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In 2013, when the Museum of Modern Art put on the enormous exhibition “Inventing Abstraction,” which was in many ways the story of the past century of art, it included, of course, work by Wassily Kandinsky, Kazimir Malevich, and Ellsworth Kelly. But the survey neglected to include Hilma af Klint, the pioneering Swedish abstract painter who was overlooked during her lifetime—and for several lifetimes thereafter. This omission troubled the artist

Josiah McElheny, who is not known as a painter but a glass artist whose blown works often dazzle with their execution and scale. He is also an active participant in the art historical conversation, dredging up the past to re-examine it through his work. In his new solo exhibition at Andrea Rosen gallery in New York, McElheny wonders: What if af Klint were a titan of her time—she did her damage mostly between the years of 1906 and 1915 (before even Kandinsky)—and thus influenced the abstract artists who followed? “These historical figures—Kandinsky, Malevich, Kelly, and others—are reimagined retroactively as if they had an awareness of Hilma’s work, which was hidden for 100 years,” McElheny explains. This theoretical play is made physical in McElheny’s “paintings,” shallow boxes with crystalline pieces behind their glass surfaces, like depths contained beneath layers of paint on a canvas—the latest development in the long line of abstraction. “It’s not a literal one-to-one relationship between these influences. But I think if you looked at Hilma’s work and the work of these artists, and then you looked at my work, it wouldn’t seem strange to say that.” See if you can trace its genetic tree.

“Josiah McElheny: Paintings” is on view through October 24 at New York’s Andrea Rosen Gallery, 525 West 24th Street.