

Article in the Swedish daily newspaper SvD (Svenska Dagbladet)

<https://www.svd.se/a/pP4621/hilma-af-klints-verk-ska-ut-pa-marknaden-orovackande>

Af KLINT HEADING FOR THE MARKET “CONCERNING”

Hilma af Klint's art has essentially been unavailable for purchase. Now, that may change. The Hilma af Klint Foundation has initiated a collaboration with a gallerist in New York, sparking criticism from art historian Iris Müller-Westermann.

Hilma af Klint's work has been described as a "Swedish national treasure," largely untouched by the commercial art world. However, it now appears poised to enter the global art market. The Hilma af Klint Foundation, which manages her legacy, is preparing for sales. The foundation has initiated a collaboration with art dealer David Zwirner in New York, and an agreement is set to be discussed at an upcoming board meeting.

The agreement with the art dealer has caused upheaval within the board. "I am very concerned," says Erik af Klint, chairman of the Hilma af Klint Foundation, who opposes any sale.

According to Erik af Klint, the sale is being justified by the foundation's need to generate funds for maintaining the art.

"If works must be sold, it should be under compelling circumstances, but there is no urgent need—there is no acute restoration requirement," he states.

Interest in Hilma af Klint's work is immense internationally. The artist was far ahead of her time, and Sweden holds an almost intact collection of her work. Hilma af Klint bequeathed her estate to her nephew, who founded a foundation to manage the "work"—a unified body of work containing paintings, sketches, and notebooks.

The foundation has been plagued by disputes over how best to manage the artist's legacy. In recent years, a conflict has emerged between the af Klint family and representatives linked to the anthroposophical community in Järna and the Ax:son Johnson sphere.

According to Anders Kumlander, a member of the foundation's board, the sale is intended to fund the care and restoration of Hilma af Klint's art. He notes that the foundation has engaged conservators to assess restoration needs.

When asked whether there is an urgent restoration need, he responds:

"Extensive work has been done by professionals in restoration, and this has been verified by other experts."

The foundation has also initiated an investigation into building a museum in Järna. "It has not been finalized, but it is underway," Kumlander adds.

A draft agreement with David Zwirner grants the American gallerist exclusive rights to sell Hilma af Klint's work for five years, with an option for renewal. However, it does not specify which or how many works the foundation intends to sell.

"The arguments for the sale are troublingly vague," says Iris Müller-Westermann, senior curator at Moderna Museet.

Iris Müller-Westermann:

She curated Moderna Museet's major Hilma af Klint exhibition in 2013 and criticizes the sale plans, highlighting the unique preservation of this Swedish artist's body of work.

"It's unique that a Swedish artist's legacy has been kept intact for so long." She points out that museums worldwide are eager to borrow Hilma af Klint's art and argues that other methods, such as negotiation with borrowing institutions, could secure funding for art preservation.

"Borrowing institutions could likely contribute more to restoration—it's a matter of negotiation," she says.