

ART SPIEL

Reflections on the work of contemporary artists

OCTOBER 9, 2021 BY ART SPIEL

An Architecture of Longing at Hopkins Art Center

Featured artist

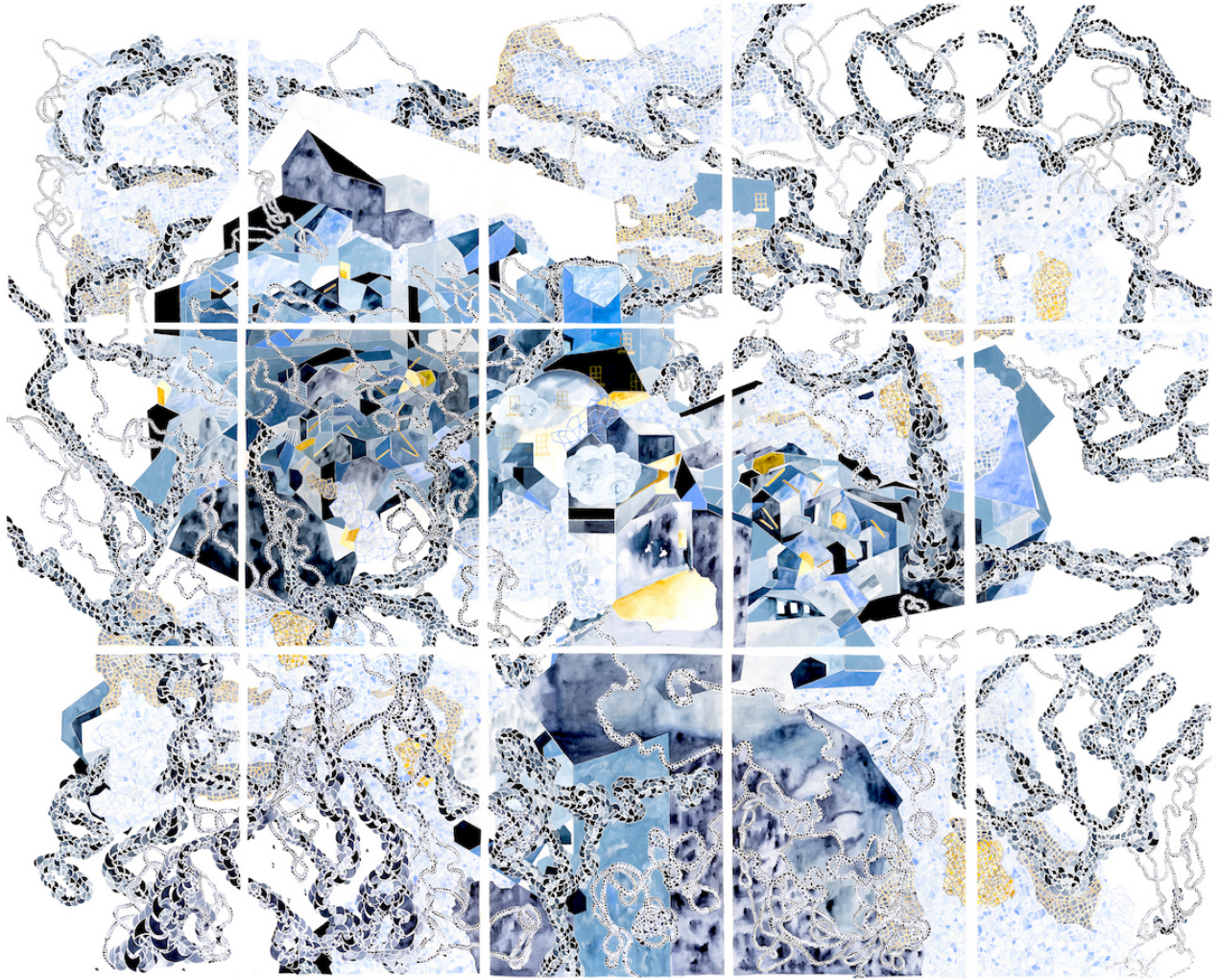


Keren Kroul, *An Architecture of Longing*, series of four works, 2021, watercolor on paper, 60" x 48" each. Photo courtesy of Keren Kroul.

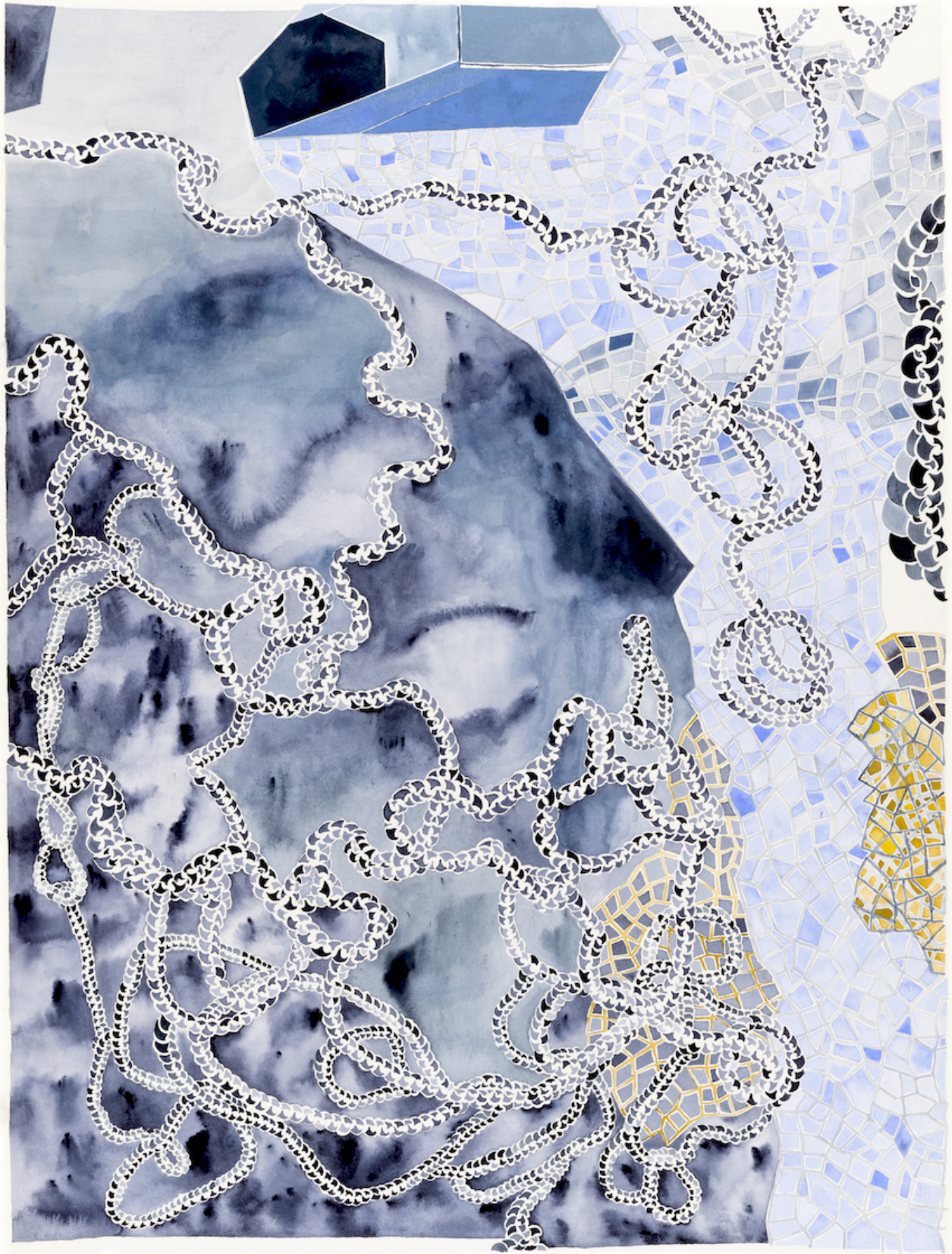
Minnesota based artist Keren Kroul shows watercolor on paper in her current solo exhibition at the Hopkins Center for the Arts. The show runs through October 23rd, 2021.

Tell me a bit about the genesis of this exhibition.

An Architecture of Longing is an exhibit of watercolor on paper works created over the past year, generously funded by a 2021 Creative Support for Individuals Grant from the Minnesota State Arts Board and a 2021 Next Step Fund Grant from the McKnight Foundation. Examining the precarity of the safety of home, the works feature rhythmic and fluid structures made of fragmented architectonic and organic elements like houses, tombstones, braids, cells, smoke and clouds. Upon entering the gallery, the viewer faces a series of watercolors on paper. Each is composed of 4 sheets of Arches paper arranged in a vertical rectangular grid, and measures 60" x 48" (5' x 4' feet). On the wall directly opposite is a sequence of 133 watercolor studies measuring 7.5" x 5.5" each. Finally, the viewer is confronted with a large-scale watercolor on paper. Composed of 15 sheets of Arches paper arranged in a horizontal rectangular grid, it is titled *The Shape of Memory* and measures 96" x 120" (8' x 10' feet).



Keren Kroul, *The Shape of Memory*, 2021, watercolor on paper, 96" x 120". Photo courtesy of Rik Sferra.



Keren Kroul, *The Shape of Memory*, 2021, watercolor on paper, 30" x 23". Photo courtesy of Rik Sferra

Please guide us through the show.

The Shape of Memory is an exploration of identity, unfolding in a landscape of memory where the past and the present collapse, liquid and porous, into magnificent realities. I was raised in a family enveloped in the shadows of people and places. My father fled Argentina during the political purge of the Dirty War. Three generations earlier, his ancestors found refuge there from the pogroms in the Pale of Settlement. My mother is the daughter of Holocaust survivors of Austrian and Romanian descent. Her extended family were victims of genocide. I carry a legacy of trauma and resilience, attracted to and horrified by the yearning and the fear that it elicits.

For this work, I mine family stories of loss and longing, wrapping memory and terrain into a fluid and expanding topography. Marks are repeated, accumulated, and layered into dense and rhythmic passages. References include photographs, maps, and images of neural pathways that capture and retrieve memory. The delicate nature of watercolor mirrors that of memory, resurfacing across and over time, coming in and out of focus, recreated as it is remembered. While some images are opaque, reflecting their solid presence in the mind, others are a watery wash, the literal dissolving of concrete places, lives, and eventually, memories.

The scale is important, expanding above and beyond the human body to create a monumentality that while fragile, is overwhelming, like the helplessness that I feel when confronted by this historical and personal heritage. Painting with tiny brushes, the process is intentionally labored and prolonged, embedding time into the work. As long as I am working on these stories, they remain alive, and so is my connection to them. *The Shape of Memory* is the first of three parts. It will expand to the right and the left to triple in size for my next exhibit, scheduled at the Gordon Parks Gallery at Metropolitan State University in Saint Paul, Minnesota, in 2022.



Keren Kroul, *An Architecture of Longing*, 2021, watercolor on paper, 60" x48". Photo courtesy of Rik Sferra

Born in Haifa, Israel, to an Argentinean father and Israeli mother, Keren was raised in Mexico City, Mexico and San José, Costa Rica. She currently lives in Minneapolis, Minnesota, where she teaches art, design, and Spanish. Keren exhibits regionally and nationally. She is the recipient of multiple awards, including Next Step Fund Grant from the McKnight Foundation (2021), Creative Support for Individuals Grant (2021) and Artist Initiative Grants (2019, 2017, and 2015) from the Minnesota State Arts Board. She was awarded a Jerome Foundation Emerging Artist Exhibition (2017), and was a finalist in the 2D Juried Category at ArtPrize (2016). Her work is featured in *MN Original* (TPT-Twin Cities PBS), and in print publications including *Paint Lab*, *Color Lab*, *Tangled Art*, and *New American Paintings*. Keren holds a BA in Fine Arts from Brandeis University and an MFA in Painting from Parsons School of Design. Website: <https://www.kerenkroul.com>



Keren Kroul, small studies (left), 2021, watercolor on paper, 133 works 7.5" x 5.5" each; and The Shape of Memory (right), 2021, watercolor on paper, 96" x 120". Photo courtesy of Keren Kroul.

Keren Kroul, An Architecture of Longing *Redepinning Gallery*, September 23 – October 23, 2021, Hopkins Center for the Arts, 1111 Mainstreet Hopkins, MN 55343

 **FEATURED ARTIST**

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