

WORK by JOSEF ALBERS

Albers is mainly concerned with the interaction of color within a constructed composition. Following are comments by the artist on color:

"Color is the most relative medium in art."

"If one in a group says 'red,' we can be sure that there are as many different conceptions of red as there are individuals in that group.

"Even when reminded of a special red as, for instance, of the Esso, Sunoco, Amoco signs which we see innumerable times, the remembered reds remain very different in our minds.

"Only by confronting the group actually with such red, all group members will have the same visual perception.

"But still, the individual associations and emotional reactions will differ vastly.

"There are a number of reasons for such diversion in both seeing and remembering colors.

"First, our visual memory is amazingly poor (whereas our auditory memory is excellent.)

"Second, our nomenclature for colors is embarrassingly insufficient (our daily vocabulary provides about 30 names for thousands of colors).

"Third, and most important, no color is perceived as what it actually is, that is, physically. Without special devices we never see a color singularly or by itself (as we may hear single tones) but in relationship to many factors which influence our vision, which transfer the optical (physiological) susception into a psychological effect (perception).

"First of all, adjacent colors exert a double change: In relation to hue, any stronger color pushes the neighboring color to its opposite, the complementary color. In relation to light, any light color makes its neighbor look darker, and vice versa.

"So the red of those signs looks changing all the time not only because of the changing light conditions but also because of the surroundings, sky, foliage, architecture, etc.

"Secondly, the larger quantity (in area and numbers) influences juxtaposed colors in a similar way, and so does pronunciation of shape.

"Third, the constellation (placement above or below, left or right, etc.), as well as the boundaries (firm or loose contact, separation), changes the appearance of colors.

"All this enables the knowing colorist (painter, designer, etc.) to make equal colors look different, and different colors alike; thus bright looks pale; and dull, intensive. He turns warm into cool, and the opposite; exchanges advancing and receding properties at liberty; makes opaque look transparent; definite shapes unrecognizable. In short, he not only recognizes that color is deceiving us all the time, but uses color as an acting agent, changing its identity in many ways.

"Color is a magic force."