

# Educator & Visitor Guide

FEBRUARY–MARCH 2024

## EXHIBITION

**Even Now**

### Artist

Keren Kroul

**February 3 –  
March 17, 2024**

## EVENTS

### Artist Talk:

**A Conversation with  
Nicole Havekost and  
Keren Kroul**

Saturday, February 3  
4:30–5:30 p.m.

Nicole Havekost and Keren Kroul will discuss the work in their exhibitions, moderated by gallery director Nicole Watson. Opening reception to immediately follow. Free and open to the public.

### Opening Reception

Saturday, February 3  
5:30–7 p.m.



*The Shape of Memory* detail,  
2023, watercolor on paper,  
8" x 10"

## ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This guide is designed as a resource for all visitors, especially college educators and their students, who are eager to engage meaningfully with the artwork on view in the gallery. The content in this guide offers a range of learning opportunities and styles, with the goals of building observational skills, encouraging dialogue, cultivating critical thinking and personal reflection, and ultimately, appreciating art as a form of learning, understanding, and creating a pathway for building empathy, relationships and community at St. Kate's and beyond.

*The content of this guide is created by Gallery Director Nicole Watson in collaboration with exhibiting artist Keren Kroul. We envision that forthcoming guides will likely change over time, with each new exhibition, and as we learn with and from those who interact with this document.*

## “MUSEUMS ARE NOT NEUTRAL”: THE GALLERY AS A SITE OF POWER

Historically, galleries (as well as museums and art spaces) are sites where art and power intersect, often at the expense and omission of marginalized communities including women, people of color, LGBTQIA+ people, and people who are disabled. As an institution that collects artwork, displays artwork, and platforms artists in a public gallery space, St. Catherine University is a participant in this history and power dynamic.

Art spaces, and the disciplines of studio art and art history, are rooted in racism and white supremacy. These ideologies have shaped — and have been shaped by — colonization, resulting in histories and institutions that claim to be “neutral,” without responsibility to address, respond to or change the injustice present in their own communities. Rather than relying on past exhibition modes that situate the institution/curator/artist as the expert, we seek to model an art space for the future that invites an exchange of ideas, perspectives and ways of being.

*For the most part, museums are products and projects of colonialism. Because the origins and evolving practices of the construct stem from and perpetuate conquest, they are by nature not ‘neutral.’ For decades artists, activists and scholars in the U.S. and beyond have opposed exclusionary modes of institutions, which include favoring works by White male artists for collections and exhibitions, maintaining predominantly White executive staffs and boards, and other practices. Museums Are Not Neutral spotlights actions for change and exposes how the claim of neutrality fosters unequal power relations.*

– La Tanya Autry, co-founder of *Museums Are Not Neutral*

## GALLERY LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Through the public display of art and related programming, students will experience the gallery as an active expression of the University's values: a women-centered, gender-inclusive approach to education that welcomes a rich diversity of students; social justice teaching as lived by the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet; and a commitment to and celebration of the liberal arts.
2. Understand the gallery as a community-based space of mutual learning, where all viewers can relate to the artworks, and one another, in some way.

# Even Now

KEREN KROUL



*The Shape of Memory* detail, 2023, watercolor on paper, 30" x 46"

## EXHIBITION LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. **Recognize** the multiplicity of communities and experiences that compose one's identity.
2. **Engage** in thinking about ways to examine identity.
3. **Consider** visual language as an avenue for the exploration of identity.

## PROMPTS FOR FREEWRITING AND/OR DISCUSSION

1. Reflect on the various communities, belief systems, and experiences that give you a sense of identity within the larger culture.
  - What parts of these continue to shape your identity?
  - How has belonging to these communities shaped your worldview, choices, and actions?
  - In what ways has belonging to these communities enhanced your life?
  - In what ways has belonging to these communities been detrimental to your life?
2. Consider an important memory from childhood — reflect on how it has shaped you.
  - Why do you remember this memory?
  - What significance did it have then?
  - What significance does it have now?
  - Has the meaning of this memory, or your feelings about it, changed over time? If so, how?

## VOCABULARY AND LANGUAGE

**Identity** – As defined in the [Merriam Webster Dictionary](#): “the distinguishing character or personality of an individual.”

**Memory** – As defined in the [Merriam Webster Dictionary](#): “the power or process of reproducing or recalling what has been learned and retained especially through associative mechanisms ... memory applies both to the power of remembering and to what is remembered.”

**Postmemory** – A term coined by Marianne Hirsch to describe the inheritance of memories that are not one's own. These memories are so visceral that the person with the inherited memories carries them psychically and physically. Hirsch, the William Peterfield Trent Professor Emerita of English and Comparative Literature and the Institute for the Study of Sexuality and Gender at Columbia University, explains: “‘Postmemory’ describes the relationship that the ‘generation after’ bears to the personal, collective, and cultural trauma of those who came before-to experiences they ‘remember’ only by means of the stories, images, and behaviors among which they grew up. But these experiences were transmitted to them so deeply and effectively as to seem to constitute memories in their own right. Postmemory's connection to the past is thus actually mediated not by recall but by imaginative investment, projection, and creation. To grow up with overwhelming inherited memories, to be dominated by narratives that preceded one's birth or one's consciousness, is to risk having one's own life stories displaced, even evacuated, by our ancestors. It is to be shaped, however indirectly, by traumatic fragments of events that still defy narrative reconstruction and exceed comprehension. These events happened in the past, but their effects continue into the present.” ([postmemory.net](#))

## CREATIVE EXERCISE

Think of images, feelings, sounds, and smells that bring back specific memories or feelings of belonging. Write down the words that come to mind, then make visual references — markings, colors, lines, forms — to accompany each word. Use these images to create a larger composition, a visual story of the words related to your memories.

## ARTIST STATEMENT

*Even Now*, the title of this exhibit, takes its name from a line in the poem “In the Daytime” by Paul Celan. Like my maternal grandmother, Celan was born into a German-speaking Jewish family in Bukovina, Romania. Like her, he was a survivor of the Nazi concentration camps during the Holocaust. Celan’s poem is a lament. He mourns the repetitive nature of memory and loss, while looking at a sky alive with grief and hope. This poem is one of several that my mother read aloud to my grandmother, in German, their mother tongue, to comfort her at the end of her life. The poem frames the two works in the gallery: a large-size watercolor on paper painting, and a small video projection on the gallery floor.

*The Shape of Memory* is a watercolor on paper measuring 8’ x 30’. Lyrical and cyclical, it weaves memory and terrain, collapsing past and present into a dense topography that expands as it pulsates forwards and backwards. Composed of 45 sheets of Arches paper arranged in a rectangular horizontal grid, it is a construction of individual panels, single moments that form a whole. The watercolor is inspired by memories of memories: my recollections of my grandmother’s stories, her experiences during the Holocaust, from displacement to concentration camp to refugee camp to freedom. Houses, synagogues, cobblestoned streets and tombs reference the town of Suceava, Romania, from where my grandmother and her family were forcibly expelled by the Nazis when she was a young girl. Saturated patterns are wallpapers and carpets. Arches and doorways disintegrate into jumbling masses. Dark braids that belong to my grandmother’s twin sister, who perished from typhus by her side in the concentration camp. Grays and blues are a sky of smoke and clouds. Magentas and pinks are the sweet peas that flowered in the surrounding wildflower fields. Ground into a powder and force-fed to my grandmother’s father in the Nazi camp where he was experimented on, it was well-known at the time that their consumption led to paralysis. While some images are opaque, reflecting their solid presence in the mind, others are a watery wash, the dissolving of concrete places, lives, and eventually, memories. Towering over the viewer, monumental in size while fragile in materiality, this work is a physical representation of the overwhelming helplessness I feel when confronted by the horror of this personal and historical legacy.

A single-channel video is projected from the ceiling onto the floor near the back of the room. The projection is circular in shape, and repeats every 18 minutes, the number signifying “chai” in Hebrew numerology, translated as “life”. I asked my maternal grandmother’s living descendants to film their sky in a coordinated gesture of remembrance. Segments of sky span geography, climate, and time of day, accompanied by a recording of the poem “In the Daytime,” read in the original German by my mother. Accompanying the viewer through the gallery, the voice is repeated like a song or a prayer, an evocation of the memory of a vanishing world, under a sky that still continues.

### *In the Daytime*

Paul Celan, translated from German  
by Michael Hamburger

Hare’s pelt sky. Even now  
a clear wing writes.

I too, remember,  
dust—  
coloured one, arrived  
as a crane.

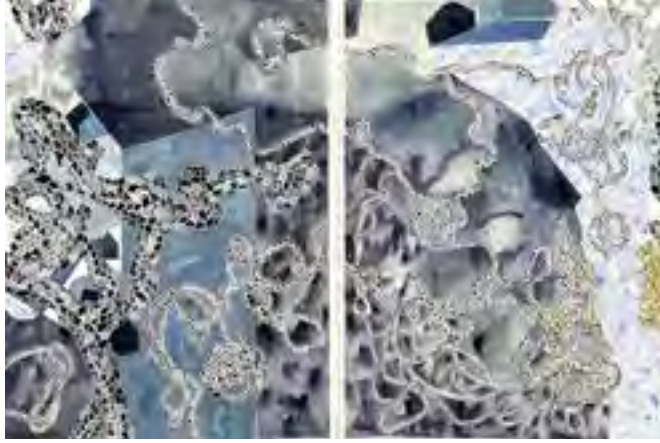
### *Bei Tag*

Hasenfell-Himmel. Noch immer  
schreibt eine deutliche Schwinge.

Auch ich, erinnere dich,  
Staub—  
farbene, kam  
als ein Kranich.

## ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

Keren Kroul creates large-scale watercolor on paper paintings and paper installations. Examining identity through time, memory, and place, they are fantastical landscapes of the mind. Born in Haifa, Israel, to an Argentinean father and Israeli mother, Keren grew up in Mexico City, Mexico and San José, Costa Rica. She lives in Minneapolis, Minnesota, where she teaches Art, Design, and Spanish. Keren has received support from private and state foundations, including: the McKnight Foundation (Visual Artist Fellowship 2023; Next Step Fund Grant 2021), Minnesota State Arts Board (Creative Support for Individuals Grants 2023, 2022, 2021; Artist Initiative Grants 2019, 2017, 2015), and the Jerome Foundation (Emerging Artist Exhibition Grant 2017). Her work has been featured on television 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 (Waltham, MA) and an MFA in Painting from Parsons School of Design (New York, NY).



*The Shape of Memory* detail, 2023, watercolor on paper, 30" x 46"

## RESOURCES

### **Related to the Exhibition:**

[Postmemory.net](http://Postmemory.net)

### **Non-fiction**

[\*The Generation of Postmemory – Writing and Visual Culture after the Holocaust\*](#)

by Marianne Hirsch

### **Fiction and Poetry**

The following sources are important to the artist as she works to consider the intersection of identity and memory, and the ways memories shape present experiences:

[\*Great House\*](#) by Nicole Krauss

[\*In Memory of Memory\*](#) by Maria Stepanova

[\*Poems of Paul Celan\*](#), translated by Michael Hamburger

[\*Shakespeare's Memory\*](#) by Jorge Luis Borges

[\*The Hare with Amber Eyes\*](#) by Edmund de Waal

[\*Austerlitz\*](#) by W.G. Sebald, translated by Anthea Bell

### **Related to the Gallery:**

[gallery.stkate.edu](http://gallery.stkate.edu)

Museums Art Not Neutral at *Art Museum Teaching – A Forum for Reflecting on Action*

<https://artmuseumteaching.com/2017/08/31/museums-are-not-neutral>

Museums As a Site for Social Action (MASS Action), <https://www.museumaction.org>

Umolu, Yesomi. "On the Limits of Care and Knowledge: 15 Points Museums Must Understand to Dismantle Structural Injustice." Accessed 25 June 2023. <https://news.artnet.com/opinion/limits-of-care-and-knowledge-yesomi-umolu-op-ed-1889739>

This guide is inspired by and modeled after educator guides offered by [Art 21](#), [Walker Art Center](#) (Minneapolis, Minnesota), [Chrysler Museum of Art College-level Educator Guides](#) (Norfolk, Virginia), [The Whitney Museum of American Art](#) (New York, New York) and the [Perlman Teaching Museum](#) at Carleton College (Northfield, Minnesota).

Special thanks to the Mellon Foundation for their support in the creation of this guide, which is part of a [grant project](#) at St. Catherine University to develop an interdisciplinary, intersectional humanities curriculum that incorporates [anti-racist work](#). If you have any questions or would like to provide feedback, please contact Nicole Watson ([nmwatson@stkate.edu](mailto:nmwatson@stkate.edu)) or directors of the grant project ([mellon@stkate.edu](mailto:mellon@stkate.edu)).



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