

An art lesson from 'new' painter Etel Adnan (91), Phaidon, October 12, 2016, online.

PHAIDON



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An Artspace interview with the Vitamin P3 featured artist on how art feeds our spirit and humanises us



Etel Adnan in her studio. Photo by Fabrice Gilbert, courtesy Galerie Lelong and Artspace

At the age of 91, the Lebanese-born, US-based painter and poet Etel Adnan is the oldest artist profiled in our contemporary painting overview Vitamin P3.

Indeed, Adnan has had many careers. Over the past seven decades she has worked as a journalist, novelist, political commentator, lecturer and fine artist, and with such experience comes wisdom. Adnan taught the philosophy of art at the Dominican University of California for 14 years, and understands quite thoroughly the uses of art within society.

Consider, by way of proof, this highly illuminating interview over on Artspace, wherein Adnan answers a simple question: what is the best thing that a work of art can do?



La Commedia dell'arte dei calamai IV (2015) by Etel Adnan. This print is available on Artspace

“We often wonder what art can do for people,” Adnan responded. “I would say that art humanises society. It brings the reminder that we are more than physical bodies. We have a spirit that needs to be fed and stimulated, with fears that need appeasement. Poetry, visual art, music, sculpture, and so on keep elevating us and opening doors to more than ourselves. They can also serve as a sort of historical monument and give us a sense of past. A society with no art is a dead society, a prison. We can extend our present notion of art by examining how anything done with care can be viewed as the beginning of an artistic instinct at work. Gardening, cooking, and sewing are seen as crafts, but they harbour an artistic desire to go further, to discover, and to procure thoughts that transcend the merely functional.”



Untitled, 1991. © Etel Adnan, courtesy Galerie Lelong

For more on Adnan's life, work, transcendent art and her place within contemporary painting, as well as much more besides, order a copy of *Vitamin P3* [here](#); for more on the uses of art, consider Alan de Botton's book *Art as Therapy*; and to collect work by this artist, take a look at [Etel Adnan's page](#) over on Artspace.