

## TEACHER'S RESOURCE GUIDE

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AMALIE ATKINS: *WE LIVE ON THE EDGE OF DISASTER AND IMAGINE WE ARE IN A MUSICAL*  
+ THE LIVING ROOM



Image: *The braid harvesters* (from *We live on the edge of disaster and imagine we are in a musical*), 2013. Image courtesy of the artist.

On display at the MacKenzie Art Gallery February 1, 2014 - June 14, 2014

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Image: *Listening to the past—listening to the future* (from *we live on the edge of disaster and imagine we are in a musical*), 2013 Image courtesy of the artist.

## Introduction

### Amalie Atkins Exhibition

This touring exhibition, co-organized by the MacKenzie Art Gallery and the Southern Alberta Art Gallery, builds on Amalie Atkins' recent residency at Open Space in Victoria with the first major solo presentation of her work. A Saskatoon artist with a growing reputation for her films and video installations, Atkins' cinematic gifts have been recognized recently in national and international survey exhibitions (*Oh, Canada, Dreamland: Textiles and the Canadian Landscape, Mind the Gap!*). This exhibition will highlight the expansion of her practice into installation by featuring pavilions housing her two most widely seen works, *Three Minute Miracle* (2008) and *Scenes from a Secret World* (2009), along with projection-installations based on a major new film: *we live on the edge of disaster and imagine we are in a musical*.

Set against the luminous landscapes of southern and central Saskatchewan, Atkins' multi-layered narratives present bittersweet sagas of grief, joy and transformation that linger in the memory like half-remembered fairy tales. Characters in the guise of wolves, bears, crows or other creatures populate her imaginative worlds and engage with human protagonists, enacting scenarios that are both everyday and otherworldly. With *we live on the edge of disaster and imagine we are in a musical*, Atkins' introduces an all-female cast of characters, which includes (among others), two-headed sisters, a troupe of roller-skating Valkyries, and braid harvesters. With a background in textiles from the Alberta College of Art and Design, Atkins' films have an immediate tactile appeal, which is manifest in the handmade fabric costumes and props, as well as in the felt pavilions that she has created to house her projections.

### The Living Room

This new gallery space is a home for the MacKenzie Art Gallery's Permanent Collection and community engagement. The Living Room is a changing, growing, and developing space. It is a space to learn from our audiences and respond to their needs and expectations. Our goal is to have visitors see themselves reflected in the space; through their favourite artwork, a kitchen table that looks like home, or being able to leave a piece of themselves behind through a response activity.

During this visit, students will find artworks curated by students in the Preschool Fine Arts Cooperative, as well as student-made, inspired by the Permanent Collection artworks.

## Tour Objectives

- To gain a basic understanding of projected art as an important contemporary art form
- To experience the works in the exhibition and enjoy them in a physical, or sensory way
- To gain a basic understanding of story narratives and how they translate to film
- To understand the concerns of this contemporary artist and the ways in which these are explored
- To gain a basic understanding of what a Curator does
- To explore the impact of our lived environments on our everyday lives

## Artist Information

Amalie Atkins is a multidisciplinary artist whose work hop-scotches from filmmaking to fabric-based sculpture to performance. Atkins currently lives and works in Canada. Her work has been exhibited nationally and internationally. To explore Atkins other projects further, visit: [www.amalieatkins.ca](http://www.amalieatkins.ca)

## Suggested Pre-Tour Activities

### Fairytale Fun

Read a fairytale to the class, such as Alice in Wonderland, Little Red Riding Hood, Hansel and Gretel, or another similar story and have students consider how they would bring the story to life; through photography, movement, costume, or theatre.

Suggested resource: [www.storynory.com/archives/fairy-tales](http://www.storynory.com/archives/fairy-tales)

### How to Make a Movie

Work with your students to brainstorm and develop a story that can be made into a short film. Before you start making your film:

1. Watch the following video: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=mequu1ARufg](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mequu1ARufg)  
**Tip:** In this short video Spencer Weaver explains the importance of not only having a good story for your film, but also planning the story out before you start shooting.
2. Know why you're making your movie. What's your message? What's your reason for telling this story? What's the point of your story?
3. Who are your characters? What type of integrity do they possess? What is the story of their lives? What makes them who they are?
4. How do your characters grow and develop throughout your film? Do they change from the time of the beginning of the story to the end?

### My Living Room

Have the students do drawings of their living rooms. Ask them to consider the objects inside the space.

- What does their furniture look like?
- Is there art in the space, and what does it look like?
- What types of activities happen in there?
- How much time do they spend in this room?

Once they get to the gallery, they will be able to compare their own living rooms to the Living Room at the Gallery.

- How are the spaces different?
- How are they the same?

## Back in the Classroom

### How to Turn Your Felt Storyboards Into a Stop-Motion Film

WikiHow has five methods that you can use for making a stop-motion film:

[www.wikihow.com/Create-a-Stop-Motion-Animation](http://www.wikihow.com/Create-a-Stop-Motion-Animation)

You may need to create more felt images to add into your sequence (as a short 20-second piece can require several images). However, this process promises to create an exciting product of their MacKenzie Art Gallery experience, summarizing all of their activities and explorations into a final masterpiece.

### Classroom Curator

Ask a student or a group of students to curate a feature wall at the school or in your classroom. They can use student artwork or any artwork reproductions that you may have available. Discuss the decisions they made and why they chose what they did. They can even write a short statement that goes with the installation that explains their ideas. This wall can rotate to allow for participation of the entire group.