

Bechtler Museum of Modern Art Announces New Exhibition *Josef Albers: The Interaction of Color*

On View January 9 Through July 4, 2021

Charlotte, N.C. – The Bechtler Museum of Modern Art’s newest exhibition, *Josef Albers: The Interaction of Color* is inspired by the Bechtler’s rare German edition of *The Interaction of Color*, featuring 81 silkscreen color studies that serve as a record of Albers’s experiential way of studying and teaching color.

Born in Germany in 1888, Josef Albers was one of the most influential artist-educators of the 20th century. Best known for his iconic color square paintings, his exploration and expansion of complex color theory principles and dedication to experiential education based on observation and experimentation, radically altered the trajectory of arts education in the United States.

Forty-five years after the artist’s death, this exhibition presents a selection of works from *The Interaction of Color*, which was originally conceived of as a handbook and teaching aid for artists, educators and students. On view in the Bechtler’s intimate second-floor gallery, the exhibition features 42 double-page screen prints, each demonstrating the ways in which colors can interact and influence each other.

“Albers suggested that color is best studied via experience, underpinned by experimentation and observation,” said Todd Smith, Executive Director. “Visitors to this exhibition see examples of different color study exercises that demonstrate principles including color relativity, vibrating and vanishing boundaries, and illusion of transparency and reversed grounds.”

After enrolling at the Weimar Bauhaus in 1920 as a maker of stained-glass, Albers soon began teaching in the foundational preliminary course (Werklehre) of the department of design. In 1925, the year that the Bauhaus moved to Dessau, he was promoted to professor and taught alongside artists such as Paul Klee, Oskar Schlemmer and Wassily Kandinsky. In 1933, under pressure from the Nazis, the Bauhaus was forced to shutter and the American architect, Phillip Johnson, made the introductions to secure Albers and his wife Anni (a Jewish German born textile artist and printmaker) an invitation to teach at the newly formed Black Mountain College just outside of Asheville, North Carolina. This experimental college was ideologically organized around John Dewey’s principles of education and a belief in democracy and freedom.

The Albers arrived at Black Mountain in 1933 and remained at the College until 1949. As the head of the painting program, Albers set out with the primary goal “to make open the eyes” and in this pursuit, he developed a unique anti-hierarchical teaching method rooted in liberalism and strategies of defamiliarization. In his courses, Albers often talked about the formal elements of an artwork, such as color, as though it were alive, and linked the behavior of colors to elements of human behavior while encouraging the development of an artistic practice that prioritized participation, human connection, and empathy.

“Moving from simple to complex, the color exercises in the portfolio were not intended as a fixed body of wisdom to be handed down from a professor to a student,” said Anastasia James, Curator. “These studies were to be understood as a guide for ongoing investigations and explorations of the possibilities of color and the results of their interaction and influence on each other in our own individual perceptions.”

Today, Albers’s works are held in the collections of The Museum of Modern Art in New York, the Art Institute of Chicago, the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., and the Tate Gallery in London, among others. He was the first living artist to be given a solo exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1971. His 1963 *The Interaction of Color* remains one of the most influential texts used in contemporary arts education.

ABOUT THE BECHTLER MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

Home to Charlotte’s iconic *Firebird* sculpture by Niki de Saint Phalle, the Bechtler Museum of Modern Art is filled with works by Miró, Giacometti, Calder, Warhol, Klee, and a wealth of other 20th-century notables. The Bechtler collection juxtaposes whimsy with work of significant intellectual depth and historical significance. Cosmopolitan in nature yet intimate in scale, the museum, designed by Mario Botta, provides an experience that is inspiring and approachable. The artworks were committed to the city of Charlotte by Andreas Bechtler, who, along with his family, built the collection over 70 years. Located in the heart of Uptown, the Bechtler is a light-filled community space created to engage audiences of all ages through exhibitions, jazz and film series, interactive art activities, and family days throughout the year. Visit bechtler.org for more information.

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Images Available Upon Request



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