



Smithsonian
Archives of American Art

A Finding Aid to the Josef Albers Papers,
1929-1970, in the Archives of American Art

Jean Fitzgerald

Funding for the digitization of this collection was
provided by the Terra Foundation for American Art.

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Archives of American Art
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<https://www.aaa.si.edu/services/questions>
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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Josef Albers papers
Identifier:	AAA.albejose
Date:	1929-1970
Extent:	1.5 linear feet
Creator:	Albers, Josef
Language:	Multiple languages English; German; Italian; French
Summary:	The papers are primarily in English and German, with some materials in Italian and French. The papers of painter, printmaker, and art teacher Josef Albers date from 1929 to 1970 and measure 1.5 linear feet. Found within the papers are biographical materials, writings, a recorded lecture, and photographs. The bulk of the collection consists of printed materials.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

The Josef Albers papers were donated by the artist in 1969 and 1970. A small collection of additional Albers papers and an audio recording of a lecture with an unknown provenance were integrated.

Related Materials

Also found in the Archives is an oral history interview with Albers conducted by Sevim Fesci in 1968, and a collection of letters from Albers to J. B. Naumann that was loaned to the Archives by the Brooklyn Museum for microfilming and is available on microfilm reel 911.

Available Formats

The bulk of the collection was digitized in 2016 and is available on the Archives of American Art's website. Materials which have not been scanned include blank pages and duplicates. In some cases, exhibition catalogs and other publications have had their covers, title pages, and relevant pages scanned.

Processing Information

Portions of the collection were microfilmed to reels N69-139 - N69-140, N70-48, and 2786. All accretions and two small small collections with an unknown provenance were merged and processed by Jean Fitzgerald in 2010. The collection was processed for digitization by Megan

Bean and digitized in 2016. Funding for the digitization of the collection was provided by the Terra Foundation for American Art.

Preferred Citation

Josef Albers papers, 1929-1970. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Restrictions

Use of original papers requires an appointment and is limited to the Archives' Washington, D.C. Research Center. Contact Reference Services for more information.

Conditions Governing Use

The Josef Albers papers are owned by the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. Literary rights as possessed by the donor have been dedicated to public use for research, study, and scholarship. The collection is subject to all copyright laws.

Biographical / Historical

Josef Albers (1888-1976) of Dessau, Germany, Black Mountain, North Carolina, and New Haven, Connecticut, was a painter, printmaker, and art teacher advocating a disciplined approach to composition, form, and color.

Josef Albers was born on March 19, 1888 in Bottrop, Westphalia, Germany, the only child of Lorenz Albers, a housepainter, and Magdalena (Schumacher) Albers. He attended the Präparanden-Schule in Langenhorst from 1902 to 1905 and then the teachers college in Büren, graduating in 1908. He became an instructor in several Westphalian primary schools.

Albers studied at the Royal Art School in Berlin, the Arts and Crafts School (Folkwang School) in Essen, and at the Art Academy in Munich under Franz Stuck before enrolling at the Bauhaus in Weimar in 1920. In 1923, he became an instructor and in 1925, when the school was transplanted to Dessau, he became a Bauhausmeister, teaching his fundamental design course. He remained in that position in Dessau and Berlin until 1933, when under pressure from National Socialism, the school was shut down. In that year, Albers emigrated to the United States, becoming a professor of painting at Black Mountain College in North Carolina.

In 1949, Albers moved to Yale University where he taught in the Department of Design and served as Chairman of the Art Department. Following his retirement in 1960, Albers continued to live in New Haven with his wife, textile artist Anni Albers.

Albers served as a guest teacher in Ulm, Germany, and in many colleges and art schools in the United States, Mexico, and South America. He was also an author of poems and books concerning art theory.

Josef Albers died on March 25, 1976 in New Haven, Connecticut.

Scope and Contents

The papers of painter, printmaker, and art teacher Josef Albers date from 1929 to 1970 and measure 1.5 linear feet. Found within the papers are biographical materials, writings, a recorded lecture, and photographs. The bulk of the collection consists of printed materials.

Biographical material consists of a curriculum vitae, bibliographic lists, a transcript of a "Yale Reports" radio interview in which Albers discusses art as a part of general education, and a photocopy of a letter from Eugene W. Leake of the Maryland Institute discussing a work by Albers in the Baltimore Museum.

Writings and Lectures are primarily photocopies of poems and typescripts by Albers concerning his theories on art, as well as an sound tape reel recording of Albers delivering a lecture at Yale University. There are also photocopied typescripts about Albers written by others including a typescript "Josef Albers" by Hans Jean Arp.

Printed material primarily consists of clippings and exhibition announcements and catalogs, some of which are annotated by Albers. There are also two exhibition catalogs for Anni Albers, press releases, a copy of poetry publication *Origin 8*, 2 books by Albers, *Embossed Linear Compositions* and *Josef Albers: Poems and Drawings*, the book *American Abstract Artists, 1936-1966*, and miscellaneous brochures.

Photographs consist of two copies of the same image of Josef Albers pin registering one of his prints with Tamarind artisan Ken Tyler.

Arrangement

The collection is arranged as 4 series.

- Series 1: Biographical Material, 1957-1970 (3 folders; Box 1)
- Series 2: Writings and Lecture, 1936-1967 (5 folders; Box 1)
- Series 3: Printed Material, 1929-1969 (1.3 linear feet; Boxes 1-3)
- Series 4: Photographs, circa 1968 (1 folder; Box 2)

Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:

Art -- Philosophy
Art -- Study and teaching
Art teachers
Painters
Printmakers

Types of Materials:

Interviews
Photographs
Poems
Sound recordings

Transcripts

Names:

Albers, Anni
Arp, Jean, 1887-1966
Baltimore Museum of Art
Leake, Eugene, 1911-
Maryland Institute, College of Art
Tyler, Kenneth E.

Container Listing

Series 1: Biographical Material, 1957-1970

3 folders (Box 1)

Biographical material consists of a curriculum vitae, bibliographic lists, a transcript of a radio interview, and a photocopy of a letter from Eugene W. Leake of the Maryland Institute.

Biographical materials are arranged by material type.

The series has been scanned in its entirety.

Box 1, Folder 1	Curriculum Vitae and Bibliography, 1966-1970 Image(s)
Box 1, Folder 2	Interview Transcript, 1957 Image(s)
Box 1, Folder 3	Letter from Eugene W. Leake, 1967 Image(s)

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Series 2: Writings and Lecture, 1936-1967

5 folders (Box 1)

Writings consist of photocopies of writings by Josef Albers and about Albers by others. There is also a recording on 1 sound tape reel of Albers delivering a lecture at Yale University.

Writings are arranged chronologically.

The series has been scanned in its entirety and the sound recording has been digitized for research access.

Box 1, Folder 4	Writings by Josef Albers, circa 1936-1966 Image(s)
Box 1, Folder 5	Albers Delivering a Lecture at Yale University, circa 1962 <i>1 sound tape reel (Duration 1 hour, 17 minutes)</i>
Box 1, Folder 6	Photocopy of Typescript, "Josef Albers" by Hans Jean Arp, circa 1962 Image(s)
Box 1, Folder 7	Typescript, "Joseph Albers' Homage to the Square" by Juan Acha, 1964 Image(s)
Box 1, Folder 8	Typescript, "Reflexions sur les Graphismes de Josef Albers" by Robert Le Ricolais, 1967 Image(s)

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Series 3: Printed Material, 1929-1969

1.3 linear feet (Boxes 1-3)

Printed material consists of clippings, exhibition announcements and catalogs for Josef Albers, exhibition catalogs for Anni Albers, press releases, publications and books by and about Albers, and miscellaneous brochures.

Printed materials are arranged by material type and chronologically.

The series has been partially scanned. Duplicates, blank versoes, and blank pages have not been scanned. In some cases, printed materials have had their covers, title pages, and relevant pages scanned.

Box 1, Folder 9	Clippings, circa 1940-1955 Image(s)
Box 1, Folder 10	Clippings, 1934-1935 Image(s)
Box 1, Folder 11	Clippings, 1940-1946 Image(s)
Box 1, Folder 12	Clippings, 1956 Image(s) Oversized material housed in Box 3
Box 1, Folder 13	Clippings, 1958 Image(s) Oversized material housed in Box 3
Box 1, Folder 14	Clippings, 1958 Image(s) Oversized material housed in Box 3
Box 1, Folder 15	Clippings, 1959 Image(s) Oversized material housed in Box 3
Box 1, Folder 16	Clippings, circa 1960 Image(s) Oversized material housed in Box 3
Box 1, Folder 17	Clippings, 1960 Image(s)
Box 1, Folder 18	Clippings, 1962 Image(s)
Box 1, Folder 19	Clippings, 1963

	Image(s)
Box 1, Folder 20	Clippings, 1964 Image(s)
Box 1, Folder 21	Clippings, 1965 Image(s) Oversized material housed in Box 3
Box 1, Folder 22	Clippings, 1965 Image(s) Oversized material housed in Box 3
Box 1, Folder 23	Clippings, 1966 Image(s)
Box 1, Folder 24	Clippings, 1967 Image(s)
Box 1, Folder 25	Clippings, 1968 Image(s) Oversized material housed in Box 3
Box 1, Folder 26	Clippings, 1968 Image(s) Oversized material housed in Box 3
Box 1, Folder 27	Clippings, 1969 Image(s)
Box 1, Folder 28	Exhibition Announcements and Catalogs, 1929-circa 1953 Image(s)
Box 1, Folder 29	Exhibition Announcements and Catalogs, 1957 Image(s)
Box 1, Folder 30	Exhibition Announcements and Catalogs, 1958-1959 Image(s)
Box 1, Folder 31	Exhibition Announcements and Catalogs, 1960 Image(s)
Box 1, Folder 32	Exhibition Announcements and Catalogs, 1961 Image(s)
Box 1, Folder 33	Exhibition Announcements and Catalogs, 1962 Image(s)
Box 1, Folder 34	Exhibition Announcements and Catalogs, 1962 Image(s)
Box 1, Folder 35	Exhibition Announcements and Catalogs, 1963

	Image(s)
Box 1, Folder 36	Exhibition Announcements and Catalogs, 1963 Image(s)
Box 1, Folder 37	Exhibition Announcements and Catalogs, 1963 Image(s)
Box 1, Folder 38	Exhibition Announcements and Catalogs, 1964 Image(s)
Box 1, Folder 39	Exhibition Announcements and Catalogs, 1964 Image(s)
Box 1, Folder 40	Exhibition Announcements and Catalogs, 1964 Image(s)
Box 1, Folder 41	Exhibition Announcements and Catalogs, 1964 Image(s)
Box 1, Folder 42	Exhibition Announcements and Catalogs, 1965 Image(s)
Box 1, Folder 43	Exhibition Announcements and Catalogs, 1965 Image(s)
Box 1, Folder 44	Exhibition Announcements and Catalogs, 1966 Image(s)
Box 1, Folder 45	Exhibition Announcements and Catalogs, 1966 Image(s)
Box 1, Folder 46	Exhibition Announcements and Catalogs, 1967 Image(s)
Box 1, Folder 47	Exhibition Announcements and Catalogs, 1967 Image(s)
Box 1, Folder 48	Exhibition Announcements and Catalogs, 1968 Image(s)
Box 1, Folder 49	Exhibition Announcements and Catalogs, 1968 Image(s)
Box 1, Folder 50	Exhibition Announcements and Catalogs, 1968 Image(s)
Box 1, Folder 51	Exhibition Announcements and Catalogs, 1968 Image(s)
Box 2, Folder 1	Exhibition Announcements and Catalogs, 1969

- [Image\(s\)](#)
- Box 2, Folder 2 Exhibition Catalogs for Anni Albers, 1959-1962
[Image\(s\)](#)
- Box 2, Folder 3 Press Releases, 1964-1969
[Image\(s\)](#)
- Box 2, Folder 4 Poetry Publication *Origin 8*, 1968
[Image\(s\)](#)
- Box 2, Folder 5 Book, *Josef Albers: Poems and Drawings* by Josef Albers, 1958
[Image\(s\)](#)
- Box 2, Folder 6 Book, *Graphic Tectonic* by Josef Albers, 1968
[Image\(s\)](#)
- Box 2, Folder 7 Book, *Embossed Linear Constructions* by Josef Albers, 1969
[Image\(s\)](#)
- Box 2, Folder 8 Book, *American Abstract Artists, 1936-1966* edited by the American Abstract Artists, 1966
[Image\(s\)](#)
- Box 2, Folder 9 Brochures for Art Work by Josef Albers, circa 1969
[Image\(s\)](#)
- Box 2, Folder 10 Miscellaneous Brochures, circa 1959
[Image\(s\)](#)
- Box 3, Folder 1 Oversized Clippings scanned with Box 1, Folders 12-16, 21-22, and 25-26, 1956-1968
- Box 3, Folder 2 Oversized Book scanned with Box 2, Folder 6, 1968

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Series 4: Photographs, circa 1968

1 folder (Box 2)

Photographs are of Josef Albers pin registering one of his prints with Tamarind artisan Ken Tyler.

The series has been scanned in its entirety.

Box 2, Folder 11 Photographs of Albers and Ken Tyler, circa 1968
[Image\(s\)](#)

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