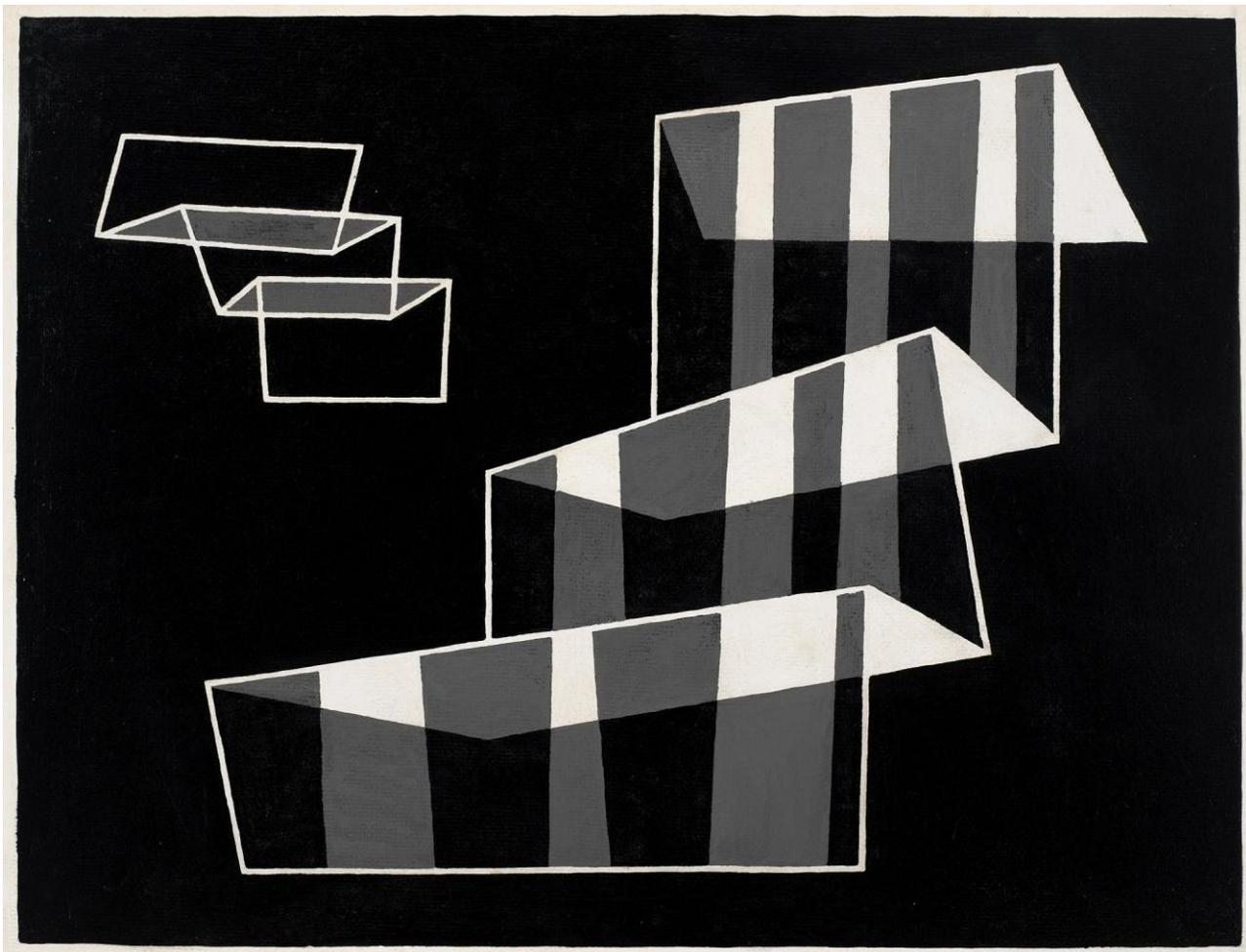


waddington custot
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Steps, 1931/1956. ©2014 The Josef and Anni Albers Foundation/Artists Rights Society New York/DACS London

JOSEF ALBERS

BLACK AND WHITE

6TH MAY - 4TH JUNE

'Black and white was a launching point for infinity in Albers's work'
– Nicholas Fox Weber, Executive Director of the Josef and Anni Albers Foundation

Waddington Custot Galleries present 'Josef Albers: Black and White' in association with the Josef and Anni Albers Foundation. This is the first exhibition to be held in the UK which explores the importance of black and white in Josef Albers's work. Almost 50 selected works testify to Albers's versatility as an artist. Featuring paintings, works on paper, glass works, photographs and engravings on vinylite, this exhibition promises a fascinating insight into his inventive journey.

Albers explored the power of black throughout his life. His thorough use of black using multiple materials helped inform his knowledge and understanding of colour. This self-imposed restriction to monochrome allowed him to approach the full spectrum with remarkable confidence. It was a similar approach to that of other great colourists: Georges Seurat restricted his palette to monochrome for two to three years in the 1880s and Henri Matisse focused on using black around 1918.

Albers's appreciation of complex tonal contrasts as a draughtsman, printmaker and photographer would go on to influence his own pupils including Robert Rauschenberg, Cy Twombly and Kenneth Noland. It also informed his ground-breaking and influential book *Interaction of Color*, Yale, 1963.

Works in the exhibition include his earliest extant drawing from 1911, his Bauhaus glass constructions and photo collages. One collage of Paul Klee dates from 1929. Klee was a friend and fellow teacher at the Bauhaus, and these images were taken before both artists left Germany for the United States. From the 1930s onwards, Albers visited Mexico on many occasions, living there for a year in 1947. During these trips he took photographs of pre-Columbian sites. Photographs of Tenayuca and Uxmal will be on view.

An important set of six *Treble Clef* gouaches from the 1930s show his subtle symbioses of black, white and grey. Six *Graphic Tectonic* drawings from the 1940s and *Structural Constellations* from the 1950s show geometric precision and exemplify his wish to create 'maximum effect' from 'minimal means'. These complex linear designs offer various possible spatial interpretations and thereby create optical illusions.

Best known for his iconic series of *Homage to the Square* paintings, focusing on chromatic interactions, Albers created these oils, usually on masonite, for a period of over 25 years. Each consists of three or four squares of solid planes of colour. He often used strong, vibrant colours, but in this exhibition are eight examples in black and in white. Alongside these will be his *Variant* or *Adobe* paintings, their composition based on the houses in Mexico and the American southwest.

Josef Albers was a pioneering colour theorist and a historic teacher at the Bauhaus, Germany, Black Mountain College, North Carolina, and Yale University, Connecticut. His impact on contemporary art and design was and is lasting and profound.

An illustrated catalogue with essay by Nicholas Fox Weber will accompany the exhibition.

NOTES TO THE EDITOR

Leslie Waddington has held worldwide representation of the Josef Albers Estate for almost 20 years.

Biography

Josef Albers (b. 1888, Bottrop, Germany; d. 1976, Orange, Connecticut, USA) is one of the twentieth century's most influential artists. Having studied at the Royal Art School, Berlin, Albers continued his studies at the Bauhaus, Weimar, from 1920. He then taught at the Bauhaus, moving to Dessau when it relocated there in 1925. The school was closed by the Gestapo in 1933 at which point Albers moved to the United States, with his Jewish wife Anni, to run art education at the newly founded Black Mountain College, North Carolina. In 1950 he was appointed head of the Department of Design at Yale University and in the same year began the *Homage to the Square* series which was to occupy him until his death in 1976.

'The Responsive Eye' show of Op Art, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1965, showed his works alongside those of Victor Vasarely, Bridget Riley and Frank Stella, amongst others. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, held a solo exhibition of his work in 1971, the first retrospective of a living artist ever to be held there. In 1988, the Solomon R Guggenheim Museum, New York, organised a major retrospective of Albers's work to mark the centenary of his birth.

Recent solo exhibitions include: Centre Pompidou, 2002 and 2012; The Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington DC, 2010; Galleria Civica di Modena, Modena, 2011; The Morgan Library & Museum, New York, 2012; Galleria Nazionale dell'Umbria, Perugia, and Accademia di Brera, Milan, 2013.

The Josef and Anni Albers Foundation, formed in 1963, is a non-profit organisation with the aim of furthering 'the revelation and evocation of vision through art'. The Josef Albers Museum opened in Bottrop, Germany, in 1983.

Nicholas Fox Weber

Nicholas Fox Weber is a cultural historian and Executive Director of the Josef and Anni Albers Foundation. He has written extensively about both Josef and Anni Albers and curated many major exhibitions and retrospectives dedicated to their work. He is a graduate of Columbia College and Yale University and author of fourteen books including *Josef Albers Works on Paper and Paintings*, *The Drawings of Josef Albers*, *The Woven and Graphic Art of Anni Albers*, *Balthus: A Biography*, *Le Corbusier: A Life*, and *The Bauhaus Group*.

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