

# ANAT EBGI

**art**and**cake**

**Ethan Cook at Anat Ebgi**

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**August 7, 2018**



**Ethan Cook, Propositions, Installation view at Anat Ebgi.**

Anat Ebgi is a gallery that often transforms itself with each exhibition, and such is the case once again with Propositions. New York-based artist Ethan Cook has created woven, textured images that at first glance seem deceptively simple. The hand-woven cotton canvases are large scale, untitled, and consist of unevenly aligned and sometimes overlapping squares and rectangles. The color palette is vivid, rich, and to some extent, flag-like.

Cook's woven compositions have surprising depth, however. Some of that is the woven elements, the seemingly-touchable quality of the works. But it is also the colors he is working with and their conjoining. A hot red meets black, meets blue, meets beige, the beige almost a salve for the other shades. In one work, brown, salmon, pink and red are in equal proportions; edging the top of the work is a narrow panel of dark, thrumming blue. In another work, pale pink and rose make up the left side of a piece, while on the right, a larger dark green square, partially subsumed by these other colors and a narrow rectangle of lighter green, stands like a shadow in a cooling, abstract city.

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In fact, that is the beauty of Cook's work – not just his materials or colors, but the way in which each abstract work, so geometric as to appear on the surface deceptively simple, can with contemplation morph into a landscape. The blocks of color can look like a city skyline, the quilt of a series of farm fields, or serve as rather emblematic representations of certain meanings or emotions. Soft rose seems peaceful, a pool of soft light; dark green a forest; black as intense as something forgotten.

Cook uses a four-harness floor loom, to create these woven landscapes of squares and rectangles. Seen as a whole the exhibition takes on a puzzle-piece like element; indeed, the exhibition appears to use the different shades to make various statements about the colors or the shapes themselves. Is that rich blue in a narrow rectangle trying to encroach upon or be pushed out of the artistic equation in one work? Is that dark green representing a forest or open space taken over by buildings, or is it a shadow being subverted? It is the spare artistic vision and the possible, personal, poetic interpretation of the works that add to their strength and depth.

The viewer's eyes and emotions control the interpretation of the works. Cook is using these abstract building blocks to create an ultimate whole. To some extent the works taken altogether remind one of musical notes, the squares on a child's xylophone – as if each color symbolized meaning or sound. His use of a loom versus canvas on which to create, subtly shapes his own arrangements; the works appear interconnected, and to spread the music analogy further, are more of a small symphony than individual sheets of music. The colors also evoke the passages of the day itself – a sunrise of orange and pink, a subtle heating up of color at midway, the pause of twilight. Music, light, time, landscape – one can read all of these meanings into Cook's spare work.