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THE IMPACT OF INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE IN DESIGN

INTERWEAVING ANNI ALBERS AND ANDEAN TEXTILES

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ABSTRACT

Indigenous knowledge and Design are two relatively new concepts, historically speaking, nevertheless, the practices concerning these ideas have been part of humankind for centuries. The scholars started talking about Indigenous knowledge only in the last decades of the 20th century. The discussions within the academic realm regarding this topic have been carried on by ethnographers and anthropologists. In order to understand the scope of this concept, an exploration into the historical past of the word Indigenous will be drawn, and its close relation with colonization, and how from an unacknowledged existence, the Indigenous were recognized not only as producers, but as carriers of knowledge.

In this paper, I will endeavour to unravel the connection between Indigenous Knowledge and Design, and the impact of such wisdom in the work of Anni Albers. To do so, first I will define the concept of Indigenous Knowledge and how this will be discussed in this context and the way it is linked to the notion of 'primitive Art' in the 20th century. Moreover, the importance of the rise of pre-Columbian art in the named century will be explained concerning the social, cultural and historical context.

To follow the way to Anni Albers, it is vital to draw the association between pre-Columbian art and Modernism, how this Indigenous knowledge influenced the minds of the masters of the Bauhaus such as Wassily Kandinsky and Paul Klee before and during the school's period.

To conclude, Anni Albers will be analysed from three different aspects: Albers the student, Albers the designer and Albers the researcher; each of these aspects will give us a unique insight into Anni Albers appreciation and understanding of Andean textiles, in particular, her learning journey about a pre-colonial culture through their textiles.