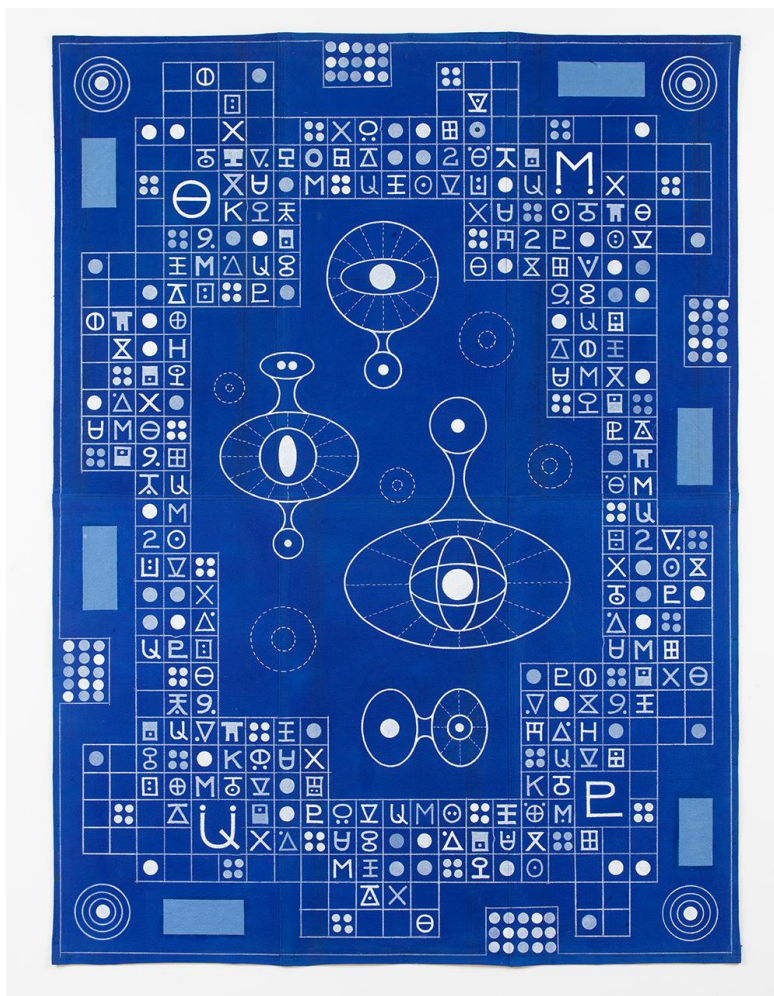


# artillery

## Karla Knight

The Aldrich Contemporary Art  
Museum, Ridgefield, CT

by Annabel Keenan | Mar 8, 2022

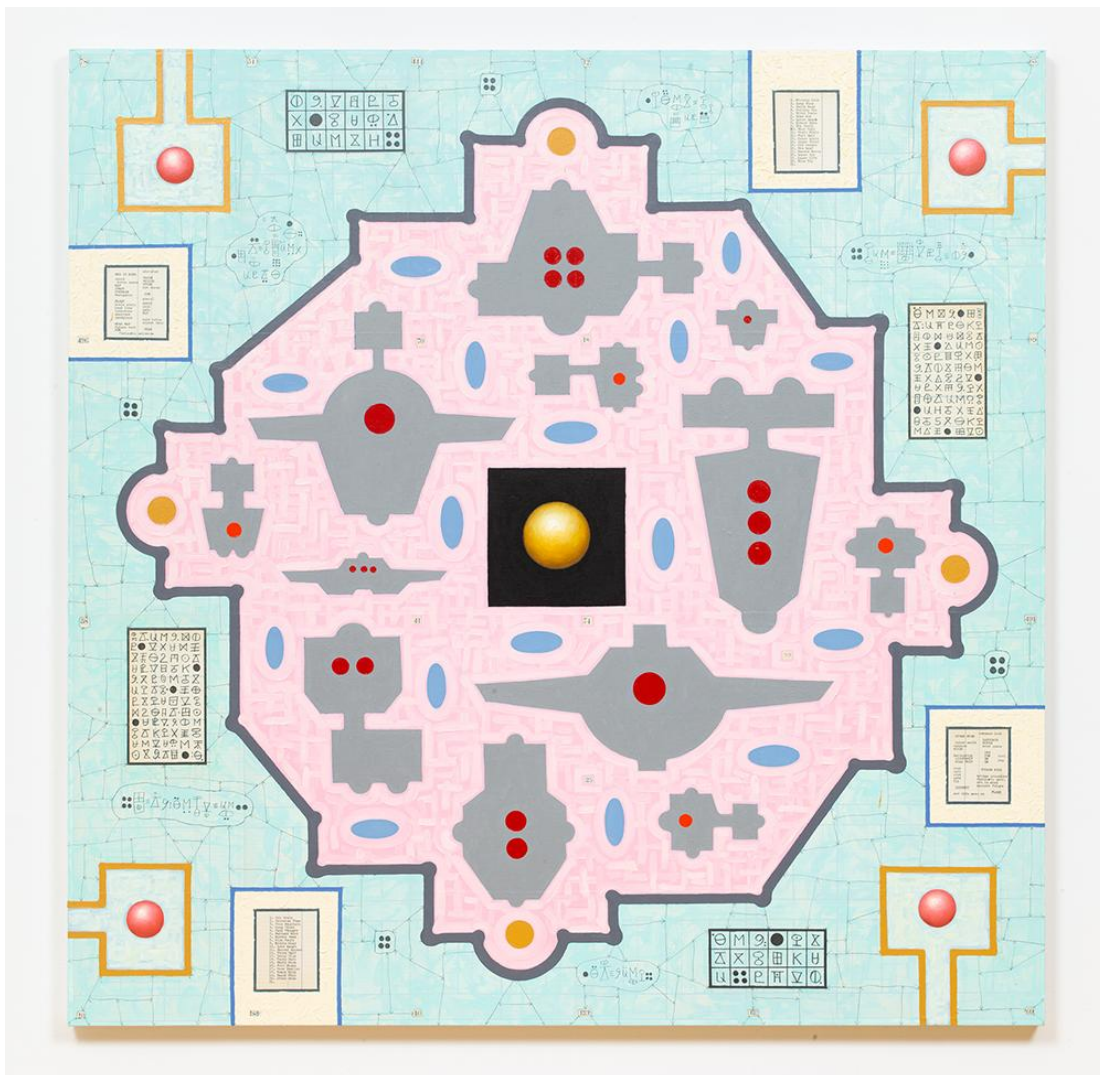


Karla Knight, Blue Navigator 2, 2021. Courtesy of the artist and Andrew Edlin Gallery, New York.

Karla Knight is sending us a message. With maps, symbols and UFOs, there are mysteries in every piece. Four decades worth of paintings, tapestries and drawings are on view in Knight's first institutional solo show, "Navigator," at The Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum in Ridgefield, CT. Signs and glyphs dart from top to bottom and side to side. Spacecrafts weave in and out of orbs and all-seeing eyes. Some imagery appears to be based on recognizable symbols, but the artist

purposefully presents her work without meaning or explanation. Pointing to the mysteries of life itself, Knight tempts the viewer to seek their own rhyme or reason.

Visually, the show is minimal in its color palette, with most works limited to a few, mainly solid colors; yet the overall effect is surprisingly impactful. “Navigator” spans Knight’s career beginning with early works on paper from the 1980s inspired by her interest in language, Ouija boards and UFOs. Knight’s lifelong fascination with all things science and occult stems in part from her father’s career as an author of books on astronomy, ghosts and the supernatural. These smaller, earlier pieces are almost academic in their investigation of symbols, as if a documentation or discovery, perhaps all working towards a larger, secret lexicon.



Karla Knight, Fleet Mind, 2021. Courtesy of the artist and Andrew Edlin Gallery, New York.

The symbols in her earlier works evolve into full landscapes later on in Knight’s career. Wayfinder 1, 2, and 3 (2020) form a monumental triptych of indecipherable glyphs, spacecrafts, orbs and charts. The triptych is part of a new body of tapestries on reclaimed cotton from seed and grain bags from the 1940s and 50s that Knight found on eBay.

The works titled Fleet Mind 1 and 2 (2020–21) add to the exhibition title's suggestion of movement or searching, but they leave more questions than answers. What is the fleet doing? Is it navigating towards a final destination? Is it protecting the yellow orb? What are the shapes and grids of symbols that surround the fleet's delineated borders?

The orb at the center of the fleet constantly reappears in Knight's work as both a central figure and a member of the background. Perhaps communicating some unknown message, the orbs also recall the classic, grainy photographs of UFOs that Knight would have seen throughout her father's books.

Another image possibly taken from her science studies is the periodic table that appears in Blue Navigator 2 (2021), an arrestingly rich blue tapestry with a white grid filled with small white symbols. There is an irresistible temptation to try to identify the signs. Yet again, we are left with infinite questions. Do the forms in the center represent spacecrafts or a space station? Are they extraterrestrials? What message is communicated in the intricate symbols so neatly organized in the white grid? Is this a blueprint for a machine? Ultimately, Knight leaves no clues, allowing the viewer to parse meaning as they choose. Overall, the show is a celebration of some of life's greatest mysteries, as well as an invitation to let your imagination take over.