



FS Colour Series: MAHOGANY ROSE Inspired by Hilma Af Klint's Warm Neutrals

Description



Group X, 1915

In the mystical, surreal world of Swedish painter Hilma Af Klint, eccentric shapes loop, twist and turn through space, carrying with them an energised, spiritual wonder. A pioneering painter of the early 20th century, Klint painted her unique brand of abstraction with a full spectrum of colour, but sandy, warm neutrals like [MAHOGANY ROSE](#) often sat in amongst more saturated hues, carrying with them an air of calm, contemplative stability. The artist must surely have known that her madcap brand of surreal, occult spiritualism was ahead of its time, for she stipulated that they could only be shown 20 years after her death, surely a surprisingly strict guideline for any artist to follow.

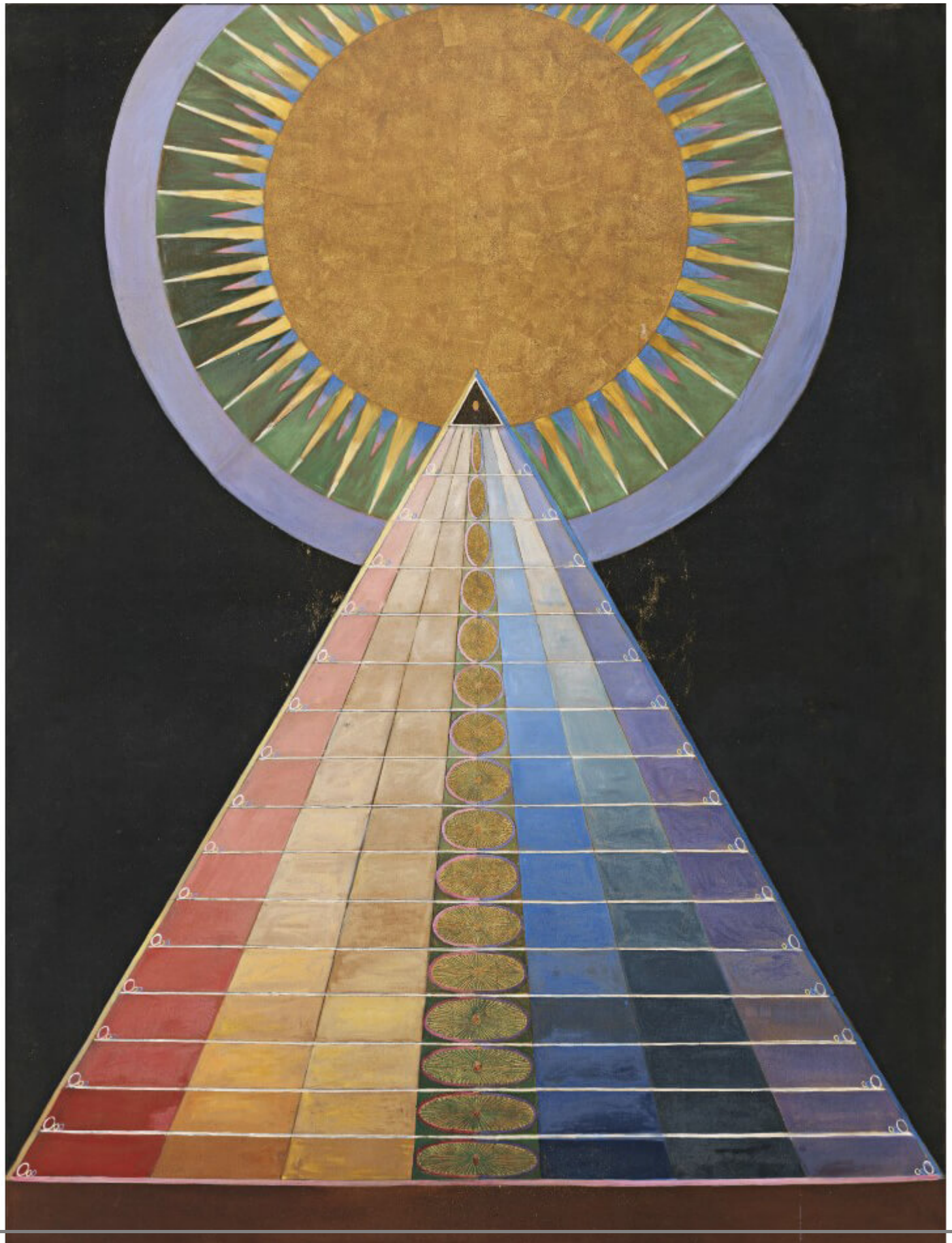
Klint was born in 1862 in Solna, Sweden. Her large family were devout Protestants, and Klint retained the spirituality of her childhood as she grew into adulthood. As a student in portraiture at Sweden's Technical School, Klint began showing a leaning towards the spiritual and the occult, attending mystical groups and seances where she tried to communicate with ghosts. After graduating, Klint gained financial stability from selling her traditional landscape and portrait paintings.



In 1896, Klint formed an artist group called 'The Five' with four fellow women artists, who shared the same fascination with occult forces and the spirit world. Together they arranged weekly seances, along with free-flowing drawing and writing sessions as a launchpad for spontaneous ideas, prefiguring the automatism of the French Surrealists nearly 30 years later.

Klint discovered through such intuitive practices that she could tap into her unconscious, unearthing surprising and unexpected results. Another key feature in Klint's art was the botanical world of plants and flowers, which she made copious studies from. While her art never directly illustrates the flora and fauna she so admired, we can clearly see how organic patterns and shapes made their way into her improvisatory drawings and paintings.

Klint claimed it was during one particular séance in 1906, when she was 44 years old, that a spirit voice instructed her to make a new kind of art 'on an astral plane.' From this point on she embarked on the most prolific phase of her entire career, creating more than 200 paintings between 1906 and 1915, under the umbrella title *Paintings for the Temple*. She created these eccentric paintings in private, all the while maintaining a public façade as a traditional landscape painter, making them all the more intimate and intriguing. In contrast with her earlier, more spontaneous art, these paintings are cerebral and considered, invested with her own private language of symbolism and hidden, layered meanings.



Warm neutral shades often featured in her astral paintings, forming a mellow backdrop for shimmering jewel tones and metallic surfaces. *Group X*, 1915 is one of a series of altarpiece-inspired artworks Klint made for the Temple series. The central focus of the image is a glistening orb painted in gold-leaf, symbolising the heavens. Below is an upturned triangle, gridded with white on black to resemble a stepped passageway. In its centre, an ornately decorated pathway seems to run downwards away from the heavens, as if inviting heavenly beings down onto the earth. Painted in a warm and enveloping shade of sandy grey, it forms a sharp contrast to the regal red beyond.

Klint made *Group IX/SUW, The Swan, No. 9*, 1915 for the same series, one of a group featuring abstracted swans. Here a curving swan-like form in the upper image is mirrored below, representing what Klint called “the union of opposites.” Klint blends beige, fleshy toned hues here with brick red, a stark colourway that packs a striking visual punch.



Group X, No. 1, Altarpiece, 1915 is another important altarpiece-like image Klint made for the same series. This time we are drawn towards the glistening, ethereal sun in the sky via a richly decorated passage of steps resembling an Egyptian pyramid. Rainbow colours are combined here with the artist's trademark sandy pale brown, its warm hue nestling in alongside

gold, red and fawn shades on one side, and contrasting sharply with the opposite blues and purples. Here Klint invites us to think about painting's role as a guide between one plane and another, a route into a magical, unknown place somewhere beyond the tangible world.

CATEGORY

1. COLOUR SERIES
2. TEXTILES

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