, Switzerland

Z76555

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe 1749–1832

Theory of Colours: Volume I

1810

Theory of Colours: Volume III

1812

Colour Reference Library, Royal College of Art
X86079, X86080

The German writer, scientist and colour theorist Johann Wolfgang von Goethe combined graphic notations with representational colour images in these illustrations of his **Theory of Colour**. This blend of different idioms resonates with af Klint's own fluid language. More broadly, it suggests that abstract and figurative languages have historically existed in complex relationships with one another.

Goethe's **Theory of Colour** was rejected by many contemporary scientists because it contradicts the physical laws laid down by Isaac Newton. Its focus on the human perception of the colour spectrum, as opposed to observable optical phenomenon, was attractive to artists and philosophers. His theory that colours elicit emotive states informed Theosophists Charles Leadbeater and Annie Besant's **Thought Forms**, as well as Rudolf Steiner, who was a Goethe scholar.

Continuing clockwise on the wall

Anna Cassel 1860–1937

No. 38

1913

Oil paint on canvas

No. 81

1913

Watercolour on paper

Anna Cassel was a Swedish artist and member of De Fem (The Five), the spiritualist collective, with af Klint. Like af Klint, she attended the Academy of Fine Arts in Stockholm. In her notes, af Klint describes Cassel playing a crucial role in producing **The Paintings for the Temple**. Cassel's work represents humanity's past as set down in the Akashic records – according to Theosophy, a supernatural compendium of all events, thoughts, and emotions; past, present and future. Af Klint felt Cassel's paintings also belonged to the temple that they were planning together.

The Hilma af Klint Foundation. X85622, X85627

De Fem (The Five)

Spiritualist Drawing

1903

Graphite on paper

Spiritualist Drawing

Undated

Graphite on paper

Spiritualist Drawing

1903

Graphite on paper

The Hilma af Klint Foundation

X85619, X85620, X85621

Members of the Christian spiritualist group De Fem (The Five) collectively produced these pencil drawings. The group consisted of Hilma af Klint, Anna Cassel, Sigrid Hedman, Cornelia Cederberg and Mathilde Nilsson. They met regularly to hold seances where they communicated with spirit guides and channelled messages from higher planes of consciousness. The Five made automatic drawings directed by their spirit guides. This is a method of rapidly producing work without consciously controlling the hand. The artists gradually built a visual vocabulary, combining their esoteric pursuits with botanical and scientific motifs.

Hilma af Klint 1862–1944

Iris Diagnosis Chart, Left Eye

Undated

Ink and graphite on paper

Iris Diagnosis Chart, Right Eye

Undated

Ink and graphite on paper

The Hilma af Klint Foundation. X85873, X85872

Vitrine 11 against the wall

Hilma af Klint 1862–1944

The Ten Largest

No. 1

No. 2

No. 3

No. 4

No. 5

No. 6

No. 7

No. 8

No. 9

No. 10

Undated

Hand-coloured photographs mounted on paperboard
The Hilma af Klint Foundation. X85707, X85708, X85709,
X85710, X85711, X85712, X85713, X85714, X85715, X85716

Anonymous

**Dalecarlian Biblical Wall Painting depicting Jesus Sweating
Blood in the Garden of Gethsemane**

1850

Paint on paper mounted on linen

Stiftelsen Gagnefs Minnesstuga

X86467

INVISIBLE WORLDS

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, several scientific and technological developments changed the way we see the world. X-rays, discovered in 1895, made solid matter appear transparent, revealing previously invisible forms. This raised fundamental questions about the existence of worlds imperceptible to the human eye. The development of wireless telegraphy in the late 1890s, based on the discovery of electromagnetic waves in 1888, suggested empty space was filled with vibrating waves. In the early twentieth century this mysterious, invisible substance termed the 'ether of space', was discussed in popular literature, and occult journals. Such new ideas on the possibilities of dimensions beyond perception, as well as reformulations of the relationship between space and matter, provided rich material for many artists.

Vitrine 12

Tyra Kleen 1874–1951

Form

1908

The Hilma af Klint Foundation

Z76590

Anders Zorn 1860–1920

Små konstböcker, No. 6

1909

The Hilma af Klint Foundation

Z76591

Hilma af Klint 1862–1944

Blue Book 4: The Ten Largest

1907

Photograph, pencil and watercolour on paper

The Hilma af Klint Foundation

X85831

Anonymous

Gagnef Parish Dress – Formal Silk Bonnet

1890

Silk

Gagnef Parish Dress – Skirt Purse

1877

Leather, wool felt and ribbon

Stiftelsen Gagnefs Minnesstuga

X86447, X86868

These textile pieces were produced in a female community in the rural village of Gagnef, Sweden. Af Klint made regular trips to visit her close friend Ottilia Adelborg – a children’s book illustrator who established a lace school that preserved the local textile traditions.

Af Klint would have been exposed to Gagnefdräkten, hand-made costume that was often embroidered with naturalistic patterns and shapes found in the surrounding landscape. The interconnecting petals and tendrils that decorate these vibrant pieces evoke the botanical imagery and vivid colour palette central to af Klint’s series **The Ten Largest**.

Vitrine opposite, free standing

Oliver Lodge

The Ether of Space

1909

Typical of this era, prominent physicist Sir Oliver Lodge was simultaneously pursuing scientific research and exploring occult phenomena. The now largely forgotten 'ether of space' was a central component of the worldview of this time. Understood to fill all space with electromagnetic waves, such as visible light, X-rays, and radio waves, the ether was virtually synonymous with 'space' in the later years of the nineteenth century. Conceptions of space and matter were transformed by scientific developments, which were popularised internationally through translations of books and the circulation of journals – popular, scientific and occult.

Tate Library and Archive. Z76691

Adriaan van de Vijzel

Mondrian's Horoscope – Enhanced

Version, with Handwritten Corrections by Piet Mondrian

1911

The words 'Character is Destiny' appear on Mondrian's horoscope, drawn and interpreted by astrologer Adriaan van de Vijzel in 1911. Mondrian regarded astrology as part of the same branch of 'spiritual science' as Theosophy; the predictions about his life are preceded by a 'scientific assessment'. Mondrian saw his horoscope as a tool to help him navigate the world, as long as he took his destiny into his own hands.

RKD – Netherlands Institute for Art History

Z76600

Annie Besant 1847–1933

C. W. Leadbeater 1854–1934

Occult Chemistry: a Series of Clairvoyant Observations on the Chemical Elements

1908

Theosophists Besant and Leadbeater included an appendix to **Occult Chemistry** called 'The Aether of Space', drawing on physicist Sir Oliver Lodge's theories. Af Klint produced the series **Ether Convolute** in 1916, part of the **Parsifal Series**. In his 1912–14 sketchbooks, Mondrian wrote: 'Between the physical and the ethereal spheres, there is a boundary, clearly delimited for our senses; yet the ether penetrates the physical sphere and acts upon it.'

Wellcome Collection, London

Z76558

Hilma af Klint 1862–1944

Blue Book 1: Primordial Chaos, No. 1–26

1907

Photograph, pencil and watercolour on paper

Af Klint made ten **Blue Books**, containing small versions of her 193 paintings of **The Paintings for the Temple** series. She used them as a kind of portfolio, showing them to friends, family and other interested parties. Af Klint brought all ten volumes with her to the Goetheanum in Switzerland in 1922, to show Rudolf Steiner. Anna Cassel, af Klint's long-time friend and collaborator, created her own set of blue books in a nearly identical format.

The Hilma af Klint Foundation

X85830

Carl Du Prel 1839–1899

**The Monistic Doctrine of the Soul:
A Contribution to the Solution of the Riddle of Man**

1890

The Philosophy of Mysticism

1890

The Hilma af Klint Foundation
Z76589, Z76706

The two books by philosopher Carl du Prel that af Klint owned were **The Philosophy of Mysticism** and **The Monistic Doctrine of the Soul: A Contribution to the Solution of the Riddle of Man**, which she annotated. Du Prel's books were translated into at least five languages, making him an internationally known author to whom af Klint was closely attuned. His writings provided critical context for her belief in a spirit world or transcendent realm beyond ordinary experience with which she could communicate.

Continuing within the adjacent vitrine (3)

Carl Gustav Jung 1875–1961

The Red Book

Illustration 86

Illustration 91

Systema Mundi Totius

Illustration 97

Illustration 135

1914–30

Facsimile

The Foundation of the Works of C.G. Jung. Z76708, Z76709

Dr Robert Hinshaw, Einsiedeln. Z76711

The Foundation of the Works of C.G. Jung. Z76712, Z76710

Carl Jung's **Liber Novus** is now known as 'The Red Book', due to the colour of its cover. It is not certain that he ever intended to publish this account and interpretation of his years of personal crisis between 1913 and 1916. The book is full of illustrations combining symbols from various religions, such as mandalas and trees encased in egg-like forms that resonate with af Klint's work. It is regarded as the seed of the analytical psychology Jung would later develop, in which the conscious and unconscious are assimilated into the whole personality.

Continuing clockwise to the opposite virtine (1)

Anonymous

Bacteriological Drawings

1925–50

Facsimile

In 1920, Mondrian was employed to make drawings for Reinder Pieters van Calcar, a professor of bacteriology. He spent time looking at bacteria and representing them in drawings similar to these. Similarly, af Klint made drawings for John Vennerholm, a professor at a veterinary institute in Stockholm. There she encountered the Petri dish, where bacteriological specimens are observed under a microscope. This ability to veer between micro and macro – from the infinitesimally small to the scale of the cosmos – shares affinities with languages of geometric abstraction, where a small painting could evoke the universal.

Rijksmuseum Boerhaave. X87710, X8711, X87712

Continuing within the adjacent vitrine (2)

Hilma af Klint 1862–1944

On Flowers, Mosses, Lichen

1919–20

In 1919, af Klint began her notebook **On Flowers, Mosses, Lichen** with her partner Thomasine Andersson, who wrote the text in German. It follows the style and format of classification systems, but translates this into an atlas of emotions and spiritual states. The plants she included are indigenous to Sweden, such as dog rose and water iris. She researched 146 specimens, developing an elaborate diagrammatic language to represent the energetic and emotional character of each. This shows her concern with the connections between things, in which all human feeling has a counterpart in the vegetal and spiritual worlds.

The Hilma af Klint Foundation

X85868

Continuing clockwise round the room to vitrine

Anonymous

New York Studio Reconstruction

1944/1987

Mixed media

Mondrian's studios were both working spaces and living examples of his worldview. His studio on Rue du Départ in Paris was a symbiosis of architecture and painting, art and life. His first apartment in New York was, according to art dealer Sydney Janis, 'of a piece with his paintings', the walls 'broken by rectangular colour areas of cardboard – red, blue, yellow, unequal in size – placed to form a typical Mondrian arrangement.'

Kunstmuseum Den Haag

X84004

Continuing within the adjacent vitrine

Model of The Temple, based on Hilma af Klint's notebook drawings

2023

This maquette visualises af Klint's temple – an imagined site in which to experience her work. This single architectural form, which continuously evolved across decades of sketchbooks, primarily took the form of the spiral. This organic motif of growth and expansion can be seen as a spatial metaphor for the theosophical ideas about spiritual development of humankind. While this structure was never physically realised, af Klint emphasised that we each hold a private temple within us – a mental space where we can move closer to a higher unity.

X88421

Blank page

Inside back cover

