

Aspen Art Museum
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Educator Notes

Etel Adnan: Each day is a whole world

May 28–**October 6, 2019**



Etel Adnan, *Sans Titre/Untitled*, 2018. Oil on canvas,
13 x 9 2/5 in (33 x 24 cm). Courtesy the artist and Galerie Lelong & Co.

About the Artist

Etel Adnan was born in 1925 in Beirut, Lebanon, and lives and works in Paris. She studied philosophy at the Sorbonne in Paris and later in the United States at Berkeley and Harvard. Adnan began painting in 1958 at the age of thirty-four, at the encouragement of an artist colleague. Her most recent exhibitions have taken place at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern, Switzerland, and at the MASS MoCA in Massachusetts (all 2018).

About the Exhibition

The AAM's exhibition brings together eleven recent works by poet and artist Etel Adnan. Adnan's small-format abstract acrylic paintings and large-scale wool tapestries address the staying power of landscape on our being. In the seventies, while the artist was living and working in the United States, the California landscape became her central subject matter. Mount Tamalpais appeared throughout her paintings, weavings, and poetry. She currently works from her home studio in Paris, where she continues to evoke place through memory, reduced forms, and color, rather than by direct observation. Each day is a whole world offers the viewer a meditation on how the places we occupy and encounter become the means through which we understand our self in the world.

Questions for Discussion

- I What does the title of the exhibition, *Each day is a whole world*, mean to you?
- I What are the differences between creating from direct observation and memory?
- I Do you have a favorite place? What does the place you love say about who you are?

Suggested Activity

Minimal Landscapes

Prepare for the activity by gathering images of diverse landscapes, pencils, sharpies, construction paper, scissors, and glue.

Have students begin by looking at Etel Adnan's piece *Le poids de la lune 18* [Weight of the Moon], and ask what they see. After students have shared their answers, ask them to imagine Adnan's painting as a landscape. What kind of landscape could this be? What might the orange circle represent? The blue at the bottom? The pink stripe? The green background?

After students have had a conversation about the painting and how Adnan simplified her surroundings, hand each student an image of a landscape. Encourage the students to find and trace shapes in the photo with a sharpie, such as drawing a circle around the sun or triangles on mountains.

Once students have traced the shapes in their images, they can begin creating a simplified landscape collage in the style of Etel Adnan. Students will cut out the shapes they have traced from various colors of construction paper. Then, they will paste the shapes together to create their own minimal landscape.

After finishing their artwork, have students gather together in pairs to share their collages. Encourage students to try to identify the shapes and what they represent in the minimal landscapes.

For further exploration, ask students to recall a landscape from their own lives. Using the same supplies and techniques learned, invite students to create an artwork representing this place from memory. Have students share their landscapes in pairs.

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