NIGHT SEA

The artist Edna Andrade is inspired by nature, perhaps because she grew up in Portsmouth, Virginia, near the seacoast. After attending the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in Philadelphia and working as an architectural drafter, Andrade began to paint geometric abstractions like Night Sea. While making this painting, she remembered swimming with her young friends in the Chesapeake Bay on a beautiful summer night in which there was a lot of phosphorescence, a glowing light emitted by tiny sea creatures in the dark: “As we splashed around in the waves we got these little sparkles all over us, and in a way that was one of the most wonderful experiences visual and tactile, and everything else that I could ever imagine.”

Andrade first worked out the design for Night Sea in pen-and-ink drawings. Then she used a Mylar template to create the painting in acrylic. Twenty-five small stars appear to glow, sending out slender rays of pink and green light in a precise, geometric pattern. The tip of each ray touches the tip of another, creating luminescent fans that flow into each other like waves suspended in blue-black space. The waves seem to be moving toward the top, the bottom, and the sides of the canvas simultaneously. Because this painting is large—approximately six by six feet—we feel enveloped in a dark world illuminated only by the small, evenly spaced stars, fans, and waves. Although all the lines in this painting are perfectly straight, their special arrangement creates the illusion of repeating, curving shapes. The dark background becomes flat ribbons or roads, bending and twisting gracefully in space.