

"In carrying out this life's work, it was to be an Anthroposophist as best I could. /.../I understand that I did not make myself understood."

Hilma af Klint, May 5, 1943

## The Hilma af Klint foundation

### *What is a non-profit foundation for public benefit?*

The Hilma af Klint foundation was founded as a non-profit foundation for public benefit and was formed by an irrevocable gift.<sup>1</sup> The gift forms a legal entity that manages capital/property through a board and is owned by its *purpose* and not by any natural person. The donor and his relatives may not receive any benefits from the foundation. In a Swedish non-profit foundation, the ownership is therefore governed and held by the *purpose* of the foundation, not by the donor or his relatives.<sup>2</sup> It is not a family foundation. A family foundation has as its main purpose is to satisfy the interests of a certain family or certain persons.

Members of the first board at the inaugural meeting that took place at the Rudolf Steiner seminar in Järna on the 22 of January 1972 were all anthroposophist's except for one person: the eldest son Gustaf af Klint who was not a member of the anthroposophical society, anthroposophist Erik af Klint

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/stiftelselag-19941220\\_sfs-1994-1220](https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/stiftelselag-19941220_sfs-1994-1220)

<sup>2</sup> The Hilma af Klint foundation is founded as a non-profit foundation. A family foundation means a foundation whose main purpose is to satisfy the interests of a certain family, a certain family or certain persons. The circle of recipients is determined in advance and these people then have preferential rights to the distribution from the foundation. (1 kap. 7 § SL).  
<https://www4.skatteverket.se/rattsligvagledning/Sok.html?query=allm%C3%A4nnnyttiga&year=2022>

himself as chairman, also artistic director at The Rudolf Steiner seminar in Järna, the anthroposophist Arne Klingborg, as well as the anthroposophist's art historian Åke Fant and the engineer Bert Vetterfalk, active in Järna.<sup>3</sup>

A board's task in a non-profit foundation for public benefit includes monitoring that the operational requirements and degree of completion are met, which is connected to the fulfillment of the purpose itself. Furthermore, a board has an obligation to interpret the statutes with due respect for the foundation act; *Stiftelselagen*.

§1 states that the foundation has "...as the object of its activity to take care of and manage Hilma af Klint's works left behind." by her. The question thus arises: what constitutes the work?

According to § 5, the work "... according to Hilma af Klint's statements, was painted on behalf of a higher being and which contains a message. The same applies to related writings." The task of interpreting the statutes thus also includes finding out who this 'higher being' is, as well as what message it is about.

In August 1970 Erik af Klint writes:

"Hilma af Klint's work, by which here is understood her occult (anthroposophical) paintings and writings..."

A draft of the statutes, dated May 14, 1971, also confirms the anthroposophical essence of her work:

"The undersigned vice admiral Erik af Klint hereby presents as a gift to a foundation hereby established with the name 'Stiftelsen Hilma af Klint's verk', due to Miss Hilma af Klint's will, paintings and writings of

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<sup>3</sup> Statutes for Stiftelsen Hilma af Klints verk.

an occult, anthroposophical nature according to a list drawn up by Olof Sundström."

The writings and the work are thus connected. "Everything written down in the notebooks is related to the paintings and their preparatory work" Hilma af Klint herself states in 1938, which can be found in the foundation's archives and is therefore also reflected in the foundation's statutes.

### *What did Hilma af Klint want?*

Erik af Klint writes that in 1908 "...she meets Rudolf Steiner and is deeply moved by his preaching and is from this time influenced by the world of ideas of anthroposophy."<sup>4</sup> "Through anthroposophy, this higher world was opened to Hilma,"/.../"She now gets answers to many questions and a solid foundation to stand on."<sup>5</sup>

Her engagement with Anthroposophy and the teachings of Steiner would last until her dying day: On April 5, 1944, she notes: "Communicate now daily with your Guru, it's Doctor Steiner..."/... /"Help me, Doctor Steiner, that I may come to insight..." She remained in the Anthroposophical Society for life and was also a member of Steiner's esoteric school.<sup>6</sup> Christine Derrer Götz at the *Mitgliedersekretariat am Goetheanum* writes 2020 12 09: "Hilma af Klint never left the Society. She joined the Society in October 1920 and stayed a member until her passing away."

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<sup>4</sup> Erik af Klint, *af Klint och hennes verk, Orientering för Börje, Victor och Gustaf mfl släktingar*, 14/11-1969, sid. 14.

<sup>5</sup> Erik af Klint, "Hilma af Klint and her work." Stockholm in December 1967, page 7. The Hilma af Klint foundation's archive. Steiner's Rosicrucian Theosophy, which was renamed Anthroposophy in 1913, Steiner's name is mentioned hundreds of times in the notebooks from 1908 until 1944. She had over a hundred books by Steiner in her library dating from 1909 and onwards. From the beginning of the 1930s she has continuous conversations with and is taught by him at an 'astral university'.

<sup>6</sup> <https://allgemeine-sektion.goetheanum.ch/de/first-class>

In one of her last notes, on October 3, 1944, she writes: "You are a co-worker and will contribute to the anthroposophical truths being understood more and more."<sup>7</sup> She thus remained an anthroposophist until her death.

Steiner gave 183 lectures in the Nordic countries between 1908–1923, of which 47 were in Sweden. Hilma af Klint met Steiner in Sweden in 1908, 1910, 1912 and 1914. Hilma af Klint traveled after the First World War, and her mother had passed away, in September 1920 to Dornach together with several Swedes and there, like the other Swedes, became a member of the Anthroposophical Society, after intensive studies of Steiner's theosophical Rosicrucian teachings between 1908–1920. She became a member on October 20.<sup>8</sup>

She then also became a member of the Swedish National Society on September 17, 1921, on April 7, 1930, she became a member of the Danish National Society and of the Danish Anthroposophical Society in Copenhagen, 1940 in January she rejoined the Swedish National Society in Stockholm and remained a member there and in Dornach until her death in 1944. In short, you are a member of the Anthroposophical Society in Dornach, then depending on where you are geographically, you can also be a member of Country's society and various lodges, sections, and study groups.<sup>9</sup> Hilma af Klint made nine trips to Dornach and stayed there for long periods between 1920-1930.

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<sup>7</sup> 3/10 1944, sid 123, HAK 1098.

<sup>8</sup> The membership coincided with that "In October 1920 the building was taken into possession for the first time for a college course." 1,400 people participated, of which about ten Swedes. "This audience heard 6-8 hours of lectures every day for three weeks on the modern problems in various subjects such as science, philosophy, art, religion and social science." See *The Goetheanum in Dornach on fire and Rudolf Steiner*. Archives of the Anthroposophical Society. Probably written in early 1923 shortly after the fire. Her friends and co-workers. Gusten Andersson and Anna Cassel also become members of the Anthroposophical Society autumn 1920.

<sup>9</sup> The membership registers of the Anthroposophical Society. Life partner Thomasine Andersson also received country membership Denmark. Mail from Christine Derrer Götz Mitgliederssekretariat am Goetheanum 2020 12 09 «Hilma af Klint never left the Society. She joined the Society in October 1920 and remained a member until her passing away.»

You are thus a member of the General Anthroposophical Society in Dornach and then you can also choose to belong to a local section such as the Stockholm Circle. But the membership is based on the membership in Dornach.

"This work will one day in the future need the protection of the Anthroposophical Society" she writes in the speech script she wrote in 1924 for a speech given to the Anthroposophical Society in Stockholm.<sup>10</sup>

Late in life, on May 5, 1943, she writes: "In carrying out this life's work, it was to be an Anthroposophist as best I could. /.../I understand that I did not make myself understood." "My outlook on life is that of the Anthroposophist..." "Getting it once into the hands of those who are not Anthroposophical minded is maybe awkward." she explains to artist Tyra Kleen on September 3, 1943.<sup>11</sup>

### *What Did the Donor Want?*

Erik af Klint wanted to realize Hilma af Klint's wish that the work would be taken care of by the Anthroposophical Society. The path to Anthroposophy for Erik af Klint himself came via Hilma af Klint. He had lived with the fear of God's punishment throughout his adult life: Erik af Klint writes in *Record from my life and my time*, 1977, page 10: "Even Luther recognized predestination. I personally found this teaching hideous. The worry about predestination followed me until 1932 when I came into close contact with Aunt Hilma and "anthroposophy". There I got a solution to the problem of "the many lives" [reincarnation]."<sup>12</sup>

Erik af Klint writes on May 30, 1967, to the photographer Gösta Kilvén: "Finally, this work of Miss Hilma af Klint is religious and anthroposophical in nature." In "In Stockholm, March 27, 1968," Erik af Klint writes about Hilma af Klint's work: "I intend to turn to anthroposophist's, theosophists, etc., but not to the general public. Within such groups, you may also be able to do small exhibitions of original pictures. It is probably within such closed societies that one can find reciprocity, understanding and interest. It is there that I hope to 'bring the

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<sup>10</sup> 9 /12-1924 sid 35, HAK 1101. Lecture for Antroposofiska sällskapet in Stockholm.

<sup>11</sup> Tyra Kleen Archive.

<sup>12</sup> Erik af Klint, *Uppteckning från mitt liv och min tid*, 1977, p.10.

message forward' and that is the most important thing for me, as well as finding the final place of the work."

In connection with his becoming a member of the Anthroposophical Society, Erik writes to the anthroposophist's' leader Arne Klingborg on 13 November 1969: about Hilma af Klints work "In an addendum to the will, she appeals to me and my brothers Börje and Victor to help me take care of the same and the last living - unless otherwise arranged - 'must submit the same to the Anthroposophical Society in Stockholm. 'With that appointment as a background, it is quite natural that I turn to the Anthroposophical Society in Stockholm. I want in my lifetime to have the work finally placed and not push it to a brother or to the next generation. I want to follow her wishes and intentions as much as possible. (sic) /.../ If you look at the matter, the Anthroposophical Society with its seminars and support associations is a suitable forum, probably the only one."

To the anthroposophical society's secretariat, he writes on December 12, 1969: "Through my aunt Hilma af Klint, and other anthroposophical friends, I have long been in contact with anthroposophy and its world of ideas, which appeals to me and has given my life meaning and purpose. Even as a counterfire against the worrying development of our time, I consider the movement worthy of all support."

Erik af Klint wanted to ensure that the work would be taken care of by anthroposophist's in accordance with af Klint's wishes and therefore wished to donate the work to the Anthroposophical Society. Erik notes in his diary on May 4, 1970 that the place for the work should be "The only conceivable place the Rudolf Steiner seminar. I can offer the work as a deposit, donation or legacy."/.../ The work should, when it comes to Järna, be kept available for study and made known through lectures and special exhibitions,..."<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Erik af Klint, Hilmas verk – Diary, 4/5-1970, p 7.

A little more than a week after the founding of the foundation, on January 31, 1972, Erik af Klint let his relatives know that the foundation had been formed: "I formed the foundation Hilma af Klint's works on the 22nd of /this month/. A copy of the record and statutes is attached here for your information." /..."...and hope that I have fulfilled the wishes that Hilma had when she asked me to take care of the work."<sup>14</sup> He thus had an anthroposophical oriented foundation created in accordance with Hilma af Klint's wishes. In order to emphasize the importance of the Anthroposophical Society in the foundation, in the event of disagreement regarding election to the board, the Anthroposophical Society must appoint a new member.<sup>15</sup>

### **What do the foundation's statutes say?**

According to § 1 of the statutes, the foundation's board of directors must, according to § 1, "safeguard and manage" Klint's legacy, and according to § 4, "keep the work available to those who seek spiritual knowledge or who can contribute to the work fulfilling the mission that Hilma af Klint spiritual principals intended for the same."<sup>16</sup>

Hilma af Klint's notebooks show that she considered Steiner to be her spiritual mentor: On June 16, 1936, she writes: "With you be the Highest of us, that is Doctor Steiner."<sup>17</sup> Without specifying who she is talking to, she writes on March

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<sup>14</sup> The son Gustaf af Klint future principal of the af Klint family was of course not informed in this way as he was part of the founding board of the foundation.

<sup>15</sup> §2 "Avgår eller avlider annan styrelseledamot /än ordföranden/ skall den återstående styrelse utse ersättare för den avgångne ledamoten. Skulle styrelseledamot icke kunna utses på sådant sätt, skall han utses av styrelsen för Antroposofiska Sällskapet i Sverige." "If a board member /other than the chairman/ resigns or dies, the remaining board must appoint a replacement for the retired member. Should a board member not be able to be appointed in such a way, he shall be appointed by the board of the Anthroposophical Society in Sweden."

[https://hilmaafklint.se/wp-content/uploads/wm-SHAKV\\_stadgar-optimized.pdf](https://hilmaafklint.se/wp-content/uploads/wm-SHAKV_stadgar-optimized.pdf)

<sup>16</sup> Erik af Klint's statutes for the foundation are very close to Klint's intentions for the work with one exception; it was never donated to the Anthroposophical Society which was Klint's wish as no final location was created for the work. Instead, he created an Anthroposophical foundation.

<sup>17</sup> 16/6 1936, sid 188, HAK 1076.

27, 1937: "All your thoughts are now focused on one and the same goal, that of being able to complete your work, and you will succeed if you can keep your thoughts first and foremost on our common goal to be able to serve Doctor Steiner who is behind the work and the one who continues to inspire you and me."<sup>18</sup>

According to § 5, works 1–193 must not be dispersed "... which, according to Hilma af Klint's statements, were painted on behalf of a higher being and which contain a message. The same applies to related writings."

Hilma af Klint was early on convinced that what was represented via symbols in the Paintings to the Temple corresponded with Steiner's ideas. While working on the Paintings for the Temple, she writes on July 2, 1912: "The symbols given are the ones that most agree with Dr. Steiner's Rosicrucian. These belong to Christianity and the Christian religion we love the most and we were connected to it when we walked here on earth 1000 years ago"<sup>19</sup>

Hilma af Klint saw Steiner as her leader. In 1933 she writes: "...and finally when you think of the leaders of all these beings, your mind goes to Doctor Steiner. He stands head and shoulders above all of them because of greater knowledge, greater nobility, greater goodness, and above all greater willpower."<sup>20</sup>

The mission she received, she believed, came from the spiritual being behind which Steiner stood:

"..."Bow down and receive at this moment a greeting from Doctor Steiner. He is present and shall open the gate which is guarded by 4 beings that you yourself have

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<sup>18</sup> 27/3–1937, sid 75, HAK 1084.

<sup>19</sup> 2/7–1912, sid 56, HAK 559

<sup>20</sup> 28/3 1933, page 16, HAK 1059. See also 22/9 1932, pages 64–65, HAK 1050: "How does Doctor Rudolf Steiner stand in relation to this remarkable institution? He is a head higher than all these who dwell in the heavenly temple. He is thus the one who teaches us and you can safely entrust yourself to his disciples, for here in the astral world there is no possibility to produce false results..."



chosen Gregor, Amaliel, Ananda and Georg.”<sup>21</sup> "Doctor Steiner is behind the entire work.”<sup>22</sup>

Hilma af Klint saw herself as a prophet with a message that she must convey to humanity. On June 26, 1934, she wrote "Instead of obstacles being placed in your way, obstacles will be removed, and you will be put at the head of the work that is penetrating the earth. Behind it is Dr. Steiner.”<sup>23</sup>

On May 2, 1943, she writes "We naturally mean Rudolf Steiner. He is the one who took all responsibility for Antr. Society and you are only an insignificant link in his life's work.”<sup>24</sup>

On January 19, 1944, she writes: "Even what you produced is the work of Doctor Steiner and conveyed through another temple brother, Amaliel.”<sup>25</sup>

On August 25, 1938, Erik af Klint writes after she had revealed the meanings of the paintings to him: “In her explanations, Hilma seems to be completely influenced by dr. Rudolph Steiner.”

"The majority of the board shall according to the statues be members of the Anthroposophical Society." it is to be read in §2, which means that the founder's intentions were that these members of the board should consist of precisely anthroposophist's. By people with the sympathy and knowledge of Hilma af Klint's and Steiner's world of ideas that is required to understand Hilma af Klint's intentions. That is, people who can appreciate Hilma af Klint's self-understanding and reveal the message of the work, as well as understand the sole founder and donor Erik af Klint's intention with the foundation, to reveal the hidden Steiner Rosicrucian message "...which is penetrating the earth..."

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<sup>21</sup> 25/5 1934, Sid 99, HAK 1072.

<sup>22</sup> 26/5 1934, sid 101–102, HAK 1072.

<sup>23</sup> 26/6 1934, sid 10, HAK 1073

<sup>24</sup> 2/5 1943, sid 54, HAK 1092

<sup>25</sup> 19/1 1944, sid 42–43, HAK 1095

Therefore, a majority of the members of the board are not just members of the Anthroposophical society but are, also like Hilma and Erik af Klint, anthroposophist's themselves.