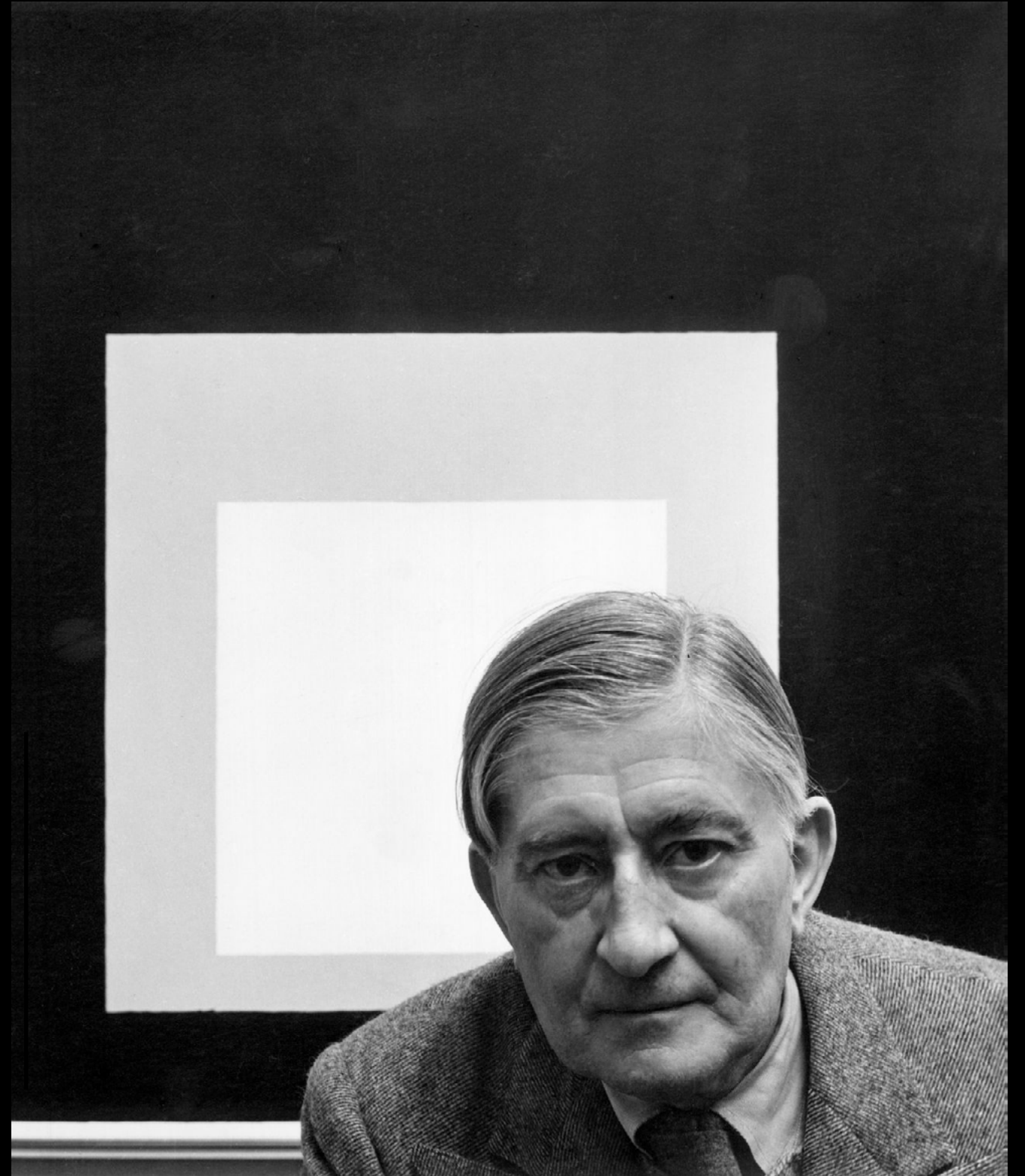


My Biggest Influence : **Josef Albers**

By Ginnie Gardiner



Ginnie Gardiner's work has been exhibited extensively throughout the US since 1985. Gardiner received her B.F.A. from Cornell University in 1974. She is widely known for her practice of creating collages that serve as studies for her paintings. Here she talks about her work in relation to her biggest influence – Josef Albers.

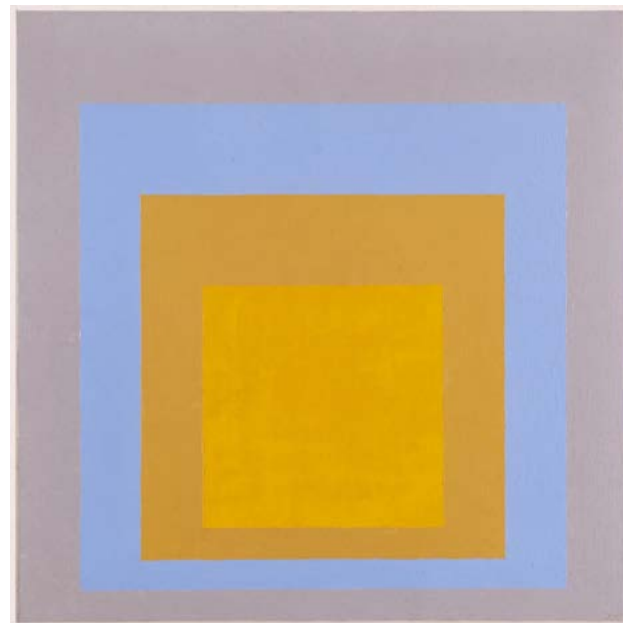


Josef Albers has been an influence on my studio process since the 1970s, when I was an undergraduate student in Cornell University's Fine Arts Department. I knew that the interaction of colours was the key for organising space in a painting; to be able to communicate the vivid hues in shadows and the interconnectedness of light and dark. Albers' method of teaching was based on observation and instinct; it was empirical versus theoretical, and actual versus factual. His approach was experiential, going for a specific optical effect obtained by moving one colour shape over another, and observing its effect on the adjacent colours. This article focuses on my ongoing studies of opacity and translucency in the exploration of visual perception and phenomenal transparency, and the influence of Josef Albers on the creation of my analog and digital collages that serve as studies for my oil paintings.

The most absorbing aspect of my studio practice is the process of translating my collage color study: creating what I call an 'equivalent palette' that is keyed to the larger scale of the canvas. Mixing pigments and making color adjustments as I develop the painting from my collage involves optical decisions concerning which pigment combinations will work physically in knitting together the oil paint surface on the canvas. For a painting to maintain the intimacy and the initial intensity of the original study or idea is always the challenge for artists, because time and scale are elongated and magnified. This is the most exciting, demanding and absorbing aspect of painting for me.

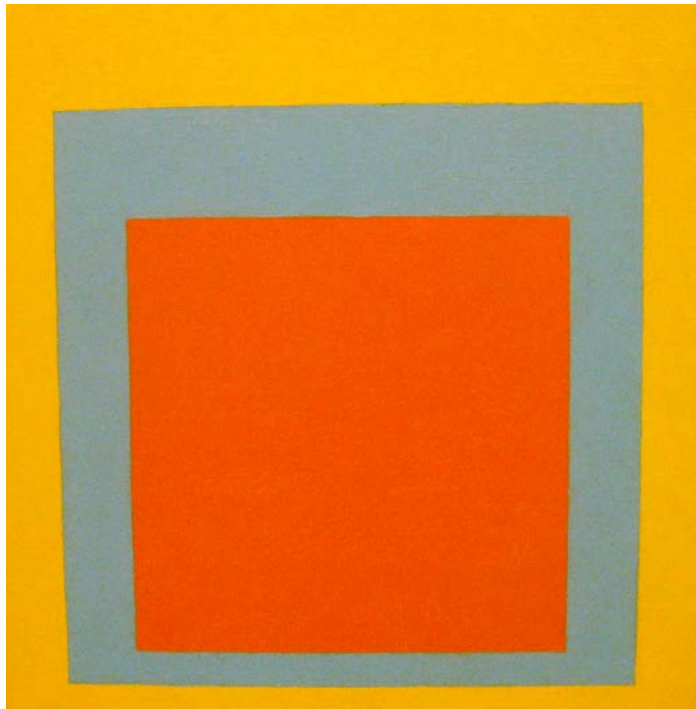
In 2016 I began '*The Color Prophecies*' series. These studies and paintings have as their apparent subject the torso and hands of a man in a shirt and tie, holding a book, or a woman draped in a scarf, and in some cases also holding a book. The initial inspiration for this series came from my years of studying Josef Albers work, and his 'Homage to the Square' series that was inspired by his trips to Mexico from Black Mountain College in 1946, with his wife, the extraordinary textile artist Anni Albers.

Josef Albers used varieties of magenta, turquoise, violet and ochre, among many other colours in varying combinations. The red earth buildings and turquoise skies amidst the abstract patterns created by the ruins and the pure colour geometry of Adobe style buildings and doorways opened a whole new way of composing in colour.



Josef Albers : Homage to the Square - Memphis





Josef Albers
Homage to the Square - Confident
1954

Right :
Ginnie Gardiner
Artifact XXXII

Mexico shook Josef Albers loose from the greys and blues of the North and inspired Albers to use these vivid colors of nature and everyday culture in Mexico. Pure, “out of the can” colours like those used as house paint or in advertisements, take their natural place with the red earth and turquoise skies. Our society and popular culture has since metabolized the intuitions of Albers, and in The Color Prophecies series, I was seeking a re-integration of that special dialog he achieved with the conscious and material reality formed by painting that joins abstraction with representation.

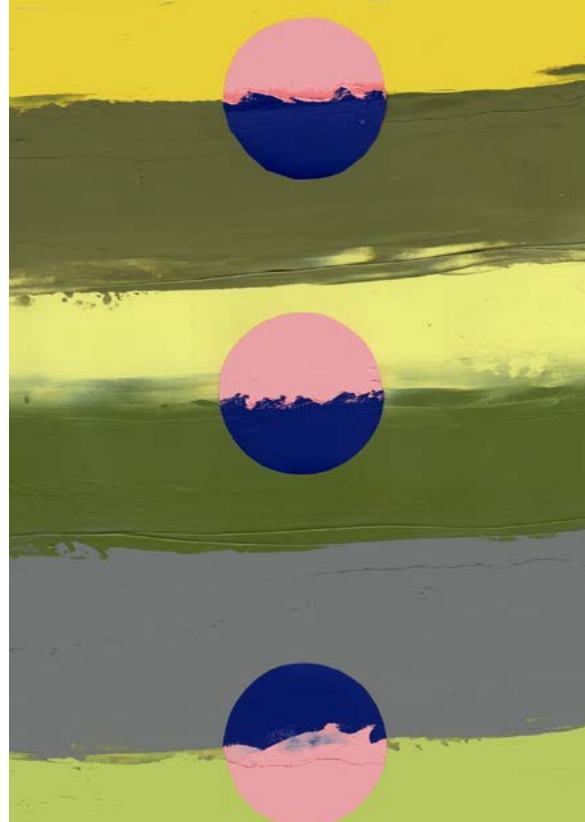
Finding a spiritual trajectory from the formal abstraction of Albers, and other South and West Coast artists who worked with high key colour planes, such as Richard Diebenkorn, I created backgrounds inspired by the colors of the shirts, ties, image motifs from the books and the patterns and shapes in the scarves that resonate with similar relationships.

In The *Color Prophecies* I explored how colour predicts and dictates certain interactions. For the creation and design of these images I painted solid colour mixtures on woodblock papers to use for backgrounds and various planar elements. with the isolated figural elements from my photographs. These mixed media collages function as the study for my paintings.

The *Artifact Color Series*, begun in 2018, represents an expansion and focus on my painterly process and my ongoing studies involving the concept of ‘*Phenomenal Transparency*’, with opaque mixtures achieving the illusion of transparency in the medium of oil paint. They are inspired by Josef Alber’s ‘*Homage to the Square*’ series. These collages are created entirely with painted woodblock papers. At the end of a painting session in my studio, I have colour mixtures left on my palette. For quite a while now I have been taking these mixtures and with a palette knife I have laid them onto woodblock papers. These papers then become artifacts.

When we see opaque colour as transparent or perceive opacity as translucence, then we are experiencing phenomenal transparency. Josef Abers





Ginnie Gardiner
Opposite Page : Interlusion 24
Left : Artifact LX

I find it fascinating to have all of these mixtures of colours that are specific to my paintings and I have grown more familiar with the types of color relationships that I am drawn to. I recognize certain moods in the color relationships and I can see the painting source that these mixtures are derived from. This imparts a foundational palette to these studies. They are the distillation of the optically observed mixtures from a very specific painting executed at a unique time formed by the seasons and local weather. This process feels almost like writing in a diary to me, personal and experience driven.

I have been working with the premise of creating paintings with specific color palettes for many years. For me, it is a working process that is endlessly fascinating. It is a product of where I find pleasure and challenge in seeing more than any single element that forms part of the work itself.

My opaque mixtures, painted on woodblock papers, are cut and arranged into small collages that show the optical effect of transparency. The tonal relationships are the key to my phenomenal transparency studies, the optical phenomena where opaque pigment is seen as transparent, opacity as translucency. The colors are important, but not for the optical effect of transparency to work – it's the values that have to work.

Titled *Interlusion*, this series, begun in 2019, combines my *Artifact Color Series* abstraction with a return to tromp l'oeil paint handling in the interest of capturing the subtle gradations of the veils of colour as they arc and flow over the graphic composition of the Artifact Color Series with some transparency. It is a hybrid style adapted to capture the transparency effects and the multiple layers of the colors and their interactions. The grounding of the collage colour study, a demonstration of phenomenal transparency, is re-informed by the layering of the veils and an introduction of literal transparency. I'm deciding how much transparency to introduce and in what areas I should preserve the chromatic intensity and more opaque colors of the objects. There is a feeling of landscape that is inescapable in that there is a sense of atmosphere between the object and the painted collage. It is the synthesis of imagination and dreamscape.

I was never interested in attacking the blank canvas or putting down one mark and seeing where that led me. Of course this is a subject that has been written about with many variations. The practice of orchestrating the colours in a painting to register in a particular key is my approach and creating a collage colour study is the first step in my process.

You can see more of Ginnie's work on her web-site: www.ginniegardiner.com