

# Art Gallery Education Guide

By: **Thalia Bock**

Completed for:

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Trent Centre for Community-based Education

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Trent Centre for Community Based Education

Women's Studies 383H

Kristi Malakoff: *Bounty*

**Introduction:**

I came upon the Art Gallery of Peterborough through Canadian Studies 100. This course had arranged a weeklong volunteer opportunity through the Trent Centre for Community Based Education with another art community in Peterborough, the Peterborough Arts Umbrella. I had a really successful week and felt like I should get involved with the art community. The program organizer emailed me a few months later, saying that the Art Gallery was in need of volunteers for a new exhibition. I helped out and was encouraged by the curator to take a volunteer form. After handing it in, I was called to help out with education programs. In our talks, Deirdre mentioned doing a course with the Trent Centre for Community Based Education.

This was a great opportunity for me, because I could get a credit for volunteering in something that I was interested in. I was also interested because I had just finished a course that had really motivated me to learn more about art, especially Canadian women in art. This course had incorporated the history of Canadian women in art, and I wanted to learn something new about a Canadian woman artist.

This involved a different process than what the Trent Centre does; usually the organization approaches the Centre and through them, finds a student and professor. I was found first, so this course was created specifically for me. Everything started from the ground up. After getting the go-ahead, I had to make meetings with Caroline, Deirdre

and Barb in order to create a guideline. Figuring out the syllabus was difficult, as I was not entirely sure of what the project entailed until a few weeks into the term. I found that coming up with assignments was difficult as well because it is hard to make the shift from volunteer work to graded work. I was to interview the artist and create an education guide for the teachers of grade five students coming into the gallery. But first I had to research the artist and different types of interview methods. For this course, I would be doing the work behind the education pamphlet; I would not actually be designing it. This interested me because I wanted to learn more about art and the process involved in working at an art gallery.

### **Method of Research:**

In order to interview Kristi Malakoff, I needed to research different types of interview methods. My interview needed to be qualitative, so I researched two types of such interviews: the active interview and the long interview. I found that some of the methods used did not apply to my form of research: it was more geared towards multiple qualitative interviews, as used in sociological research. As I was only interviewing one person, a person whose background I had already researched, the method that I would shape for myself to write the questions would draw certain aspects from the long interview.

An important aspect of the long interview involves the crossing of disciplines. Interdisciplinarity is crucial in the interview process because it provides different research angles and informs the interviewer of different opinions. Researching the subject beforehand was integral to the interview process because it gave a necessary distance. This distance would prove handy during the interview as to provide a new angle to the

research (McCracken, 1988). If I was to center my research using an artist lens as opposed to the lens of a student with a focus on research, I would have come up with different results entirely. I was also required to research Kristi Malakoff with a feminist viewpoint as well, because this course had been listed as a Women's Studies course. The long interview focused on the idea of the interviewer de-familiarizing themselves with the familiar and recognizing the importance of bias within the research (McCracken, 1988). My research had a feminist bias, seeing as I was required to make some connections to her work and Women's Studies. I tried to view her work under feminist frameworks, and interpret what she said as being feminist or not. I did not have much previous knowledge of her work or of installation art in general, and I definitely used my research as a student, rather than an artist.

At this point I was not sure if I was to interview Kristi Malakoff in person or not, so I also made notes on the appearance and body language of the interviewer and how it can be interpreted by the interviewee. It is important to dress formally because if an interviewer dresses too casually, the interviewee might not answer questions in a fashion that is desirable. That is to say, they might view the interviewer more as a friend and might say what they think that the interviewer wants to hear (McCracken, 1988). To me, it seems as if the opposite were true; when the interviewer dresses too formal, a respondent might not want to share as much because they would not view the interviewer as a friend.

It is also crucial in a long interview to ensure that the interview is not guided or forced in any way by the interviewer; that they must be positive that the respondent does not feel as if their answers are being directed towards a certain bias (McCracken, 1988).

his involves reiterating a question by repeating it back to the respondent in a way that seems directed. The interviewer can also try to anticipate what the interviewee will say; this is harmful in a long interview (McCracken, 1988). I was worried during my research that I would end up doing that by accident in the interview. However, I believe that my interview ended up going in a different direction than anticipated in the long interview.

In creating questions for the interview, I had to incorporate the research I had done both on installation art and Kristi Malakoff as well. I needed to be sure that she had not already previously answered a question that I had come up with, so it was necessary to read her earlier interviews. There had been a few answers from these interviews that I was not sure about, so I found a way to re-ask them. Researching installation art was also very helpful, as it gave me a few questions to ask her that tied into her work and its relation to the art movement.

I learned that Kristi Malakoff would not be in Peterborough for the interview, so I had to conduct it over the phone. I sent Kristi the questions beforehand, so she had her responses all written out. It was a matter of reading written material on both sides, which was not as engaging as I had originally imagined the interview.

### **The Artist and her Medium:**

Kristi Malakoff is very interested in fantasy and draws upon her life experiences to create her art. Her work incorporates the idea of transformation; she is very interested in bringing the inanimate to life (Grahauer, 2005). She uses size as an extreme as a common theme throughout her work. Malakoff's work is the incarnation of imagination and fairy tales (Grahauer, 2005). Reproduction is also an important element in her work; she uses pictures of nature to create beautiful installations (K. Malakoff, Interview,

March 14, 2008). She reproduces these pictures as well, cutting them out to construct a larger sculpture. I found her dedication quite captivating; as a child she used to train for triathlons and she also planted trees (Grahauer, 2005). This intense dedication to her work is what makes her art so fascinating.

Installation art questions the use of space in an art gallery or museum. It is usually temporary and transient; installations can travel to different spaces to exhibit. Installation art developed out of the question of negative space in regards to statues (Reiss, 1999).

The area where the work is placed is also incorporated, not just the space itself (Suderburg, 2000). In an installation piece, there is no negative space; sometimes the audience is incorporated into the work (Reiss, 1999). There are many different kinds of installation art. A functional site is what Kristi Malakoff is involved with: most of her work is transportable and changes with the space. A literal site is a sculpture that is created for its area; the artist works with the so called negative space to build a sculpture that involves the space (Suderburg, 2000).

Installation art gained popularity in the 1960s and 1970s. It was truly groundbreaking because it did not just rebel against commodification, it did so by changing the space in which to do it (Reiss, 1999). At first, installation art was used to question the gallery and institutionalized space. However, this new form of art caught on, and museums began showing certain installation pieces. Installations were used as political acts; artists often challenged museums which let them change the entire structure of how museums were run (Reiss, 1999). Installation art is still around today, which demonstrates the flexibility of the museums and galleries to change on demand what type of work they decide to show.

Malakoff's work incorporates the use of scale, both the miniature and the gigantic. The miniature has come to hold multiple meanings within our culture. Making normal sized objects smaller require more patience and skill on the part of the artist. On the part of the audience, they view miniatures as a giant would (Stewart, 1993). They feel as if they are in greater control of a miniature object than if it were to be normal sized. The miniature is portrayed in a contained space, which gives an adult more of an idea of control. These miniatures are smaller and contained, which makes them more perfect and fantastical; as if to control a non natural object is to be able to create something beyond the realistic (Stewart, 1993). As children are miniature adults, they are most interested in smaller objects, feeling as if miniatures are more properly sized for them. Adults, when viewing miniatures, feel childlike because of their largeness as compared to the miniature object. Being an adult, however, they feel more in control with the miniature world than a child would (Stewart, 1993). Malakoff uses currency as a form of miniature art; she creates small worlds out of world currencies that are contained within a space that she has set out.

The gigantic, on the other hand, is seen as the complete opposite. People see the gigantic as uncontrollable and sometimes intimidating. The gigantic is outside the realm of nature in its larger size, which means that humans have little or no control over it as they do with miniatures (Stewart, 1993). With the gigantic, the space is all encompassing; it is not miniature as it is not in a controlled world (Stewart, 1993). Art that uses the gigantic is not seen as art unless the artist takes control of the natural aspect of the gigantic (Stewart, 1993). Malakoff's work with the gigantic, as seen in *Swarm*, has been controlled; the butterflies are safely contained within the gallery space and are not alive.

Malakoff also relies on reproduction as a part of her process. Reproduction is a way for art to be replicated; this way, there is more of a piece of art than just one (Benjamin, 1993). It is common to see replications of artworks, including books and paintings. Walter Benjamin argues that the original piece of art has an aura that cannot be replicated, and an original loses its aura each time it is replicated (Benjamin, 1993). Art has also branched out into using forms of replication as works of art itself; Benjamin uses the example of photography. Photography was used to take pictures of nature, which has an aura. However, photography is no longer a form of replication that destroys an aura; instead it is a form of replication that takes away the aura of the original but also creates a separate entity of art (Benjamin, 1993). Malakoff's work involves replication with photography among other mediums. She takes the pictures herself most of the time, and her main focus in this is to bring the replication to life, as it is the closest that she can come to actual nature without bringing nature into the gallery (K. Malakoff, Interview, March 14, 2008).

**Outcome of the interview:**

The interview with Kristi Malakoff went well, provided it was my first. I called her one afternoon and we both read off our sheets. It was still amazing to have her jump off the page; all of my research had led to something! She threw me some answers that I had not expected and I wanted to jump off the record and talk to her about them and go off on a different tangent. I felt that that would not have been a very good choice, so I stuck to the questions I had before me. I found that most of her responses were quite surprising. I also had to use my knowledge of clarification that I had learned from the long interview to ask her an extra question. (See Appendix)



When asked about her artistic process, Malakoff described how she conceptualized her work. She believes that her work comes from within, and she needs time to think about her past experiences and how she can bring them to life through her work. Malakoff also has an intense physical dedication to her work, which she described in her answer. She works long days, working on one show at a time in order to complete it (K. Malakoff, Interview, March 14, 2008). I found this interesting because I admire such dedication to one task full of repetition. Doing research on her, I learned that she planted trees for many years (Grahauer, 2005). This can explain a lot, because planting trees is very physical and repetitive and requires a lot of dedication.

Malakoff's answers on her past work provided me with a lot of new information that I had not come across in my research. I found her answer about her year abroad in Chelsea very surprising. Her work before going abroad was large and difficult to move, but as she lived there and wanted to transport her work home she decided to start working on a smaller scale (K. Malakoff, Interview, March 14, 2008). I found a lot of connections that were not apparent before the interview; her work with money and her work with butterflies seemed to connect a bit more after talking with her.

I also asked her if she felt she was a feminist artist and her answer surprised me. Being a Women's Studies major, I am caught off guard when women do not feel as if their life relates to feminism. Caroline articulated my sentiment when stating that Malakoff or any other female artist would not be shown in any gallery if it was not for feminism. Women often do not relate to being a feminist because they do not have to; their rights (for example, suffrage) are taken for granted now. I had to email Malakoff to clarify her answer; I felt that her phone answer did not delve into this topic enough.

In clarifying, she feels that all groups of nature should be treated with respect, not just women even though they deserve respect as well. She just feels that everyone and everything should be equally valued (K. Malakoff, Personal communication, March 20, 2008). I believe that this is what feminism is trying to achieve; feminism is not about giving women special treatment. Feminism realizes that the view that everyone should be treated equal is not possible in a patriarchal structure. In this way, feminism works to change people's opinions of women in order for women to be treated equally, as they should be. Patriarchy should be changed and altered for women and other minority groups to become equal within society. Granted, Malakoff is not a Women's Studies major and I feel that her position was well articulated. However, I still wonder if the word 'feminism' is still a loaded term to her and many others.

**Conclusion:**

I felt that this was a successful collaboration between the Art Gallery of Peterborough and Trent University. It was mostly research based, which I feel is an important component of university learning. University is very theoretically based; readings and lectures and essays are integral in my degree. I also felt that this course gave me a chance to apply my research to something practical, especially creating questions, conducting the interview and helping to create the brochure. I feel that this was a good way to step out of the theoretical classroom and apply my skills to something that has a tangible effect within the Peterborough community.

Upon beginning this project, I was hoping to go to the Art Gallery on a fairly regular basis. I was imagining this course to be more work at the Gallery; however, other courses and its distance kept me far away. This was not a problem, as most of my

research was done outside the Gallery and there was no need to go, but I felt that this isolated me from my work in the community.

I also enjoyed being able to link Kristi Malakoff's view on feminism with what I have been learning the past three years; I have a better understanding of feminism now and could apply it to what Malakoff said in her interview. I also found it interesting, in working with both Kristi Malakoff and Amy, a student-teacher from Queens, that I had my own knowledge to bring to the table. With Amy, I had more knowledge of installation art and was the 'art consultant' in making the education guide. Of course, she had more knowledge of the grade five curriculum and we worked together to create different activities for the students. In talking with Kristi, she knew more about installation art and Minimalism because she is an artist. But in needing to clarify the question about feminism, she recognized that I knew more than she did about feminism. I feel that this made her shy away from a direct answer about what feminism entailed. I felt that in both of these situations, my knowledge was of use to someone other than me. This course really helped me to learn new things, and provide me with groundwork knowledge of art.

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## Appendix

Hello, my name is Thalia Bock, today is Friday March 14<sup>th</sup> and this is my interview with Kristi Malakoff.

**T: Can you describe your artistic process for me?**

K: Okay. I wasn't sure if you meant the conceptualization of the work or the physical making of the work, so I did both. Which part did you have in mind? Or both?

**T: I think both would be great.**

K: Just in terms of the conceptualization of the work I sort of have this sense that all my feelings, experiences, visions, ideas all that are sort of inside already so its just a matter of looking internally basically and letting these things come to the surface. I am so busy preparing for shows all the time that they don't bubble up spontaneously so I have to sit down and have a quiet time to think about the all the things that are going on inside already. So often when I'm lying in bed in the morning or before I go to sleep at night or when I'm having a cup of tea or something that's when the ideas come forward. But then physically, in terms of the making of the work again, I'm so busy so its full production zone all the time. I work twelve to sixteen hours a day. I just power out, it's pretty exhausting. A lot of my work is concerned with repetition so I sort of have this strict schedule where I time myself, like how long does it take to cut out each seed, each module so I try to fit as many into a day as I can. I usually just work on one piece at a time and also one show at a time so it's hard for me to multitask. That's essentially my working process.

**T: What areas were you most interested in at Emily Carr?**

K: So Emily Carr, in terms of studio, it was just general studio practices so we couldn't specify like synthetics, wood metal. We had all our critical theory, history, English and on the other side we had our studio. For sure, studio was the best, which is why I went to art school in the first place, to get into those studios. But then, on my own, I was initially attracted to the synthetics room I think because it was new and I had never done synthetic work before. Later on I moved towards wood quite a bit. I find wood to be really flexible and versatile medium and I still tend to use quite a lot of wood. I also did quite a bit of photography at Emily Carr as well. I did a bit of metal as well but I'm not totally interested in metalwork. We had to be quite self directed at Emily Carr if you wanted to learn these skills. None of them were actually taught, so I wanted to get as much skills as I could before I left Emily Carr. I think you can express yourself better if you have the skills to back you up.

**T: Could you clarify synthetics for me please?**

K: Synthetics are working with resins, like fiberglass resins or rubbers or things. I did a lot with casting resin initially. It looks a lot like glass but it deepens [when you] add dye to it and whatnot, mold making techniques and that sort of thing.

**T: Do you feel that your year abroad in Chelsea influenced your work?**

K: I was actually there for six months, so half a year, it was just one semester. But it did influence my work but maybe not in the way you were thinking. Just in terms of logistics, it completely affected my work. So previous to going to Chelsea, I did quite a lot of larger light pieces; I did a lot with fiberoptics. I used a lot of kinetics and motors and that kind of thing. My pieces were really large sculptural, kinetic pieces. When I got to Chelsea, number one, I had no money and number two; I was interested in bringing my work back again. So I had shipping concerns to think about. Being in a new city I had no idea where to find things and everything was so different. Logistically, things changed a bit for me there and that's when I first started

cutting up money for the first time just simply because it was light and small and easily accessible. Also, the *Swarm* piece, the piece with the butterflies, I didn't make it in London but I conceptualized it in London and I think that was just a factor of the weather was so grey and dark and it was raining and I was trying to think of beautiful things and I liked going to butterfly gardens, thinking about that. I made quite a bit of general work, work I could throw away at the end, or work that was done directly on the walls so I could just dismantle it and sort of modular work. A lot of that was around the logistics of my situation at the time.

**T: I know you studied at Emily Carr and you also were an Artist in Residence in Iceland and Banff. Did you come across any influential mentors during your times in these places?**

K: No, I never had any mentors per se; for sure I've met tons of great artists and good friends that I've met along the way. I would never call any of these relationships mentor relationships. I'm not that interested in being mentored, I guess, I never really have. I have a clear path already and I have my hands full with that. I find that most of the senior artists are so busy and focused on their own work I don't know if they have time for that kind of relationship anyway. I don't know if that sort of relationship exists anymore. But yeah, definitely I've met a lot of good friends along the way.

**T: I read in an earlier interview that you are not conscious of any direct artistic influences. Other than those already cited, can you elaborate on this?**

K: I'm not at this time conscious of having direct artistic influences. So of course I've absorbed feelings, ideas, experiences along the way. When I create work I'm very much looking internally into these experiences that I've had rather than exterior to other artists or theoreticians. My previous life before I was an artist I spent a huge amount of time outdoors, I worked outdoors, I lived outdoors and I've also travelled a lot. I have a really vivid and active dream world. I grew up immersing myself in fantasy books and I also tried to be a pretty careful observer of life. So it's all these experiences that I have inside that I turn to when I create my work. I'm not that interested in other artists or other theoreticians because it's like they've already digested the world and so it's already one step removed from real life. So I'm more interested in going to the source rather than taking it from them digested already.

**T: Do you see yourself as a feminist artist?**

K: No, I don't actually. It comes up a lot though, I find that interesting. But no, I don't think so. I was thinking about this last night: I am interested in life, all of life: human, male, female, transgendered, animals, plants, the earth. I'm interested in all of that, not just one area of that. I respect all of life, I wish others would also have this same respect but sometimes it's lacking. A lot of people like to contextualize my work in a feminist context. It's a little bit frustrating because it sort of takes away from my intentions and I find it limits the intentions of the work and sort of takes away from what I'm trying to say. I don't know, I guess maybe because I use nature a lot? Or because I use fantasy, or I have used butterflies and flowers in my work before? I think nature is for everyone, not just women.

**T: Do you feel your art relates to Minimalism?**

K: This was a great question actually, probably the best interview question I've ever gotten. It's really super interesting. I do, actually, surprisingly. Many people might not see that but I think that it has a lot of ties to Minimalism. I mean, Minimalism happened at a very specific point in history and also partly as a reaction against Abstract Expressionism. In terms of their tenants, I think that a lot of them are similar as the ones that I use. That is to say, my work is stripped down to its fundamentals, that is, some of my work, most of my installation

work I'm talking about, not the smaller pieces. I'm not at all interested in symbolism and tend not to have any metaphor or irony in my work which is the same in Minimalism. So, what you see is what you get. If I want to create a beehive, or a swarm of butterflies, I do that: I recreate a beehive or a swarm of butterflies in the most direct way that I can. That is the most direct way without using the real animals themselves. So I don't combine different elements in my work: I use just one subject matter and also material at a time which is similar to Minimalism. I am also interested in putting the materials in the foreground. Also, I think that is probably where the similarity ends because Minimalists were non-representationalists and I do represent real life situations. Also they were interested in more industrial type materials where I am more interested in ephemeral materials like paper and such. They also tended to step away from pictorial, illusionistic and fictive work and I actually directly use these methods. Besides that, except for the respect I have for the subjects of my work, I think that I present the work fairly objectively and devoid of emotional expressionism. So I think that's quite similar. Also, Minimalists didn't want this illusionistic sort of pictorial expressive sort of work, they moved more into sculpture work and stayed away from 2d work which is exactly what I've always done as well. Surprisingly I think that there [are] a lot of similarities between my work and Minimalism. I like thinking of my work in terms of Minimalism.

**T: *Swarm* incorporates transparency photocopies of butterflies. What is your opinion on the idea of authenticity and replication?**

K: I hope I understood your question correctly, interrupt me if I'm going on a different tangent. [In] quite a bit of the work in the last year and a half, I've been using digital images as a sculptural medium. Mostly I've taken them myself so they're my own images but sometimes depending on the season if I can access those things then I use photocopies of scientific sourcebooks etc. Initially when I started this work, it was sort of a formal concern, it was rebellion against; I felt 2d work is so powerful still after all these hundreds and thousands of years. I find that confusing and I sort of identify as a sculptor and stubbornly try to bring things back into their original 3d state. That was the initial formal interest that I had; also, just challenging the power of the symbolism of two-dimensional things like money, photographs and such. Now it's also the realization that the natural world is perfect already, I can't add anything more to it. If I want to recreate a swarm of butterflies or a beehive I need to go straight to the source as opposed to the source that I can do that. The ultimate artwork is the living creatures themselves. I would love to enter a room and have the viewers be surrounded [by a] swarm of living locusts. This to me is the ultimate work. I think that using the real creatures is totally ethically inexcusable so I would never do that. So I have to go to the next best thing, which is the actual image of the object that I'm interested in representing so that's why I do that. I have no interest at all in drawing thousands of butterflies using them instead or plain painting an image of butterflies. I'm not at all interested in that. I'm trying to get as close to the original as I possibly can.

**T: You answered it totally. How do you feel that the works in this exhibition relate to your past work?**

K: Yeah they do quite, they do relate very much so. I've only been practicing outside of school for two and a half years so just a short time. So I'm very much still interested in many of the same ideas that I have been in the last few years. I'm interested in swarms and herds and large groups of creatures, so this idea I've used before and I'm still fascinated by it so I have a few pieces that use that in this show. As well, I've used money before as a medium and I'm using it again for this show. I'm also doing some work with postage stamps. That's new; I've

never used postage stamps before. But the work I'm doing for this show relates to the three dimensionalising of money that I've used in the past. I'm also using fantasy and elements of fairy tales. I've used that before; this time I'm using more Grimm Brothers. I just spent six months in Berlin, so I've got some German thematic-like threads through the show. I'm using a little bit of inspiration from Grimm fairy tales. The new element to this show that I've never directly used before is the addition of death. I've always been passionate about life, so now I'm looking at its other half, death. The title of the show is *Bounty* and that reflects both sides of life: the bounty meaning abundance and fertility and that sort of thing but it also means the price placed on someone's head. If you kill someone, that's a bounty on their head. Those are two completely opposing ideas on the same work. So yeah, I'm interested in both death and life. I've always been drawn to cemeteries; I think they're really places of beauty and tranquility. I've spent a lot of time in my travels going to cemeteries. I'm looking at that side as well. So that's the new aspect to the show. I did a series of old German grave crosses. They have these old baroque wrought iron grave crosses; I've replicated them in paper. I'm doing a large sculpture of paper flowers which sort of relates to my time spent in Mexico last year. That's the new element to the show.

**T: Do you think that your artwork in this exhibition will be shaped by the gallery space?**

K: Yes and no. Half the work is self contained existing pieces that can be shown in any space and the other half will be the installation work. I have never actually seen any of these installations in the flesh yet and I am still working on them as we speak. It would definitely, installation work is always influenced by the space. Once I get there and I'm actually in the space that will guide how I install the work. I'm showing four or five mid size installations that I've never seen before. So we shall see, but I'm sure they will be shaped by the space.

**T: Your past work highlights an interest in scale, both the miniature and the gigantic. The idea of the miniature must be quite interesting to children. How do children respond to your work?**

K: Yeah, they're quite drawn [to] and fascinated [with] my work. I have a lot of children in my life, godchildren and nieces and nephews and all my friends have children, so I get to spend quite a bit of time with children. They're always very excited and express joy: that's [with] both the miniatures and the installation pieces. The butterfly piece kids really love. I think that's great, I would have too at that age. That's the kind of work I've always been interested in as well.

**T: So in regards to that, how do you feel about people touching or interacting with your work?**

K: Nooo, I don't like people touching my work. It's so extremely fragile, really really fragile and it gets damaged very easily. It's also really labour intensive. If I expend two thousand hours on a piece I feel pretty protective of it and attached to it. Unfortunately people are really drawn to touch my work and also to take some of it home. Every show I've had, I accrue lots of damage. I've often had my work stolen as well. That's really common with my work especially like modular pieces, like butterflies or the flowers, always people take those away. But it's really hard, it's really devastating. Because it's just me at the end who's left with the pieces left to repair or fix or replace. And I'm really short on time so it's like 'oh no another piece I have to repair'. I'm very happy the people interact with the piece on an emotional or experiential level for sure. That's why I make it; I'm using the space as well so if



they can experience it emotionally, that's fantastic. Not on a physical level, it's just so fragile, that's the problem.

## **Artistic Profile and Grade 5 Curriculum Design**

**Includes:  
Final Report**

**By Thalia Bock**

**Completed for:**  
Peterborough Art Gallery  
Supervising Professor: Prof. Caroline Langill, Trent University  
Trent Centre for Community-Based Education

**Department:** Canadian Studies  
**Course Code:**  
**Course Name:**  
Term: Fall/Winter 2008  
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**Project ID:** 893

**Call Number:**



Gallery of  
Peterborough

Grade 5 Program 2008  
**Educational Resources CD**  
Kristi Malakoff- *Bounty*

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## **ARTIST STATEMENT**

As a child who grew up on Disney movies and books by Roald Dahl and C.S. Lewis, I have always been intrigued by notions of fantasy and the possibilities for escape into new, marvelous worlds via mundane objects such as a wardrobe (C.S. Lewis), a peach or an elevator (Roald Dahl). Parallel to this fascination was the delight I took, and continue to take, in the possibility of inanimate objects coming to life. As a serious child who was engaged from a young age in heavy discipline and competition, fantasy was my escape from the rigors of daily life.

Now, as an artist, I am becoming increasingly aware of my tendency to try to bring inanimate objects to life; in particular, I have been working on the 3-dimensional animation of 2-dimensional media including wallpaper, photographic images, paper currency and cereal boxes. By presenting these ubiquitous objects in a new way, I hope to both challenge their entrenched symbolism as well as to bring humanism and the element of the handmade back into these highly manufactured products. As I breathe new life into these insentient things, I also strive to create a unique, exquisite object from one that was previously mass-produced...

Through my installation work, I am interested in creating a visceral experience for the viewer – allowing them an opportunity to be visually and emotionally transported to a place that alternates between beauty and foreboding, awe and intimidation and reality and the façade. I have always believed that a degree of fantasy – as a respite from the responsibilities of daily life – is crucial for human health. As such, I wish to provide this sanctuary to the viewer...

Finally, much of my work is concerned with explorations of beauty. In a world that is currently fraught with chaos and uncertainty, I believe that there is a great need for experiences that are sublime (in the common sense of the term) and exquisite. I find that the experience of beauty is as profound as any other and one that is capable of precipitating great social change. While daily newscasts serve to deaden the senses, I wish to engage the senses. As one subject that I believe is capable of such perfection, nature is quickly becoming a major subject area in my work. Challenging urban development, I strive to put nature back in the world – allowing it to reassert itself within the urban or domestic context.

**KRISTI MALAKOFF, 2008**

**AGP: Can you describe your artistic process for me?**

KM: Just in terms of the conceptualization of the work I sort of have this sense that all my feelings, experiences, visions, ideas all that are sort of inside already so its just a matter of looking internally basically and letting these things come to the surface. I am so busy preparing for shows all the time that they don't bubble up spontaneously so I have to sit down and have a quiet time to think about the all the things that are going on inside already. So often when I'm lying in bed in the morning or before I go to sleep at night or when I'm having a cup of tea or something that's when the ideas come forward. But then physically, in terms of the making of the work again, I'm so busy so its full production zone all the time. I work twelve to sixteen hours a day. I just power out, it's pretty exhausting. A lot of my work is concerned with repetition so I sort of have this strict schedule where I time myself, like how long does it take to cut out each seed, each module so I try to fit as many into a day as I can. I usually just work on one piece at a time and also one show at a time so it's hard for me to multitask. That's essentially my working process.

**AGP: What areas were you most interested in at Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design?**

KM: So Emily Carr, in terms of studio, it was just general studio practices so we couldn't specify like synthetics, wood metal. We had all our critical theory, history, English and on the other side we had our studio. For sure, studio was the best, which is why I went to art school in the first place, to get into those studios. But then, on my own, I was initially attracted to the synthetics room I think because it was new and I had never done synthetic work before. Later on I moved towards wood quite a bit. I find wood to be really flexible and versatile medium and I still tend to use quite a lot of wood. I also did quite a bit of photography at Emily Carr as well. I did a bit of metal as well but I'm not totally interested in metalwork. We had to be quite self directed at Emily Carr if you wanted to learn these skills. None of them were actually taught, so I wanted to get as much skills as I could before I left Emily Carr. I think you can express yourself better if you have the skills to back you up.

**AGP: Could you clarify synthetics for me please?**

KM: Synthetics are working with resins, like fiberglass resins or rubbers or things. I did a lot with casting resin initially. It looks a lot like glass but it deepens [when you] add dye to it and whatnot, mold making techniques and that sort of thing.

**AGP: Do you feel that your year abroad in Chelsea influenced your work?**

KM: I was actually there for six months, so half a year, it was just one semester. But it did influence my work but maybe not in the way you were thinking. Just in terms of logistics, it completely affected my work. So previous to going to Chelsea, I did quite a lot of larger light pieces; I did a lot with fiberoptics. I used a lot of kinetics and motors and that kind of thing. My pieces were really large sculptural, kinetic pieces. When I got to Chelsea, number one, I had no money and number two; I was interested in bringing my work back again. So I had shipping concerns to think about. Being in a new city I had no idea where to find things and everything was so different. Logistically, things changed a bit for me there and that's when I first started cutting up money for the first time just simply because it was light and small and easily accessible. Also, the *Swarm* piece, the piece with the butterflies, I didn't make it in London but I conceptualized it in London and I think that was a just a factor of the weather was so grey and dark and it was raining and I was trying to think of beautiful things and I liked going to butterfly gardens, thinking about that. I made quite a bit of general work, work I could throw away at the end, or work that was done directly on the walls so I could just dismantle it and sort of modular work. A lot of that was around the logistics of my situation at the time.

**AGP: I know you studied at Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design, and you also were an Artist in Residence in Iceland and Banff. Did you come across any influential mentors during your times in these places?**

KM: No, I never had any mentors per se; for sure I've met tons of great artists and good friends that I've met along the way. I would never call any of these relationships mentor relationships. I'm not that interested in being mentored, I guess, I never really have. I have a clear path already and I have my hands full with that. I find that most of the senior artists are so busy and focused on their own work I don't know if they have time for that kind of relationship anyway. I don't know if that sort of relationship exists anymore. But yeah, definitely I've met a lot of good friends along the way.

**AGP: I read in an earlier interview that you are not conscious of any direct artistic influences. Other than those already cited, can you elaborate on this?**

KM: I'm not at this time conscious of having direct artistic influences. So of course I've absorbed feelings, ideas, experiences along the way. When I create work I'm very much looking internally into these experiences that I've had rather than exterior to other artists or

theoreticians. My previous life before I was an artist I spent a huge amount of time outdoors, I worked outdoors, I lived outdoors and I've also traveled a lot. I have a really vivid and active dream world. I grew up immersing myself in fantasy books and I also tried to be a pretty careful observer of life. So it's all these experiences that I have inside that I turn to when I create my work. I'm not that interested in other artists or other theoreticians because it's like they've already digested the world and so it's already one step removed from real life. So I'm more interested in going to the source rather than taking it from them digested already.

### **AGP: Do you feel your art relates to Minimalism?**

KM: This was a great question actually, probably the best interview question I've ever gotten. It's really super interesting. I do, actually, surprisingly. Many people might not see that but I think that it has a lot of ties to Minimalism. I mean, Minimalism happened at a very specific point in history and also partly as a reaction against Abstract Expressionism. In terms of their tenants, I think that a lot of them are similar as the ones that I use. That is to say, my work is stripped down to its fundamentals, that is, some of my work, most of my installation work I'm talking about, not the smaller pieces. I'm not at all interested in symbolism and tend not to have any metaphor or irony in my work which is the same in Minimalism. So, what you see is what you get. If I want to create a beehive, or a swarm of butterflies, I do that: I recreate a beehive or a swarm of butterflies in the most direct way that I can. That is the most direct way without using the real animals themselves. So I don't combine different elements in my work: I use just one subject matter and also material at a time which is similar to Minimalism. I am also interested in putting the materials in the foreground. Also, I think that is probably where the similarity ends because Minimalists were non-representationalists and I do represent real life situations. Also they were interested in more industrial type materials where I am more interested in ephemeral materials like paper and such. They also tended to step away from pictorial, illusionistic and fictive work and I actually directly use these methods. Besides that, except for the respect I have for the subjects of my work, I think that I present the work fairly objectively and devoid of emotional expressionism. So I think that's quite similar. Also, Minimalists didn't want this illusionistic sort of pictorial expressive sort of work, they moved more into sculpture work and stayed away from 2d work which is exactly what I've always done as well. Surprisingly I think that there [are] a lot of similarities between my work and Minimalism. I like thinking of my work in terms of Minimalism.

**AGP: *Swarm* incorporates transparency photocopies of butterflies. What is your opinion on the idea of authenticity and replication?**

KM: I hope I understood your question correctly, interrupt me if I'm going on a different tangent. [In] quite a bit of the work in the last year and a half, I've been using digital images as a sculptural medium. Mostly I've taken them myself so they're my own images but sometimes depending on the season if I can access those things then I use photocopies of scientific sourcebooks etc. Initially when I started this work, it was sort of a formal concern, it was rebellion against; I felt 2d work is so powerful still after all these hundreds and thousands of years. I find that confusing and I sort of identify as a sculptor and stubbornly try to bring things back into their original 3d state. That was the initial formal interest that I had; also, just challenging the power of the symbolism of two-dimensional things like money, photographs and such. Now it's also the realization that the natural world is perfect already, I can't add anything more to it. If I want to recreate a swarm of butterflies or a beehive I need to go straight to the source as opposed to the source that I can do that. The ultimate artwork is the living creatures themselves. I would love to enter a room and have the viewers be surrounded [by a] swarm of living locusts. This to me is the ultimate work. I think that using the real creatures is totally ethically inexcusable so I would never do that. So I have to go to the next best thing, which is the actual image of the object that I'm interested in representing so that's why I do that. I have no interest at all in drawing thousands of butterflies using them instead or plain painting an image of butterflies. I'm not at all interested in that. I'm trying to get as close to the original as I possibly can.

**AGP: How do you feel that the works in this exhibition relate to your past work?**

KM: Yeah they do quite, they do relate very much so. I've only been practicing outside of school for two and a half years so just a short time. So I'm very much still interested in many of the same ideas that I have been in the last few years. I'm interested in swarms and herds and large groups of creatures, so this idea I've used before and I'm still fascinated by it so I have a few pieces that use that in this show. As well, I've used money before as a medium and I'm using it again for this show. I'm also doing some work with postage stamps. That's new; I've never used postage stamps before. But the work I'm doing for this show relates to the three dimensionalising of money that I've used in the past. I'm also using fantasy and elements of fairy tales. I've used that before; this time I'm using more Grimm Brothers. I just spent six months in Berlin, so I've got some German thematic-like threads through the show. I'm using a little bit of inspiration from Grimm fairy tales. The new element to this show that



I've never directly used before is the addition of death. I've always been passionate about life, so now I'm looking at its other half, death. The title of the show is *Bounty* and that reflects both sides of life: the bounty meaning abundance and fertility and that sort of thing but it also means the price placed on someone's head. If you kill someone, that's a bounty on their head. Those are two completely opposing ideas on the same work. So yeah, I'm interested in both death and life. I've always been drawn to cemeteries; I think they're really places of beauty and tranquility. I've spent a lot of time in my travels going to cemeteries. I'm looking at that side as well. So that's the new aspect to the show. I did a series of old German grave crosses. They have these old baroque wrought iron grave crosses; I've replicated them in paper. I'm doing a large sculpture of paper flowers, which sort of relates to my time spent in Mexico last year. That's the new element to the show.

**AGP: Do you think that your artwork in this exhibition will be shaped by the gallery space?**

KM: Yes and no. Half the work is self-contained existing pieces that can be shown in any space and the other half will be the installation work. I have never actually seen any of these installations in the flesh yet and I am still working on them as we speak. It would definitely. Installation work is always influenced by the space. Once I get there and I'm actually in the space that will guide how I install the work. I'm showing four or five mid size installations that I've never seen before. So we shall see, but I'm sure they will be shaped by the space.

**AGP: Your past work highlights an interest in scale, both the miniature and the gigantic. The idea of the miniature must be quite interesting to children. How do children respond to your work?**

KM: Yeah, they're quite drawn [to] and fascinated [with] my work. I have a lot of children in my life, godchildren and nieces and nephews and all my friends have children, so I get to spend quite a bit of time with children. They're always very excited and express joy: that's [with] both the miniatures and the installation pieces. The butterfly piece kids really love. I think that's great, I would have too at that age. That's the kind of work I've always been interested in as well.

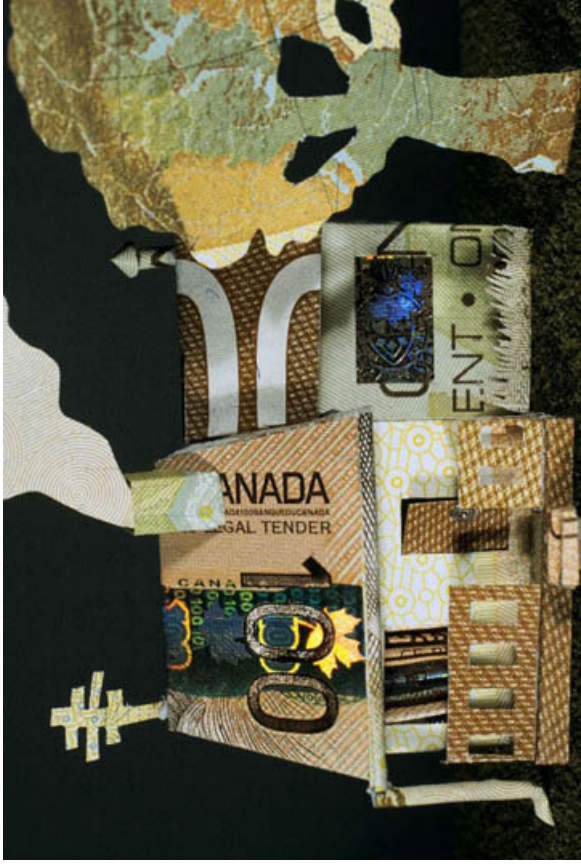
**AGP: So in regards to that, how do you feel about people touching or interacting with your work?**

KM: Nooo, I don't like people touching my work. It's so extremely fragile, really really fragile and it gets damaged very easily. It's also really labour intensive. If I expend two

thousand hours on a piece I feel pretty protective of it and attached to it. Unfortunately people are really drawn to touch my work and also to take some of it home. Every show I've had, I accrue lots of damage. I've often had my work stolen as well. That's really common with my work especially like modular pieces, like butterflies or the flowers, always people take those away. But it's really hard, it's really devastating. Because it's just me at the end who's left with the pieces left to repair or fix or replace. And I'm really short on time so it's like 'oh no another piece I have to repair'. I'm very happy the people interact with the piece on an emotional or experiential level for sure. That's why I make it; I'm using the space as well so if they can experience it emotionally, that's fantastic. Not on a physical level, it's just so fragile, that's the problem.

# Canadian Currency





**“\$100 Cabin”, Kristi Malakoff, 2005\***



**“Intersecting Star”, Kristi Malakoff, 2008\***

**Links to basic 3d origami:**

<http://www.enchantedlearning.com/math/geometry/hexaflexagon/instructions.shtml>

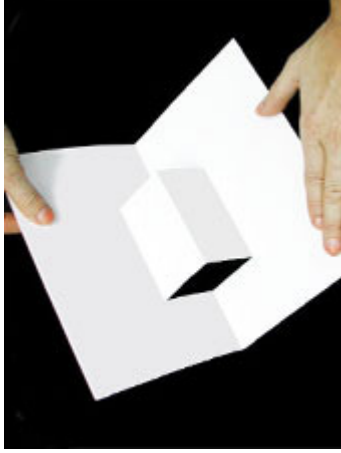
[http://www.korthalsaltes.com/pictures\\_selection.html](http://www.korthalsaltes.com/pictures_selection.html)

<http://www.foldastar.com/how-to-make-an-origami-star/>

## Activity 2:

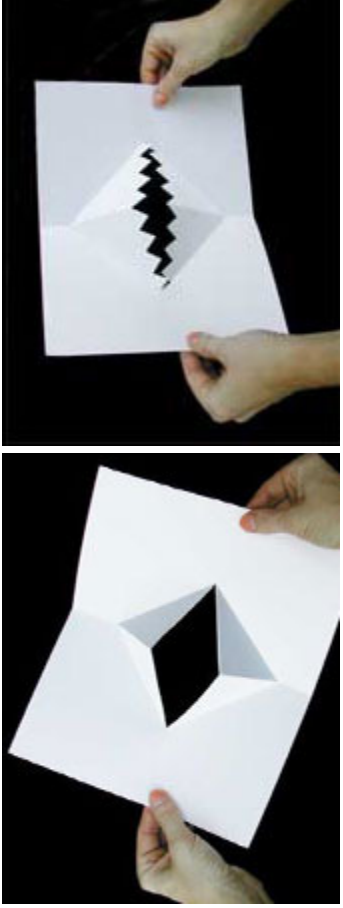
### Layer Pop-Ups:

- Step 1:** Begin with an 8 1/2" x 11" piece of construction paper or card stock.
- Step 2:** Fold the construction paper in half to form a card
- Step 3:** Draw two parallel lines of equal height towards the fold of the card. The lines don't have to be perfect as long as they are the same height
- Step 4:** Cut along both lines starting at the folded edge
- Step 5:** Fold the cut section back and crease along the edge with your thumb
- Step 7:** Put the cut strip back in its original position
- Step 8:** Open the card up like a tent.
- Step 9:** Using your thumbs, push the cut strip through to the other side of the card.
- Step 10:** Close the card and press firmly.
- Step 11:** Open your Layer Pop-up!
- Step 12:** Glue your images onto the flap so that it pops up when the page is opened!



### Mouth Pop- Up:

- Step 1:** Begin with an 8 1/2" x 11" piece of construction paper or card stock.
- Step 2:** Fold the construction paper in half to form a card
- Step 3:** Draw a line from the folded edge of the card to the center.
- Step 4:** Cut along the line starting at the folded edge
- Step 5:** Fold back the top flap to form a triangle and crease the edge with your finger
- Step 6:** Fold back the bottom flap to form a triangle and crease with your thumb or finger
- Step 7:** Put the bottom triangle flap back in its original position.
- Step 8:** Put the top triangle flap back in its original position.
- Step 9:** Open the card up like a tent.
- Step 10:** Using your thumb or fingers, push the top triangle through to the inside.
- Step 11:** Using your thumb or fingers, push the bottom triangle through to the inside also.
- Step 12:** Close the card and press firmly
- Step 13:** Open your mouth pop-up!



## Accordion Pop Up

- Step 1:** Cut two long strips of paper, approximately 1cm x 5cm.
- Step 2:** At one end, line the papers up so that they make a perpendicular angle with each other.
- Step 3:** Fold the bottom paper over the top piece.
- Step 4:** Continue until all of the paper is folded
- Step 5:** Glue one end of your accordion to your page, and the other end to your image.

[http://www.robertsabuda.com/popmake/popmake\\_mouth-step1.asp](http://www.robertsabuda.com/popmake/popmake_mouth-step1.asp)

[http://www.robertsabuda.com/popmake/popmake\\_layer-step1.asp](http://www.robertsabuda.com/popmake/popmake_layer-step1.asp)

[http://www.ldssplash.com/kids/fun\\_stuff/funwithpaper/pop\\_up\\_cards/pop\\_up\\_cards.htm](http://www.ldssplash.com/kids/fun_stuff/funwithpaper/pop_up_cards/pop_up_cards.htm)

<http://www3.sympatico.ca/bovine.designs/ht1.html>

<http://www3.sympatico.ca/bovine.designs/ht2.html>

<http://www3.sympatico.ca/bovine.designs/ht3.html>

## **Brothers Grimm**

Jacob Grimm, January 4, 1785 – September 20, 1835  
Wilhelm Grimm, February 24, 1786-December 16, 1859

The Brothers Grimm were well known for their collections of childrens fairy tales. The two brothers collected and wrote down various tales that had been handed down for generations. Grimm's Fairy Tales were known to be dark in nature, often focusing on evil and violence. Included in their collections were now popular tales including Rapunzel, Hansel and Gretel, Cinderella, and Rumpelstiltskin.

For more information on the Brothers Grimm, visit:

<http://www.pitt.edu/~dash/grimm.html> -chronology of their life, tales, and external links

<http://www.nationalgeographic.com/grimm/index2.html> -the Grimm versions of some popular fairy tales

<http://www.grimmfairytales.com/en/main> -biography, tales, fun activities

<http://www.familymanagement.com/literacy/grimms/grimms-toc.html> -complete compilation of Grimm's Fairy Tales



**“Swarm”, Kristi Malakoff, 2005\***



**“Orchard”, Kristi Malakoff, 2005\***





***“Garden”***, Kristi Malakoff, 2007\*



***“Ornithological Series (Kingfisher)”***, Kristi Malakoff, 2004\*

\*Images courtesy of the artist