

Gunta Stölzl, Anni Albers : the Museum of Modern Art, New York, February 15-July 10, 1990

Author

Stölzl, Gunta, 1897-1983

Date

1990

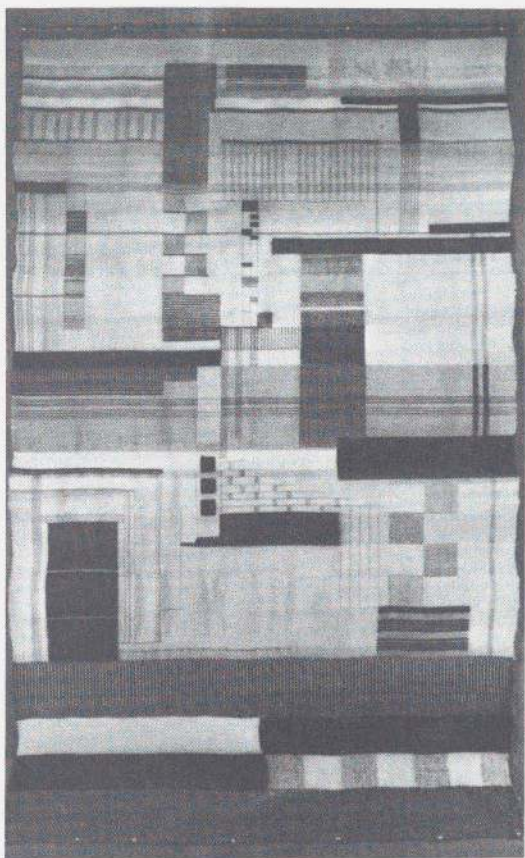
Publisher

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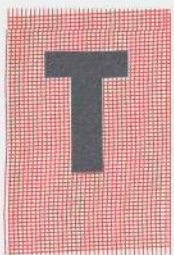


Gunta Stölzl



Anni Albers

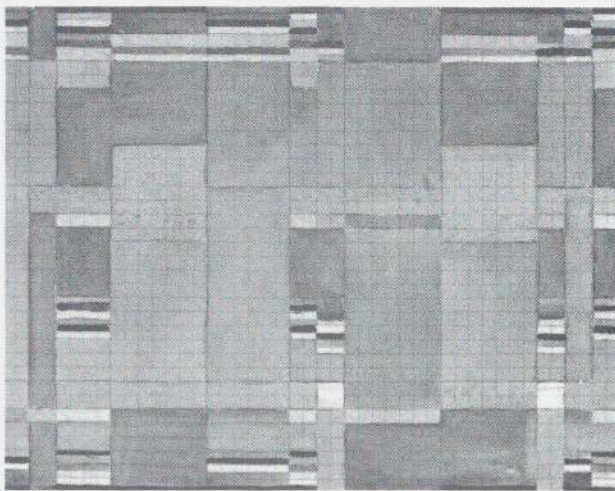
The Museum of Modern Art, New York
February 15 - July 10, 1990



he 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."¹ 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



Gunta Stölzl. **Design for double-woven cloth.** c. 1925.

Photo: Kate Keller

Gunta Stölzl. **Textile samples.** 1923–60. ▶

Photo: Kate Keller

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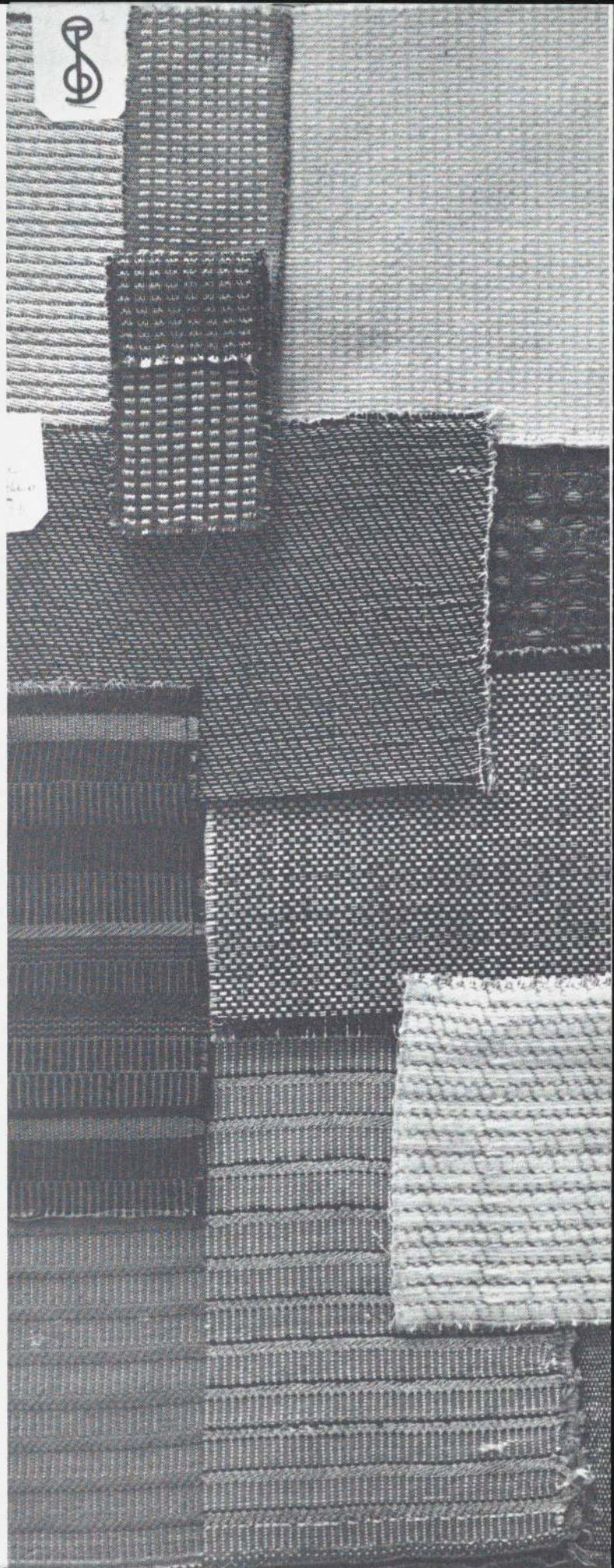
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the study of form to "enable the student to perceive the harmonious relationship of different rhythms and to express such harmony through the use of one or several materials."² After leaving the Bauhaus, Albers and Stölzl continued with this approach 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.

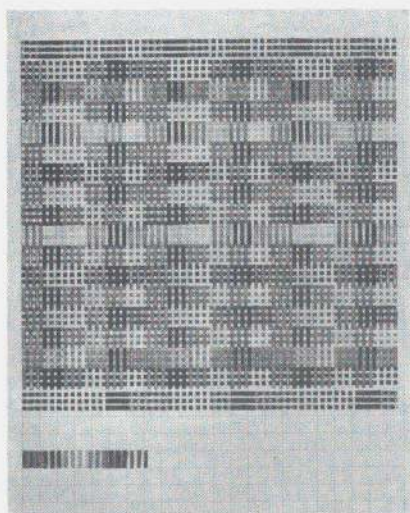
Matilda McQuaid
Curatorial Assistant
Department of Architecture and Design

¹ *Anni Albers: Pictorial Weavings* (Cambridge: New Gallery, Charles Hayden Memorial Library, MIT, 1959), 3.

² Herbert Bayer, Walter Gropius, and Ise Gropius, eds., *Bauhaus 1919-1928* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1938), 34.

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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Anni Albers. **Design for cotton tablecloth.** 1930.

Photo: Kate Keller

Anni Albers. **Textile samples.** 1923-60. ▶

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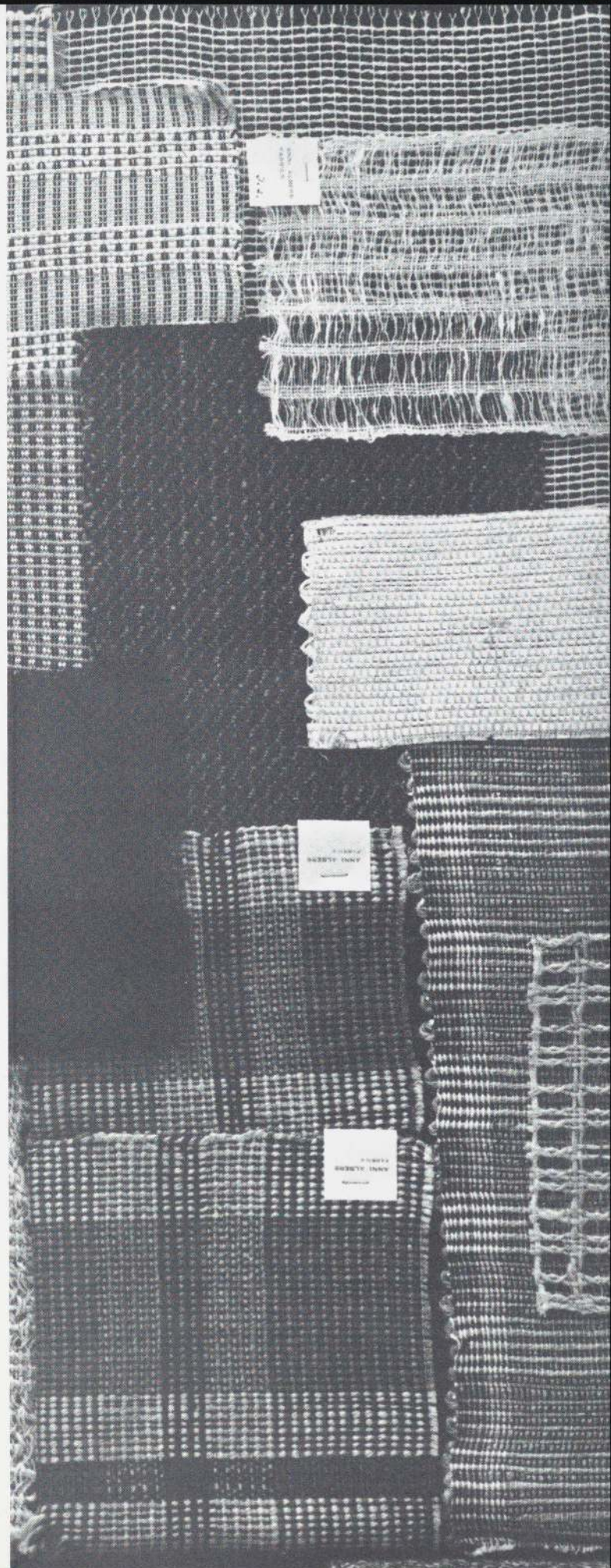
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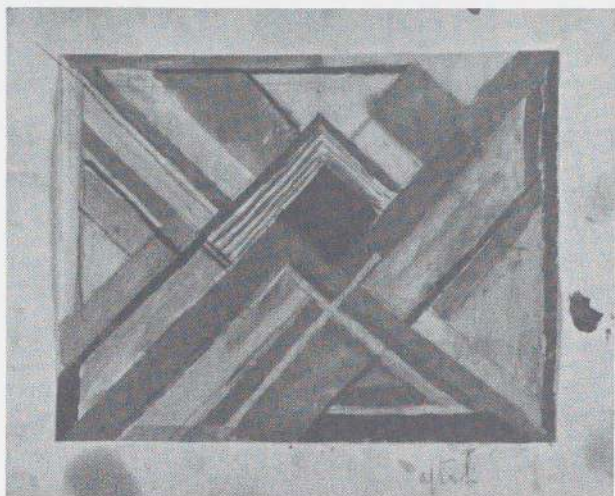
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Gunta Stölzl. **Design for textile.** c. 1923.
Photo: Kate Keller

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 textile. c. 1923

Gouache on paper

3 1/8 x 3 7/8" (8 x 9.8 cm)

Estée and Joseph Lauder Design

Fund

Design for double-woven cloth. c. 1925

Watercolor on paper

6 7/8 x 8 7/8" (17.5 x 22.5 cm)

Purchase

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

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. 1926

Gouache on paper
12 1/8 x 8 3/4"
(30.8 x 22.2 cm)
Gift of the designer

Design for wall hanging. 1925

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 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

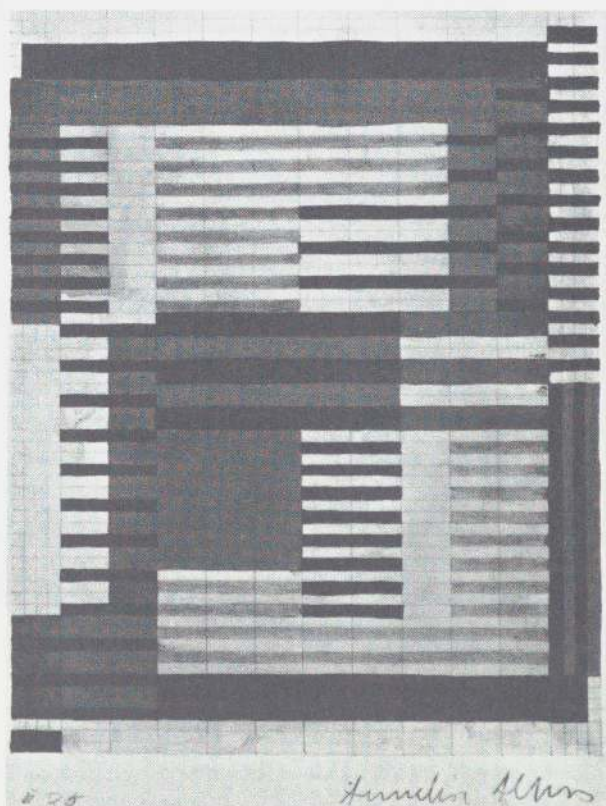
Gouache and pencil on paper
10 x 8" (25.4 x 20.3 cm)
Gift of the designer

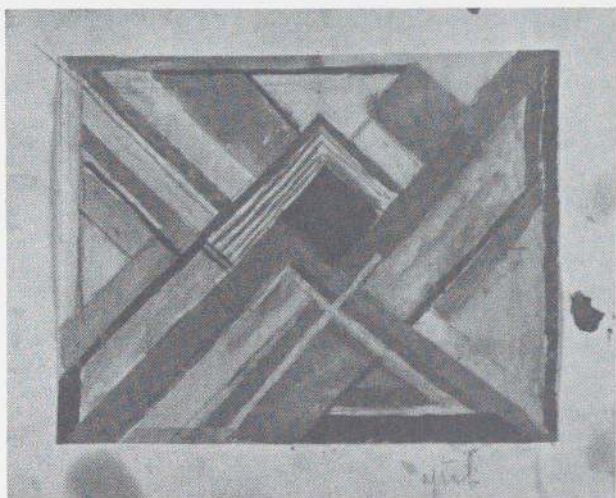
Design for wall hanging. 1926

Gouache and pencil on paper
13 3/4 x 9 3/8"
(34.9 x 23.8 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





Gunta Stölzl. **Design for textile.** c. 1923.

Photo: Kate Keller

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