

FOREWORD

Interaction of Color is a masterpiece that fulfills the goal of Josef Albers's life: "to open eyes." His was a straightforward, heartfelt intention: Albers wanted people to further their appreciation of life itself through the joys of seeing. With messianic zeal, he longed for everyone—regardless of education or circumstances—to go with him to the enchanted territory of color performance and to savor the offerings of vision. Albers's revelations were accessible to one and all, for they are timeless and apprehensible universally.

The alchemy presented in *Interaction* is glorious in its simplicity, its dependability, and the sense of wonder it bestows on us. Colors are not merely what they first appear to be. They change—which is to say that our perception of them changes—according to their settings. A blue that is luminous and ethereal when surrounded by a dark red may seem solid, even brooding, when encased in a pale yellow. An X that looks gray on a yellow background appears to be yellow on a gray background, yet it is always the same exact hue. The miracles are endless.

Exult in the mysteries! Relish the way that there is no one truth. Celebrate the way that just about everything we see depends on context. Albers beckons you with his immense generosity of heart to enter his kingdom of delights.

The first *Interaction of Color*, published by Yale University Press in 1963, was a large, precious object: produced to be exquisite thanks to the quality of its design and printing and presentation. But its contents were meant to be distributed to the entire world. Soon enough, *Interaction* began to proliferate: in paperback editions, with its text translated into seventeen different languages, as well as in electronic form. Its theories became influential in the teaching of art. Albers's students became teachers of its ideas to their students, and the number of apostles multiplied. The mutability of hues and the means of demonstrating it became central to the teaching of art on every level.

Yet color transformation is not simply taught; it is experienced directly. Albers's goal was for us to engage in our own explorations. *Interaction* guides its readers to be activated. And in making that green look one way in one environment and different in another, the participants in this glorious search come to feel the extraordinary happenings acutely.

Interacting with Color: A Practical Guide to Josef Albers's Color Experiments is a fantastic step forward in the realization of Albers's dream. With its straightforward exercises, explained with eloquence and clarity, it expands the territory of perception. Its exercises are succinct and realizable for everyone, from small children to university professors; it fulfills a need that has existed ever since the original *Interaction of Color* was published. For the nearly twenty years to date that Fritz Horstman has been associated with the Josef and Anni Albers Foundation, he has been teaching this subject matter in museums, community centers, and educational institutions of every level. In so doing, he has developed the means to make the experimentation Albers encouraged more accessible than it has ever been before. Diligently, excitedly, Horstman has found the ways with which, with limited tools and materials, the larger audience can feel Albers's alchemy in full force. The exercises presented here succeed completely: this is a tremendous achievement. This lucid book advances human knowledge and pleasure as Josef Albers intended.

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