

Translation of the letter originally written in German from the Albert Steffen Foundation in Dornach, Switzerland

<https://safetrade.media/onewebmedia/Dornach.pdf>

Article in the Swedish daily newspaper SvD (Svenska Dagbladet)

Translation follows

<https://www.svd.se/a/al1gBE/stiftelse-vi-lurades-att-salja-hilma-af-klint-malningar>

Foundation: We Were Tricked into Selling af Klint Paintings

The Anthroposophical foundation in Switzerland believed it was selling its Hilma af Klint paintings to a future museum in Järna. Instead, the works were resold to an art dealer in New York. “We feel deceived,” the foundation’s representatives wrote.

It was described as magic. In 2021, eight works by Hilma af Klint appeared for sale at a New York gallery. The event was extraordinary, as almost all of af Klint's works are owned by foundations, and her art rarely comes to market.

Business magazine *Forbes* called it “art world magic.” However, the aftermath has been bitter, with sharp accusations aimed at a key figure in the Swedish Anthroposophical movement.

Hilma af Klint has become a star in the international art world in the 21st century. Her artistry was strongly influenced by anthroposophy, a spiritual worldview that emerged around the turn of the 20th century.

The works that appeared at a New York gallery in 2021 had been gifted by Hilma af Klint to Rudolf Steiner, the founder of anthroposophy. After Steiner’s death, the watercolors ended up with Albert Steffen, a poet who took over the leadership of the Anthroposophical movement.

For decades, the works were managed by a foundation in Dornach, often referred to as the Mecca of anthroposophy.

However, through the Swedish Anders Kumlander, they ended up in 2021 with a powerful art dealer in New York. Kumlander had purchased the works from the Swiss Albert Steffen Foundation.

Anders Kumlander is a prominent figure in Swedish anthroposophy and a board member of the Hilma af Klint Foundation, which has long been plagued by mistrust and conflicts among its members.

The Swiss foundation claims it was misled during the deal. The foundation believed the watercolors were destined for a Hilma af Klint museum in Sweden and sold the works to Anders Kumlander at a favorable price. “We are disappointed and feel cheated and deceived,” the foundation’s representatives wrote in a letter.

“I believe this is a smear campaign,” Anders Kumlander told *SvD*. He expressed disappointment that the Swiss foundation had revealed his involvement in the high-profile art deal.

“They signed a confidentiality agreement and are not allowed to share information about this deal with any external parties.”

Museum Plans on Hold

Anders Kumlander has been a driving force behind plans for a Hilma af Klint museum in Järna, an idea conceived in the early 2000s. Kumlander was for several years the chairman of the Kristallen Foundation, established to create the museum.

However, the museum plans have long been on hold. Today, the Kristallen Foundation’s activities are limited to an annual board meeting.

Last winter, an unexpected letter arrived from Dornach to the board members of the Kristallen Foundation. In it, the Albert Steffen Foundation shared its version of how the Hilma af Klint works were sold to Kumlander, under the impression that the deal involved a representative of the Kristallen Foundation.

Museum Sketches Sent

Anders Kumlander reportedly sent project sketches for the planned museum where the Hilma af Klint works would be displayed.

Staffan Jonsson, chairman of the Kristallen Foundation, stated that the foundation had no involvement in the deal.

“We were not informed, and the foundation is in no way involved,” he said.

According to the letter from Dornach, Kumlander was able to purchase the works after sending images of the proposed museum in Järna and emphasizing that Rudolf Steiner had said Hilma af Klint’s works should remain in Northern Europe.

The Swiss foundation perceived Kumlander as an “anthroposophical friend.” This, according to the letter, convinced the foundation that Kumlander was the right buyer, despite other offers that would have yielded more money. The foundation stated that it had turned down David Zwirner.

Works Ended Up with Zwirner

Yet through Kumlander, the works ultimately ended up with Zwirner. “Naturally, you and David Zwirner profited significantly. The ones who lost out are us,” the Swiss foundation wrote.

The letter described it as a slap in the face when Kumlander, citing consultation with “the two people most knowledgeable about Hilma af Klint and her works,” decided to place the pieces on the international art market. The foundation stated that the harm done could not be remedied with money but suggested it would be appropriate for Kumlander to donate part of his profits to the Albert Steffen Foundation.

Through David Zwirner, the works were sold in 2022 to Glenstone, a private museum in Maryland. The purchase price remains undisclosed. However, in his 2022 tax return, Anders Kumlander reported a capital surplus of over 69 million SEK, a significant departure from previous years.

Are You Satisfied with What Happened to the Works?

“Yes, I am,” said Anders Kumlander. “I believe it is important that Hilma’s art is accessible to the public at renowned museums around the world. I see that as something very positive. Otherwise, over time, she will not receive the place in the art world that she deserves.”

But you have also made a significant profit here?

“I conducted a private transaction, and I am distributing the proceeds in a way that satisfies me, which I will not comment on further.”

Kumlander described the letter from the Swiss foundation as “embarrassing for those who sent it.”

“They entered into an agreement with me and now apparently regret it. I believe they need to stand by what they have done. I have no problem standing by what I have done,” said Kumlander, insisting that everything was conducted properly.

Confidentiality Around the Purchase

In addition to calling the criticism part of a smear campaign, Kumlander said the confidentiality surrounding the transaction makes it difficult to respond to the letter from the Swiss foundation.

“They simply want more money, and I suppose this is their attempt to get it,” he said.

Christine Engels, a representative of the Albert Steffen Foundation, declined to comment on the transaction with Kumlander or the letter in which the foundation appealed for financial compensation after feeling misled.

“This is a private matter for our foundation,” she told *SvD*.