

Edna Andrade



Edna Andrade, courtesy of Locks Gallery

- **Born:** Portsmouth, Virginia, in 1917
- **Studied** at the Barnes Foundation
- Bachelor of Fine Arts degree, the University of Pennsylvania, 1938
- Post-graduate studies at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Art
- **Known for:** Hard-Edged style, Op Art (1950s and 1960s)
- During WWII, designed charts and maps for Office of Strategic Services (now known as the CIA)
- **Major influence** in Philadelphia as artist and educator, 1941-2008
- **Professor** at Tulane University and Philadelphia College of Art (taught for 30 years)

Edna Andrade was an early and influential pioneer of the Hard-Edged style, Op Art, and other forms of reductivist painting of the 1950s and 1960s. As a part of the Op Art movement, Andrade's style confronts the nature of perception by creating highly abstracted images that infuse color and optical effects across complex geometric fields. These complex visual experiences are based in aesthetic experimentation rather than storytelling. Andrade once remarked that she was struck by "how little it takes to upset the eye." In a series from the 1980s, she appropriated the mathematically-determined patterns used to decorate Islamic architecture to explore these optical effects. Influenced by architectural design, astrophysics, Freudian psychology, philosophy and mathematics, her chromatic spectrums and intricate geometric patterns challenge viewers to engage new and different visual logics.

Born in Portsmouth, Virginia, in 1917, Edna Davis Wright studied at the Barnes Foundation and earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from the University of Pennsylvania in 1938. She pursued post-graduate studies at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts and was awarded two Cresson Traveling Scholarships to study in Europe. Exposure to Bauhaus ideologies and post-war artists such as Piet Mondrian and Paul Klee influenced her approaches to color, abstraction and teaching. During World War II, she worked under architect Eero Saarinen for the Office of Strategic Services, what is now the CIA, designing charts, maps, and graphs. She married architect Preston Andrade in 1941 and moved to Philadelphia, where she became a significant influence on the art scene until her death in 2008. A celebrated educator, she was a professor at Tulane University in New Orleans and taught at the Philadelphia College of Art for thirty years, where she was awarded the College Art Association Award for Distinguished Teaching in 1996.

Inspired by the nature of perception, Andrade's interests in fine arts, crafts and public projects led her to experiment with printmaking and creating artist editions, which included commissions for the Free Library of Philadelphia and the Salvation Army. Returning to her formal training and the representational subjects of her early landscape paintings, her later works are delicate and masterful graphite drawings of the rocky coast of Maine. Andrade was the focus of two major retrospectives during her lifetime at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts and at the Institute of Contemporary Art, University of Pennsylvania, and was included in the Op Art publication by Joe Houston, *Optic Nerve: Perceptual Art of the 1960s*, in 2007. The artist's work is in numerous museums throughout the U.S. including the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, the Houston Museum of Fine Arts, the Dallas Museum of Art, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts and Baltimore Art Museum.