

ENGLISH

NOV 24, 2023 — MAR 17, 2024

E TEL ADNAN

PAINTING
INTO
SPACE



Etel Adnan, *Untitled*, 2017. Oil on canvas. 21 5/8 × 18 1/8 in.
Collection of Mr. and Mrs. John L. Townsend, III.



Etel Adnan, *Al Hajj*, 2023. Leporello: ink, watercolor and pencil on paper. Cover: 7 × 7 4/5 in.;
20 folded pages: 7 × 12 in. each; max. extension: 94 1/2 in. Collection of Oscar and Carole Seikaly.

ETEL ADNAN: PAINTING INTO SPACE



Etel Adnan, *Untitled*, 2020. Crayon on paper. 8 × 12 in. Sketch for a ceramic mural, catalogue raisonné number D93. Courtesy of the estate of the artist and Sfeir-Semler Gallery Beirut/Hamburg.

Etel Adnan (b. 1925, Beirut, Lebanon; d. 2021, Paris, France) is a leading figure in contemporary Arab American literature and visual art. She moved to Paris in 1949 to study philosophy at the Sorbonne, and then to the United States in 1955 to pursue a PhD in aesthetics and philosophy at the University of California, Berkeley. She taught philosophy at Dominican College in San Rafael, California, before returning to Beirut in 1972 to work as a cultural editor for two daily newspapers. In 1976, after the outbreak of civil war in Lebanon, Adnan moved to Paris with her lover, the Syrian artist Simone Fattal, where she lived—with intermittent sojourns in California and Greece—writing, painting and making films until her death in 2021.

Painter, academic, poet, writer—Adnan pursued a wide-ranging practice inspired by cross-cultural experiences and a lifelong engagement with the natural world and politics. She created rich, geometric fields of color in her paintings and drawings, with compositions occasionally translated into large-scale

murals and tapestries. In other works, texts and images coalesce into the form of the *leporello*, an artist's book with folded, accordion-style pages that offers a unique engagement with space as it expands and unfurls. Adnan originally wanted to study architectural design before turning her attention to canvas and paper, once stating, "Architecture contains everything: form, color, social concerns." She recognized the mural's inherent connection to the built environment, a direct means of injecting art into public space.

Painting into Space presents a selection of works by Etel Adnan centered around The Bass' recent acquisition of a monumental ceramic mural—the only one by Adnan in the United States—based on a sketch the artist completed in 2020. The exhibition focuses on the interplay of geometric abstraction—circles, squares and triangles—redolent in Adnan's paintings and underlying her enduring interests in landscape and the spatial environment.



Etel Adnan, *Untitled*, 2015. Oil on canvas. 16 1/8 x 13 in.
Collection of Mr. and Mrs. John L. Townsend, III

Etel Adnan: Painting into Space is curated by Dr. James Voorhies, Curator of The Bass.
This exhibition is presented with support by Sevan Bıçakçı.

Sevan Bıçakçı

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MIAMI BEACH



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Cover: Etel Adnan, *Untitled* (detail), 2023. Ceramic mural, 165 tiles, 16 x 16 in. each; 173 x 260 in. overall. Edition 1/3. Conceived in conjunction with artist's sketch, 2020. Collection of The Bass. Purchased through the John and Johanna Bass Acquisition Fund.