

## HOW ANNI AND JOSEF ALBERS BECAME 21ST CENTURY ART STARS



The Wall Street Journal wrote an extensive piece today, September 8<sup>th</sup> 2017, on the phenomenon in the recognition and reputation – and, needless to say, market prices – of Josef and Anni Albers. According to David Leiber, prices for certain Homage paintings have doubled in the past five years and tripled in the past 10; the gallery has sold them at prices ranging from \$300,000 to over \$2 million.<sup>1</sup> In addition, Albers’s index in Artprice has increased + 1004% since 2000.

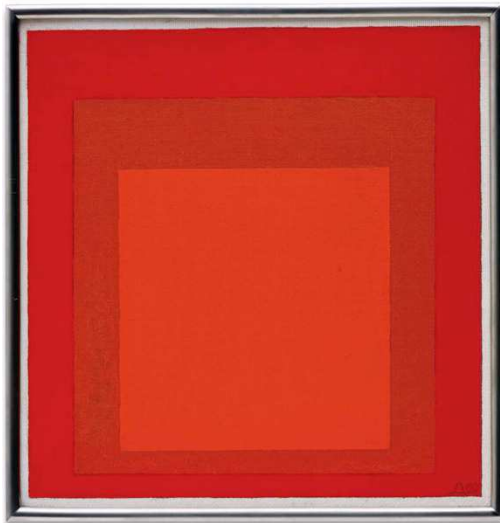
Since the announcement at the end of 2015 that the estate of Josef Albers would be represented by David Zwirner Gallery, the German artist has been the highlight of the art market. In the last auction season Albers became the unexpected focus of market attention within each sale. Until then, the highest price for a small, 16-inch-square Albers had been around \$400,000, but when Christie’s in London auctioned off the collection of the Modern-art dealer Leslie Waddington, the first of three small paintings by Albers tripled estimates, selling for \$848,000. This outcome was also result of Albers’s exhibition at the MoMA in New York titled “One and One Is Four: The Bauhaus Photocollages of Josef Albers”. After the highly positive review in the New York Times, the collectors began to turn their heads to this Bauhaus teacher. “The show is more than just an advertisement. It’s a genuine, if highly selective and jumpy, traversal of a passionately sustained career.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Kino, Carol. “How Anni and Josef Albers Became 21st Century Stars”. *The Wall Street Journal*. 8 Sept. 2017 <https://www.wsj.com/articles/how-anni-and-josef-albers-became-21st-century-art-stars-1504713775> Accessed 8 Sept. 2017.

<sup>2</sup> Pogrebin, Robin. “Delivering Fresh Attention to Josef Albers.” *The New York Times*, 3 Nov. 2016, [http://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/04/arts/design/delivering-fresh-attention-to-josef-albers.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/04/arts/design/delivering-fresh-attention-to-josef-albers.html?_r=0). Accessed 8 Sept. 2017

Just like a cannonball, the following auctions in Milan, Paris and New York followed the same record-breaking results all throughout 2016 and the first few months of 2017. The market momentum is most likely a product of the market’s mood shift toward works at a lower price point and the volume and recognizability of Albers’s work. Art Market Monitor stated, “Like Fontana’s slashes, Hirst’s spots and Richter’s abstract paintings, the Homage to the Square series ticks several important boxes for a global art buying audience. They’re abstract, recognizable and come in seemingly endless variation.”<sup>3</sup>

But it seems that this trend is here to stay. The coming year brings a crop of major Albers shows in Europe and New York, including the Guggenheim Bilbao exhibition, “Josef Albers in Latin America,” opening October 6 in 2017; the Tate Modern is planning a major retrospective of Anni Albers’s work in 2018; and an exhibition about the Black Mountain College in North Carolina, which includes Josef and Anni Albers - organized by the Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston - is now at the Wexner Center in Columbus, Ohio.



Josef Albers, *Study for Homage to the Square: Wet and Dry* (1969)

The fruits of the foundation’s labors can be seen clearly in Albers’s reputation and their current massive endeavor of creating a Catalogue Raisonné will only solidify the interest of collectors and buyers. These results would only lead to Marion Maneker’s headline for today’s publication “The Albers’ Reputation Climbs to New Heights Under the Backstage Guidance of their Foundation.”<sup>4</sup>

**By Giovana Edid**

<sup>3</sup> Maneker, Marion. “Albers Squared Variation X Volume = Market Momentum” Art Market Monitor, 8 Sept. 2017 <http://www.artmarketmonitor.com/2016/11/03/albers-squared-variation-x-volume-market-momentum/>

<sup>4</sup> Maneker, Marion. “The Albers’ Reputation Climbs to New Heights Under the Backstage Guidance of their Foundation.” Art Market Monitor, 8 Sept. 2017, <http://www.artmarketmonitor.com/2017/09/08/the-albers-reputation-climbs-to-new-heights-under-the-backstage-guidance-of-their-foundation>. Accessed 8 Sept. 2017.



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