

**Josef Albers** (1888 - 1976)

*Study for Homage to the Square*, 1969

Oil on masonite

16 by 15 3/4 inches (40.6 x 40 cm)



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1964

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Inscribed and dated "A64" lower right. Titled 'Study for Homage to the Square' on verso

Provenance:            Sidney Janis Gallery, New York  
                                Edward Totah Gallery, London  
                                Dante Galleria d'Arte, Padua  
                                Private collection, Italy  
                                Christie's London, *Contemporary Art*, October 24, 1996, lot 109  
                                Private collection, Italy  
                                Private collection  
                                Sotheby's Milan, *Contemporary Auction*, November 22, 2023, lot 6  
                                Private collection

Exhibition:            New York, Sidney Janis Gallery, *Albers*, 1993

Literature:            Alviani, Getulio, *Josef Albers*, *l'Arcaedizioni*, Milano, 1988, p. 171,  
                                no. 245, illustrated.

While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information provided above, confirmation of these facts may not always be possible due to the unavailability of primary sources. Please be advised that the work of art described above is subject to changes in availability and price without prior notice.

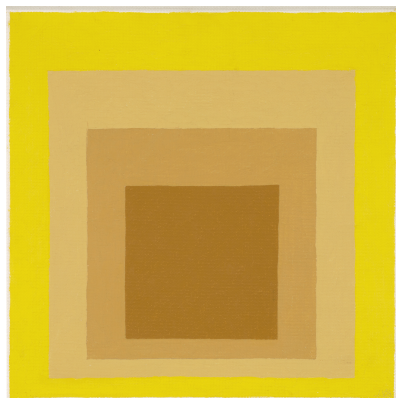
**EDWARD TYLER NAHEM**

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Josef Albers (1888-1976)

*Study for Homage to the Square, 1964*



Albers began his iconic *Homage to the Square* series in 1950 and pursued it until his death in 1976. The series is defined by an unmitigated adherence to one pictorial form: the square. Each *Homage* is painted by applying oil paint directly from the tube onto the rough side of masonite, with a palette knife, and is composed of a varying number of different colored superimposed squares. The optical effects Albers created—shimmering color contrasts and the illusion of receding and advancing planes—were meant not so much to deceive the eye as to challenge the viewer’s faculties of visual reception. Albers felt that the only way to comprehend the true impact of color was to observe the “push and pull” effect of various chromatic values when placed in close proximity to each other.

*Study for Homage to the Square, 1964*, is composed of four quasi-concentric squares in varying shades of yellow. The largest square is painted in bright cadmium yellow and stretches to the outmost edges of the masonite. This large square contains two smaller Naples yellow squares, more muted in tone. The center most square completes the painting in pale yellow ochre, the darkest in value. Set inside one another, these quasi-concentric squares seem to drift towards the bottom edge of the painting. Isolated flat squares of color give the illusion of receding or advancing. At times the isolated colors seem to fuse to generate new colors that appear to hover in front of the picture plane, leaving the viewer with after-images.

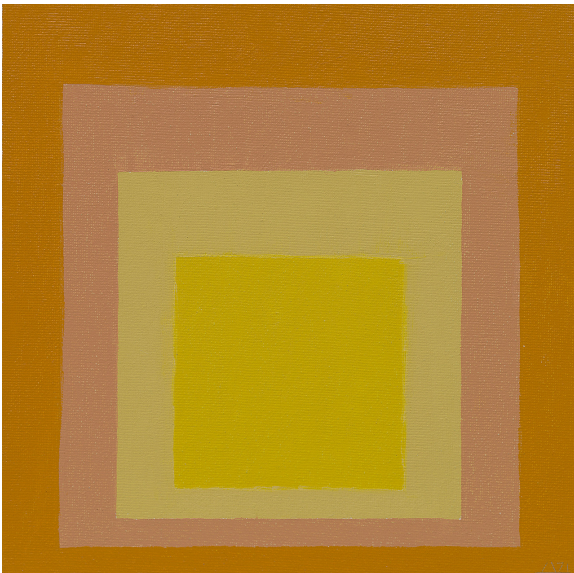
In 1965, Albers wrote of the series: “They all are of different palettes, and, therefore, so to speak, of different climates. Choice of the colors used, as well as their order, is aimed at an interaction - influencing and changing each other forth and back. Thus, character and feeling alter from painting to painting without any additional ‘handwriting’ or, so-called, texture. Though the underlying

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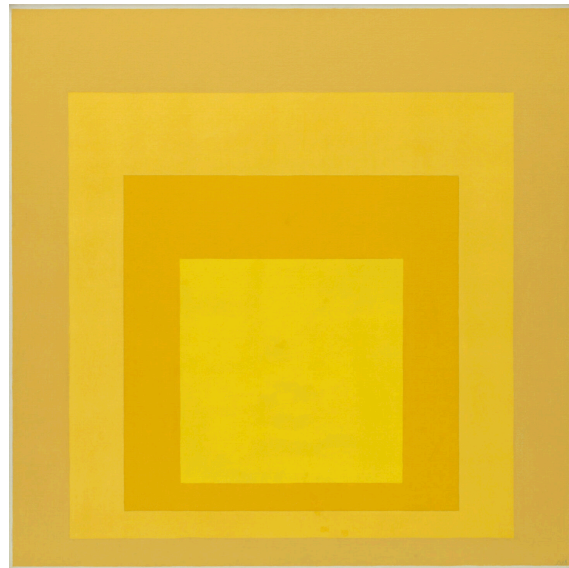
symmetrical and quasi-concentric order of squares remains the same in all paintings – in proportion and placement – these same squares group or single themselves, connect and separate in many different ways.” (*Study for Homage to the Square: Departing in Yellow, Josef Albers 1964*, Tate, N.p., n.d. Web. April 24, 2017)

Despite the resolutely non-referential nature of Albers’ works, the *Homages to the Square* have nonetheless been interpreted in deeply emotive terms. As Hans Arp once wrote, “They contain simple, great statements such as: I’m standing here. I’m resting here. I’m in the world and on earth. I’m in no hurry to move on. While Mark Rothko sought transcendence, Albers looked for fulfillment here on earth.” (Hans Arp, quoted in W. Schmied, *Fifteen Notes on Josef Albers*, The Mayor Gallery, London, 1989, p. 9-10). By the late 1960’s, Albers’ *Homages* had broken new ground in the field of color theory and in 1971 he became the first living artist to be granted a retrospective at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

Similar paintings to *Study for Homage to the Square*, 1964 can be found in museum collections around the world, including *Study for Homage to the Square: Consent*, 1971, The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, and *Homage to the Square: Starting*, 1968, The San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco.



*Study to Homage to the Square: Consent*, 1971, The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York



*Homage to the Square: Starting*, 1968, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco