

PEGGY GUGGENHEIM COLLECTION

Press Release

Josef Albers in Mexico
Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Venice
May 19 – September 3, 2018

#JosefAlbers

Mexico is truly the promised land of abstract art
Josef Albers

From May 19 through September 3, 2018, the Peggy Guggenheim Collection presents *Josef Albers in Mexico*, an exhibition illuminating the relationship between the forms and design of pre-Columbian monuments and the art of **Josef Albers** (1888 - 1976). The presentation features a selection of rarely shown early paintings, iconic canvases from Albers's *Homage to the Square* and *Variant/Adobe* series, and works on paper. The exhibition also includes a rich selection of photographs and photocollages, many of which have never before been on view and were created by Albers in response to frequent visits to Mexican archaeological sites beginning in the 1930s. With letters, studies, and unseen personal photographs alongside works drawn from the collections of Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, and the Josef and Anni Albers Foundation, *Josef Albers in Mexico* presents an opportunity to learn about the least known aspect of his practice, photography, offering new perspective on his most celebrated abstract works. The Peggy Guggenheim Collection will be the second venue of the exhibition, after the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum (November 3, 2017–April 4, 2018).

Josef Albers in Mexico is organized by Lauren Hinkson, Associate Curator, Collections, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum.

An artist, poet, theoretician, and professor of arts and design at the Bauhaus, Dessau and Berlin; Black Mountain College, Asheville, North Carolina; and Yale University, New Haven, Albers worked across the mediums of painting, printmaking, murals, and architecture. With his wife, the artist Anni Albers, he traveled to Mexico and other Latin American countries more than a dozen times from 1935 to 1967 to visit monuments of ancient Mesoamerica, which archaeologists were then excavating amid a resurgence of interest in pre-Columbian art and culture. On each visit, Albers took hundreds of black-and-white photographs of the pyramids, shrines, and sanctuaries at these sites, often grouping multiple images printed at various sizes onto paperboard sheets. The resulting photographs and photocollages reveal Albers's innovative, if understudied, approach to photography and also underscore the importance of seriality within his overall body of work.

Albers's collaged images also suggest a nuanced relationship between the geometry and design elements of pre-Columbian monuments and the artist's iconic abstract canvases and works on paper.

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Several of the latter are titled after key sites in Mexico, and formal resonances between the two bodies of work become apparent, especially when viewed together as in the Peggy Guggenheim Collection presentation. Albers's embrace of pre-Columbian imagery may be considered within the complex and often-fraught history of modernist artists looking toward non-Western cultures for source material. His work contrasts with that of the revolutionary Mexican artists with whom he met on his trips, including Diego Rivera. At the same time, Albers's long-term commitment to studying Mexican art and architecture also positions him as a prescient figure in the history of post-World War II American art, when artists such as Donald Judd, Ad Reinhardt, and Robert Rauschenberg looked toward ancient traditions with a new sensitivity and self-awareness.

A fully illustrated catalogue, with scholarly essays by Hinkson and Joaquín Barriéndos, an independent scholar and curator of Latin American art, accompanies *Josef Albers in Mexico*. The volume also includes writing by Josef Albers and an illustrated map documenting the Alberses' journeys.

Major support for *Josef Albers in Mexico* is provided by LLWW Foundation. Funding is also provided by the Robert Lehman Foundation, the Mex-Am Cultural Foundation, Inc., and The Mexican Cultural Institute of New York with the Consulate General of Mexico and AMEXCID.

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Daily 3:30pm free presentations of the exhibition; museum ticket purchase required.

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