

TC JewFolk, June 8, 2015



Who the Folk?! | Keren Kroul



Kroul in front of her painting at the new Mayo Clinic Square building.

Minneapolis-based painter, Keren Kroul, talks about how her memories of growing up in Israel and South America influence her Jewish identity and her artwork. Sounds interesting, right? It is.

You grew up in Mexico, Israel and Costa Rica. How did you end up in Minneapolis?

I was born in Israel to an Argentinian father and Israeli mother. When I was five, we moved to Mexico City for my father's job. He represents Israeli companies in Central and South America that work in the agriculture sector. I finished high school in Costa Rica, then came to the States for College at Brandeis. I got my MFA at Parsons in New York where I met my husband, then we moved to Minnesota nine years ago for his job.

Wow. How many languages do you speak?

I grew up speaking Hebrew and Spanish. English is my third language, which I didn't learn until school in fourth grade.

Does Minnesota—the landscape, the people, the feeling—influence your artwork?

Absolutely. Walking around in the winter, I'm amazed by the crystals that form in the snow. Paying attention to snowflakes made me look at crystals in general and that's influenced my [geometric work](#).

Describe your artistic practice.

I work in a meditative process. I use little, teeny brushes to make little, small lines and shapes. As I work, the painting becomes denser and more layered. And it physically get larger, growing to be 5 x7 feet. Something about the painting being the same size of my body makes me feel that I'm part of it and in a different world. I paint standing up and it's very physical. With each small shape, I feel I'm almost recording units of time and memory. I get so lost in the artwork, I have to set my alarm or I won't know when to stop.

Do your Jewish roots influence your artwork?

Not in a religious sense, but definitely in the fact that I think about memory a lot while I'm painting, which is a huge Jewish theme. So many Jewish artists I love—William Kentridge, Nancy Spero—all talk about memory and the Jewish diaspora of moving around and not having a home. In a philosophical sense, my artwork is in tune with being that wandering Jew, always looking for a homeland. And I'm conflicted as to that identity of what being Jewish is; Is it cultural, historical, a language or a place? Or is Judaism strictly religious? These are questions I ponder in my experience of being an Israeli and an American Jew, both quite different.

What are you currently working on?

I got an artist initiative grant from the Minnesota State Arts Board in 2015 to develop this series I'm currently working on, and I'm on number eight. So, I'll be creating these large map-like paintings for the next year at least, maybe two. I'm interested to see how far I can push this idea.

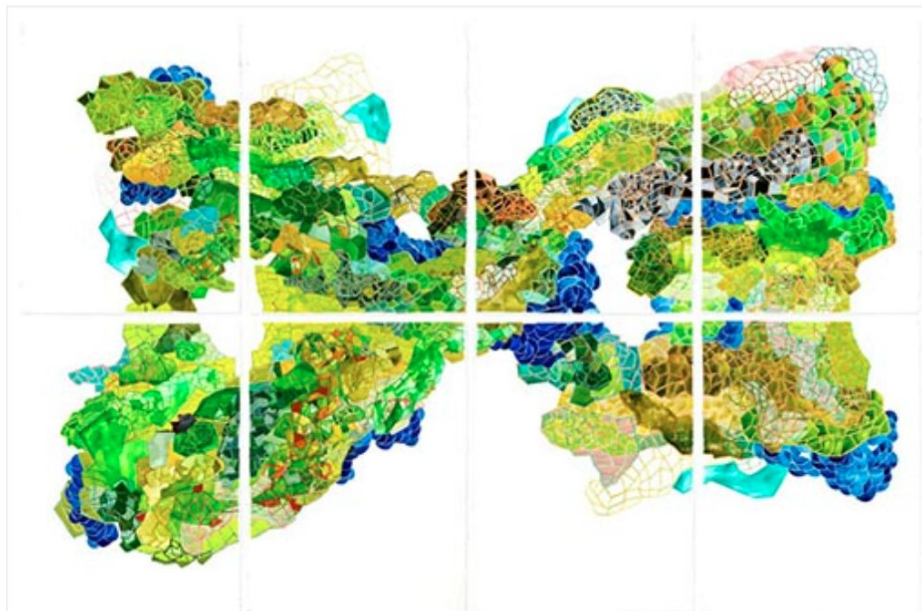
Where can we see your artwork?

The best place is my website, I keep it updated all the time. KerenKroul.com.

Last week, I had an opening at the new Mayo Clinic Square on Hennepin (600 Hennepin Square) in Minneapolis for a large painting I made for the lobby. They built a frame for it so it looks like part of the wall, which is neat. I also have an upcoming show in August in Banfill-Locke Center for the Arts in Fridley, about 30 minutes away, and a show in November at Concordia University in St. Paul

What's your favorite Jewish holiday?

Passover has always been my favorite. It's a holiday that comes with a full house. I love how it's rooted in story and narrative. And the food. I love the food. I could eat gefilte every day.



"Chartered Memories" Series, Watercolor on Paper, 60" x 88", Keren Kroul, 2014