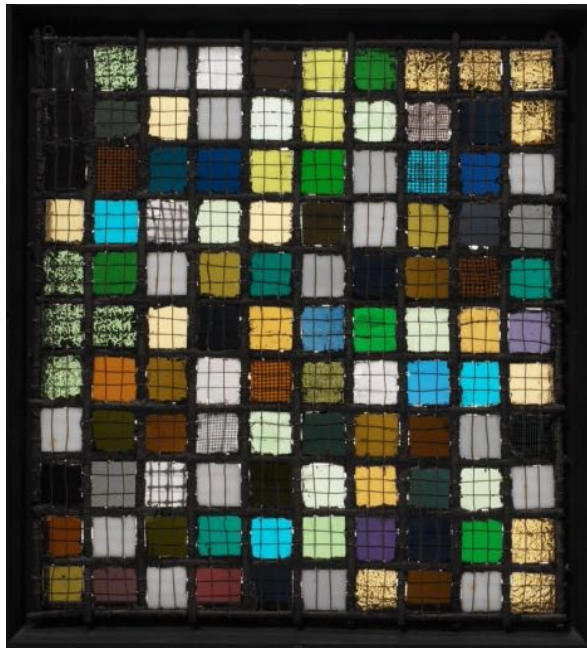


Affinities: Anni Albers, Josef Albers, Paul Klee

March 13–April 19, 2025
537 West 20th Street, New York



Josef Albers, *Gitterbild (Grid Mounted)*, c. 1921-1922 © The Josef and Anni Albers Foundation/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York
Courtesy The Josef and Anni Albers Foundation and David Zwirner

David Zwirner is pleased to announce *Affinities: Anni Albers, Josef Albers, Paul Klee*, curated by Nicholas Fox Weber. On view at the gallery's 537 West 20th Street location in Chelsea, this exhibition presents the work of these three artists who overlapped at the Bauhaus during the 1920s and early 1930s and who greatly respected one another's work. The exhibition features an extensive and varied selection of works by the Alberses from The Josef and Anni Albers Foundation and notable works by Klee on loan from institutional and private collectors, as well as additional Klee works from the collection of Alain and Doris Klee. Additional support for the exhibition has been generously provided by the Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern.

In 1921, Paul Klee joined the faculty of the recently established Bauhaus in Weimar as a "form master," one of the senior instructors at the school. The previous year, Josef Albers had arrived as a student before overseeing the glass workshop and later the preliminary design course. Though Josef never studied with the older Swiss-born German artist, Anni Albers (née Fleischmann; she married Josef in 1925), who came to the Bauhaus in 1922, took a weaving course with Klee and attended his lectures. She would also come to teach at the school starting in 1929. After the Bauhaus moved to Dessau in 1925, the Alberses became neighbors of Paul and Lily Klee, their son Felix, and their cat Fritz. Though Klee was quite reserved, Anni in particular expressed reverence for his art and instruction, stating that he "had more influence on my work and my thinking by just looking at what he did with a line or a dot or a brush stroke."¹

¹ Anni Albers, interview, July 5, 1968, Oral History Program, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, accessed online.

Affinities will present works by all three artists from their time at the Bauhaus as well as from their later years, showcasing their distinct but overlapping aesthetic styles. Works from the Bauhaus era include paintings and works on paper and board by Klee that are composed of dramatic geometric arrangements with vivid palettes that visualize the centrality of color and line to his practice. Two of Josef Albers's earliest glassworks—composed of grids and variously shaped pieces of stained glass, respectively—are singular examples of his art from this period. Also on view will be Anni Albers's *Wallhanging* (1924), one of only a handful of the artist's extant textile works from the 1920s, an extraordinarily innovative exploration of minimalist form.

Later works by the artists include those by Klee featuring more loosely rendered subjects and arrangements of forms, which are representative of his increasingly diaristic visual practice during his later years. Textiles and works on paper by Anni Albers from the decades after the Bauhaus speak to her endlessly inventive and novel engagement with color, and linear and geometric form, which she explored in textiles, prints, and in drawings. Several notable examples of Josef Albers's *Homage to the Square* paintings—his best known and most celebrated body of work—will be on view, as well as singular paintings and studies from his time at Black Mountain College that blend his Bauhaus-era interests with his fascination in Mesoamerican art. Taken together, the selection of works reveals how each artist's work continued to evolve while still retaining formal and compositional elements that extend back to their time together in Weimar and Dessau.

Though Klee and the Alberses have been exhibited together in thematic and historical shows on the Bauhaus, the three of them together have never before been the direct focus of an exhibition. This groundbreaking show provides a unique opportunity to see their works in dialogue. What comes through is the rich humor and perpetual wish for experimentation, the playfulness and profundity of their exuberant art. As Fox Weber writes, "Neither Paul Klee nor Anni nor Josef imitated one another, but they shared certain goals. Their art was a celebration—of color, of form, of the value of art that was not a personal revelation but was, rather, an ode to the universal. This exhibition has been created to unite the work of these three timeless artists and to reveal the rich affinities of work that is salubrious and uplifting."²

This exhibition precedes a major survey of Anni Albers's work that will be presented at the Zentrum Paul Klee from November 2025 to February 2026. The traveling exhibition *Woven Histories: Textiles and Modern Abstraction*, curated by Lynne Cooke and featuring works by all three artists, will open at The Museum of Modern Art, New York, in April 2025.

Paul Klee (1879–1940) counts among the truly defining artists of the twentieth century, exploring and expanding the terrain of avant-garde art through work that ranges from stunning colorist grids to evocative graphic productions. Klee taught for a decade, from 1921 to 1931, at the Bauhaus and the novelty of his work and ideas established him as one of the institution's foremost instructors. He was associated with some of the most important art movements of the twentieth century, such as expressionism, cubism, and surrealism, yet his practice remained highly individualistic and distinct; it was never encapsulated by the concerns of a movement or reducible to the modernist binary of abstraction and figuration.

² Nicholas Fox Weber, curator's statement for *Affinities: Anni Albers, Josef Albers, Paul Klee*, February 2025.

Known for her pioneering graphic wall hangings, weavings, and designs, Anni Albers (née Annelise Fleischmann; 1899–1994) is considered one of the most important abstract artists of the twentieth century, as well as an influential designer, printmaker, and educator. Across the breadth of her career, she combined a deep and intuitive understanding of materials and process with her inventive and visually engaging exploration of form and color. Her innovative textiles from her time at the Bauhaus, at once functional and aesthetic, were the first to combine avant-garde geometric abstractions with weaving.. Albers was deeply influenced by pre-Columbian art and textiles, which she encountered on trips to Mexico during her time teaching at Black Mountain College between 1933 and 1949. She went on to employ long-forgotten techniques discovered through her in-depth study and collection of these works, leading eventually to the creation of her pictorial weavings of the 1950s. After 1963, she largely moved away from weaving to focus on printmaking and drawing as well as a select number of commissions that likewise engaged her singular approach to composition, creating numerous abstract motifs that—like her weavings—set up a dynamic play between figure and ground.

Josef Albers (1888–1976) was one of the most influential abstract painters and art teachers of the twentieth century. Albers's artistic career, which bridged European and American modernism, consisted mainly of a tightly focused investigation into the perceptual properties of color and spatial relationships. Working with simple geometric forms, Albers sought to produce the effects of chromatic interaction, in which the visual perception of a color is affected by the hues adjacent to it. Albers's precise application of color also created plays of space and depth, as the planar colored shapes that make up the majority of his works appear to either recede into or protrude out of the picture plane.

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