

# Adelheid Hirsch - A Life's Work in Color

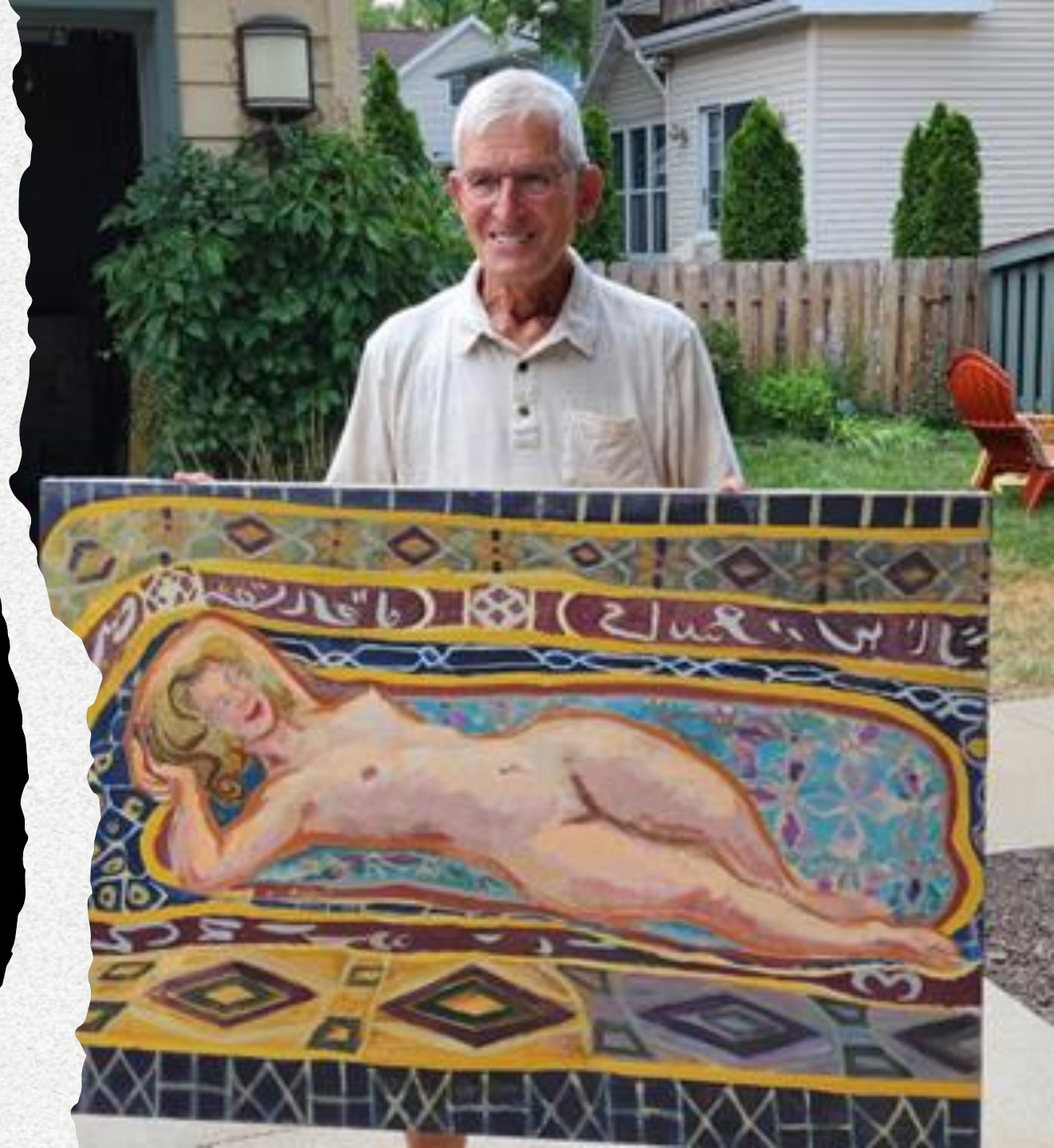
Scott J. Carpenter  
Iowa City Art & Antiques





# Acknowledgments

- Tom and Lynn Hirsch
- Ron and Debby Christman
- Hawks Inn / Delafield History Center
- Leslie Carpenter



# How we got to today's opening

Serendipity and Facebook Marketplace – July 2-5, 2023

- An 18<sup>th</sup> century German cupboard and a garage sale
- A promise to document Tom's mother's work

Two years of work – a distinct honor and pleasure





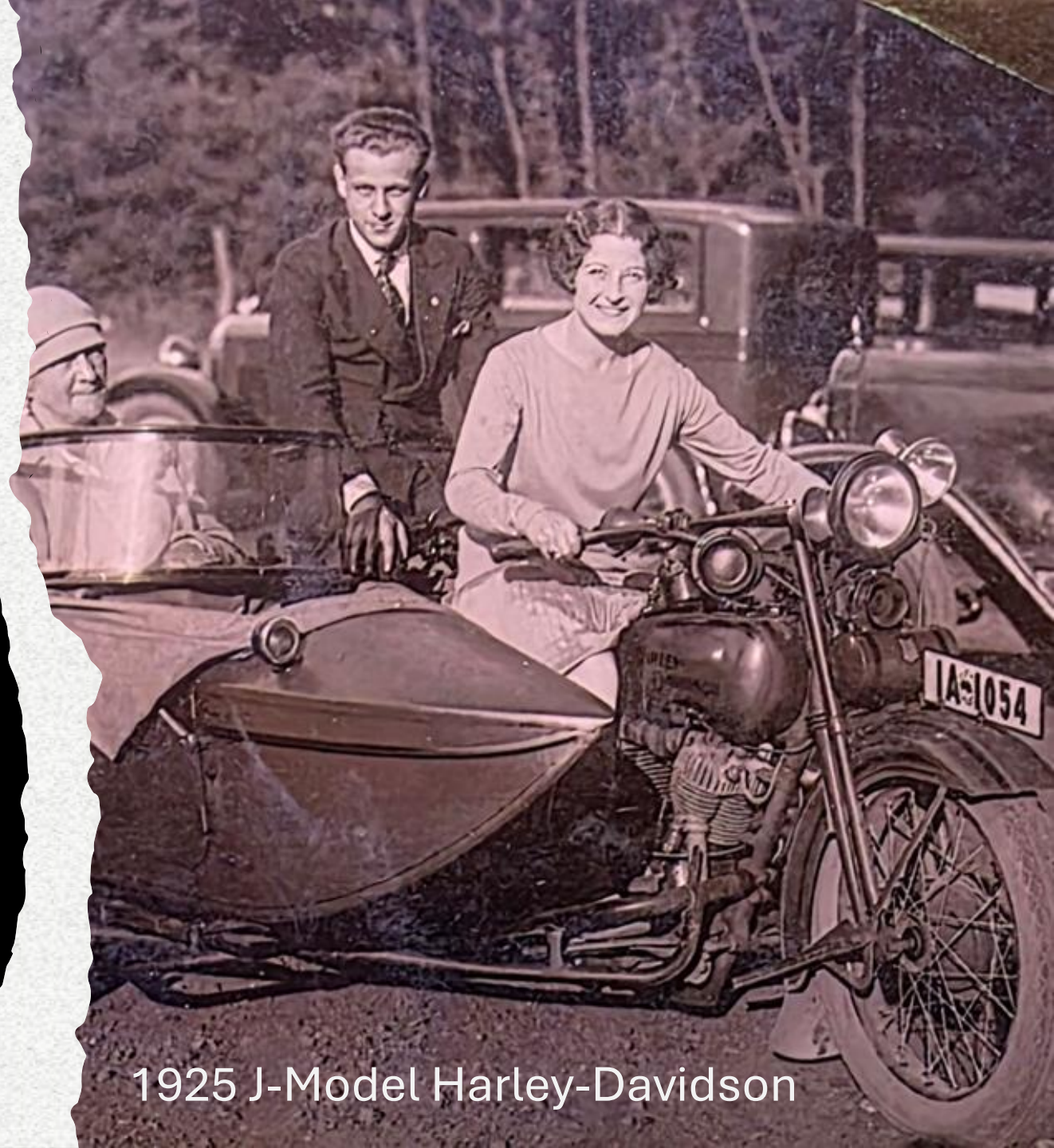
# Adelheid Hirsch (nee Flatau)

- b. Berlin, Germany 1903
  - Dr. Theodor Flatau & Evelyn Albu
- d. Madison, WI, 1998
- Married Dr. Franz Hirsch in 1934 (Berlin)
- Fled Nazi Germany in 1935
- Lived in England briefly and then emigrated to the United States (New York City) in 1937.
- Relocated to Chicago to be in the company of the exiled German artists at “The New Bauhaus”
- Raised three children
  - Violet (b. 1936, England)
  - Jack (b. 1940, Chicago)
  - Tom (b. 1943, Chicago)



# Adelheid Flatau

- Studied art at the Vereinigte Staat-schulen and graduated as a master with German Expressionist Karl Hofer. Timing of this is unclear (1927-30?). Also worked with George Mosson and Ferdinand Spiegel (definitely 1928)
- Studied with color theorist Johannes Itten and then assisted him with German-English translation for his non-German speaking students (likely 1927-1934).
- Itten left The Bauhaus in 1924 to start the Itten Schule in Berlin (1926-1934).
- Adelheid Flatau had a studio near the Itten Schule and exhibited in galleries in Berlin 1930-1934?



1925 J-Model Harley-Davidson



# Adelheid Hirsch

## Teaching Career (Chicago)

- Hull House
- Francis W. Parker School
- Junior School – Art Institute of Chicago

## Activities

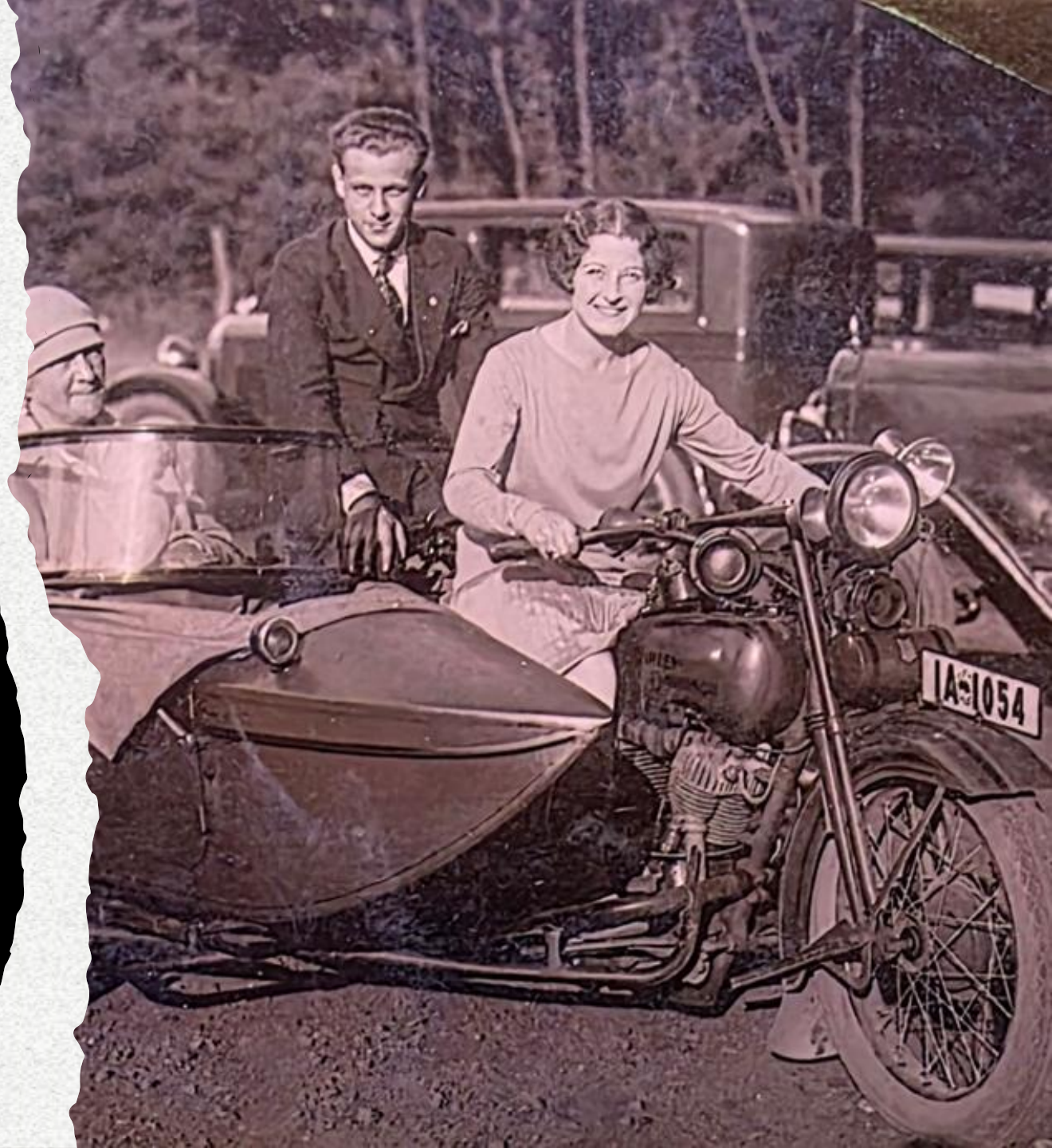
- Designed all of the costumes for the 1948-49 Railroad Fair in Chicago, commemorating the first transcontinental railway.
- She worked in ceramics, enameled copper jewelry, puppet-making, and theater set designs.
- Painted “Recreationally” - occasionally doing portraits for hire.
- Studio at 438 St. James Place, Chicago



# A Career Interrupted

## Artwork

- Early work not taken to the United States was lost in Germany and in England.
- It's unclear what artwork was exhibited and in which galleries while living in Berlin.
- There's one painting that may shed light on her studio. What's the relationship with Richard Eschke (1859-1944)?





# Chicago Sun-Time Harold Haydon September 16, 1972

16 SECTION FIVE SHOWCASE/CHICAGO SUN-TIMES, Sun., Sept. 10, 1972

## Harold Haydon/Art Germany's loss, Chicago's gain

Together with other cities of the world, Chicago received an immense benefit from the cultural wreckage caused by the Hitler regime in Germany.

Of the many creative artists who found opportunity here, Mies van der Rohe and Laszlo Moholy-Nagy may be best known but they brought with them other notable artists who taught and worked in this city. The cultural windfall included supporters of the arts and collectors, such as Oskar Schulze, whose painting collection, confiscated by the Nazis, eventually went to the German city of which he had been the Socialist mayor. Who can say just how many young artists of all sorts came here too, without reputation to aid them, and made a new life in Chicago?

One of these is Adelheid Hirsch, a student of Karl Hofer and Johannes Itten, who was at the beginning of a professional career, with a one-woman show in Berlin and other gallery exhibitions, when she was uprooted.

**BORN ADELHEID FLATAU** in Berlin, she studied art in the state school which had been completely modernized by the radical artists of der Brücke, Campendonck, Otto Mueller, Heckel, Heinz Kamps and others who had become the establishment. She had a stern drawing teacher named Spiegel, whose ideal was Hans Holbein and who had his pupils make large, careful charcoal drawings of nudes, working every day for three weeks on the same pose.

"I graduated as master student under Karl Hofer and then traveled a lot— IN Europe, Africa, Japan — and had my own studio and painted and also showed in galleries. I became very influenced by Johannes Itten, who had his own school in Berlin, took a studio nearby and assisted in his school after a

year's study with him. He had me translate his teaching to all his American and English-speaking students. English was my second language because my mother was born there, in London."

After Hitler's rise to power and Mrs. Hirsch's arrival in Chicago, painting was neglected while she raised a family. "After my third child was 2½ I went to the Art Institute and Carolyn Howlett hired me to teach Saturday junior school and, later on, summer school. I also started taking courses there and got my Bachelor of Art Education degree."

NOW, FOLLOWING HER retirement from the Francis Parker School in 1971 after some 12 years of teaching, Adelheid Hirsch teaches senior citizens at the Lutheran Welfare Center and has time to get back to drawing and painting after the years when she was a Saturday artist. Although she never stopped painting, it could not be an intensive involvement.

While her studio at 438 St. James Place is filled with paintings and she exploited her knack for spontaneous drawing by making sparkling pastel portraits of students at Francis Parker, Mrs. Hirsch has not attempted serious exhibitions since her Berlin days.

The budding talent nurtured by German Expressionism and exposure to Der Sturm, the radical art magazine founded by Herwarth Walden in 1910, whose offices and gallery were just down the street from her studio, had reached a professional competence that Chicago has done little to nourish.

Her painting was radical when she arrived here, but it no longer is. Instead, it is the mature accomplishment that makes a living link with the historic past.

Since 1912, Der Sturm's gallery exhibited

the German Expressionists, the Blau Reiter, Futurists, French Cubists and the Orphists and Kokoschka, Ensor, Delaunay and Archipenko. It expanded its range during World War I until it became the center of modern art in Berlin for a while after the war. Here it was that the young Adelheid Flatau first saw the works of Chagall, Pechstein and Franz Marc.

Johannes Itten was one of her very good friends as well as her teacher Mies van der Rohe was another good friend.

All but two or three oil paintings that were not left in Berlin were destroyed by World War II bombs. Several portfolios of drawings, watercolors and some school studies she brought with her to Chicago.

ALTHOUGH THE FIGURE was and is her favorite subject for painting, she did many landscapes too. Some of the most effective watercolors in the Berlin portfolios are of landscapes. Her oils are strong, well-composed and colorful in rich dark tones. There is material in the St. James Place studio enough for one or more very interesting exhibitions. And perhaps the quiet, unassuming Adelheid Hirsch might respond with renewed energy in her painting.

Are there other Adelheid Hirsches who came from centers of culture to this raw but pretentious city, made their social contributions through teaching and other work and felt at home, yet found no real encouragement for their art?

Traditionally, Chicago exports artists after providing a stimulating climate for their studies. To create a favorable climate for working artists here we must begin by welcoming and appreciating their effort and accomplishment before it becomes generally known and accepted.

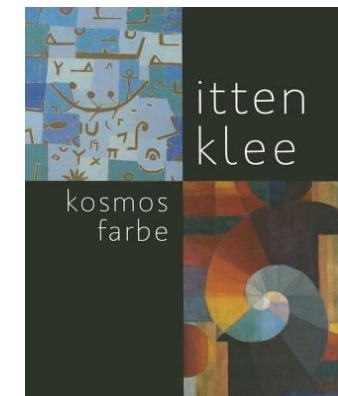
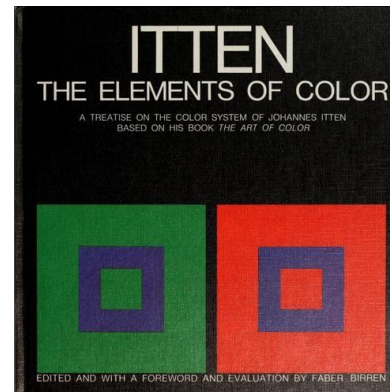
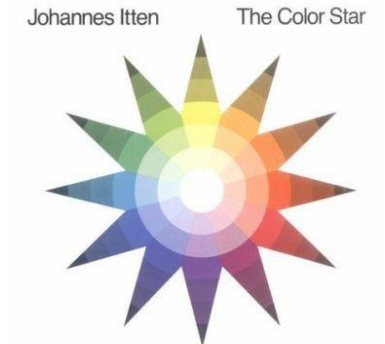
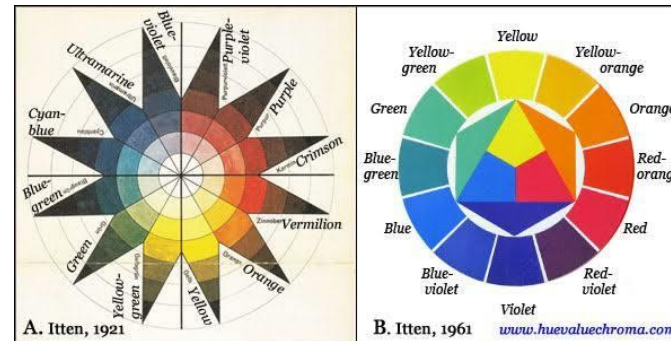
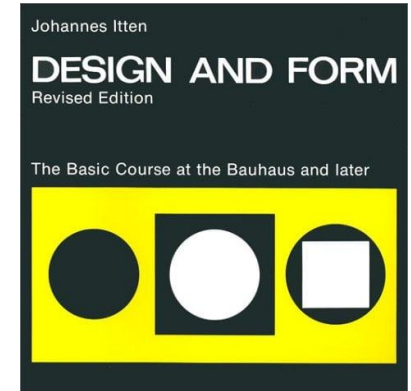
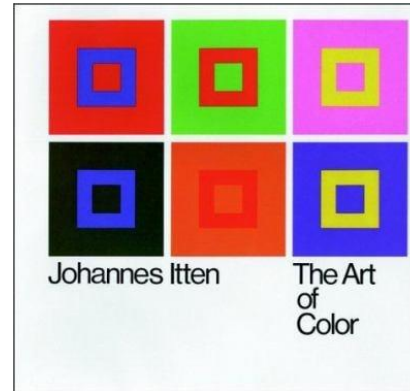


It's good to have friends...

...in high places

# Johannes Itten

- **Itten's Color Theory** centers on a 12-color wheel, a system of seven types of color contrast, and the emotional and psychological impact of color choices.
- He taught color theory at the Bauhaus school and developed concepts for using primary, secondary, and tertiary colors, warm and cool colors, and complementary colors.
- Itten's work provides a framework for artists to understand how colors interact and how to evoke specific feelings through their use of color.
- Itten was instrumental in getting Klee and Kandinsky to work at The Bauhaus.







## Friendship with Johannes and Anneliese Itten

ANNELIESE ITTEN ACKERSTEINSTRASSE 202 8049 ZÜRICH

14. Mai 67

geehrte Frau Hirschi.

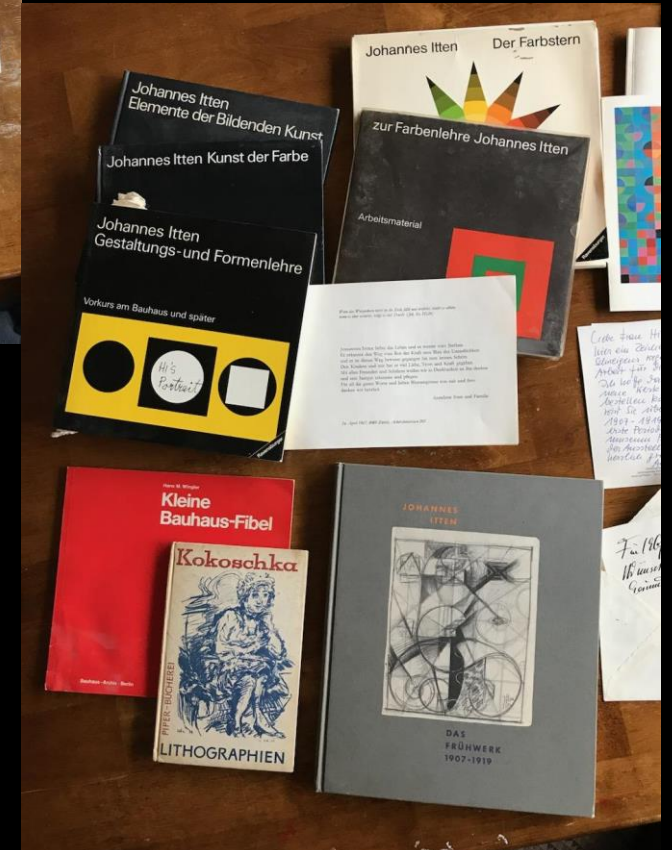
nimmt das Übermass von  
aus aller Welt doch all-  
lich ab, sodass ich Ihnen  
meiner Karte gerne noch et-  
schreiben möchte. Es wird  
beruhigen, wenn ich Ihnen  
be, dass mein Mann nur  
kurz wirklich krank war,  
3 Stunden i. Spital u.  
ter u. klar bis zu dem  
unerwarteten Sterben. Ganz  
artet in falsche ausdrück-  
nach vorher hatte er wirklich  
"lived" genommen von uns,  
meinen Kindern u. seit, seit  
Jahren war sein Herz nicht  
er arbeitete pausenlos,  
u. nach u. hatte noch  
Sterben immer noch



# Itten Correspondence

Für 1967 die besten  
Wünsche für beste  
Gesundheit & viel Erfolg  
Hamer Hen

Beste Wünsche für 1866!  
Vielleicht kommt nächstes  
Jahr eine Güntelky in  
Chicago!!  
Herr





# Ludwig Mies Van der Rohe (1888-1969)

- German-American architect, academic, and interior designer.
- Generally regarded as one of the pioneers of modern architecture
- The last director of the Bauhaus, emigrated in 1937-38 to escape Nazi Germany
- He accepted the position to head the architecture school at what is today the Illinois Institute of Technology (The New Bauhaus)



# Artistic Influences

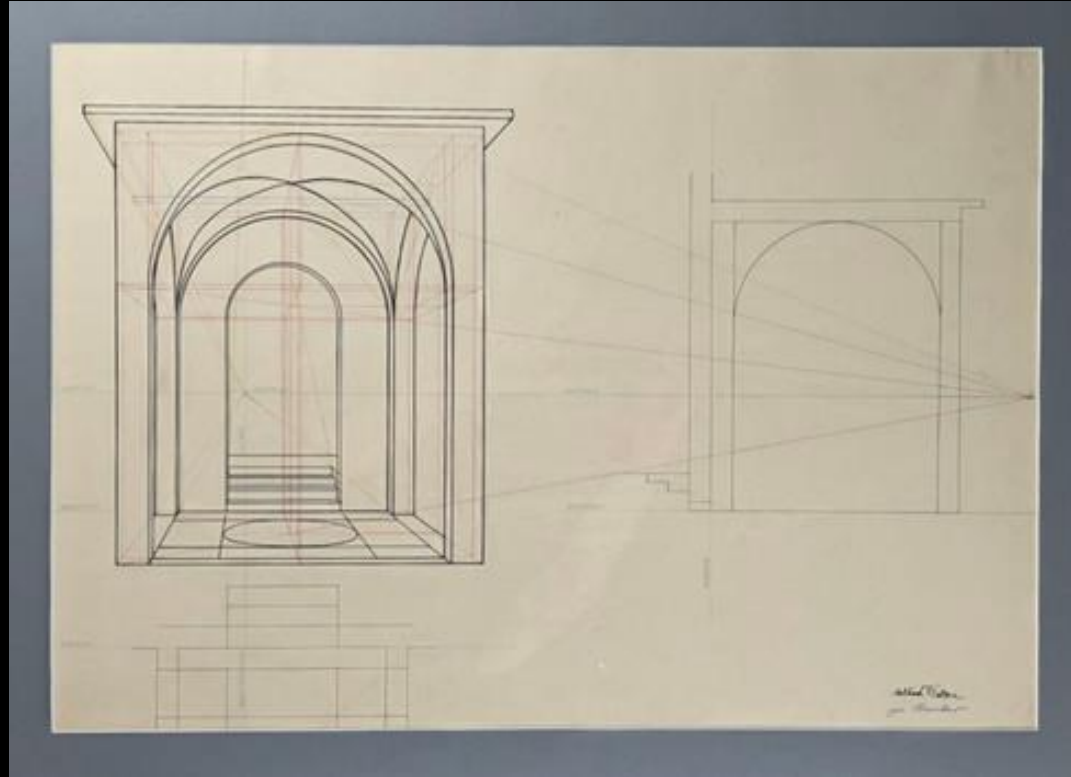


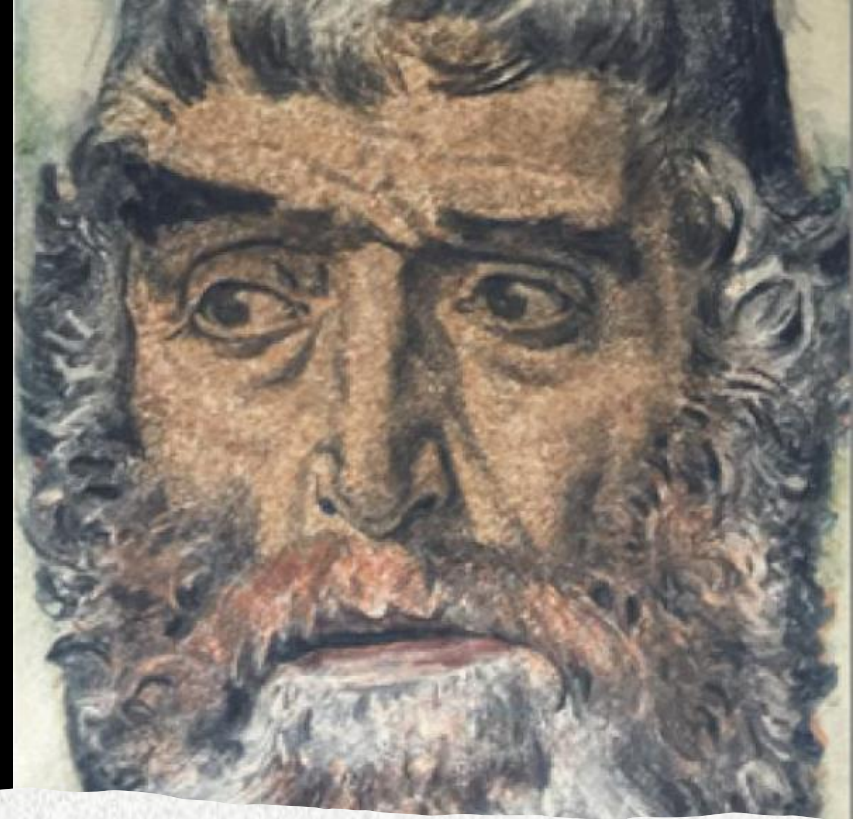


# Classical Training – Technical Drawing - Vereinigt Staatschulen - Berlin



Dutch copperplate engraving of  
Arch Perspectives, 1605





**Adelheid Hirsch -Vereinigt Staatschulen – Berlin**

**Ferdinand Spiegel (1879-1950)**



# Vereinigt Staatschulen – Berlin

Karl Hofer (1878-1955)





Johannes Itten - 1916



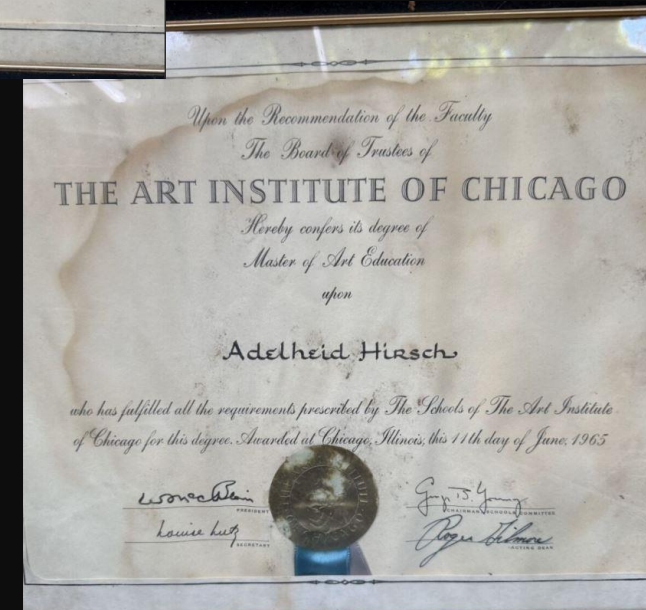
Adelheid Flatau – ca. 1928

Johannes Itten



# The Art Institute of Chicago

1949 Bachelor of Art Education  
1965 Master of Art Education



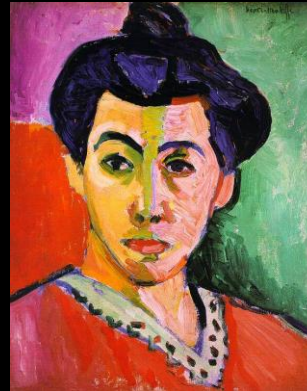
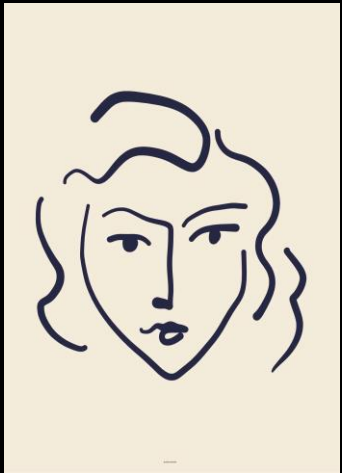
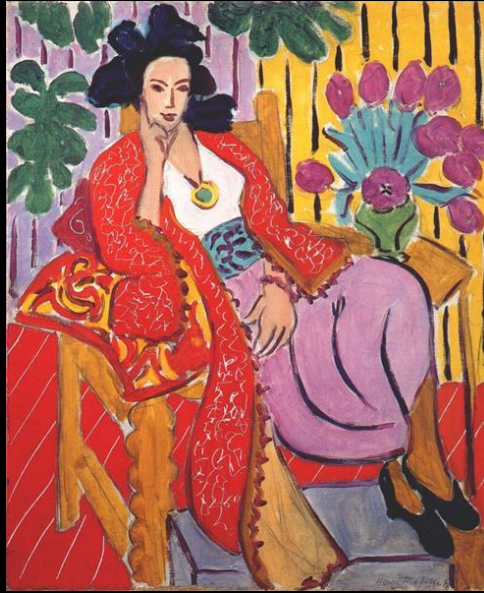


## Later Influences - Art Institute of Chicago (1960s)

- Paul Wieghardt (1897-1969)



# Henri Matisse



Henri Matisse, 1905  
The Green Stripe



# Items of Interest



# Lillian Leitzel

Portrait of Lillian Leitzel (1892-1931) who was a German-born aerial acrobat for Ringling Brothers & Barnum and Bailey Circus.

Leitzel performed in Berlin in late 1930 and early 1931 as part of a European off-season tour.

She appeared on bills with the Flying Codonas at the Wintergarten in Berlin in January 1931, performing her solo act, while her partner Alfredo Codona continued at the Wintergarten for some time after her death in Copenhagen in February 1931.



# Johannes Itten (1888-1967)

Lithograph on heavy paper. 1921

Saying from the portfolio of New European Graphics, 1<sup>st</sup> Portfolio: Masters of the State Bauhaus, Weimar, 1921.

Given to Adelheid Flatau by Johannes Itten sometime in the late 1920s when she studied with him for a year and then served as his interpreter at the Itten Schule (1926-1934) in Berlin.





“Greeting and health to the hearts that are illuminated by the light of love and cannot be led astray by the hopes of a heaven or the fear of a hell”

— O.Z. Hanish

(founder of the religious movement known as Mazdaznan)

# Questions?

Scott Carpenter

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