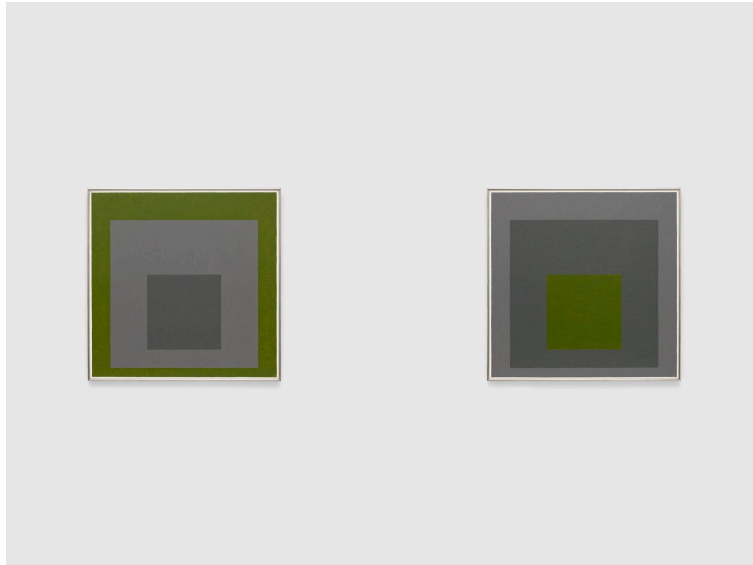


## Josef Albers *Duets*

15 January–21 March 2026  
108, rue Vieille du Temple, 75003, Paris



Josef Albers, *Study for Homage to the Square*, 1968 and *Study for Homage to the Square: Starting Anew*, 1964

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David Zwirner is pleased to present *Josef Albers: Duets*, on view at the gallery's Paris location. The exhibition features significant paintings and works on paper from the 1930s through the 1970s in which two related forms are played against one another. Albers was fascinated by such dualities. He guides us to recognize first that either two disparate paintings or two disparate elements within a single painting are in many ways the same but also vary from one another because of shifts in color or their internal structures.

*Josef Albers: Duets* is organized in collaboration with the Josef & Anni Albers Foundation. It is the first solo show of the artist's work in Paris since the widely acclaimed *Josef and Anni Albers: Art and Life*, which was held at the Musée d'Art Moderne de Paris in 2021–2022, and the permanent installation of a gift of more than fifty works from the Albers Foundation to the museum.

As Nicholas Fox Weber, executive director of the Josef & Anni Albers Foundation, notes:

*Albers delighted in pointing out that "in math and science, one plus one is two; in art, one plus one is two and also many more." Lifelong, he would periodically play two related forms against one another to demonstrate the multiple events, exciting and mysterious, that occur as a result of*

*dualities. To juxtapose closely related forms enabled Albers to give you, the audience whom he cherished, a visual feast.*

*Albers was, at heart, a magician. Pairing resemblant forms created a surcharge of visual activity. As a teacher, starting from his early days when as a young man he taught classes in a one-room school in an agricultural region of his native Westphalia, through his time as the first student to be appointed a "master" at the Bauhaus, then during his years inspiring renegades at the experimental Black Mountain College and on into his teaching at Yale University and lecturing all over North and South America and Germany, he inspired people to recognize the infinite possibilities of parallel shapes. Eventually, as an octogenarian, he loved nothing more than to guide open-eyed children to see the wonderful visual events that can occur when two disparate elements are placed side by side.*

*Sometimes Albers would have one element be simply a reversal of the other, but usually the pairings are more complex. In all instances, the viewer becomes engaged with the wonderful experience of two (and sometimes more) variations on a single theme. It is the sort of rich diversion provided by the music of J. S. Bach, whose work was one of Albers's lifelong passions. Duets is the first exhibition ever to focus on the powerful ways that one plus one is more than two.*

Paintings and works on paper from Albers's groundbreaking series *Homage to the Square* (1950–1976), in which he experimented with endless chromatic combinations and perceptual effects set in precise formats, are featured. These include *Study for Homage to the Square: Starting Anew* (1964) and *Study for Homage to the Square* (1968), whose shared palette of green and grays demonstrate how Albers returned to resonant colorways over the years, here in large 40-by-40-inch scale. Nearby, *Study to Homage for the Square: Budding* (1958) and *Study for Homage to the Square: Spring Out* (1962), apply earthen greens and browns that allude to the natural world and the changing seasons. Others, such as two grayscale oil studies for Albers's first *Homage to the Square* from 1950, further highlight how compositional placement defines the ultimate perception of color.

The exhibition further highlights Albers's work in black, white, and gray. Early series by the artist, including a significant glass work and gouaches from the series *Treble Clefs* (1932–1935), each depict the musical notation in grayscale tones. These important works bridge the period from Albers's departure from the Bauhaus to his arrival in the United States. They will be complemented by key pairings of *Homage to the Square* paintings, including the aforementioned early studies, as well as a complete portfolio of *Gray Instrumentation I* (1974), comprising a suite of *Homage to the Square* screenprints published by Tyler Graphics in Bedford Village, New York.

On view are selections of Albers's series of *Variants* (begun in 1947), also called *Adobes* because of their relationship to the architecture that riveted the artist in Mexico and the American Southwest, with one of its hallmarks being the presence of two entrances, inviting the viewer to experience the same structure following two different but related routes. Albers was very aware that these alternate visual experiences were analogous to what happens in life itself when one considers or takes different paths, emotionally or physically, rather than adhering to the idea that there is only a single way to do something.

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.

Albers was born in Bottrop, Germany, and studied briefly at the Königliche Bayerische Akademie der Bildenden Kunst, Munich, in 1919, before becoming a student at the Weimar Bauhaus in 1920. In 1922, Albers joined the school's faculty, first working in stained glass and, starting in 1923, teaching design. In 1933, he and Anni Albers emigrated to North Carolina, where they founded the art department at Black Mountain College. During their time at Black Mountain, Albers began to show his work extensively within the United States, including solo exhibitions at the Addison Gallery of American Art, Andover, Massachusetts (1935); J.B. Neumann's New Art Circle, New York (1936, 1938); The Germanic Museum at Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts (1936); Katharine Kuh Gallery, Chicago (1937); San Francisco Museum of Art (1940); and the Nierendorf Gallery, New York (1941). The Alberses remained at Black Mountain until 1949 and, in 1950, moved to New Haven, Connecticut, where Josef Albers was invited to direct a newly formed department of design at the Yale University School of Art. In 1950, too, he developed what would become his seminal *Homage to the Square* series, which he continued to elaborate until his death in 1976. This body of work was featured in a major exhibition organized by The Museum of Modern Art, New York, in 1964 that traveled to twenty-two venues in the United States and Latin America. Albers retired from teaching in 1958, a few years prior to the publication of his important text *Interaction of Color* (1963), which was reissued in two volumes in 2013. Following numerous gallery and museum exhibitions, as well as his participation in Documenta I (1955) and Documenta 4 (1968), Albers became the first living artist to be the subject of a solo exhibition at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, with his career-spanning retrospective there in 1971.

More recent exhibitions include *Painting on Paper: Josef Albers in America*, which originated at the Pinakothek der Moderne, Munich (2010; traveled to Josef Albers Museum, Quadrat, Bottrop, Germany; Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebæk, Denmark; Kunstmuseum Basel; Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris; Centro de Arte Moderna, Gulbenkian Museum, Lisbon; and the Morgan Library and Museum, New York); *Josef Albers: Minimal Means, Maximum Effect* at the Fundación Juan March, Madrid (2014; traveled to Henie Onstad Art Centre, Høvikodden, Norway); and *A Beautiful Confluence: Anni and Josef Albers and the Latin American World* at Mudec, Museo delle Culture, Milan (2015–2016). From 2016 to 2017, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, presented *One and One Is Four: The Bauhaus Photocollages of Josef Albers*. In 2017, *Josef Albers in Mexico* was presented at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, and traveled to the Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Venice, in 2018. *Anni and Josef Albers: Art and Life* was on view at the Musée d'Art Moderne de Paris in 2021 and subsequently traveled to IVAM (Instituto Valenciano de Arte Moderno), Valencia, Spain, in 2022. At the Josef Albers Museum in Bottrop, Germany, *Josef Albers: Homage to the Square* was on view from 2022 to 2023. The artist's first retrospective exhibition in Japan, *Josef Albers: Pedagogical Experiments*, was on view at the Kawamura Memorial DIC Museum of Art, Sakura, Japan, in 2023.

The Josef and Anni Albers Foundation has been exclusively represented by David Zwirner since 2016. The same year, *Josef Albers: Grey Steps, Grey Scales, Grey Ladders* was presented at the gallery's New York location. *Josef Albers: Sunny Side Up* was on view at David Zwirner, London, in 2017. David Zwirner, New York, presented *Josef Albers: Sonic Albers* (2019) and the two-person exhibition *Albers and Morandi: Never Finished* (2021). In 2022, the gallery presented *Josef Albers: Primary Colors* at its Hong

Kong location, and in 2023, *Josef Albers: Paintings Titled Variants* was presented at the gallery's London location, in tandem with the group exhibition *Black Mountain College: The Experimenters*.

Work by Albers is held in important public and private collections worldwide.

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