

## PRESS RELEASE

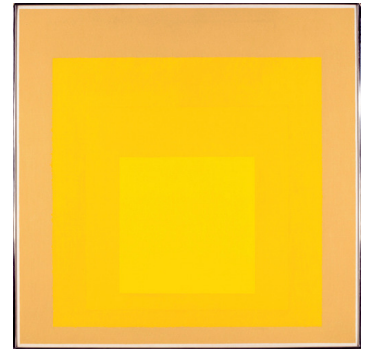
# JOSEF ALBERS

## Paintings

1 April–2 May 2009

Monday–Friday 10am–6pm

Saturday 10am–1.30pm



**Homage to the Square: "Started"** 1969  
oil on masonite, 48 x 48 in

"In order to use colour effectively it is necessary to recognize colour deceives continually"<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>J. Albers, *Interaction of Color*, p.1

Waddington Galleries are pleased to announce an exhibition of paintings by Josef Albers from his *Variant* and *Homage to the Square* series, dating from 1947 to 1971.

The earliest painting in the exhibition is *Variant: "White and Grey with Two Yellows and Two Greens"* (1947–1955). Albers started the *Variant* series in 1947, a year which he spent in Mexico and the paintings resemble the simple geometric facades of adobe houses, with two mirroring windows, that Albers had seen there. Throughout the series, also known as the Adobe paintings, Albers used a similar composition with varying colour combinations, applying paint unmixed, directly from the tube onto white primed hardboard. He divided each work into units so that every colour could be given a quantitative as well as chromatic valuation, often noting the formula on the back of the painting. It was a working practice he would use again in his *Homage to the square* paintings, which he began in 1950, the same year that he moved to Yale University to organise a teaching course incorporating many of his ideas from the Bauhaus.

Colour was central to Albers' work and teaching and, partly inspired by Goethe's 1811 *Farbenlehre* (Study of colour), he had developed the subject into a separate course. In his experimental exercises, using cut-out paper, Albers explored how colour behaves and perpetually changes, its spatial effects, and how the same colour placed on different colour grounds can lose its identity or how different colours can be made to look the same. For the *Homage to the Square* series he used a format of squares within a square (an idea developed from Johannes Itten's Basic Course at the Bauhaus, where squares within squares were used for colour exercises). Albers formulated four different compositions based on related proportions, all of which are included in the exhibition; three containing 3 squares and one of 4. Sometimes Albers added mitred corners to the squares, as can be seen in *Study for Homage to the Square: "Oracle"* 1961, extended the horizontal planes by painting these a different colour, as seen in "*Variation on Homage to the Square*" 1961, and used descriptive, often lyrical words to describe how the colours performed together and the associations they evoked; in this exhibition, paintings are named "Whist", "Green Dusk", "Golden" and "Oracle". Albers worked continuously on the *Homages to the Square* paintings for the next twenty-six years, until his death in 1976.

Born in 1888 in Bottrop, Germany, Josef Albers trained as a teacher, later moving into art education before studying art at the Kunstgewerbeschule, Essen, where he worked in stained glass and print-making. In 1920, Albers enrolled in the preliminary course at the Bauhaus, which had opened the previous year in Weimar. Within two years he was running the glass workshop and, in 1923, he formulated the preliminary course in material and design, later taking charge of this course and rising to the position of assistant director to Mies van der Rohe in 1930. When the Bauhaus was closed down by the Gestapo in 1933, Albers, then aged forty-five, left Germany for the United States to initially take up a teaching post at the newly-formed Black Mountain College in North Carolina, moving to Yale University in 1950. Albers retired as Chairman of Yale University Art School in 1958 but retained his post as Visiting Professor until 1960. In 1959, he was awarded the Ford Foundation fellowship. *Interaction of Color*, his seminal account of over thirty years of his colour theory teaching, was published by Yale University Press in 1963. In 1967, he received the Carnegie Institute award for painting at Pittsburgh International Exhibition. In 1971, Albers was the first living artist to be given a solo exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Josef Albers died on 25 March 1976 in Orange, Connecticut.

**A fully illustrated catalogue with a foreword by Nicholas Fox Weber, Executive Director of the Josef and Anni Albers Foundation, accompanies the exhibition. For further information or images, please contact Leonie Grainger**