

## NATURE STUDIES

In the spring and summer of 1919 and 1920, in the fields and forests near her studio on the island of Munsö, outside Stockholm, af Klint drew flowers almost every day. The resulting *Nature Studies* reflect what she saw and what she knew: an expansive plant knowledge gained from formal and informal botanical education and work as a scientific illustrator. Her subjects were mostly common wildflowers or weeds, with just a few cultivated. All are depicted when the flowers first blossomed, a recognition of new beginnings and their role in the ecosystem's lifecycle.

But these are not conventional botanical illustrations. Af Klint radically conjoins two distinct approaches to image-making: She juxtaposes her jewel-tone blooms with abstract diagrams—drawing on her growing inventory of spirals, targets, nested squares, and more. Borrowing the Swedish word for “guidelines” or “directions forward” af Klint called her diagrams *riktlinier*; each expresses a human condition, state of consciousness, or aspect of character she gleaned from close observation of her plant subjects. She distilled these insights into short descriptions, first written onto the sheet and later transferred into a series of notebooks, on view nearby. Some of af Klint's diagrams reflect the properties of the flower, from its color to the shape of its petals, stem, leaves, and roots, to specialized details about growth and reproduction.

Af Klint imagined her *Nature Studies*—and related texts—as a flora, or botanical atlas. Hers, however, would be a flora of the spirit, a mapping of nature in spiritual terms. “I have shown,” she wrote, “that there is a connection between the plant world and the world of the soul.”