



Countless artists, students and patrons see color differently because of Josef Albers. His teaching and works opened eyes to a new awareness of the interaction of color. What he saw, most of us have seen, but failed to question the phenomena or recognize its significance. As a young art student, I had been frustrated with painting my first gray scale. Individual chips of grays appeared to have slight gradations, but I knew this was not the case. What was causing these flat grays to appear to be fluted? As with all my fellow students, we witnessed this illusion, but never questioned the cause. Albers, by contrast, recognized this deception as the cornerstone of the interaction of color.

This questioning and subsequent exploitation of color interaction, changed our perceptions and the way we work with color...forever. Where color had been assigned according to the dictates of subject matter or whim, color selection was now generated by a new set of criteria. Albers staged performances where color changed its role from that of an independent act to one which responded to and interacted with other members of the cast. Albers compared color relationships to those found in every family, with a clarity of reason seldom experienced in typical art school environments. This was visual grammar; not dogma or a plea for “self-expression”. Trial and error replaced theory, but these trials were carried out on a path seeded by the teacher. Or as Jerome Bruner said, “Discovery favors the prepared mind”. Each lesson was the seed, and it was up to each student to discover *his own* unique solution. Although most of our discoveries had already been made countless times by others, the very act of self-discovery was a critical component in fostering independent problem-solvers.

For me, Albers passed the baton of learning to each of us. This baton has been transformed by each who joined the relay as new revelations presented themselves along the track, seeded by our mentor. My own revelations have resulted in much the same way as those experienced and taught by Albers. Learning never ends if you ask the right questions, practice awareness and respond to the dynamics of student contributions. For me, this was his greatest gift. As a result of his model, my own teaching has been ever evolving through visual discoveries, changing technology and endless hours of trial and error. Some of these modifications were minor, while others challenged the sacred cows of the art world. Was Albers and his program exempt? Would these changes be consistent with his teaching philosophy? Would he spare the truth to calm a restless sea? If Albers were teaching today, I believe the program would be quite different from those lessons published in 1963. It's therefore reasonable to assume that if we take his baton, we had better be willing to run with full commitment or drop out of the race.

But before we implement a single addition or modify the mission, we must ensure the fulfillment of his vision, his teaching and his belief that learning is a living and ever evolving process. I believe his response would be, “Learning never ends.”