
Author
Stölzl, Gunta, 1897-1983

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Gunta Stölzl

Anni Albers

The Museum of Modern Art, New York
February 15 – July 10, 1990
The textile designs of Gunta Stölzl (1897–1983) and Anni Albers (b. 1899) are creative experiments in material, structure, and color. Rejecting a nineteenth-century tradition of cloth-making that emphasized pictorial imagery, Stölzl and Albers altered the course of twentieth-century weaving by introducing new fibers and finishes and by revealing the fundamental woven structure, or the warp and weft, of the cloth.

As Albers' teacher and colleague at the Bauhaus from 1922 until 1930, Stölzl changed the intuitive and craft-oriented approach of the weaving workshop in Weimar (1919–25) to one that encouraged scientific and systematic experimentation after the school moved to Dessau (1925–32). With the addition of modern industrial looms at Dessau, Stölzl and her coworkers tested new materials as prototypes for industry and were able to mass-produce textiles for everyday use. Synthetics and new fibers such as rayon, cellophane, and metallic thread—widely used now—were combined with traditional natural fibers like jute and linen to reveal the essential and contrasting characteristics of the materials. The effect is an extraordinary surface and textural quality in the work by Stölzl and Albers that reflects the function of the fabric.

Stölzl and Albers wanted "the threads to be articulate again." They exposed the strong verticals and horizontals of the warp and weft, often simply by using a plain weave and contrasting fibers. In their wall hangings, they employed a careful balance of subtle colors and geometric forms that recall the linear planes in a floor plan by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, or the asymmetrical configuration in a painting by Piet Mondrian. At the Bauhaus both Stölzl and Albers were influenced by painters Johannes Itten and Paul Klee, who emphasized...
the study of form to "enable the student to perceive the harmonious relationship of different rhythms and to express such harmony through the use of one or several materials." After leaving the Bauhaus, Albers and Stölzl continued with this approach in their individual workshops in the thirties and forties, and, in Albers' case, later, at Black Mountain College, North Carolina.

The textiles in this exhibition were developed for a variety of functions and reflect the designers' responsiveness to the different demands of their time. They include spanning material for radio speakers, dust-repellent wall coverings, and fabrics for car upholstery and tubular-steel furniture, many incorporating new materials for newly recognized needs. Stölzl's assimilation of color, structure, and function is seen in her curtain for a photo studio, in which the pattern of the weave resembles a bellows camera. A wall covering by Albers, which earned her a Bauhaus diploma in 1930, incorporates cellophane, chenille, and cotton to improve the light-reflecting and sound-absorbing abilities of an auditorium. Her delicate handling of contrasting materials is best illustrated by transparent fabric produced in 1944: weaving together jute and cellophane, Albers created a fabric to harmonize with any modern architectural setting.

Matilda McQuaid
Curatorial Assistant
Department of Architecture and Design


I would like to thank Anne Dixon of the Department of Architecture and Design for her invaluable assistance on the exhibition; Sheila Hicks for her encouragement and support for this brochure; and Nicholas Fox Weber for his patience in answering many questions about Anni Albers' work.

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Gunta Stölzl. **Design for textile.** c. 1923. Photo: Kate Keller

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**CHECKLIST**

All works are from the collection of The Museum of Modern Art. Dimensions are given in inches and centimeters, height preceding width. Approximately 100 textile samples by both designers are exhibited in the display case and are not listed here.

**Gunta Stölzl**
(Swiss, born Germany. 1897-1983)

**Design for textile.** 1920-24
Watercolor, ink, and pencil on paper
11 x 10 1/16" (27.9 x 25.6 cm)
Mrs. John D. Rockefeller 3rd
Purchase Fund

**Wall hanging.** 1924
Wool, silk, mercerized cotton, metallic thread
69 1/2 x 45" (176.5 x 114.3 cm)
Phyllis B. Lambert Fund

**Design for double-woven cloth.** c. 1925
Watercolor on paper
6 7/8 x 6 7/8" (17.5 x 22.5 cm)
Purchase

**Design for textile.** c. 1923
Gouache on paper
3 1/8 x 3 7/8" (8 x 9.8 cm)
Estee and Joseph Lauder Design Fund

**Working drawing for wall hanging.** c. 1924
Pencil on tracing paper
12 1/8 x 9 5/16" (30.8 x 23.6 cm)
Arthur A. Cohen Purchase Fund

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Anni Albers. **Design for Smyrna rug.** 1925. Photo: James Welling
Anni Albers
(American, born Germany 1899)

Design for Smyrna rug. 1925
Watercolor, gouache, and pencil on paper
8 1/8 x 6 9/16"
(20.6 x 16.7 cm)
Gift of the designer

Design for wall hanging. 1925
Gouache on paper
12 1/8 x 8 3/4"
(30.8 x 22.2 cm)
Gift of the designer

Design for wall hanging. 1926
Gouache on paper
13 3/16 x 10 7/16"
(33.5 x 26.5 cm)
Gift of the designer

Preliminary design for wall hanging. 1926
Gouache and pencil on paper
13 3/4 x 11 5/8"
(34.9 x 29.5 cm)
Gift of the designer

Design for wall hanging. 1926
Gouache and pencil on paper
12 1/2 x 8 1/8"
(31.7 x 20.6 cm)
Gift of the designer

Preliminary design for wall hanging. 1926
Gouache and pencil on paper
10 x 8" (25.4 x 20.3 cm)
Gift of the designer

Final design for wall hanging. 1926
Gouache and pencil on paper
14 x 11 1/2" (35.5 x 29.2 cm)
Gift of the designer
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Anni Albers. **Design for Smyrna rug.** 1925
Photo: James Welling

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