Anni Albers: From Bauhaus to Black Mountain

Kellen Rosslie Ledford

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Anni Albers: From Bauhaus to Black Mountain

by

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ABSTRACT

The topic of this thesis is the relationship between the artistic career of Anni Albers and her time spent at Black Mountain College. To give an accurate display of the impact that the school had on both her personal and professional life, the first chapter of this paper is dedicated to Albers’ biography prior to Black Mountain College. It discusses her upbringing and the years she spent at the Bauhaus, where her weaving career began. The weavings produced during this period will also be analyzed to provide the reader with an understanding of how Anni Albers’ time at Black Mountain College impacted her artistic repertoire. The second chapter of this thesis begins with the artist’s immigration to America and provides the reader with background information on the formation of Black Mountain College. Throughout this chapter, the evolution of Anni Albers’ role at the school, from a non-essential position to a department director, is discussed. The impact she had on the overall success of the institution is also examined as well as the opinions of her that have been expressed in interviews of Black Mountain College alumni. The art Albers produced in this period is also examined and compared to pieces that were created during her years at the Bauhaus to display the artistic evolution that occurred in her career while at Black Mountain College. The concluding portion of this chapter will discuss Albers’ life after leaving Black Mountain College and her legacy, specifically her solo exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art and the re-visitation of her work by the Tate Modern Museum.
The overall goal of this paper is to display the impact of Black Mountain College on Anni Albers’ life through the examination of her personal biography and artistic retrospective. This paper will bring to light the hardships and lack of recognition faced by Anni Albers throughout her lifetime but how her time spent at Black Mountain College allowed her an outlet for expression that proved to combat both. In conclusion, this thesis will provide a biographical documentation of Anni Albers with a focus on the impact of her time at Black Mountain College.
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CHAPTER 1: BAUHAUS BEGINNINGS
Annelise Fleischmann

On June 12, 1899, Annelise Else Frieda Fleischmann (Figure 1.1) was born in Berlin, Germany.¹ Anni’s father Sigfried Fleischmann was a designer of furniture in the art nouveau style. Her mother, Toni Fleischmann-Ullstein, was from the German-Jewish Ullstein family who owned the largest publishing house in Europe at the time.² Growing up, Anni was surrounded by fine art, lavish furnishings and extravagant parties, all of which she detested.³ She was conditioned from a young age to pursue the same lifestyle as other women in upper-class society. Such role consisted of getting married, having children, and managing the household.⁴ Pursuing a career was not a priority for a girl of Anni's rank. At their family home, everything for the Fleischmann women was taken care of by others. This included being dressed by a tailor who would come to their house and fabricate custom outfits for them.⁵ Anni believed that her mother was overweight due to the laziness that came with being a part of the bourgeoisie. Nicholas Weber, an Anni Albers scholar and friend of the family, claims that all she ever said about her mother was that she was ‘uninteresting’ and ‘fat’.

² Ibid.
Although the women in the family were never expected to pursue careers, Anni’s family ensured her an excellent education. When Anni was a child, her parents hired an Irish nanny who taught her to be fluent in the English language.\(^6\) When she turned thirteen, she attended a lyceum where she studied with a private art tutor.\(^7\) She then attended the Hamburg Art Academy for ten years from 1910-1920. There, she trained in painting and drawing with impressionist painter Martin Brandenburg.\(^8\) For a while, Anni liked studying with Brandenburg and felt that she benefitted from his strict studio rules. It was almost a comfort for her to have him around while her father was away at war.\(^9\) One day, she tried to use the color black in her work, which was forbidden. However, unlike typical girls who would have followed Brandenburg’s rules, Anni objected and was told to leave his studio.\(^10\) Although it was seemingly a small episode, this event would foreshadow the rest of her career as an artist. Black would go on to be a constant presence in Anni’s work as well as the unwillingness to conform.\(^11\) Weber further states Anni was also unwilling to express appreciation of her parents’ dire efforts to support her art, even calling it “almost pathological”.\(^12\) One of her art tutors, Sten Nadoly, wrote about her in one of his journals, “Anni…was the most difficult of the Fleischmann family. She was

\(^7\) Ibid.
\(^10\) Ibid.
\(^11\) Ibid.
\(^12\) Ibid.
also the most beautiful, a first-rate femme fatale…She wanted to be a bohemian, a revolutionary, an artist.”

Bauhaus Background

In 1915, Walter Gropius (Figure.1.2) was recommended by the Grand Duke of Saxony to replace Henry van de Velde as the director of the Weimar Grand Ducal School of Arts and Crafts. In the “Spirit of New Nationalism” that was rising in Germany at the time, the Duke wanted an authentic German leader in the position, regardless of Gropius’s sub-par qualifications. His placement, however, was postponed due to World War 1. He was called to active service and the school was transformed into a military hospital for the time being. Whilst on the battlefield, Gropius continued to develop plans and proposals according to his vision of what an art school should entail. In these proposals, the future founder of the Bauhaus emphasized the importance art’s relationship to industry. He believed that technology was the death of the romantic artist and that if efforts were made, that the two could actually coexist. Gropius had envisioned a world where mass production and the individual artist worked in harmony with one another. An environment where everyday objects would be transformed by the hands of the artist, bringing aesthetic quality to the masses.

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16 Ibid.
17 Ute Ackermann, Jeannine Fiedler, and Peter Feierabend, Bauhaus (Cologne: Könemann, 1999).
By 1919, after finishing his service in World War I, Walter Gropius’s vision had come to fruition. The School of Arts and Crafts and the Academy of Fine Arts were combined into a singular institution of which Gropius was now the head. He called it the Bauhaus, which meant two things. The name is derivative of Bauhütten, a medieval term referencing the masonic lodges that were part of the guild system. But Gropius did not want to use Bauhütten directly, because of its medieval connotations; he wanted something new. The term Bauhaus is a combination of “Bau” (build) and “Haus” (house), or “House of Building”. The founder also stated how the name doubly refers to the building of character. In Weimar, Germany, at the German National Theatre, the opening celebration of the Bauhaus was held. In his famous opening speech, Gropius proclaimed in front of his audience the principle element of the Bauhaus idea, “There is no essential difference between the artist and the craftsman. The artist is an exalted craftsman.” With this in mind, the structure of the Bauhaus was different from any other art school of its time. Unlike the Academy, which was centered around a specific skill, the Bauhaus would train its students to meld different art forms into their craft. This unique approach to handicraft and design would come to be known as the “Bauhaus

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19 Ibid.
23 Ibid.
Style”. Gropius described this style in his 1919 manifesto as “the structure of the future, which will embrace architecture, and sculpture, and painting in one unity.”

To create the specific unity of art forms, the Bauhaus curriculum was based on the old Master and Apprentice system from the Middle Ages. At the time, this was seen as avant garde and a necessary return to the past in the midst of the aftermath of World War I. The curriculum can be formed into a circle, (Figure.1.3) as a way to exemplify the unity it was attempting to create. After the preliminary courses which are called Vorkurs, students are placed into Werklehre, workshops to receive instruction in crafts. This is broken down into two parts: Instruction in materials and tools, and elements of bookkeeping, estimating, and contracting. After Werklehre, students move on to instruction in form problems which was called Formlehre. This was broken down into three parts: Observation, Representation, and Composition. Regardless of workshop placement, all training followed this specific layout.

The Bauhaus also followed a specific style of leadership at its first location in Weimar. In the ‘Bauhaus Programme’ (Figure.1.4) that was issued at the same time as the manifesto, Walter Gropius describes the school’s set up: “The school is the servant of the workshop, and will one day be absorbed in it. Therefore there will be no teachers or pupils in the Bauhaus but masters, journeymen and apprentices.” In another reference

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26 Ibid.
27 Ibid.
28 Ibid.
to the medieval guild system, faculty members were called “masters”.\(^{29}\) After passing the preliminary course and being admitted into a workshop, one would receive the title of apprentice.\(^{30}\) This was a three year long period where students received training in a designated field to prepare them for the workforce. For the apprentices, the Bauhaus sought out contracts with nearby factories in an attempt for mutual benefit.\(^{31}\) After completing their internships, apprentices completed an examination for the title of “journeyman”.\(^{32}\) The journeyman receives instruction from two masters (a craftsman, and an artist) for the duration of their schooling. The program also stated that the Bauhaus students would have to pass a guild-like exam administered by the Council of Masters, before becoming a master and receiving a diploma.\(^{33}\)

Beginning at Bauhaus

Initially, Albers applied to become an apprentice in the painting studio of Oskar Kokoschka (independent of the Bauhaus). She had just purchased one of his lithographs as her first art acquisition; the subject coincidentally was a woman’s head.\(^{34}\) After accepting her daughter’s desire to pursue art professionally, Toni Fleischman (Anni’s Mother) went to multiple hotel rooms to track down Kokoschka in order to show him her


\(^{30}\) Ute Ackermann, Jeannine Fiedler, and Peter Feierabend, *Bauhaus* (Cologne: Könemann, 1999).


\(^{32}\) Ibid.


daughter’s work.\textsuperscript{35} Their encounter lasted about five minutes and he ended up rejecting her on the opinion that she would have been better off as a housewife and mother.\textsuperscript{36}

In 1922 at the age of 23, Albers applied to the Bauhaus (Figure.1.5).\textsuperscript{37} She wanted to continue her training in painting that began at the Hamburg Art Academy and sought out the school after reading a manifesto (the Programme, Figure.1.4.) that was sent out by Walter Gropius.\textsuperscript{38} Although her father was a manufacturer of modern furniture and had a considerable interest in art, he disapproved of his daughter's decision but supported her none the less.\textsuperscript{39} Since the Bauhaus did not provide housing for incoming students, Mr. Fleischmann rented his daughter a modest room on the outskirts of Weimar, which she preferred to the pomp and circumstance of her childhood\textsuperscript{40} Her apartment in Weimar had one bedroom, and the bathroom was available to her only once a week. If she needed to bathe in excess of a single time, she would have to make an appointment at the downtown bathhouse.\textsuperscript{41} Anni went from riding in horse-drawn carriages at her uncle's estate to becoming limited to bathing only once a week in the communal shower of her

\textsuperscript{37} Anni Albers et al., \textit{Anni Albers} (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2018).52-60. \\
\textsuperscript{39} Anni Albers et al., \textit{Anni Albers} (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2018).52-60. \\
\textsuperscript{40} Nicholas Fox Weber, \textit{The Bauhaus Group Six Masters of Modernism} (New York, NY: Knopf, 2009). 341-415. \\
\textsuperscript{41} Ibid.
new home.\textsuperscript{42} Though this living situation was especially humble, Anni preferred it to the constrictive lifestyle of lavishly wealthy women.\textsuperscript{43}

Anni attended sessions of the Vorkurs under Johannes Itten (Figure.1.6), the school’s first professor of Preliminary Courses.\textsuperscript{44} Itten was a strange character whose original aspiration was to be a high priest.\textsuperscript{45} He wore a monk’s robe accompanied by a shaved head. As Itten was the decision maker in terms of admission to the school, many Bauhaus students associated him with having the otherworldly power that he craved.\textsuperscript{46} Itten was a follower of Mazdaznan, a popular quasi-religious movement of the period that emphasized physical and breathing exercises. His courses began with these exercises as a way to withdraw rhythm, intensity, and concentration out of his students.\textsuperscript{47} Itten then had his pupils conduct improvisational and constructive exercises with a strong emphasis on drawing from nature.\textsuperscript{48} Students were also made to analyze the work of “old masters” through impressions and emotional absorption.\textsuperscript{49} According to Walter Gropius, the purpose of the Preliminary Course is, “to liberate the individual by breaking down conventional patterns of thought in order to make way for personal experiences and

\textsuperscript{44} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{46} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{47} Éva Forgács, \textit{The Bauhaus Idea and Bauhaus Politics} (Budapest: Central European Univ. Press, 1998). 46-47
\textsuperscript{49} Ibid.
discoveries which will enable him to see his own potentialities and limitations.” These courses were administered over the course of a six month trial period which ended with Itten determining if you were fit to be placed in a workshop. After her first round of *Vorkurs*, Anni was deemed as unqualified for acceptance.  

Another prospective student named Ise Bienert sympathized with Anni and assured her that she would eventually get in. Bienert’s background was similar to Anni’s in the sense that she was from an upper-class family. Ida Bienert, Ise’s mother, was an established art collector who had close relationships with several higher-up members of the Bauhaus and one, in particular, Josef Albers (Figure 1.7).  

At the time, Josef was 11 years older than Anni and working his way through his education. He had come from a completely different background than Anni but was already very admired at the Bauhaus for his successes in glass and other disciplines. Josef was from Bottrop, Germany, an industrial town that was home to mainly working-class or impoverished families. At this point Albers could afford art supplies, the glass works he produced which were admired by his Bauhaus colleagues were often composed of glass fragments that he salvaged from the nearby dump in Weimar. Although Josef and Anni’s relationship began on an academic level, it quickly transformed into one of a

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53 Ibid.
romantic nature. He was rough around the edges and Catholic, but the young Anni Fleischmann quickly fell for his charm. Even though Josef did not come from a bourgeois background as they had, the Fleischmann family adored him and thought that he was a good match for their daughter (Figure.1.8).\(^57\) In an interview with Nicholas Weber, Anni stated, “You know, when I brought Josef home for the first time, the parents liked him so much, right from the start, that they said to him, ‘Our Anke is so difficult: if you can’t deal with her, you can always come home to us.’”\(^58\) She registered for six more months of training in Vorkurs, and with Josef’s assistance, Anni succeeded on her second attempt for admission to the school.\(^59\) As fate would have it, Johannes Itten would eventually leave the Bauhaus on the grounds of creative differences and an insatiable hunger for power at the school; he would be replaced as the head of \textit{Vorkurs} by none other than Josef Albers and László Moholy-Nagy.\(^60\)

After her initial acceptance, Anni was to try out for a workshop. After being drawn to the school by Walter Gropius’ manifesto that appeared to be accepting of all genders and backgrounds, she would soon find that this was not the case. In the early years of the Bauhaus, Walter Gropius’ admission policy stated, “Any person of good repute, without any regard to age or sex, whose previous education is deemed adequate by the council of masters, will be admitted, as far as space is available.”\(^61\) However, only one year after its opening, Gropius changed his mind after underestimating female

\(^{58}\) Ibid.
\(^{59}\) Ibid.
interest in the school. In 1920, he sent a letter to the board suggesting, “a tough separation at the time of acceptance, most of all for the female sex whose numbers are too strongly represented.” From then on, only the pottery, bookbinding, and weaving workshops would be available to the women who attended the Bauhaus. There were a handful of women who were able to take courses in workshops such as painting but, they were required to register under the weaving department.

In *The Gendered World of the Bauhaus*, author Anja Baumhoff identifies this plot between Gropius and the Masters Council of the school (*Meisterrat*) to reduce the high number of incoming female applicants. By not allowing women into its upper-level workshops, she suggests that the Bauhaus attempted to combat their ambition in hopes of turning them off to the school. The orientation towards craftsmanship marginalized women, and despite the fact that even early Bauhaus programs claimed to enroll and educate students regardless of their sex, the institution’s policies did otherwise. The Bauhaus answered the *Frauenfrage* (“woman question”) by establishing a separate department for them, which included a different set of restrictions and conventions, including the requirement to cook and garden. The creation of the “Women’s Department was an aim to keep women away from “hard” work in

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63 Ibid.
65 Ibid.
traditionally male fields.\textsuperscript{67} The Bauhaus accomplished this goal by promoting softer work that might be a benefit in the domestic realm. It became second largest department in overall attendance, boasting roughly one-third of the school’s population.\textsuperscript{68}

Her health issues were another factor that prevented her from joining the painting workshop. She could not physically withstand the requirements, which included standing on her feet for vast amounts of time. In addition to her gender, Anni was born with Charcot-Marie-Tooth disease, which is a neuromuscular disorder that causes distal muscle weakness and atrophy beginning in the legs.\textsuperscript{69} By the time Anni gained admission to the school, her legs and feet were so frail that she could not stand without some assistance. She required customized shoes and a cane.\textsuperscript{70} Later in her life, she would insist that this was the primary reason for her placement in the weaving workshop, and her gender was an irrelevant factor in the decision.\textsuperscript{71}

The Bauhaus Weaving Department: Weimar, Germany

In the years that the school’s location was in Weimar, the weaving workshop earned the reputation as the “women’s department” (Figure. 1.9). In the school’s beginning, the majority of female students willingly chose this department then in 1920 it

\textsuperscript{67} Elizabeth Otto and Rössler Patrick, \textit{Bauhaus Bodies: Gender, Sexuality, and Body Culture in Modernisms Legendary Art School} (New York, NY, USA: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, Bloomsbury Publishing Inc, 2019).3-25
\textsuperscript{68} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{70} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{71} Ibid.
became the Bauhaus’s fortress for women applicants. Helene Borner led the Weaving Department from its beginning and was the only woman to stay at the Weimar Bauhaus from its opening to close. There is scarce background information on Borner, except that she studied as Handarbeitslehrerin, which is the equivalent of a home economics teacher. Although Borner was the first female to become a Bauhaus Master, there was little to no respect for her as an instructor. Her views were rejected by many female students because of her traditionalist views on weaving. Albers described her as being more equipped to teach needlework rather than weaving. Because of her background in craft, she taught weaving as handiwork rather than an art form. She also limited how the students in the workshop used the looms because she provided them.

Student accounts of Börner are immensely critical regardless that the weavers were using her personal equipment and materials due to lack of funding. Future head of the Weaving Department, Gunta Stölzl, referred to her as, “a needlework teacher of the old school,” from whom Weimar girls learned to embroider “birds, butterflies, the usual stuff on a pre-woven background.” Even Anni described her instruction under Borner in one of her journals, “we just sat there and practised.” Later in her life, she would also say that Helene Borner was better equipped to teach needlepoint. In Börner’s defense however, the weaving department at the Weimar location was not only unequipped for weaving, but also in terms of general working conditions. For example, in the Fall

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74 Ibid.
semester of the Bauhaus’ opening year, the weavers did not have heat in their workshop according to letters between Börner and the Bauhaus secretary.⁷⁶

At Weimar, the Weaving department was informal and lacked structure. It was open to all students who had completed their Vokurs training, including males.⁷⁷ Students who were accepted moved between workshops to complete the rest of their training, which proved to be cumbersome and inefficient. Over the years, accounts from Bauhaus attendees provide excuses for the lack of attention to the weavers, mainly centered around training being generally unavailable at the time. These statements are untrue. Far before the Bauhaus existed, there were several European textile schools that taught everything from color theory to machine operation.⁷⁸ While this informal set up gave them creative liberty and the freedom to explore at their will, there were only a select number of women who took the opportunity to do this.

The women of the Bauhaus Weaving Department could be divided into three categories. First, there was the marginal group of students who left Bauhaus without any further professional involvement in the arts. Second, there were those who completed their training in weaving but chose a different artistic path when the opportunity came available. The last and smallest category encapsulates women such as Anni Albers and Gunta Stolzl who embraced weaving as their lifelong career.⁷⁹

In a strange twist of fate, Helene Börner, the teacher who had been criticized by students for having no talent, was asked to reproduce weavings created by her pupils at

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⁷⁷ Ibid.
⁷⁸ Ibid.
the closing of the Weimar Bauhaus. The pieces are in the Weimar Collections, and she was generously compensated for them, including a replica of a wall hanging by her successor Gunta Stölzl (Figure 1.10). According to journal entries and interviews, Anni Albers attributes none of her knowledge on weaving to Helene Börner’s teaching methods. Perhaps, this was out of frustration with her teacher’s similarities in mindset to her mother’s. Anni Albers was devoted to patterns in her creative work and in her life she also exhibited consistent patterns of behavior. Both in her relationships and work, the style and methods of delivery will change but there is a constant theme throughout.

First Steps in Weaving: Anni Albers work from Weimar

Due to the type of instruction she received from Helene Börner upon entering the Bauhaus weaving department, the art Anni produced during this period is scarce and mostly experimental. Initially, she only wove swatches and at one point a pillowcase because the technical requirements were minimal enough to be self-taught. It took Anni a year after her acceptance into the department to produce her first wall hanging (Figure 9). Even in this early work, it is clear that her aesthetic preferences leaned towards order and formality. Although she received training under impressionist painter Martin Brandenburg, Anni found herself gravitating towards abstraction upon attending the Bauhaus. Early on, she read Wilhem Worringer’s Abstraction and Empathy of 1908.

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81 Ibid.
which inspired her greatly.\textsuperscript{83} In this book, Worringer’s central argument is that societies that are experiencing forms of anxiety or a heightened political climate tend to lean towards a more abstracted form of expression in their art.\textsuperscript{84} Anni found that the stability and clarity of the shapes in abstract art countered the uncertainty and problems of the natural world. As an upper-class girl, she was sheltered from the outside world which culminated into a fear for the unknown.\textsuperscript{85} She thought that nature was a source of beauty but also of anxiety and violence, even death whereas manmade forms were reassuring. Anni found that she preferred limitations, few elements, and simple colors.\textsuperscript{86} These ideas reflect Worringer’s theories in the sense that Anni sought out abstraction as a form of control in a world that she had no authority in. Her early works are about order and equilibrium as well as timelessness with no reference to the time or place which they were created.\textsuperscript{87} In an interview with Nicholas Weber, almost half a century after the piece was created, Anni commented on it saying, “Art is the one thing that keeps you in balance. You have the feeling that you are taking a part in something not parallel to creation, but something that adds in a way to a whole, that shows a wholeness that you can’t find in nature because you can’t understand nature as a whole.”\textsuperscript{88}

Many of Anni Albers pieces from the Weimar period were either lost in World War II or destroyed. However, due to the purchase of student artwork by the Bauhaus and

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{86}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{88}Ibid.
\end{flushright}
the sales of these acquisitions to collectors, Anni’s first wall hanging resurfaced in 1960 (Figure.1.11). Ludwig Grote, former Director of the Dessau and Nuremburg Museums, purchased it from the school and hung it in his home. When she went to see the piece, Anni herself noted that she had not yet developed her belief that asymmetry and a constant shifting of weight were necessary for movement and dynamism. But the careful placement of form showed that the seeds of the discipline and clarity that have governed her entire life were already planted, according to Nicholas Weber. Anni was very critical of her own work and extremely humble about her accomplishments. Although she personally could not see the beauty in her early work, she evoked a style that stood out amongst the other weavers in the department.

Since the learning process during the Weimar years was slow, Anni spent much of her time experimenting with Gunta Stolzl, who would eventually become head of the department. There are more surviving examples of Stölzl’s work due to the reproductions produced by Helene Börner upon the school’s move to Dessau. The same year that Anni created her first wallhanging (Figure.1.11), Stölzl finished Tapestry ‘Black/White’ (Figure 1.12). Upon comparison of the two, Anni’s minimalistic aesthetic becomes apparent. Stolzl’s work, displays a complex series of forms which are sporadically woven throughout the piece. It evokes rhythm rather than order by using variations of line and shape that carry the eye throughout its entirety. Anni’s work on the other hand utilizes a stagnant composition that directs the eye to its central band. There is a sense of stability and balance, not found in Gunta’s work. Although this is the first wall hanging produced

90 Ibid.
by Anni, the aesthetic qualities of this piece pulsate throughout her career but manifested in different ways. The other weavers in the department followed along the same path as Gunta, creating pieces that could double as expressionist paintings. Anni’s minimalistic designs and muted color palettes set her apart and would become what she was renowned for in her career.

The aesthetic involvement in producing the wall hangings from the Weimar period brought Anni a sense of joy that would not be present in her other work at the Bauhaus. Gropius was rapidly transitioning the school towards industry and production with less emphasis on the individual artist. Initially, Anni Albers resented this and believed that art was the constant, unwavering to change. Over time, this belief would change as she began to explore the different qualities of fiber and the limits of the loom as a form of expression. In 1925, Anni Albers wrote in her personal journal:

“Having been so deeply absorbed in the problems of the materials itself and the discoveries of the unlimited ways to handle it, consideration of usefulness brought about a profoundly different conception. A shift took place from the free play with forms to a logical building of structures.”

By this, she is referring to a shift from weaving in an expressionist style to a more systematic approach to composition. Two examples that can illustrate this shift would be Wallhanging, 1925 (Figure 1.13) and Black White Red, 1926 (Figure 1.14). By comparing these two works which were created only one year apart, one can see a definite change in how Anni Albers approached her compositions. The wall hanging from 1925 exudes an element of unpredictability in its formatting where Black White Red utilizes rhythm and an alternating pattern. The methodical

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approach Anni Albers took in constructing *Black White Red*, would continue to be the basis of how she devised her compositions for years to come. At Black Mountain College, the experimental qualities of the Weimar period would re-emerge but not to the same extent as *Wallhanging, 1925*.

Upon the school’s move to the Dessau location, she would continue to explore the possibilities that came with developing fabric for production purposes. For now, her work would shift from pure aesthetics to being geared towards industry.

Figure 1.1: Annelise Fleischmann
Figure. 1.2: Walter Gropius

Figure. 1.3: Bauhaus Curriculum
Figure 1.4: Bauhaus Programme

Figure 1.5: Annelise Fleischmann Bauhaus Composite Photo
Figure 1.6: Johannes Itten

Figure 1.7: Josef Albers
Figure 1.8: Josef and Anni Albers

Figure 1.9: Weimar Bauhaus Weaving Workshop
Figure 1.10: Replicas of Gunta Stölzl Weavings by Helene Börner

Figure 1.11: Anni Albers; First Wallhanging, 1924 & Figure 1.12: Gunta Stölzl, *Tapestry Black/White*, 1924
Figure 1.13: Anni Albers, *Wallhanging*, 1925 & Figure 1.14: Anni Albers, *Black, White, Red*, 1926
CHAPTER 2: DESSAU YEARS

New Beginnings in Dessau

By 1925, Albers had completed her initial Vorkurs training, accepted her placement in the Weaving Workshop and begun the experimental portion of her training. Aside from the fact that she thought the town was ugly, Anni was flourishing at the new Bauhaus location in Dessau. She was married to Josef Albers that same year at a local Catholic church followed by an elaborate lunch at Berlin’s finest hotel, the Adlon. Anni’s parents were enthusiastic about furnishing the cost of their ceremony as they believed that Josef was a stabilizing force for their daughter. The Fleischmann’s completely disregarded the fact that their new son-in-law was of a completely different rank in society; they were thankful for him.

In contrast to Anni’s family, Josef had his reservations about he and Anni’s union. Though he married up in society, he traded down in terms of religion. Since Josef was Catholic and Anni was baptized Protestant but Jewish by descent, their marriage was considered “interracial” in the eyes of his traditional family. At one point Josef wrote a letter to his family describing their marriage saying, “I shall not come to the West in the near future. Our interracial marriage is still too fresh for me to show my face. It is quite all right to let people know about my marriage; I have written about it to

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acquaintance myself. At that time, I did want to keep my marriage plans quiet. It
seems that at home they do not like to talk about my bad match." Anni would only ever
meet her new husband’s father and stepmother a single time in her entire life.

Due to Josef’s promotion at the new Bauhaus location, the newlyweds were given
a flat built by Walter Gropius to call their first home (Figure 2.1 & Figure 2.2). Josef was
made a Bauhaus Jungmeister (Young Master) at the Dessau Bauhaus and by 1928, he
was the first student to become a Formeister. Josef was in charge of teaching the
Vorkurs courses, replacing Johannes Itten who had rejected his now wife previously for
admission. In this position, he would come to be a renowned teacher which would prove
to be crucial in their survival at the future closing of the Bauhaus.

Bauhaus Weaving Department: Dessau, Germany

In Weimar, the Weaving Workshop had proved to be a huge asset to the success
of the Bauhaus. Due to this, an improved studio space complete with a dye shop was to
be allocated to the department at the new Dessau location (Figure. 2.3). Despite its
success, the weavers were still the last priority in the eyes of Walter Gropius. A shortage
in funding to the school had prompted its founder to almost need to shut down a
workshop; he proposed the Weaving Department. The only thing that saved it from
closure was the input of representatives from the Dessau Trade Union School after seeing
the Bauhaus exhibition in 1925. After being shown to a room full of Bauhaus textiles,

93 Nicholas Fox Weber, Pandora Tabatabai Asbaghi, and Anni Albers, Anni Albers (New
94 Ibid.
95 Ibid.
96 Sigrid Wortmann Weltge, Womens Work: Textile Art from the Bauhaus: Textile Art
from the Bauhaus (San Francisco: Chronicle, 1993). 89-96.
they reported, “...The Weaving Workshop seems to be better than others. Its products clearly demand recognition, which cannot be said of the Carpentry Workshop.”

When the Bauhaus officially moved to Dessau, Germany in 1926, Helen Börner was replaced by Gunta Stolzl as head of the weaving workshop. Stolzl began as a decorative painter and actually participated in the workshop for mural painting at Bauhaus before its limitations on females were set. She also took courses under Helene Börner as a colleague of Albers. After a brief leave from the school, she returned in 1925 and received an opportunity to take part in a new program that was being offered by the Bauhaus. In exchange for teaching a workshop, she would be able to receive the title of Bauhaus Master. At Weimar, the title of Master was not offered to students of the weaving department. Stolzl was the only female out of six students who achieved an appointment as a Bauhaus Master which she obtained in 1927. Under Gunta Stolzl, the Weaving Department became geared towards understanding materials and producing a variety of purposeful fabrics rather than on the “sentimental romanticism” that is associated with weaving. At the beginning of their training, the courses in weaving stressed artistic accomplishment rather than technical. Although the Bauhaus itself is centered around the idea of preparing for industry, Stolzl wanted her students to discover

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99 Ibid.
the possibilities of materials freely and without the burdens of technical performance.102 This portion of training was identified as “unique work”, which involved a student setting their own creative task such as a tapestry or wall hanging. The next section of training was referred to as “textile design”.103 Here, students were to learn the different properties of materials and how they perform, with a goal of developing innovative textile solutions that served a practical purpose.104 They received advanced instruction in geometry, state of the art weaving technology, analysis, dying techniques and the use of mechanical equipment. In addition to this, they also took care of bookkeeping for the department and calculations of the quantities of materials required for projects.105 The Weaving Department at Dessau also differed from Weimar due to a division into two separate units, the Experimental and Production Workshop and the Teaching Workshop.106 The Experimental and Production Workshop focused on the development and production of industrial prototypes while the Teaching Workshop prepared students for instruction.107 This entirely different curriculum for weaving geared around industry, ultimately resulted in a drop in female attendance. From the 52 women who were enrolled at the Weimar Bauhaus in 1922, only 34 women remained at the School after its move to Dessau in 1924/5.108 However, some women such as Anni Albers were delighted by this move to...

103 Ibid.
104 Ibid.
105 Ibid.
107 Ibid.
industry and designed successful prototypes for standard products that a variety of
economic classes could afford; this may have turned off the local women, but it attracted
many new female artists from Eastern Europe to the school.\textsuperscript{109} Anni Albers would go on
to emulate this industry-focused curriculum in her own Weaving Workshop at Black
Mountain College in the years to come. She believed it was important for artists of all
types to have a hand in production in order to remain relevant to society.

The drop-in attendance could also have been a result of a new and rigorous
schedule that was imposed on the Bauhaus Weavers. Their days began with classes that
started at 7am and did not end until 9pm.\textsuperscript{110} There was a 2-hour mid-day break allowed,
but many students account their exhaustion being so intense that they were unable to
attend any Bauhaus social gatherings.\textsuperscript{111}

Despite its reputation as a lower level workshop for women, the Weaving
Department made enormous contributions to the school in the form of state-of-the-art
designs and consumer products. When the school moved to Dessau, commercial
production by the Weaving Workshop increased but the funding did not. Anni Albers
recalled that this directly affected the textile styles produced by the workshop,
specifically the colors. The equipment that was provided to them was also unsuitable as
the responsibility of purchasing of looms was left to an outside party.\textsuperscript{112} This resulted in

\textsuperscript{109} Ulrike Muller, Sandra Kemker, and Ingrid Radewaldt, \textit{Bauhaus Women: Art,
\textsuperscript{110} Sigrid Wortmann Weltge, \textit{Womens Work: Textile Art from the Bauhaus: Textile Art
from the Bauhaus} (San Francisco: Chronicle, 1993).89-96.
\textsuperscript{111} Sigrid Wortmann Weltge, \textit{Womens Work: Textile Art from the Bauhaus: Textile Art
from the Bauhaus} (San Francisco: Chronicle, 1993).89-96.
\textsuperscript{112} Ibid.
the acquisition of the incorrect type of looms and serious disagreements between Gunta Stölzl and the Bauhaus.\textsuperscript{113}

The looms that were purchased for the Dessau location were jacquard looms.\textsuperscript{114} This may have appeared to be an oversight to Stölzl, but it was probably intentionally done by Gropius. Walter Gropius, who may have remained bitter over the decision to continue the Weaving Department probably ordered jacquard looms due to the fact that they are more compatible for mechanical production.\textsuperscript{115} Jacquard looms have been referred to as the “first computer” because they are mechanized and utilize punch cards to assist the loom in the production of textiles. Stölzl perhaps saw this as an attempt to limit her responsibility as head of the Weaving Workshop. In his report, \textit{Failings of the Workshops} he discussed how the weavers were producing individual pieces that could easily been woven as yard goods. Gropius rejected all excuses for this, perhaps because it was by his hand they were failing.\textsuperscript{116} As a result, the department was now outfitted with six jacquard looms which resulted in a drastically different output by the class from what was seen in the Weimar Period.\textsuperscript{117}

\begin{itemize}
  \item[\textsuperscript{114}] Ibid.
\end{itemize}
Style Shift in Dessau

Even though she initially regarded weaving as "sissy" work later on in one of her diaries, Anni's reluctant participation in the Weaving Workshop quickly turned into a passion. Ultimately it became her springboard for the creation of intricate and technically complex explorations in fiber. Anni was able to utilize the new looms to break boundaries in the field of textiles and expound upon her abilities in a way that she had not had the chance to in Weimar.

At the Dessau Bauhaus, Anni had famous mentors aside from Gunta Stoltzl including Paul Klee and Wassily Kandinsky, both of whom greatly influenced her work during this time. The students were taught that each medium was never purely concrete in its definition, the students were encouraged to allow them to transcend one another through either method or material. Students absorbed aspects of other mediums into their crafts, and for Anni, this was expressionist painting in her wall hangings, specifically the work of Paul Klee. While at Bauhaus, Anni formed a special relationship with Klee who was the “master of form” for the Weaving Department and lived only five houses down from the Albers in Dessau. Although he held a position of authority over the department, he rarely gave lectures or instructed courses.118 Rather than teach the craft of the workshop, the “Master of Form” was responsible for instructing students on the theories that should be found in their work, in order to provoke creativity.119 Anni however, found herself enamored by Klee and even acquired one of his watercolors after an exhibition in which he tacked up his most recent work in a corridor of the Bauhaus when it was still in

Weimar. The purchase had been a rare public admission of her family’s wealth, which she normally concealed. But though her ability to buy the painting conspicuously set her apart from the other students in difficult economic times, she still could not resist acquiring Klee’s composition of arrows and abstract forms. (Figure 2.4)\textsuperscript{120} Much of her early work was inspired by Klee and she referred to him as “my god at the time”. In an interview with Nicholas Fox Weber, Albers discussed how on his 50th birthday in 1929, she and three of the other girls from the Weaving Department rented a plane out of which they threw Klee’s presents from the sky. Later that day, Josef asked Anni if she saw those “silly girls” in the plane for Klee for which she had to admit to participating in.\textsuperscript{121} As someone who was not naturally outgoing, her relationship with Paul Klee exposed her to life outside of her comfort zone which deeply impacted her art.\textsuperscript{122}

The inspiration derived from Klee’s work was not of an aesthetic nature, but in a more theoretical sense. In his own work, Paul Klee utilized a systematic approach towards color that almost paralleled architecture in terms of planning and intent.\textsuperscript{123} An example of this would be his work \textit{Architecture of the Plane} (Figure. 2.5). In this watercolor, Klee, like an architect, built the composition by layering intentionally chosen colors to create the desired effect. Rather than manipulation of color, Albers used the same approach to thread as Klee used towards paint. In his own work and in his lectures on form, Klee emphasized the importance of using a grid as a foundation for composition. She studied the materials vigorously enough to know the capabilities then

\textsuperscript{120} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{122} Ibid.  
planned her compositions in advance using gouache on paper (Figure 2.6). Once down on paper, she would begin the weaving process and develop the final product (Figure 2.7) In comparison to the experimental years in Weimar, Albers’ new method was orderly and formal. Once she adapted the genre of weaving to the sense of structure that she gravitated towards, Anni Albers began to produce art at a rapid pace.

In terms of a personal style shift, Anni took advantage of new technologies and techniques to make her weavings unique from others. She began to use the triple weave, a three-ply method that allowed for further experimentation and precision.\textsuperscript{124} Also, she utilized a new number system where every aspect of the composition is derived from the factors of twelve.\textsuperscript{125} On top of all of this order, they would incorporate unexpected elements which gave way for further intrigue on the viewer’s part. The use of the grid technique learned from Klee, combined with the utilization of more precise methods of weaving resulted in compositions that were technologically advanced while maintaining the feeling of individual craftsmanship.\textsuperscript{126} When comparing her work from the initial move to Dessau in 1925 to weavings completed only two years later, there is a clear difference in Albers’ approach to textiles. By examining a silk and cotton wallhanging that Albers created in 1926 (Figure 2.8), one can see she used a concrete numeric system to construct the compositions of her works. In an almost contradictory manner, Anni Albers used this orderly system to avoid repetition. This is another instance where Albers’ work pulls almost directly from the theories of Worringer’s \textit{Abstract and}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{125} Ibid.
\end{flushright}
Empathy, due to her systematic approach to abstraction. There is order in her designs but also an element of planned unpredictability due to the way she avoids repetition. This wallhanging and the few others that survive from the Bauhaus period only remain intact because of Anni’s parents. She gave her best works to the Fleischmann’s who housed them anywhere they would. This work sat on their piano and is slightly damaged because of spillage from a flower vase.127 Although she adored composing Wall Hangings, Anni’s success at the Bauhaus would not be realized through her aesthetic work. When Hannes Meyer replaced Walter Gropius as the new Bauhaus Director, he made it the responsibility of the students to outfit a school he recently designed.

Bauhaus Diploma

When Hannes Meyer replaced Walter Gropius as the new Bauhaus Director, he made it the responsibility of the students to outfit a school he recently designed. Anni Albers was chosen to design a functional fabric to outfit the interior of Meyer’s Bundesschule des Allgemeinen Deutschen Gewerkschaftsbundes (Trade Union School). In 1930, Albers worked independently to develop a soundproof and light reflecting fabric to outfit the auditorium of the building.128 The school was designed by Meyer in 1928 to function as a communal learning facility. As an architect, his philosophy on buildings was that they should be the, “direct transcription of the functional diagram”.129 As a weaver, Albers’ philosophy on function paralleled Meyer’s, making her the ideal

candidate for this assignment. Rather than the typical method of using velvet to mute sound vibrations, Anni decided to produce her own innovative fabric that would be more pleasing to the eye. The material was a combination of chenille and cellophane, which at that time was state of the art. The cellophane worked on the surface to reflect light while being backed with chenille to limit sound (Figure 2.9).\textsuperscript{130} Along with being more aesthetically pleasing, this new fabric was practical and could be subject to maintenance as needed. Rather than being geared toward aesthetics, the design for this fabric revolved around functionalism. To Albers, this meant that the formal qualities of a textile aligned seamlessly with its purpose. Although the material was unique, it was not able to be physically differentiated from other fabrics. Albers utilized muted colors that were “meant to hide in the open”.\textsuperscript{131} According to colleagues of Albers, her personality often paralleled her work in the sense that she preferred for textiles to work “secretly” as she did herself.\textsuperscript{132} This creation would become a defining moment in the career of Anni Albers. From the development of this fabric, she would earn her Bauhaus diploma and obtain a faculty position at the school.

Although this fabric was seemingly a radical departure from her first weavings at the Bauhaus aesthetically, in theory, it was not. Once more, her mentor Paul Klee was a key inspirational figure in the development of this design.\textsuperscript{133} Rather than borrowing from Klee's aesthetic, Albers took his theories on duality into consideration during the

\textsuperscript{130} Anni Albers et al., \textit{Anni Albers} (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2018).60-64.  
\textsuperscript{131} Anni Albers et al., \textit{Anni Albers} (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2018).60-64.  
\textsuperscript{132} Ibid.  
conceptual phases of the material.\textsuperscript{134} Here, duality was utilized by creating a fabric that maintained artisan elements but could be produced in mass quantities for the building and serve the purpose for which it was meant. The fabric was not only scientifically advanced, it was beautiful. Albers could have resorted to the standard method of using velvet to create the same sound subduing effect but, she used a mixture silver and black metallic and matte cotton which resulted in an elegant, yet effective fabric.\textsuperscript{135} Duality would become a significant component in the work of Anni Albers for the remainder of her career in textiles. She would develop fabrics that adhered to her minimalistic aesthetic while serving the purpose for which they were intended.\textsuperscript{136}

The fabric Albers developed for the Trade Union School was innovative not only in design, but also scientifically. The Zeiss Ikon Goertz Company scientifically tested the fabric and wrote a formal evaluation that confirmed the fabric’s effectiveness.\textsuperscript{137} At this time, artists, educators, and theorists were investigating the role of the applied arts in the machine age. Albers’ contribution was to help bring textiles to the forefront of art and design in the industry by maintaining the value of hand-weaving as a vital step in the production process and by exploring the artistic possibilities of fiber in industry. Her efforts contributed to the breakdown of distinctions between art and craft, and craft and industry.

Although her time as a professor at the Bauhaus was limited, Albers concentrated on teaching her students how to produce fabrics for an increasingly industrial world. This

\textsuperscript{135} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{136} Ibid.
was something that she deemed essential in order to keep the artist relevant to the genre of weaving. Throughout every teaching position she would go on to hold, she ensured that her students knew how to evolve their craft in order to adapt to technology and trends. She would go on to develop this skill and become renowned for her lectures, theories and writings on the topic of weaving for industry.

In 1930, this short-lived freedom would end due to political influence having an impact on students. The Bauhaus became overcome with protests by students, and the political climate of Germany heightened tensions. Josef was eager to escape what he referred to as the “fog over Bauhaus”.\textsuperscript{138} That same year, to save the school Hannes Meyer was dismissed, and Ludwig Mies van der Rohe replaced him as head of the school. Although Albers was happy with this appointment, the continuous political war in Germany made it virtually impossible for even the headmaster to make any progressive decisions.\textsuperscript{139} In 1932, a year before Hitler’s appointment as Chancellor of Germany, Josef had grown increasingly frustrated with Bauhaus, and its student body with intentions to leave the school.\textsuperscript{140} By October, Dessau announced that they were to cease funding of the institution, therefore, causing its closing.\textsuperscript{141} Due to negotiations by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, the Bauhaus was rebranded as a private institution and relocated to Berlin. Classes at the new location began in January of 1933, the same month as the appointment of

\textsuperscript{139} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{140} Ibid.
Hitler who laid a heavy hand on the Bauhaus by enacting new National Socialist reform.\textsuperscript{142}

A professional disqualification was issued to many female teachers at Bauhaus by the National Socialists because they were either: from Jewish descent, were politically active, came from enemy countries or produced “degenerate art”.\textsuperscript{143} Several students came to agreements with the National Socialists and provided them with information on their peers while others took part in Nazi projects to further their careers.\textsuperscript{144} A total of six women who attended the Bauhaus were eventually murdered in concentration camps and others survived under difficult conditions to stay alive.\textsuperscript{145}

Only three months later, the Nazis and the Berlin police descended onto the Bauhaus and closed the school.\textsuperscript{146} Once more, Mies went on to negotiate and was able to get approval from the National Socialist Culture Minister for the reopening of Bauhaus. Due to the strenuous conditions of the agreement, Mies gathered his faculty, and with a bottle of champagne, they closed the Bauhaus indefinitely on July 21, 1933.\textsuperscript{147}

Anni Albers’ experience at the Bauhaus served as an introduction not only to the medium of weaving but also to the possibilities of exploration in the realm of textiles. This period in her life was revealing not only of artistic pursuits but also in the sense that she overcame a multitude of limitations in her personal life. She overcame the

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  \item 142 Ibid.
  \item 144 Ibid.
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constrictions of her youth as an upper-class German girl and pursued an art career. Though initially rejected and physically handicapped, she took advantage of the limitations that were placed on her due solely to her gender. The Bauhaus set Albers in the Weaving Department as another female student that they deemed unfit for other courses of study based on a perspective of what women could handle. Albers surpassed all expectations placed upon her by her family and by the Bauhaus when she earned her diploma.

Conclusion

At the Bauhaus, Anni Albers discovered a passion for weaving and textile materials which would last a lifetime. She entered the school as an impressionist painter but graduated as a technical weaver developing fabrics for mass production. Moreover, Albers changed her artistic intent from being sole aesthetically based to providing society with functional yet artfully designed products that were practical. This newfound purpose along with her innovative studies of the properties of materials set her apart from all other weavers at the time.

Upon the closure of Bauhaus, Anni and Josef Albers were now without jobs in an atmosphere becoming hostile to the abstract art they were producing. Adolf Hitler’s preference for the classics suddenly made their art déclassé and degenerate amongst the rising National Socialist party. Over time, the Albers’ art would have possibly been featured in the now infamous Degenerate Art Exhibition that caused shame and humiliation to their colleagues such as Wassily Kandinsky. This new shift in artistic taste would have made it impossible for them to further their careers in Germany.
Aside from the loss of their livelihood, the couple, specifically Anni was in grave danger of being abducted by the Nazi Party. Although she was baptized Protestant, she was a member of one of the wealthiest Jewish families in the nation which made her a target for Hitler. In a moment of good fate, Anni Albers ran into American Architect, Philip Johnson on the street in Berlin. Johnson was a longtime admirer of her textiles and a contributor to a liberal arts college in America that was looking for faculty members. After having tea at the Albers’ house that afternoon and learning the danger that the couple was facing, Johnson proposed that they join the faculty at this up and coming school. They immediately agreed to the opportunity with no hesitation or background information; the Albers initially thought North Carolina was in the Philippines. But, in November of 1933 the couple made their way to America.

Figure 2.1: The Albers and Walter Gropius on the grounds of the Dessau Bauhaus faculty homes
Figure 2.2: Anni Albers bedroom at the Dessau Bauhaus Faculty home

Figure 2.3: Dessau Bauhaus Weaving Workshop
Figure. 2.4: Paul Klee, *Two Forces*, 1922-3

Figure. 2.5: Paul Klee, *Architecture of the Plane*, 1923
Figure. 2.6: Anni Albers, Gouache Study for a Wallhanging

Figure. 2.7: Anni Albers, Wallhanging, 1925
Figure 2.8: Anni Albers, *Wallhanging*, 1926

Figure 2.9: The fabric Anni Albers created for Hannes Meyer’s Bundesschule des Allgemeinen Deutschen Gewerkschaftsbundes
CHAPTER 3: BLACK MOUNTAIN COLLEGE

Background

Aligning almost simultaneously with the closure of Bauhaus was the opening of Black Mountain College in 1933. This institution was the outcome of a series of controversial events beginning with the dismissal of John Andrew Rice, who was a professor of classics at Rollins College.\footnote{Vincent Katz and Martin Brody, Black Mountain College: Experiment in Art (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003))13-19.} Founded by the Congregational Church in 1885, Rollins was by no means the ideal atmosphere for Rice to expound his theories on progressive education to students or colleagues.\footnote{Mary Emma Harris, The Arts at Black Mountain College (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007))2-47.} The incident that triggered the professor’s expulsion was his recommendation to abolish the Conference Plan. This plan was the curriculum brainchild of the college’s current President, Hamilton Holt.\footnote{Mary Emma Harris, The Arts at Black Mountain College (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007))2-47.} Rice proposed a schedule that organized the student’s days into four two-hour conferences. As a result of disagreement, Holt requested the resignation of John Andrew Rice in February of 1933, which he initially refused. Rollins College formally dismissed him later on March 22, which left the former professor of classics jobless amid the Great Depression.\footnote{Mary Emma Harris, The Arts at Black Mountain College (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007))2-47.}
Although John Andrew Rice was unsuccessful at changing the educational system at Rollins College, his dismissal fueled tensions between faculty and the school’s governance board. By the end of the school year in 1933, at least eight faculty members who had supported Rice were dismissed, and a great deal of the student body followed them as a means of protest. The majority of teachers who were let go accompanied Rice on his mission to found a college of his own.  

By June of 1933, with the help of Frank Aydelotte, president of Swarthmore College and the brother-in-law of John Andrew Rice, the prospective college had found a real home — just outside of Asheville, North Carolina in the Blue Ridge Assembly buildings.  

Although YMCA conferences occupied the premises during the summer months, they remained vacant in the winter. This location provided what would be known as Black Mountain College a ready-made campus for its beginning years. For the next two months, Rice spent his time raising money and recruiting students with Theodore Drier who was the former physics teacher at Rollins College. Together, they managed to raise the $14,500 required to open the school without any issues.  

Although the school had acquired an ideal campus site, recruiting students to attend Black Mountain College proved to be a challenge. To keep up with the school's financial obligations, the board needed an enrollment of thirty students before August of 1933. However, parents were hesitant to send their children to Black Mountain College

154 Ibid.
155 Ibid.
156 Ibid.
because of its expensive tuition, newness, and its status as an unaccredited college. The lack of interest resulted in a loss of faith among the faculty that had followed John Andrew Rice from Rollins College, and many of them withdrew from the endeavor entirely. However, Rice was persistent in continuing the college and decided to do a press release regarding its opening with the *Herald Tribune*. With a small student body of twenty-two and twelve faculty members, Black Mountain College opened its doors in September of 1933. Aligning with the concepts Rice proposed at Rollins College, the school was run by faculty with no trustees, deans or regents. There were no required courses for students and initially no grades (this changed later on). Rice was intent on returning the responsibility to students in regard to their education. Although the school was lenient in terms of academics, it was mandatory that college attendees participated in community life at Black Mountain College. Both students and faculty were responsible for all aspects of the school from serving meals to its groundskeeping. Rice wanted his college to be a place for education while also being a preparation for life. Black Mountain College would become legendary for its unique academic structure and impressive repertoire of famous staff members, including Anni Albers.

Albers in America

The series of events that brought the Albers’ to America were both traumatic yet fortuitous. In June of 1933, Josef left the Bauhaus at the forced closure of the school by the National Socialist Party. The rise of the Nazis also carried a grim fate for Anni as she was from a prominent Jewish family. A saving grace came in the form of a letter on August 17, 1933, from Phillip Johnson who was at the time, the curator of architecture at the Museum of Modern Art. It was an invitation for Josef to teach at Black Mountain College, which he accepted almost immediately.

On Friday, November 24, 1933, the S.S. Europa pulled into New York with heavily anticipated cargo: Josef and Anni Albers. The press was waiting with bated breath for an interview with Josef, only to find out that he could not speak English. Anni, however, was well versed in the English language, having learned it as a child. Although she only exercised this skill once before on a week-long trip to England, Anni took the responsibility of being her husband’s translator for interviews. She also translated his lectures until he learned to speak the language fluently enough.

Despite being a hugely successful textile designer and professor in Europe, the American press paid little or no attention to Anni Albers. Although they relied on her translations for their content, the press seemingly ignored her artistic career. In articles announcing their arrival, many reporters omit this detail all together. Also, Anni’s

163 Mary Emma Harris, The Arts at Black Mountain College (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007))2-47
weaving was described by American newspapers in terms that align more with craft rather than industry. For example, the Brooklyn Daily Eagle states, “His wife weaves tapestries, the beauty of which lies in the way strange combinations of straw and silk and wool are woven into patterns.” This statement is a primary example of how the perception of weaving in the United States would conflict with Anni’s goals and attitude toward the medium. The Asheville Citizen published a now-famous photograph of the couple upon their arrival, which displays the characteristics of both Josef and Anni perfectly (Figure.2).

Anni is seen wearing an all-black ensemble complete with a black veil. Her outfit choice could be almost a metaphor for her reserved personality and perception that artists should remain in the background. Josef however, looks off to the side as if he is agitated by the press. He would become known for his short fuse and attention span during his time as a professor at Black Mountain College.

Although the press welcomed the couple with open arms, the United States Department of Customs was not so kind. Due to the outbreak of World War II, suspicions heightened towards German immigrants. Upon their arrival, the Albers’ personal belongings were seized and not returned for eight weeks. When the items were given back, the couple found all of their belongings had been gone through and damaged. In a letter to the United States Director of Customs from February 12, 1934, Josef describes

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167 Art Professor Fleering Nazis, Here to Teach,” Brooklyn Daily Eagle (Brooklyn, New York), 1933.
168 Germans on Faculty at Black Mountain School,” Asheville Citizen (Asheville, North Carolina), December 5, 1933.
169 Josef Albers to Director of the Customs, February 12, 1934, United States, Asheville, North Carolina.
their losses in great detail.\textsuperscript{170} Nine boxes that they had carefully wrapped in oiled paper and cloth prior were withheld from them by customs.\textsuperscript{171} They returned penetrated with dirt, weaving yarn in confusion and art books covered in filth. At the time, Josef was working on creating a series of glass pictures and had brought them to the United States for completion. Of the thirty-two glass pictures that traveled with the couple, ten were broken or cracked. Josef and Anni had also brought a camera to document their new life in America, but it was given back with the glass plate destroyed.\textsuperscript{172} On top of the damage to their belongings, there were several items withheld from the Albers. The United States Customs Department wrote back and denied all allegations. They claimed that Josef and Anni’s belongings were already damaged before they handled them.

After spending that weekend in New York, the Albers’ set out on a train ride to what would become their home for the next sixteen years. The landscape of the Blue Ridge Mountains reminded Josef of Germany’s Harz Mountains, but to Anni, there was no trace of her past life to be found.\textsuperscript{173} From her early childhood, Anni had limitations set on her freedom. Having come from a traditional upper-class German background, she grew up according to a strict set of guidelines in terms of how a proper lady should behave. In an attempt to break from the restraints of her upbringing, she enrolled at the Bauhaus only to be welcomed by more prejudice brought on by her gender. By the time she became a faculty member at the Bauhaus, the National Socialist Party had intervened

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\textsuperscript{170} Josef Albers to Director of the Customs, February 12, 1934, United States, Asheville, North Carolina. \\
\textsuperscript{171} Josef Albers to Director of the Customs, February 12, 1934, United States, Asheville, North Carolina. \\
\textsuperscript{172} Josef Albers to Director of the Customs, February 12, 1934, United States, Asheville, North Carolina. \\
\textsuperscript{173} Frederick A. Horowitz and Brenda Danilowitz, \textit{Josef Albers to Open Eyes} (London: Phaidon Press Limited, 2014)
\end{flushright}
both politically and academically. There were regulations in terms of what the school was allowed to teach and restrictions regarding her religion. This opportunity however, was actual freedom. At Black Mountain College Anni wrote in disbelief about her new liberties, “The secretary, a very healthy, luscious girl, greeted us on the porch and I remember that her fat little pink toes were in sandals. And I thought, ‘Well maybe this is a true story.’”\(^\text{174}\)

Despite their trouble upon initially entering the country and the loss of a lot of their belongings, the Albers’ immigration experience was atypical of most. Unlike many immigrants seeking asylum in the United States, Josef and Anni arrived with all of their needs sorted out for them. A descendant of the Rockefeller family financed their travel expenses and the couple’s living, food, and social arrangements had been set up before their arrival.\(^\text{175}\) Although it was the middle of the Great Depression, the Albers’ did not have to worry about job security. Though they were now citizens of rural Appalachia, Anni and Josef Albers were by no means out of place at Black Mountain College. The school eventually became known as the “willing beneficiary of the splendid offerings that Hitler gave the New World,” due to the high volume of European immigrants it employed.\(^\text{176}\)

\(^{174}\) Frederick A. Horowitz and Brenda Danilowitz, *Josef Albers to Open Eyes* (London: Phaidon Press Limited, 2014)
\(^{175}\) Frederick A. Horowitz and Brenda Danilowitz, *Josef Albers to Open Eyes* (London: Phaidon Press Limited, 2014)
Weaving from the Ground Up

Although Anni Albers began her career at Black Mountain College as a translator for Josef and tutor for weaving, she quickly proved herself as an asset for the school. In the Fall of 1934, only a year after her arrival she gained an appointment to faculty as Director of the Weaving Department.¹⁷⁷ As the school was a year into its lifespan, Albers quite literally began the department with sticks and stones. Initially, Black Mountain College did not have any looms, so the weaving students made primitive looms out of sticks until the school could provide professional ones.¹⁷⁸ She also shared her equipment with classes throughout her sixteen years stay at Black Mountain. In 1949 at the time of her resignation, she wrote to the school describing how the long term use of her equipment by inexperienced hands had caused warping and frame damage.¹⁷⁹ Albers’ dedication to the success of the Weaving Department is apparent through this gesture, which paid off immensely over time. The overall success of the workshop gave the school an incentive to outfit it to the best of their ability. After the college moved to the Lake Eden campus (Figure.3.3), Black Mountain College eventually supplied Albers’ classes. They gave the workshop up to nine looms ranging from the most enormous eight harness loom to the smallest, a two-harness loom (Figure. 3.4 ).¹⁸⁰

In its beginning stages, the weaving department also relied on the natural elements for its threads. Because Black Mountain College was a costly art school

¹⁷⁷ Don Page, interview by Mary Harris, Western Regional Archives, December 8, 1970.
¹⁷⁸ Anni Albers to Board of Fellows, May 17, 1949, Western Regional Archives, Asheville, North Carolina.
¹⁷⁹ Don Page, interview by Mary Harris, Western Regional Archives, December 8, 1970.
¹⁸⁰ Don Page, interview by Mary Harris, Western Regional Archives, December 8, 1970.
founded amidst the Great Depression, funding for materials was limited. As the success of the Weaving Department increased, the college became more inclined to provide it with the required textiles including some fabrics that were state of the art. Synthetic fabrics like rayon were only beginning to come out, but Anni Albers ensured that her students worked with them to maintain her mission of keeping weaving relevant to the times.\textsuperscript{181}

Bauhaus Meets Black Mountain

In terms of instruction, Albers' classes were a continuation of what she previously taught at the Bauhaus before its closure. She focused on weaving and textile design as a "preparatory step to machine production," rather than a leisure time activity or craft.\textsuperscript{182} Albers recognized the broader social aim of designing for the industry due to the increasing presence of mass production. This principle is what separated the Weaving Department at Black Mountain College from others of its time. In an interview, Trude Guermonprez described Albers' methods of teaching at Black Mountain as "Socratic.\textsuperscript{183} Meaning by this that she let her students make their deductions to solve a particular problem. She would discuss fabric construction with her students then assign them a purpose for which to create a fabric. Through deduction after deduction, they would decide on the materials and style of weaving that would be the most efficient solution. By doing this, Anni Albers ingrained into her students the importance of understanding the

\textsuperscript{181} Don Page, interview by Mary Harris, Western Regional Archives, December 8, 1970.
\textsuperscript{182} Mary Emma Harris, The Arts at Black Mountain College (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007), 24.
\textsuperscript{183} Trude (Elsesser)-Guermonperez, interview by Mary Harris, Western Regional Archives, December 8, 1971.
different possibilities of each material. In one of her books, *On Designing*, she explained the reasoning behind the emphasis she placed on the vital relationship between machines and fabric: "The tools, or the more mechanized tools, our machines, are our guides too. We learn from them of the interaction of material and its use, how a material can change its characterizer when used in a certain construction and how in turn the construction is affected by the material; how we can support the characteristics of material or suppress them, depending on the form of construction we use."

Anni Albers was ahead of her time in terms of adapting her art form to an ever-changing society. She was adamant about keeping weaving relevant. While she promoted weaving for the modern era, she also ensured that her students understood its history and fundamentals.

Due to the lush landscape of the school and the ever-changing financial situation, Albers took advantage of the natural materials around Black Mountain College in her lessons. Her beginning students completed exercises using found materials (different types of grasses or kernels of corn) to display how a single material can be transformed through various methods of weaving (Figure 3.5). During their time at Black Mountain College, Anni and Josef Albers took several trips to South America. Anni fell in love with ancient South American culture and textiles, which served as another primary influence in her teaching methods. In an interview conducted by Mary Harris, Else Regensteiner describes how Albers taught her classes to make a backstop loom with wooden sticks and string. When asked why she thought her professor found this important, Else stated, "Well, because Anni Albers felt it was a fundamental, “primitive”

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184 Trude (Elsesser)-Guermonperez, interview by Mary Harris, *Western Regional Archives*, December 8, 1971.
tool which would lead us into more complicated looms… as a matter of fact, I have been
doing that with my students for the same reason, to start off with something primitive.”

Else Regensteiner went on to become a successful weaver and weaving instructor at the
Art Institute of Chicago after training under Anni Albers at Black Mountain College.

After finishing their necessary studies in the fundamentals of weaving and basic
exercises, Anni's more advanced students began designing fabrics for specific functions.
She taught them the capabilities and limitations of materials, knowledge of the
characteristics of weaves, and to have an acknowledgment of the particular functional
requirements for the textile in mind. In their notes, students would illustrate different
types of knots and patterns extensively as well as provide samples of the outcomes
(Figure. 3.6 & 3.7). Albers also set up a program that allowed these students to make
money from their products and additional funding for the Weaving Department by selling
their products to locals. These items were always for a functional purpose, such as
table linens, to convey to students the consumer need for solid woven materials rather
than those solely for artistic purposes. Textiles created by the advanced weaving
students were on exhibition throughout the United States. They came to be recognized as
unique from those produced by other weaving programs due to their minimal aesthetic
and emphasis on material. Anni Albers’ outlook on fabrics as being functionally serving,

187 Interview by Mary Harris and Else Regensteiner, Western Regional Archives, November 3, 1971.
189 Anni Albers and Lore Kadden, "What Is Weaving" (lecture, Weaving Class, Western Regional Archives, Asheville, North Carolina, 1945).
190 Don Page, interview by Mary Harris, Western Regional Archives, December 8, 1970.
modest objects that should blend into the background, made Black Mountain College's Weaving Department the most advanced at the school and gained the institution national recognition.

Personal Projects at Black Mountain

Upon their move to Black Mountain College, the press primarily recognized Anni Albers as the wife of Josef Albers rather than an artist of her own. This angered her as she had achieved so much at the Bauhaus, including the design of a revolutionary fabric that doubled as a scientifically proven solution for sound reverberation. In the same way that she proved herself worthy at the Bauhaus, she sought to make her own name in America. The couple was also experiencing marital issues beyond professional jealousy. There are accounts of infidelity on both Anni and Josef’s behalf regarding another couple at the school; Ted and Bobbie Dreier. Also, there are several accounts from female students that attended Black Mountain College, exposing Josef’s inappropriate behavior towards them.

As a professor, Josef expected a great deal more out of his male students than he did females. One student recalls the art professor's ideology on this matter by saying he, "was very much aware that if you were a female, you were a female. He didn't just treat you as another student. It's difficult to put your finger on; he'd speak to you differently and treat you differently." Perhaps the reasoning behind this was inherited from the

193 Josef Strasser, 50 Bauhaus Icons You Should Know(Munich: Prestel, 2018))  
Bauhaus, where women were discouraged from certain fields due to gender. I also speculate that he did not take women seriously as artists due to his lack of respect for them in a physical sense. There are accounts from several Black Mountain alumnae that discuss Josef touching them inappropriately and pinching their backsides.¹⁹⁵ In a series of interviews with students conducted by Mary Harris in the 1970's, one female student describes a morning at breakfast, "I was sitting there quietly buttering my toast and Juppi (nickname for Josef) came in… and he said, 'Ya, Jane, good morning. How are you?' and he reached over and grabbed..aagh!"¹⁹⁶

On the contrary, Anni Albers' presence at the school was far less colorful than her husband's. Anni was known to wear white coveralls around campus with a bandana tied around her head. This get-up became her signature style and is on display in her faculty composite photo (Figure.8). Like her designs, she blended into the background and remained reclusive outside of the classroom. Students described her as a retiring and reserved person who much-valued privacy.¹⁹⁷ The majority of Black Mountain's campus was seen as a come and go as you please scenario with Anni Albers' weaving studio being the exception. It was a known fact amongst the faculty and student body that no one could enter that space unless personally invited.¹⁹⁸ Wide speculation surfaced that the lameness Anni suffered as a child had much to do with her introversion. Despite her humility, students and staff recognized the talent that Anni Albers possessed as an

¹⁹⁶ Interview by Mary Harris and Jane Robinson-Stone, *Western Regional Archives*, March 27, 1971.
¹⁹⁸ Winslow Ames, interview by Mary Harris, *Western Regional Archives*, March 18, 1971.
individual. One of her students, Raymond Barnhart described in an interview with Mary Harris how her abilities are not recognized as much as they should be, "I don't know whether that's realized as much as it ought be or not, but she was just as cool and bright and revealing of what they considered the truth as he (Josef) was."¹⁹⁹

This constant overshadowing by her husband resulted in an immense amount of artistic expression by Anni during her time at Black Mountain College. By 1937, she was traveling to Chicago to show her work, and lecturing to women’s groups.²⁰⁰ In 1938, she participated in the Bauhaus Exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and contributed an essay, *The Bauhaus Weaving Workshop* to the catalog.²⁰¹ She continued in the Bauhaus fashion to produce groundbreaking textile designs for industrial companies, like Rosenthal and Knoll.²⁰² An example of this would be a screening material that she created in 1944 for the shop of Rena Rosenthal in New York that allowed one to look out from the store but prevented passerby from looking in.²⁰³ The fabric was composed of slit cellulose cotton and rayon woven into horizontal stripes.²⁰⁴ Her relationships with Rosenthal and Knoll proved to be lasting as her designs for the company remained consistently in high demand. Fifteen years after producing the silk screening, Albers was producing rugs for Knoll but taking inspiration from printmaking which she turned to later in her life as a primary art form. Currently, seventy-five years after she created her

¹⁹⁹ Raymond Barnhart, interview by Mary Harris, *Western Regional Archives*, December 6, 1971.
²⁰⁰ Winslow Ames, interview by Mary Harris, *Western Regional Archives*, March 18, 1971.
²⁰¹ Winslow Ames, interview by Mary Harris, *Western Regional Archives*, March 18, 1971.
²⁰³ Ibid.
²⁰⁴ Ibid.
first industrial textiles in America, Knoll is re-releasing the designs that Anni Albers created for them.

Finally, free from the direction of the Bauhaus, Albers was also able to return to expressive weaving for which she coined the term “pictorial weaving”. These were an extension of what she began at the Bauhaus in 1922, but due to the school’s change in curriculum, she had to stop producing them. In these works, she completely disregards functional purposes and gives the viewer an art piece to ponder solely for enjoyment. The most renowned of these pieces is Monte Alban (Figure 3.9), which serves as an ode to her love of South American culture. Albers’s travels to South America were not only dear to her heart in terms of cultural appreciation, they were a huge source of inspiration for her work and in her teaching. Throughout her time at Black Mountain College, she and Josef would journey to Mexico a multitude of times and develop a large collection of pre-Hispanic art. She often utilized and taught ancient South American weaving methods because she thought them to be extremely fundamental to the craft. In Monte Alban, Albers applied her beloved method of abstraction to impressions she took of the archeological sites during her visit to Monte Alban to create something both visually interesting that remained true to her aesthetic. Unlike her previous work at the Bauhaus, which was focused on rhythm and balance alone, Monte Alban has a concrete subject matter. In this work, Anni Albers is creating an abstracted picture of the layout at Monte Alban; hence her created term “pictorial weaving”. Although Monte Alban is a more expressive piece in concept for Albers, it still exudes the same aesthetic qualities that she utilized for the entirety of her career. While the threadwork in the central plane of the weaving is playful and guides the viewers eye on a visual tour of the site at Monte Alban,
the work is grounded by bold parallel lines. These horizontal lines serve as a sort of boundary. Anni Albers placed the structured lines to contrast the organic lines as a way to ensure that the viewers eye was going in the right direction.

Another work that falls into the category of Anni Albers’ pictorial weavings would be *Ancient Writing* (Figure 3.10). This work is also inspired by the Albers’ trips to Mexico. Unlike *Monte Alban* which focuses on ancient architecture, this work focuses on language which was also a passion of Anni Albers. At Black Mountain College, she gave her students exercises on typewriters (Figure 3.11.) to show them how linguistic characters can form patterns. The work *Ancient Writing*, utilizes the same format as *Monte Alban* in terms of a centralized subject panel being grounded through contrasting panels on either side. Rather than the organic line that guides the eye throughout *Monte Alban*, this weaving utilizes free floating geometric shapes that are comprised of different pattern to create intrigue. Albers once again uses thick, horizontal bands to draw the viewers eye down vertically to create order. Though the “pictorial weavings” were more expressive, they still maintained order which was something highly valued by Albers.

In a sense, the pictorial weavings were the visual result of Anni Albers training at the Bauhaus and her experience at Black Mountain College. The formality that was instilled in her at the Bauhaus is displayed through the grounding horizontal bands, muted color pallets, and structure of the pieces. At Black Mountain, experimentation was appreciated and can be seen in these weavings through the use of organic line, the unpredictable placement of shapes, and the creation of these works for pure aesthetic pleasure. Previous works created by Anni Albers were meant to serve a specific purpose because they had to. Prior to these “pictorial weavings” she was weaving for either the
Bauhaus to sell for production or for the design companies she was employed by. Works such as *Ancient Writing* and *Monte Alban* allow the viewer a chance to see what Anni Albers valued artistically as an individual. The wallhangings *Monte Alban* and *Ancient Writing*, both created in 1936, are the earliest form of expressive work by Albers at Black Mountain College. They serve as the foundation for the aesthetic she would become known for which utilizes formalism learned from the Bauhaus with the creative liberation that she experienced at Black Mountain. Prior to this, her functional textiles and artistic textiles maintained separate styles but, after 1936, her work in both realms began to meld into a style that was consistent with her experiences at both the Bauhaus and Black Mountain. For example, when comparing a rug created by Albers in 1959 (Figure 3.12) to a weaving titled *Under Way*, which she created in 1963 (Figure 3.13), there are striking similarities in the stylistic qualities while the functional purpose of each is drastically different.

Both of these works maintain simplistic color palettes and formal use of line but, they are also highly expressive in composition. They also maintain the calculated format that Albers began to utilize at the Dessau, Bauhaus but, there is an organic quality to the formation and placement of line. This almost contradictory style of organic formalism is a result of Anni Albers’ experiences at both the Bauhaus and Black Mountain. While both schools have been compared as similar in their institutional makeup and many of their faculty attended both, the Bauhaus and Black Mountain College exist on opposite ends of the stylistic spectrum. Anni Albers attendance at both institution and her application of learned skills from both, made her textiles entirely different from anyone else’s at the time. As mentioned in Chapter 1, Albers gathered the importance of duality
from her education from Paul Klee. This idea finally came to fruition in her work at Black Mountain College through combining her past education with her present experience.

Two Schools, One Exhibition & A Lasting Legacy

On September 14, 1949, a culmination of Albers’s achievements at the Bauhaus and Black Mountain College was presented as a solo exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art. She was not only the first weaver to have been given a solo exhibition at a major American institution, but also the first woman from the Bauhaus to ever receive such an honor. The show was the brainchild of the Director of Industrial Design at the Museum of Modern Art, Edgar Kaufmann Jr., after visiting Black Mountain College in 1948. It was curated by Philip Johnson, who had also been the Albers first contact in the United States. In January of 1949, Albers flew to New York to discuss the show with Johnson who claims her as the true curator. The exhibition Anni Albers Textiles opened on September 13, 1949. It lasted six weeks at MoMA then travelled to twenty-six institutions in the United States and Canada, featuring sixty items created between the time spanning from Bauhaus to Black Mountain College.

The exhibition (Figure 3.14) was set up as a single room display with objects grouped by material function. As indicated by the press release, the show was a culmination of educational experiments, drapery, upholstery and dress materials, and

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206 Ibid.
207 Ibid.
210 Ibid.
pictorial tapestries. Anni Albers methodical approach to weaving was also emphasized through the display of her preliminary sketches and studies of material. Separating the different elements of the exhibition were woven partitions that Albers created from modern fabrics but executed through ancient weaving processes. The exhibition was in a sense, a retrospective of Albers’s life up to 1949. A solo exhibition at MoMA should have seemed like a major lifetime achievement to Albers, however, it was not. According to an interview by Nicolas Fox Weber, when he asked her about the exhibition, she pointed out the flaws more than anything. Anni Albers was highly disappointed in the amount of attention her exhibition received in the press and blamed it on a newspaper strike.  

Over a decade after her death in 1994, interest in the epic artistic career of Anni Albers has finally peaked. In 2018, the Tate Modern in London curated a major exhibition of Anni Albers’ works. On display were more than 350 objects, from the Bauhaus to the prints she designed in her last years. The overall goal of the show was to display a long overdue recognition of Anni Albers groundbreaking accomplishments in weaving and design in general. Unlike her solo exhibition at MoMA, the Tate Modern’s show received massive amounts of press attention and rave reviews from critics.

In addition to artistic institutions, production companies that Albers once designed textiles for, have re-released her designs. In 2019, Knoll textiles paid homage to

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213 Ibid.
Albers by re-launching some of the textiles that she created for them.\textsuperscript{214} The most successful of these being \textit{Eclat} which was originally designed for Knoll in 1976, which can now be purchased in 6 different colors.\textsuperscript{215} In 2003, Christopher Farr rugs began producing products based on Anni Albers weavings. Currently, the company offers rugs based on Albers works spanning from the Bauhaus period through Black Mountain College.\textsuperscript{216} For generations, Anni Albers works have made design accessible for the masses, which is true to what the mission of the Bauhaus was. Her work with design firms both prior to her passing and after, have allowed for people of all social climates to experience fine art in their homes, offices, and businesses.

Overall, rejection was a constant theme in the life of Anni Albers, but so was perseverance. Much like the rhythm and pattern in her weavings, a downfall was consistently met with a victory. Rejection from the Bauhaus resulted in admission through Albers’ hard work and resilience. The outcome of her disappointment in being placed in the weaving workshop was that she became a pioneer in textiles. She was unacknowledged as an artist when she immigrated to America and countered that by becoming the first woman from the Bauhaus to receive a solo exhibition at MoMA. Although these feats were not given recognition during her lifetime, Anni Albers work is now being given the attention it deserves. The goal of this thesis was to recognize the work of Anni Albers from her Bauhaus and Black Mountain years, but also to honor the story someone who achieved success in the face of adversity.

\textsuperscript{215} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{216} “Anni Albers → Christopher Farr Cloth,” → Christopher Farr Cloth, accessed November 7, 2019, http://christopherfarrcloth.com/designers/anni-albers/)
Figure 3.1: Black Mountain College Blue Ridge YMCA Campus

Figure 3.2: Anni and Josef Albers upon arrival to the United States
Figure.3.3: Black Mountain College Lake Eden Campus

Figure.3.4: Students in the Weaving Department at Black Mountain College
Figure 3.5: Leaf weaving exercise by a Black Mountain College Student

Figure 3.6: Class notes by Lore Kadden from Anni Albers’ lecture
Figure 3.7: Class notes by Lore Kadden from Anni Albers’ lecture

Figure 3.8: Anni Albers’ Black Mountain College faculty photo
Figure 3.9: Anni Albers, *Monte Alban*, 1936

Figure 3.10: Anni Albers, *Ancient Writing*
Figure 3.11: Type writing exercise from one of Anni Albers’ Courses

Figure 3.12 (left) Anni Albers, Rug, 1959 and 3.13: Anni Albers, Under Way, 1963
Figure 3.14: Anni Albers solo exhibition at MoMa in 1949
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