

## Epilogue *Nicholas Fox Weber*

“Josef and I always say, ‘You can go anywhere from anywhere.’” You probably already know this much-quoted statement by Anni Albers, but I would like you to imagine it uttered at a particular moment. The twenty-four-year-old me was seated on the simplest kitchen chair—bare-bones chrome, the seat and back covered in a reddish-brown Vinylite—next to the distinguished, radiant seventy-three-year-old Anni, her chair identical, at the folding aluminum table in her workroom. Proofs for the print *Fox* I were lying on the corrugated surface of the table, and a large negative of the print with its meandering triangles was lying atop a shiny *Velox* of the identical image. The negative, by chance, was about a quarter of an inch (0.6 centimeters) to the right of and below the *Velox*. The effect was an interplay of a

positived and a negative of the same abstract image composed of triangular elements in an irregular pattern.

“Look at the design that has been made by the accident of how those objects fell on the table,” Anni exclaimed. “It is not anything we thought about in advance, but it is quite marvelous. The forms of the one underneath come through mysteriously.”

With the long fingers of her dauntingly thin hands, their skin practically translucent, Anni then turned both the negative and the *Velox* ninety degrees clockwise, keeping the relationship of the top and bottom the same. “And look now. It is even better in this direction? Can you make a second print of that result?”

I assured her that we would do our utmost and that I would show it to the men

*It is unnecessary to repeat here what has been said often about the educational values of art. We might mention only that art, as a visual formulation of our reaction to life, embraces all facets of life. It integrates all fields of learning; it discloses abilities not employed in other fields; it disciplines eye and hand besides the mind. Art is needed everywhere, in private and public life, from the home to the city hall, from religion to business.*

Josef Albers, *Present and/or Past*, 1946. First published in *Design* 47 (Columbus, Ohio), no. 8 (April 1946): 16-17, 27.



with whom she had already worked in “the stripping department” of Fox Press. She had already expressed great admiration for their skill of hand and impeccable technique with materials that they kept in meticulous order. (Anni has smiled mischievously when she asked Gary Thompson, a broad-shouldered man who was six feet, five inches [two meters] tall, “So you are what is called ‘a stripper?’” as she batted her eyelids like Mae West.) Anni then pointed out that this unexpected combination “came directly from the process”—which she pronounced “proh-cess” and intoned with religiosity—and “had nothing to do with my original intentions. It is the same thing as your having gone to Ecuador when you were fifteen and having bought those Esmeralda pots Josef and I liked so much. You told me they only

cost you a couple of dollars—‘bucks,’ as the man in the checkout at the supermarket likes to say. It didn’t take a lot of money; it took eyes and temerity—a word that Josef and I love. Josef and I always say, “You can go anywhere from anywhere.”

My greatest fear at that age was of not going far, of following the prescribed route: living in the town where I grew up, joining the country club, never venturing into the world. I did not yet know all that much about the Alberses, but I knew that Josef, who was painting downstairs in his studio while Anni and I were upstairs, had as a young man taught in a one-room school in a small town in Germany and had recently been the first living artist ever to have a solo exhibition at New York’s Metropolitan Museum of Art, causing television crews to flock to this house



neutral 4-colour black and white

*Et omnimodolento conserum barciatem facea debis am quis et, eum si*

that was now so quiet. I also knew that Anni had had a childhood of affluence in which she was meant to do nothing but lead the life of “one of those women who just tell the cook what to make for dinner and then complain about their dressmakers,” but had become the foremost weaver of the century and, more recently, an adventurous printmaker. For those of us educated on Robert Frost’s “The Road Not Taken” as a sort of sacred text, they exemplified the independence the poet counseled. Her idea that one might go through life like the triangular forms of her composition—one step this way, one step that way, no goal in sight but every turn rich in its own right—was music to my ears.

That is pretty much how I have run the Albers Foundation: with certain goals and guidelines in place but always open to the next possibility, provided that it was true to Anni and Josef’s wonderful values.

Édouard Detaille and Willem van Roij have, from the start, devoted themselves tirelessly and with consuming intelligence to making this publication to show in summary some of the work of the Foundation. The result is magnificent, thanks to their generosity of heart and spirited engagement in the project. Édouard and Willem are part of a splendid band of individuals who have participated diligently and enthusiastically in what we do—exhibitions, publications, schools, medical centers, conservation, the nourishment of creativity. They belong to the new generation that should assure the future of so much that has proved to benefit people all over the globe.

Édouard and Willem’s achievement warrants, quite simply, the favorite of all expressions of Anni and Josef: the two words they most liked uttering. It is said with the bravura of one of Anni’s wall hangings and the infinite depth of one of Josef’s Homages to the Square: “Thank you.”

“The Road Not Taken,” Robert Frost

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,  
And sorry I could not travel both  
And be one traveler, long I stood  
And looked down one as far as I could  
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,  
And having perhaps the better claim,  
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;  
Though as for that the passing there  
Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay  
In leaves no step had trodden black.  
Oh, I kept the first for another day!  
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,  
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh  
Somewhere ages and ages hence:  
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—  
I took the one less traveled by,  
And that has made all the difference.