

# Anni Albers

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Albers was born Annelise Else Frieda Fleischmann in [Berlin](#) of Jewish descent. Her mother was from a family in the [publishing](#) industry and her father was a [furniture](#) maker. Even in her childhood, she was intrigued by art and the visual world. She painted during her youth and studied under [impressionist](#) artist, [Martin Brandenburg](#), from 1916 to 1919, but was very discouraged from continuing after a meeting with artist [Oskar Kokoschka](#), who upon seeing a portrait of hers asked her sharply "Why do you paint?" She eventually decided to attend art school, even though the challenges for art students were often great and the living conditions harsh. Such a lifestyle sharply contrasted the affluent and comfortable living that she had been used to. Albers attended the [Kunstgewerbeschule](#) in [Hamburg](#) for only two months in 1920, though eventually made her way to the [Bauhaus](#) at [Weimar](#) in April 1922.

At [Walter Gropius](#)'s Bauhaus she began her first year under [Georg Muche](#) and then [Johannes Itten](#). Women were barred from certain disciplines taught at the school, especially architecture, and during her second year, unable to get into a glass workshop with future husband [Josef Albers](#), Anni Albers deferred reluctantly to [weaving](#). With her instructor [Gunta Stölzl](#), however, Albers soon learned to love weaving's tactile construction challenges.

In 1925 Anni and Josef Albers, the latter having rapidly become a "Junior Master" at the Bauhaus, were married. The school moved to [Dessau](#) that year, and a new focus on production rather than craft at the Bauhaus prompted Albers to develop many functionally unique textiles combining properties of light reflection, sound absorption, durability, and minimized wrinkling and warping tendencies. She had several of her designs published and received contracts for wall hangings. For a time Albers was a student of [Paul Klee](#), and after Gropius left Dessau in 1928 Josef and Anni Albers moved into the teaching quarters next to both the Klees and the [Kandinskys](#). During this time,

the Albers began their lifelong habit of travelling extensively: first through [Italy](#), [Spain](#), and the [Canaries](#).

The Bauhaus at Dessau was closed in 1932 under pressure from the [Nazi](#) party and moved briefly to Berlin, permanently closing a year later in August 1933. Anni and Joseph Albers were invited by [Philip Johnson](#) to teach at the experimental [Black Mountain College](#) in [North Carolina](#), arriving stateside in November 1933. Both taught at Black Mountain until 1949. During these years Anni Albers's design work, including weavings, were shown throughout the US. Albers wrote and published many articles on design. In 1949, Anni Albers became the first designer to have a one-person exhibition at the [Museum of Modern Art](#) in New York City. Albers's design exhibition at MoMA began in the fall and then toured the US from 1951 until 1953, establishing her as one of the most important designers of the day. During these years, she also made many trips to [Mexico](#) and throughout the Americas, and became an avid collector of [pre-Columbian](#) artwork.

After leaving Black Mountain in 1949, Anni moved with her husband to [Connecticut](#), and set up a studio in her home. After being commissioned by Gropius to design a variety of bedspreads and other textiles for [Harvard](#), and following the MoMA exhibition, Albers spent the 1950s working on mass-producible fabric patterns, creating the majority of her "pictorial" weavings, and publishing a half-dozen articles and a collection of her writings, *On Designing*. In 1963, while at the Tamarind Lithography Workshop in [Los Angeles](#) with Josef for a lecture of his, Anni Albers was invited to experiment with print media. She grew immediately fond of the technique, and thereafter gave up most of her time to [lithography](#) and [screen printing](#). She was invited back as a fellow to Tamarind in 1964, wrote an article for [Britannica](#) in 1963, and then expanded on it for her second book, *On Weaving*, published in 1965. Her design work and writings on design helped establish Design History as a serious area of academic study.

In 1976, Anni Albers had two major exhibitions in Germany, and a handful of exhibitions of her design work, over the next two decades, receiving a half-dozen honorary doctorates and lifetime achievement awards during this time as well, including the second [American Craft Council](#) Gold Medal for "uncompromising excellence" in 1980. She continued to travel to Latin America and Europe, to design and to make prints, and to lecture until her death on May 9, 1994, in Connecticut. Josef Albers, who had served as the chair of the design department at [Yale](#), after the artists had moved from Black Mountain to Connecticut, in 1949, had predeceased her in 1976.

In 1971, the Albers founded the Josef and Anni Albers Foundation,<sup>[2]</sup> a not-for-profit organization they hoped would further "the revelation and evocation of vision through art." Today, this organization not only serves as the office Estate of both [Josef Albers](#) and Anni Albers, but also supports exhibitions and publications focused on Albers works. The official Foundation building is located in Bethany, Connecticut, and "includes a central research and archival storage center to accommodate the Foundation's art collections, library and archives, and offices, as well as residence studios for visiting artists."<sup>[3]</sup> The U.S. copyright representative for the Josef and Anni Albers Foundation is the [Artists Rights Society](#).<sup>[4]</sup> The Josef and Anni Albers Foundation is represented for unique work by The [Pace Gallery](#), New York, and Waddington Galleries, London, and for editioned work by [Alan Cristea Gallery](#), London.

Albers was inducted into the [Connecticut Women's Hall of Fame](#) in 1994.<sup>[5]</sup>

## Artwork<sup>[edit]</sup>

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Albers was a designer who worked primarily in textiles and, late in life, with print media. She produced numerous designs in ink washes for her textiles, and occasionally experimented with jewelry design. Her woven works include many wall hangings, curtains and bedspreads, mounted "pictorial" images, and mass-produced yard material. Her weavings are often constructed of both traditional and industrial materials, not hesitating to combine [jute](#), paper, and [cellophane](#), for instance, to startlingly sublime effect.

## Bibliography<sup>[edit]</sup>

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- *On Designing*. The Pellango Press, New Haven, CT, 1959. Second edition, Wesleyan University Press, Middletown, CT, 1962. First paperback edition, Wesleyan University Press, 1971 ([ISBN 0-8195-3024-7](#)).
- *On Weaving*. Wesleyan University Press, Middletown, CT, 1965.

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