

Josef Albers Museum Quadrat Bottrop opens its new wing

19 October 2022

Special exhibition "Josef Albers: Homage to the Square"

19 October 2022 - 26 February 2023

PRESS RELEASE

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The Josef Albers Museum Quadrat Bottrop will open its new wing on 19 October 2022 with the special exhibition "Josef Albers: Homage to the Square".

The new wing at the Josef Albers Museum Quadrat Bottrop is opening with an extensive exhibition entitled "Josef Albers: Homage to the Square" that will run from 19 October 2022 to 26 February 2023. Featuring numerous major loans from museums abroad, the exhibition honours Josef Albers, who was born in Bottrop in 1888, as one of the 20th century's most influential artists.

Designed by the acclaimed Zurich-based Gigon/Guyer architects, the new space enables the Albers Museum, which opened in 1976, to present special exhibitions alongside its permanent collection of works by Josef Albers.

Josef Albers' famous *Homage to the Square* is a series of around two thousand oil paintings whose composition in a simple square format cedes the stage to colours – in a tribute to form and colour alike.

The "Josef Albers: Homage to the Square" exhibition is dedicated to this extraordinary series which Albers worked on from 1950 to his death (born 1888 in Bottrop, died 1976 in New Haven, Connecticut). The *Homage* pieces became his signature work. Around 90 exceptional paintings, divided into eight chapters, will go on display in Bottrop in October, including numerous loans from e.g. the Museum of Modern Art, the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Whitney Museum in New York. They are complemented by notable works of Paul Cézanne (*Quarry at Bibémus* on loan from Museum Folkwang, Essen), Giorgio Morandi, Ad Reinhardt and Donald Judd – artists whose work is closely connected with that of Albers.

"In visual perception a color is almost never seen as it really is – as it physically is. This fact makes color the most relative medium in art" (Josef Albers). This insight lays the foundation for Albers' *Square* series in which colours interact with and thereby alter each other.

Dr. Heinz Liesbrock, director of the Josef Albers Museum Quadrat Bottrop and curator of the exhibition, observes that "Josef Albers stands for art that teaches us to see with new eyes. His reputation as an outstanding artist was long surpassed by his fame as an instructor who had begun his career at the Bauhaus. That changed in the 1960s with a new appreciation by young American minimalist and conceptual artists like Donald Judd, Agnes Martin, Ad Reinhardt and Frank Stella. The *Homage to the Square* series was a signal starting point in their search for a lucid, streamlined and contemplative language of art."

The works stem from different decades marking developmental stages in this iconic series as of 1945. They include studies from the 1940s presaging *Homage to the Square*, the first *Homage* from summer 1950, and works from the next 25 years until the artist's death in the spring of 1976. They show changes in Albers' perception of colour and his concrete engagement with the materiality of colour, revealing the emergence of a genuine idiom of painting, one that transcends all 'isms'.

Exhibition catalogue

Appearing in parallel with the exhibition, the catalogue *Homage to the Square: Toward a History of 20th-Century Art*, surveys the many stimuli that Albers was exposed to first in Europe and later in Mexico, while also appraising the multifaceted impact of his art in the USA and Europe since the 1960s. Edited by Heinz Liesbrock, its authors include Jeannette Redensek, Gottfried Boehm, Margit Rowell and Donald Judd. The catalogue was designed by Ingo Offermanns and is published by Hatje Cantz: approx. 240 pages, 180 illustrations, German and English editions.

The wing by Gigon/Guyer architects

Swiss architects Annette Gigon and Mike Guyer's conception of a new two-storey wing represents a harmonious extension to the complex in Bottrop's historical Stadtgarten park. The new extension expands the ensemble consisting of a stately 1913 villa and Bernhard Küppers' museum buildings from the 1970s and 80s to the northeast. With 1,400 square metres of space on two floors, it will also house educational and outreach facilities, an art depot and offices. The eight exhibition rooms are discreet in design in order to showcase the art itself. Sawtooth rooflights illuminate their different proportions, and four large windows face the park from all sides.

Gigon/Guyer architects created the building in collaboration with pbr Rohling.

The new permanent exhibition

The new permanent exhibition of works by Josef Albers, which will be shown in the main building of 1983, will also open in October 2022. It presents Albers' work at the Bauhaus, his encounters with pre-Columbian art in Mexico, and the famous course on colour he developed as a teacher in the USA.

Farewell to Dr. Heinz Liesbrock

The curator of both the special and permanent exhibitions is Dr. Heinz Liesbrock, director of the Josef Albers Museum Quadrat Bottrop. After assuming the directorship in 2003 he has produced prominent exhibitions on e.g. Agnes Martin, Sol LeWitt, Donald Judd and Ad Reinhardt that explored Albers' influence in the USA. "Josef Albers: Homage to the Square" will be his last project for the Bottrop museum before retirement.

Funding for the new wing has come from the German federal government, state of North-Rhine Westphalia, RAG foundation, RAG corporation, Evonik foundation, Alfried Krupp von Bohlen und Halbach foundation, Brost foundation, Landschaftsverband Westfalen-Lippe and Josef and Anni Albers foundation.

Exhibition sponsors: the state of North-Rhine Westphalia, North-Rhine Westphalia art foundation, Landschaftsverband Westfalen-Lippe culture foundation, Alfried Krupp von Bohlen und Halbach foundation, Egon Bremer foundation, RAG foundation and Sparkassen finance group.

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Press contact

commissioned by the Josef Albers Museum Quadrat Bottrop

Hendrik von Boxberg

+49 177 7379207

presse@von-boxberg.de

Franziska Schönberner

+49 175 1635251

post@franziska-schoenberner.de

Josef Albers Museum Quadrat Bottrop

Anni-Albers-Platz 1

46236 Bottrop, Germany

Tel.: +49 (0) 2041/372030

Fax: +49 (0) 2041/3720344

E-Mail: quadrat@bottrop.de

www.quadrat.bottrop.de