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## Esteemed Phila. artist Andrade dies

By Edward J. Sozanski  
For The Inquirer

Edna Andrade, 91, one of Philadelphia's most accomplished and beloved artists, died yesterday at her home in Center City.

A resident of the city since 1946, Ms. Andrade was highly esteemed throughout the art community not only for the exemplary quality of her art - she was a leading practitioner of Optical Art - but also for her generosity to other artists, particularly as a teacher.

Striking testimony to this came in the fall of 1993, when more than 500 people turned out on a rainy night for the opening of her retrospective exhibition at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts.

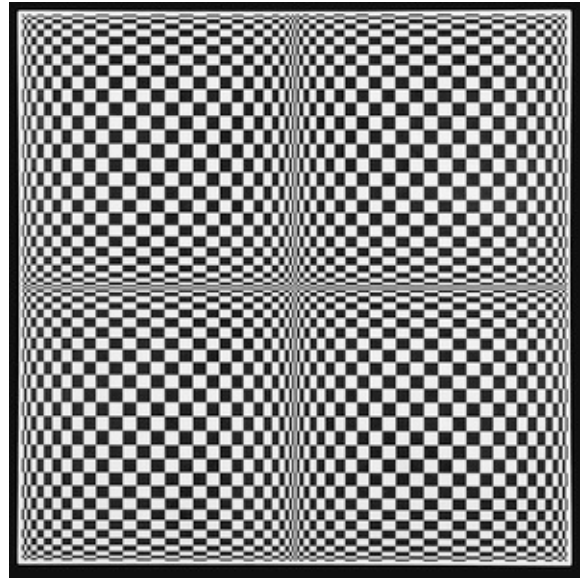
Ms. Andrade taught for more than 30 years at what is now University of the Arts. In 1996, when the College Art Association honored her for distinguished teaching, UA professor Kenneth Hiebert lauded her as "the quintessential amalgam of all that makes for great art and great teaching," and said, "Her distinguished career as an influential artist and teacher for over 50 years is legendary in the city."

As a painter, Ms. Andrade worked through several stylistic phases after graduating from the Pennsylvania Academy and University of Pennsylvania joint fine arts program in 1937. Initially a realist, she gradually moved in the late 1950s into a strain of geometrical abstraction that generated dazzling, and sometimes dizzying, optical effects.

It's for these precise, meticulously crafted images, exhibited at Penn's Institute of Contemporary Art in 2003, that she is best known. Other artists extrapolated from geometry, but Ms. Andrade's approach is distinctive for its gentle, luminous palette and lush, poetic lyricism. One doesn't expect to find such qualities, and even occasional whimsicality, in Euclidean rigor.

Ms. Andrade, who continued to paint and draw until her death, moved away from abstraction about 1993 and returned to realism, expressed through highly detailed drawings of coastal rocks found near her longtime summer residence in Maine.

The Philadelphia Museum of Art owns 25 of her paintings, drawings and prints. One painting, Color Motion 4-64, is included in the exhibition "Pop Art and Its Affinities," on view through June. Another, Mariposa, will be hung tomorrow in the corridor gallery outside the auditorium as a memorial.



"Color Motion 4-64," part of the Art Museum collection, exemplifies Andrade's dizzying geometrics.

Besides the Art Museum and the academy, Ms. Andrade's art is also owned by the Albright-Knox Gallery in Buffalo; the Addison Gallery of American Art in Andover, Mass.; the Yale University Art Gallery; and the Baltimore Museum of Art. She exhibited her work periodically at Locks Gallery here from the gallery's founding in 1968 until early last year.

Art Museum director Anne d'Harnoncourt described Ms. Andrade as "a thoughtful artist whose taste was always interesting, and whose support and encouragement of younger artists was absolutely terrific. I always thought of her not only as a remarkable painter and a wonderful teacher but as a real-life force in the city."

"She was a great lady and a generous spirit, and an inspiration to us all. We will miss her very, very much."

Philadelphia painter Diane Burko, a longtime friend, called Ms. Andrade "the most incredible human being, the quintessential artist, and role model. Her dedication to her art, her dedication to speaking her mind were both inspirational. She was my artist mother."

Friends attributed Ms. Andrade's graciousness to her upbringing in Tidewater Virginia. She was born in Portsmouth on Jan. 25, 1917, as Edna Davis Wright, daughter of a lumberman-engineer and a schoolteacher.

She began her career as an art teacher in Norfolk public schools and later at Tulane University. In 1941, she married architect Preston Andrade, who introduced her to the fields of architecture and design. During World War II, she was involved in a number of design projects, including creating posters and pamphlets for the war bond division of the Treasury Department.

Ms. Andrade moved to Philadelphia in 1946. During the late 1940s and '50s, she did freelance drafting for architects; plans for Philadelphia's airport were one such job. She had her first major solo exhibition at the Philadelphia Art Alliance in 1954, and was hired at Philadelphia College of Art in 1958.

Divorced from Andrade in 1960, she recalled in an interview last year that the divorce allowed her artistic career to flourish. "I didn't really take charge of my career until middle age."

She is survived by a brother, Thomas Judson Wright 3d of Portsmouth, and a sister, Mary Wright Thrasher of Norfolk, Va. Funeral arrangements are incomplete.