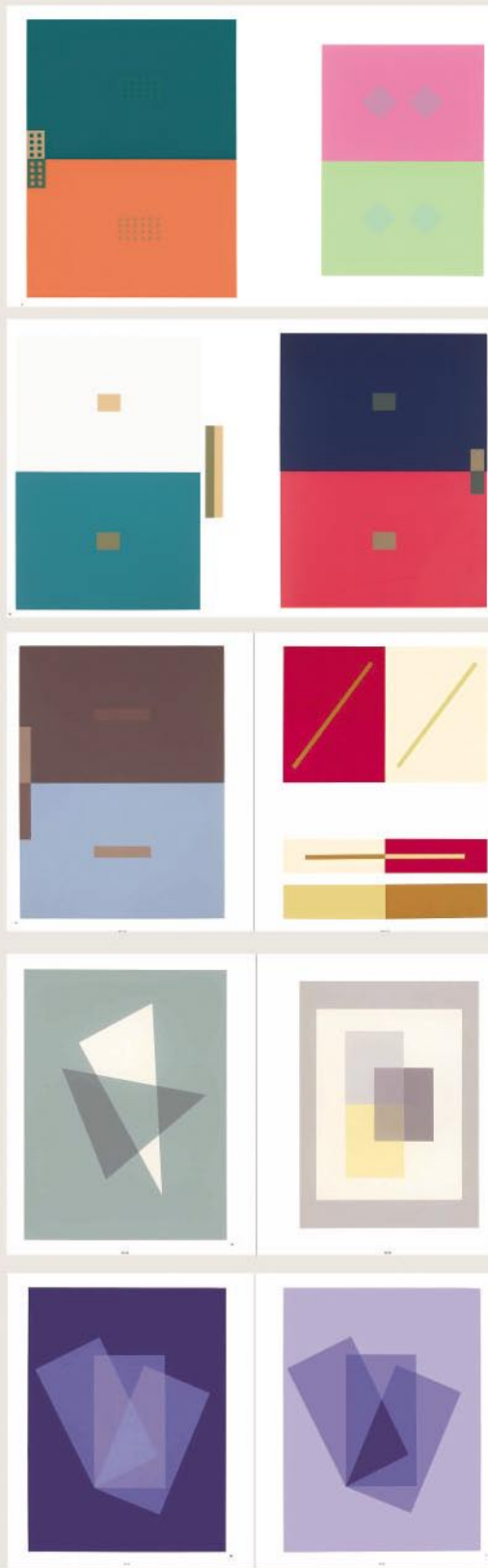


**Josef Albers was, and still is,** the absolute master of colour. When his book *Interaction of Color* was first published in 1963 by Yale University Press, it achieved a cult status with artists, designers and architects, and now, over 40 years later, its reputation has transcended to a much wider audience.

An unusual and daring collaboration between a publisher and a fine artist, in its original form, and in this incarnation, the book was an expensive and exquisitely produced two-volume masterpiece.

Albers was a founding member of the Bauhaus design school in Germany until the war brought him to America and what was so special about this book was its intention to be not only an object of great beauty and informative content but a book that encouraged its readers to explore and develop their own conclusions about colour. In his introduction to the book he says, "Interaction of Color is a record of an experimental way of studying color and teaching color." Today there is still a ridiculous and entrenched idea that there is a 'correct' and definitive way to use colour. It's big business to predict and preach to the less informed which colours work together and which ones don't, yet Albers believed passionately that by understanding certain principals of colour one could develop an intuitive personal colour language of one's own. He wants the reader to "develop – through experience – by trial and error – an eye for color". Understandably this book has become an essential learning and teaching tool yet strangely enough, in this country, art students, and the public in general, are rather ignorant of Albers and his inventive colour lessons. One of the few art schools that teaches the



full Albers colour class is Central Saint Martins in London. Unsurprisingly it is on the BA textile design course that this occurs.

Josef Albers was married to the unsurpassed weaver, Anni Albers, and it seems natural that his ideas about colour translate perfectly to a textile designer's sensibility. The relationship between colour and textiles is a close and complex one and any textile designer of note is usually celebrated for their individual use of colour. Consequently Albers incentive to experiment through practice applies perfectly. The other important word here is 'interaction', clever and eye-catching textiles depend entirely on how colours work together.

It's important to celebrate and note that this book is a series of fabulous colour exercises, of course it is an excellent read and beautiful to look at but the aim is to get you to really think about colour in a practical way. But Albers also wants you to see colour differently. The first chapter is about colour recollection and visual memory. We all see colours differently which is exactly why it's so interesting and impenetrable. As he famously explains in this chapter, ask fifty people to think of Coca Cola red and they will each think of fifty different reds.

Now, for the first time since its original debut, the book has been restored to its former glory – beautifully printed colour plates on lustrous warm white paper – closer to Albers' original vision than recent paperback editions. This is an essential book for anyone inspired by colour and appreciative of great art. Josef Albers was a truly great artist and a peerless teacher. ●●● **Ptolemy Mann**