
Cristea Roberts Gallery

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Press Release

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The Sum of the Parts: The Complete Portfolios of Josef Albers

12 June - 29 August 2025



Homage to the Square: Ten Works by Josef Albers, 1962. The complete portfolio of 10 screenprints.
Paper and Image each: 43 x 43 cm (each). Edition of 250.

Cristea Roberts Gallery is delighted to open the first exhibition dedicated solely to the complete print portfolios by Josef Albers made during the latter decades of his life, including his final body of work.

***The Sum of the Parts: The Complete Portfolios of Josef Albers* (12 June - 29 August 2025), features eighteen portfolios using lithography, silkscreen, inkless intaglio and embossing. The portfolios made over a period of 14 years which are increasingly rare to see in their complete form, is each a powerful demonstration of how markedly original Albers was in his understanding of colour and line.**

Josef Albers (1888 - 1976), was one of the greatest abstract artists of the twentieth century, creating seminal works in painting, stained glass, and furniture design. He was also a dedicated print-maker and, having made his first print – a linoleum cut – in 1916, he continued to passionately pursue printmaking until his death in 1976. His complete graphic oeuvre comprises some 350 editions in an extraordinarily diverse range of mediums and imagery. In printmaking, Albers found the perfect vehicle with which to realise the full array of his imagery and to develop his theoretical approach to colour.

Albers made his first suite in 1962, *Homage to the Square: Ten Works by Josef Albers*. It was the first time he explored his *Homage to the Square* painted imagery in a series of prints. Using an array of solid, unmodulated colours, the viewer is invited to perceive shifting depth and change of tone in multiple works at once.

Albers went on to produce more sets, which each take a particular compositional theme, which is then explored through variations of tone, colour and line. *Midnight and Noon*, 1964, brings together two opposing colour sets, printed in different densities, in a single portfolio. In *Soft Edge-Hard Edge*, 1965, edges define forms but then begin to disappear before your eyes, creating a conflict between what is precise and what is an illusion. *White Line Squares*, 1966, features colours registered side by side, delineated by a single white line. The addition of this precise line creates the appearance of four colours, although only three inks are used.

In the early 1970s Albers spent almost two years making *Formulation: Articulation*, 1972, a set of two boxed portfolios each containing 66 sheets of paper screenprinted with imagery from every decade of his career, from the Bauhaus period to early woodcuts, pre-Columbian influences and his *Homage to the Square* explorations.

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A realisation of the essential ideas in Albers' works, *Formulation: Articulation* demonstrates the visual and material connections that drove the artist's practice over the preceding forty years.

Arguably two of Albers most important works in any medium, are the portfolios *Gray Instrumentation I* and *II*, made in 1974-75. Together they are the ultimate expression of Albers theoretical approach to colour. The basis for each work is the interactions between different shades of grey. This exploration by Albers was prompted by seeing black and white photos of his *Homage to the Square* paintings.

In previous portfolios colours were typically printed on top of one another. However, the inks used in *Gray Instrumentation I* and *II*, were applied adjacently without overlapping, a level of precision that had not been seen in screenprinting before and a process more closely aligned with Albers painting. Nick Fox Weber, Director of the Josef and Anni Albers Foundation, states "*As a totality, the twenty-four prints that comprise these two portfolios are in many ways Albers's ultimate masterpiece.*"

Still driven by his need and desire to discover colour relationships beyond anything in his previous work, Albers made *Never Before* in 1976, which developed upon ideas he had started exploring over twenty-five years earlier in painting. The portfolio was completed, but Albers was too unwell to complete signing each work. As a result a number of prints remain unsigned.

David Cleaton-Roberts, Gallery Director explains, "*At the time of his death, he had just completed the series aptly titled Never Before. While artists creating works in series is not unique to printmaking, the ability to formulate, develop, and present an idea through multiple images, tied together by an underlying ethos and/or medium was perfectly realised by Albers using techniques that simultaneously allowed for multiplicity, repetition, and variation.*"

The individual plates that make up each portfolio in this exhibition challenge or echo one another, support or oppose one another, but when viewed together, the visual perception and interpretation achieved demonstrates that the whole is always much greater than the sum of its parts.

The Sum of the Parts: The Complete Portfolios of Josef Albers is accompanied by a 144-page hard-back publication. Featuring texts by Nicholas Fox Weber, Executive Director of the Josef and Anni Albers Foundation, and David Cleaton-Roberts, a senior director of Cristea Roberts Gallery.

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About Cristea Roberts Gallery

Cristea Roberts Gallery is a leading international contemporary art gallery with a particular focus on original prints and works on paper. Since its inception, the gallery has commissioned a significant number editions by a wide range of artists, whilst also representing others for their unique works. The underlying ethos of the gallery has always been artist-led.

Acknowledged as one of the leading galleries in its field of specialty, the gallery's programme is dedicated to publishing, cataloguing, exhibiting and dealing in original prints and drawings by its roster of over 30 important international artists and Estates. It participates in all the major international art fairs and has a dynamic programme of exhibitions hosted in its bespoke space in Pall Mall, London.

The gallery works closely with international museums on acquisitions and loans, and examples of its editions are held in major public collections around the world including Tate, London, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; and Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Visitor information

Tues - Fri 11am - 5.30pm
Sat 11am - 2pm

Closed on Mondays, Sundays and public holidays
Closed on Saturday's throughout August
Free admission

Travel: Piccadilly or Green Park underground station
+44 (0)20 7439 1866

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Talk: Introduction to the exhibition 6pm, Wednesday 11 June 2025

Join Nicholas Fox Weber, the Director of the Josef and Anni Albers Foundation for an introduction to the exhibition. Please note this is a standing event.

Opening reception 6.30 – 8pm, Wednesday 11 June 2025

Contact rsvp@cristearoberts.com to confirm your attendance.