

Keren Kroul explores the landscape of the mind

Marianne Combs February 13, 2014 6:03 AM



Detail of "Where matter becomes conscious", 22" x 300" (25 feet), watercolor on paper, 2013 (Photo courtesy of the artist)

[Keren Kroul](#) has an intensity about her that comes out both in her work and her life.

Her latest exhibition navigates the often unsteady terrain shared by artistry and motherhood.

Lining the walls of the [Tychman Shapiro Gallery](#) at Sabes Jewish Community Center in Minneapolis, Kroul's watercolors evoke both the natural elements and the landscape of the mind.



"Where matter becomes conscious", 22" x 300" (25 feet), watercolor on paper, 2013 (Photo courtesy of the artist)

Her 25-foot piece "Where matter becomes conscious" dominates one wall and is comprised of several panels that read from left to right. Inspired by her grandmother's death, the work is abstract and representational, filled with images of a figure in the fetal position.

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"I was sad and grieving, but it also connected to all these feelings of vulnerability I had around being a new mother, and the questions around identity that come with that," Kroul said.. "Am I an artist or a mom? Can I do both?"

At the far left of the piece, a multitude of figures lie buried under ground. But at the far right, a single figure sits upright.

"In this case she's not buried anymore," Kroul explained. "She's a solid part of the structure."

[image]

Detail of "Where matter becomes conscious", 22" x 300" (25 feet), watercolor on paper, 2013 (Photo courtesy of the artist)

Born in Israel, Kroul was raised in Mexico and Costa Rica. She studied art in New York, where she met her husband, and after a brief stint in Memphis, they moved to the Twin Cities. They've lived here eight years and have two children.

Kroul took the same dedication she applied to her art and moved it to her children. But she found trying to do both with the same intensity was nearly impossible.

"When I'm working I'm so focused," she said. "It consumes me, both mentally and emotionally, and I don't want to stop. I have to pay attention to it every day; I can't just check in and out."

Ultimately Kroul was forced to lower her expectations for her art. But now that both her children are in school, she's

found a new rhythm, painting in her studio after they've caught the bus.

"I have five and a half hours every day," she explained. "And then once every couple of weeks I'll work at night, til 3 a.m. It kills me, but I love working at night."

How does she sustain the energy level?

"Coffee!" she laughs.



On the right: "But a multitude of drops", 60" x 88", watercolor on paper, 2014 On the left: "Unquiet mind", 60" x 88", watercolor on paper, 2014 (Photo courtesy of the artist)

Building on her piece "Where matter becomes conscious," Kroul has created new works that elaborate on particular patterns that, while still two-dimensional, feels almost sculptural.

"I'm thinking a lot about the brain, neurons firing, craggy environments," she said. "I decided to spend some time investigating these patterns to see where they came from. My work is very intuitive and organic. I never know what it's going to be like when it's done."

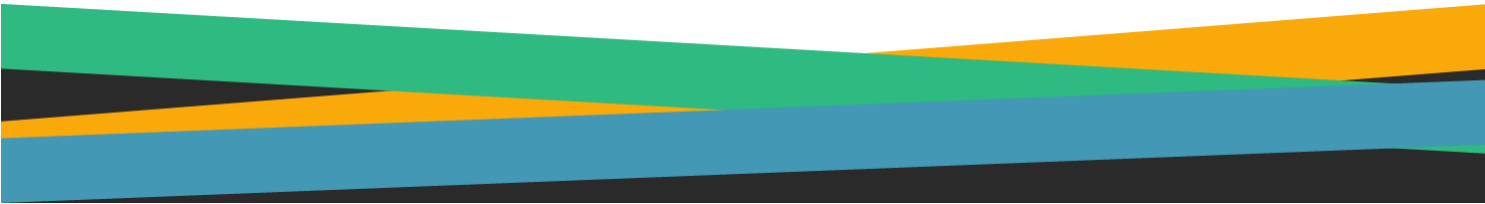
For Kroul, the past two years spent on her art have been cathartic for in a number of ways.

"I really felt like I have gotten out of my system, the vulnerability and fear," she said. "Now I'm at a place where I can say that I'm an artist and know that I'm not lying. And I'm in a place where I can be a mom, too."

Kroul's work is part of a dual exhibition called "Lyrical Narratives," paired with the sculpture of [Jeffrey Haddorff](#). It opens tonight and runs through March 27.

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