

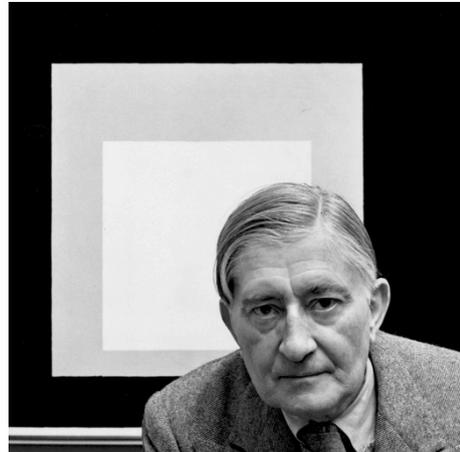
JOSEF ALBERS

(Bottrop, Germany, 1888 – New Haven, USA, 1976)

To distribute material possessions is to divide them, to distribute spiritual possessions is to multiply them

Josef Albers was born in Germany in 1888. In 1920 he started his studies at the Bauhaus School, in Weimar. Bauhaus was considered the pioneering school for interdisciplinary education in art, architecture and design. Albers took part of the Special Program, where he studied in depth the "contrast effects" of form, texture and, most importantly, colour.

Five years later, Albers was working at the Bauhaus teaching alongside artists such as Wassily Kandinsky, Paul Klee and Oskar Schlemmer. After the rise of the Nazi government, the school's financial situation got worse closing its doors in 1933 and Josef Albers and his wife, the designer and printmaker Anni Albers, emigrated to the United States. With his strong pedagogical vocation, Albers continued teaching at Black Mountain College in North Carolina, and later on, at Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut. Albers was able to transmit the concepts of Bauhaus and his own artistic philosophy to a new generation of American artists such as Cy Twombly and Robert Rauschenberg.



Josef Albers, 1948. © Arnold Newman

In the United States he began a process of experimentation with the optical effects of colour, which resulted in his well-known series of paintings *Homage to the Square*. Albers focused in demonstrating that there is not a single perception of colour; colour responds to the environment, its receptor and his mind. He investigated the difference between the visual information of the retina and the one created in the mind. The artist used the calculation of reduced forms to illustrate how places, shapes and lights have an effect on colour. Josef Albers explored the illusion of colour advancing or receding on flat surfaces. This series included over a thousand works; paintings, drawings, prints and tapestries executed over a period of 25 years. The entire series was based on a particular format of several squares, which appear to be superimposed or nested within each other with visible strokes, variations in pigment densities, from colour to colour and from square to square.

His colour studies were accompanied with the publication in 1963 of the influential book *Interaction of Colour*. This publication provided the most comprehensive analysis of the function and perception of colour to date, and deeply influenced artistic education practice, especially Color Field painting and Minimalism in the 20th Century. Albers had his first exhibition in 1919 at Galerie Goltz, in Munich, and in 1935 in the United States at Addison Gallery of American Art, Phillips Academy, Andover, Massachusetts. In 1936 he showed his work for the first time individually in Manhattan, at the New Art Circle of J. B. Neuman. He also participated in *Documenta I* (1955) and *Documenta IV* (1968), Kassel. Since then, his work has been exhibited all over the world. In 1971 he was the first living artist to have a solo exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Today, his work is part of major public collections around the world.

Josef Albers died in New Haven, Connecticut, on March 25, 1976.