

## Remembering Josef Albers in anticipation of 'Rauschenberg & Albers: Box vs. Square'

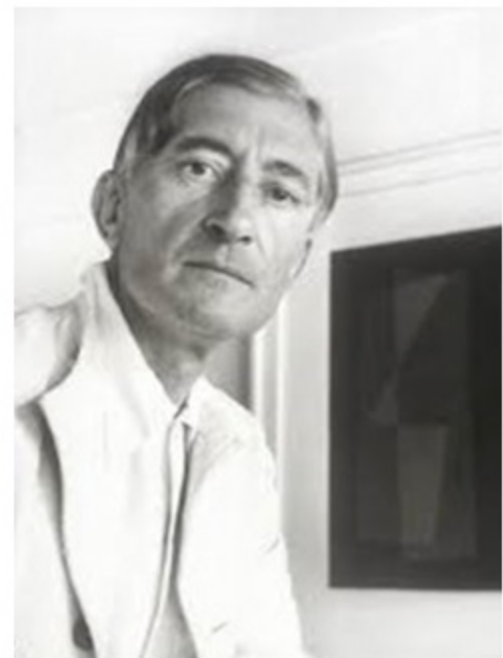
By TOM HALL  
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Florida SouthWestern State College has announced that its next exhibition at the Rauschenberg Gallery will be *Rauschenberg & Albers: Box vs. Square*, the first in-depth investigation anywhere of the student-teacher relationship between these two great modern masters.

Josef Albers was a painter, poet, sculptor, teacher, and art theoretician. Color Field painting and Op Art were among the innovative movements he helped pioneer.

From 1908 to 1920 Albers studied painting and printmaking in Berlin, Essen, and Munich and taught elementary school in his native town of Bottrop. In 1920 he enrolled at the newly formed Bauhaus, which was to become the most important design school in Germany. His most important creations of that period included compositions made of colored glass, as well as examples of furniture design, metalwork, and typography. After he became a "master" at the Bauhaus in 1925, Albers explored a style of painting characterized by the reiteration of abstract rectilinear patterns and the use of primary colors along with white and black.

When the Nazi government closed the Bauhaus in 1933, Albers left Germany for the United States. On the recommendation of architect Philip Johnson, Albers organized the fine-arts curriculum at Black Mountain College in North Carolina, where he taught until 1949. "So powerful was Albers's influence on the nature of the school that many people today assume that Black Mountain College was a school of art," writes art historian Frederick A. Horowitz. "At Black Mountain College, Albers shifted his objectives from teaching professional skills to teaching the whole person. He was confident that he



could improve anyone's life by exposing that person to visual training, and welcomed John Dewey's then-novel assertion that art should be integrated into the general curriculum. As a consequence of his work with young, non-professionals, he began increasingly to emphasize thinking for oneself as a primary goal of his teaching."

"Instead of art I have taught philosophy," Albers once stated. "Though technique for me is a big word, I never have taught how to paint. All my doing was to make people to see."

In 1950, Albers began a 10-year tenure as chairman of the art department of Yale University. Over the course of his time at both Black Mountain and Yale, he brought the tenets of European modernism to America, furnishing the theoretical basis for the development of non-objective art during and after the age of Abstract Expressionism. His extensive theoretical work proposing that color, rather than form, is the primary medium of pictorial language, profoundly influenced the development of modern art in the United States, and his 1963 book, *Interaction of Color*, provided the most comprehensive analysis of the function and perception of color to date and profoundly influenced art education and artistic practice, especially Color Field painting and Minimalism.

In addition to influencing the art faculty at both institutions, Albers counted Robert Rauschenberg, Eva Hesse and Kenneth Noland among his most influential students. (Other luminaries who attended Black Mountain include John Chamberlain, Kenneth Snelson, Arthur Penn, Peter Voulkos, Dorothea Rockburne, Paul Taylor, Francine du Plessix Gray, Robert Creeley and Jonathan Williams.)

The exhibition will open on Friday, February 26 with a public reception and performances by internationally-acclaimed electro-acoustic violist Martha Mooke and Sonic Combine. This event is open to the public, free of charge. For more information, please telephone (239) 489-9313 or visit [www.RauschenbergGallery.com](http://www.RauschenbergGallery.com). ■