

Seattle City Council

Housing, Human Services, Health and Culture Committee Meeting

2 p.m. Wednesday, June 13th, 2012

Words' Worth

The Poetry Program of the Seattle City Council

Curated by **Sibyl James**

Today's poet is **Kathleen Flenniken**

Kathleen Flenniken is the 2012 – 2014 Washington State Poet Laureate. Her new collection, *Plume* (University of Washington Press), is a meditation on the Hanford Nuclear Site. Her first book, *Famous* (University of Nebraska Press), was named a Notable Book by the American Library Association and a finalist for the Washington State Book Award. Flenniken's awards include a Pushcart Prize and fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts and Artist Trust.

News Item

By Kathleen Flenniken

"New research suggests we have a fixed reservoir of self-restraint."

This is why at the end of the day
you smuggle bowls of ice cream to the TV

Or put another way
when you pushed your plate aside
and hunger kneaded your gut for months
this is why you crammed the closet with new clothes
and emerged from your diving bell
in a breathless hotel room
why you let the coat fall from your shoulders

That manic week
when you ironed every shirt and tablecloth
why you couldn't keep up with the grief

Last night sirens passed close
this morning the airwaves crash and moil

and your mail is flooded with catalogs

This is why you've staged your house like a catalog
why you can't bear to open the bills
why streets are jammed with luxury cars
and panhandlers
and your country is at war

End.