

Little is known about Ad Reinhardt's painting "The Tunnel". The first thing which grabs an art historian's attention is the fact that it has an actual title. In most cases Reinhardt numbered his abstract paintings or simply wrote "abstract painting" on the flipside of the canvas. Minor exceptions to the rule were additional adjectives like "red", "blue" or "yellow", but following his own assertion that "a painting should be nothing and free and not a thing at all", "The Tunnel" stands alone in its named state. The front of the painting, which is dated 1957, gives no hints. It looks like one of the black abstracts which were prevalent in this period of Reinhardt's work. Searching for solutions in well-known biographic details also gets us nowhere: a "potential" clue, the fact that Broadway - the street where his prominently photographed studio was in the year of production - leads to the Brooklyn-Battery Tunnel, is upon reflection too contrived, and completely unacceptable from an iconological point of view. One possible answer to our question could be found in the resumé of another abstract "colour-field" painter: German-born Josef Albers. It was he who invited Reinhardt to work part-time at Yale's educational program in 1952. Albers, Reinhardt later announced, was a big influence to him and his understanding of colour. An interview in which Albers recounts his life in the time before the First World War may offer us the key. In 1913 - being a young teacher, fascinated with engineering and technical toys, and having painted his first abstract composition (under the influence of Piet Mondrian) - he fell for Bernhard Kellermann's bestseller *Der Tunnel*. The story of Allan, an idealistic engineer who sets out to build a tunnel connecting the United States with Europe on the bottom of the Atlantic Ocean, mirrored the zeitgeist, in both positive and fraught aspects. Allan's fictitious tunnel was finally completed after 26 years of construction, but the engineering masterpiece was outdated as soon as it opened, as aeroplanes had already begun to make the same journey in a few hours. The novel's critical observation that technology becomes obsolete at the moment of its application had a lasting impact on Albers's thoughts about art, and he noted that "in science what seems true today may not be true tomorrow. (...) Science is dealing with physical facts, in art we are dealing with psychic effects." Albers thus states that art is never progressing in a sense of a technical-evolutionary development: "When I want to speak about why I am doing the same thing now, which is squares, for - how long, 19 years? - because there is no final solution in any visual formulation." In arguing the case for the central influence of *Der Tunnel*, Reinhardt's oeuvre presents no overt link with Kellermann's novel. It is only through noting Albers's mention of the book in this 1968 interview, in combination with the fact of Reinhardt's short Yale appearance some 16 years earlier, that we might come to this conclusion. But this constellation of reference is thoroughly compelling, and importantly, if it is to be believed, it has at its heart a serious conflict. Our painting, "The Tunnel", was produced during a time Reinhardt claimed to be painting the "last paintings" that anyone can paint. Against Albers's scientific- and art-field division, it seems that Reinhardt was working to undo the value of the artist's quest for endless repetition. To contemplate on this investigation, and its dramatic historical implications, we have no choice but to present to you the reverse of "The Tunnel" in 3D-Technology. In considering this offering, while navigating an avant garde revelation, a moment's thought should be given to the themes of communication, anachronism, and the shifting nature of the quest for representation.

