

A Message from the Executive Director

SO MANY THANKS TO EVERYONE WHO HELPED MAKE 2018 OUR BEST YEAR EVER!

Interact Visual Artists kicked off the energy this past spring with an Innovation Award from the MN Department of Human Services. This award recognizes our pioneering history in creating transformational opportunities for artists with disabilities.

Interact Theater Artists set the stage on fire with Hot Funky Butt Jazz, which sold out every single performance at the Guthrie's Dowling Studio Theater this past November. Five spectacular guest musicians - including three direct from New Orleans - joined Interact's cast of 40+ actors with disabilities.

And yet, at the same time we are celebrated for high quality artistic work that transforms lives for people with disabilities, continuing cuts in government funding for people with disabilities are threatening our future – *with a new 7% funding decrease predicted on the near horizon.*

Now more than ever before, your financial support is critical. Every dollar you donate tells artists with disabilities that you value them as integral members of our communities.

When I founded Interact twenty-two years ago, I could never have imagined we would be where we are today. We have grown from five artists in 1996, to over 100 artists today - growth that tells us how urgent the need is to support art that challenges perceptions of disability.

As 2018 draws to a close, I am inviting you to make a year-end gift to Interact. And I am inviting you to continue to visit our arts exhibits, see our shows, and experience the joy of this creative community.

Thank you, everyone, for your gifts and goodwill! May you enjoy a wonderful holiday season!

Jeanne Calvit
Founder and Artistic/
Executive Director



A Note from our Board Chair

DEAR FRIENDS AND FAMILY,

Together, we are creating art that challenges perceptions of disability. Together, we are opening doors for artists with disabilities and audiences eager to experience their work. We are grateful for all you do for the Interact Center for the Visual and Performing Arts.

We are thankful for the incredible work of all of our artists, staff, volunteers, patrons, sponsors, and donors.

Our Visual and Performing Arts programs enable the creation of art in a spirit of radical inclusion, seek to inspire artists and audiences to explore the full spectrum of human potential, and transform lives by expanding ideas of what is possible.

We are focusing on moving forward by creating new visual and performing art showcased in galleries and theaters throughout the Twin Cities. We continue to pursue new opportunities for artistic collaboration and together we will create an even brighter future for the Center.

Please know that because of all of you, our work is not only possible, but thrives. You conceive, plan, fund, sponsor, create, produce, market, deliver, enhance, inform and revitalize our excellent artistic work. Interact Center creates art that challenges perceptions of disability!

Best wishes and thank you,
Robert J. Spikings
Board Chair





Hot Funky Butt Jazz 2018

Interact Theater just wrapped up a sold out, three week run of the new musical, *Hot Funky Butt Jazz*. With a cast of over fifty artists, including outstanding actors and musicians from New Orleans, every night was a remarkable experience in the Guthrie Dowling Theater that ended with a well-deserved standing ovation! New audience members experienced the work of Interact and one person sent us an email that captured the feeling of a first time Interact patron:

*"Dear Interact Center,
I saw your latest show at the Guthrie, Hot Funky Butt Jazz, and wanted to send a note of gratitude. Thank you for your amazing work and mission of your organization. The show was coordinated so beautifully and the participants did a beautiful job! My girlfriend and I attended not knowing anything about the show or organization- it made my weekend and she indicated she was attending it again!"*

Hot Funky Butt Jazz Press Highlights

"Hot Funky Butt Jazz is a challenging show in the best sense of the word. This Interact Theater production isn't so much a play as an immersive experience fusing music, history and the combined energies of more than 50 cast members into a lively, pointed and heartbreakingly genuine piece."

- Lisa Brock, *Star Tribune* Stage and Arts Section

*"It's rare, but sometimes something comes at me so fresh and so unexpectedly that it takes my breath away. I had the pleasure of just such an experience last weekend at *Hot Funky Butt Jazz*, a new musical by Interact theater on stage at the Guthrie's 9th floor studio space. I went to the show because I love jazz and the hook of the plot - the real history of New Orleans jazz as told by infamous voodoo queen Marie Laveau - was just way too tempting to turn down. It was clear, however, that I was in for so much more from the very opening scene, depicting a second line jazz funeral for Laveau that included the most diverse range of faces and bodies that I've ever seen on stage."*

- Becki Iverson, *Compendium*

"Hot Funky Butt Jazz is powered by music, including a raunchy song ("Sin in Sin-copation"), a hilarious song ("Small-Time Vaudeville"), a wistful song ("Jasmine in the Wind") and a song with teeth ("Mista Jim Crow"). It's about many things: history, jazz, human struggles, racism, survival and improvisation in the face of oppression.

It may ultimately be about hope. Twice during the play, near the beginning and again near the end, Marie Laveau tells us we all get three wishes: to remember the souls from the past, to be happy in the present, and to hope for the future."

- Pamela Espeland, *MinnPost*



MN DHS Awards Innovation Grant To Interact Visual Arts Department

Interact Center for the Visual and Performing Arts has launched **Proclaiming Our Place**, an unprecedented creative e-commerce and arts marketing initiative that will change the economic landscape for over 70 artists with disabilities.

The MN DHS **Innovative Solutions for People with Disabilities** fund puts teeth into the Olmstead Act* with funding to put it into practice. It provides working capital for new approaches to creating competitive employment for people with disabilities, and for "integrating" - connecting - people with disabilities into vibrant community life.

Interact has been a pioneer in both of those areas since 1996, long before Olmstead was started. This MN DHS award celebrates our history, and moves us exponentially forward. Interact was **one of only eight organizations in the entire state** to receive this award!

Interact's mission to "create art that challenges perceptions of disability" has modeled innovation and earnings equity for artists with disabilities since 1996. Interact's vision of radical inclusion blurs ideas of who "can" and who "cannot," featuring artists with and without disabilities, and artists from the mainstream and the margins, together on stage and in the studio. Interact pays all artists industry-standard fees for performances and sales of their artwork.

Proclaiming Our Place is a change-making initiative for Interact's Studio of over 70 artists with disabilities. Here's a quick look at some ways it will transform lives:

- A new, fully ADA-accessible **e-commerce website** will feature the work of Interact's Studio of over 70 artists with disabilities - giving them potentially global reach for artwork sales.
- **Professional Gallery Management and Artist Representation** will develop *exhibitions* of work by Interact artists in local, regional, and national brick-and-mortar galleries; and will connect them with eager *art purchasers*.
- Professional creative workshops and networking opportunities with acclaimed guest artist instructors/mentors will **position Interact artists with disabilities as peers in the wider arts community**.
- Research and networking opportunities with organizations like MIA, Walker Art Center, MCAD, and more, connect artists with disabilities to **real world arts learning opportunities**.

Interact Theater has always been a recognized player in the professional arts community: winning two Ivey Awards and multiple National Endowment for the Arts Awards, and performing at the Guthrie Theater's Dowling Studio.

Yet media attention for Minnesota's world-class community of Visual Artists does not meet the high-impact threshold for media attention. That means that - even for experienced professional artists - attracting audiences for gallery openings is an uphill challenge, and connecting with potential art purchasers is beyond the reach of most, who have few skills in self-marketing. For artists with disabilities, those barriers multiply.

Highly recognized artists like Wing Young Huie, Susan Armington, Lori Greene and Seitu Jones have encouraged us to reach for the kind of opportunities that Proclaiming our Place offers. MN DHS agrees, and today they are helping us change the economic landscape for Interact artists with disabilities.

**Olmstead mandates that people with disabilities are able to live, learn, work, and enjoy life in the most integrated setting.*



- Arts Business workshops will develop **skills for self-advocacy and self-sustainability**.
- **A multi-tiered marketing initiative** will not only leverage local and national print, broadcast, and social media. It will also collaborate with e-commerce leaders, promote in-person and online special events, exhibit at local and national collector gatherings, and more.

And the best part...

- Interact artists with disabilities are paid a **regular, reliable baseline stipend** to devote their time to creating new work in our Studio, **in community with emerging and experienced artists with and without disabilities**.
- For every work of art that is sold, **the artist receives the industry-standard 50% commission**, while Interact invests the other 50% right back into high-quality, professional arts supplies that are available to every artist in the Studio - **a renewable cycle of economic sustainability** for today's artists, and for artists of the future.

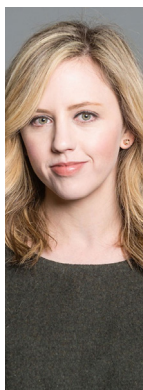
STAFF ADDITIONS

Interact added two talented and experienced staff this year as a result of the DHS Grant

Gallery Director

Laura Wertheim Joseph is an experienced curator, writer, art historian and arts organizer and received her doctorate in art history from the University of Minnesota in 2015. She has worked with numerous arts organizations across the country, including the Mary and Leigh Block Museum, the Plains Art Museum and the Weisman Art Museum. Her recent projects include exhibitions that have toured internationally, such as "A Feast of Astonishments: Charlotte Moorman and Avant-Garde," which was recognized as one of the best of 2016 by The New York Times.

"I'm delighted to join the dedicated and visionary team at Interact. It's a special place," said Joseph. "My commitment to advancing appreciation and understanding for artists whose work gives voice to undervalued sources of knowledge and wisdom aligns with Interact's vision of combining radical inclusivity with artistic excellence."



Gallery Archivist & Collections Manager

Brittany Kieler received a Master of Fine Arts degree with a Graduate Minor in Museum Studies from the University of Minnesota in 2018. She has performed archival work for Bohemian Press Editions; the University of Wisconsin Digital Collections Center; and SIGHTINGS, an exhibition and permanent online archive that she co-curated in 2016. Kieler has also developed arts programming and been an art educator at various institutions in the Midwest, including RedLine Milwaukee, the Minnesota Veterinary Historical Museum, and the Department of Art at the University of Minnesota. She is thrilled to join Interact's community!



WORKSHOPS, EVENTS, AND SHOWS

Visual Arts Highlights

2017:

Coffee, Croissants & Creativity – First Year, four workshops
Saori Weaving w/ Chiaki O'Brien – monthly workshops
Changing Landscapes, Institute on Community Integration - January
Mississippi Creative Arts School Residency – February
Plumage & Sparks, Phoenix Theater – March
Spring Saint Paul Art Crawl – April
Courage Kenny Art of Possibilities – April
Feast, Birchwood – August
Etcetera, CanCan Wonderland - September
Fall Saint Paul Art Crawl – October
Hoppy Holidays Makers Market, Urban Growler – December
Strange Girls Holiday Night Market, Modist Brewery – December

2018:

Coffee, Croissants & Creativity – Second Year, four workshops
Through the Window, Interact Gallery, curated by Artist Advisory Council - March
Spring Saint Paul Art Crawl - April
Courage Kenny Art of Possibilities – April
Fertile Ground, Interact Gallery – June
Courage & Triumph, MN Orchestra – July
Art For All (Featuring Ingrid Hansen and Jon Leverentz), MPLS Club - August
Rollin' on Down the River, Interact Gallery – September
Pop!, Interact Gallery - October
Fall Saint Paul Art Crawl – October
Great Big Holiday Art Sale - November



Spotlight

COFFEE, CROISSANTS, AND CREATIVITY

Interact is a 2018 recipient of a MN Department of Human Services (DHS) innovation grant to assist Interact visual artists to market their artwork on-line nationally. As Access Press reported in their fall newsletter, DHS Commissioner Emily Piper visited Interact and stated that "these grants will help expand options and pathways for people with disabilities to live the lives they want. These organizations are broadening choices for people to live, work, and engage in their communities."

One component of the Innovation Grant is "Coffee, Croissants, and Creativity" workshops. These workshops are taught by Interact artists to case managers and other service professionals who refer their clients to Interact. The experiential workshops engage participants in learning techniques of painting, sketching, sculpting, and other visual arts forms. After the teaching sessions, artists share with the attendees what art means to them in their life, and how Interact has supported their career choice as an artist. The Interact artists are paid to teach the case managers, and the participants gain a better understanding of making and selling art as a career choice.

SITE TOURS FOR PROSPECTIVE ARTISTS

Deb Holtz, Artist Support Department Manager, gives tours to prospective artists who are interested in Interact Center.

"We are busy with constant tours. We now average two or three tours a week, and are a popular spot for new case managers wanting to learn more about options in the community. The vast majority of our tours result in an artist following up with an Experience Day, and then deciding to choose Interact as their career choice to pursue their art. We have had so many new attendees in the past year,



**INTERACT KEEPS
GROWING WITH
EXCEPTIONAL
NEW TALENT!"**



Feast of Fools

WHAT A PRODUCTION TO REMEMBER IN 2017!

Complete with evil kings, wise fools, starving villagers, and fortune-telling Manouches (Gypsy outcasts), Interact Theater's 40+ actors with and without disabilities brewed this wild harvest into the Medieval Feast of Fools. With *Kevin Kling as the Masterfully Foolish storyteller* who brought all the action to life, Interact turned The Lab Theater into an enchanted kingdom of intrigue, evil doing, and redemption, and the live five-piece orchestra performed *an original score by Ivey Award-winning composer Aaron Gabriel*.

We hope you were there when audiences were treated to....

- Holy fools, wise fools, April fools, and Interact fools... Kevin Kling told us "the fool is a hero for our times, a child of lightning... bringing, as it says in Corinthians, foolish things to shame the wise."
- Director Jeanne Calvit boiled up this kettle of foolishness, hot on the heels of winning the Pollen/AARP 50 Over 50 Award.
- Known for designing and directing at the Guthrie, Children's Theatre, Theatre de la Jeune Lune, and many others, Joel Sass set the stage with living gargoyles, an auspicious cathedral, the all-powerful throne room... and the dark magic forest where gypsies revel, tell fortunes, and remember all that passes before them.

- Multi-award-winning costume designer Sonya Berlovitz filled a courtyard with threadbare villagers, velvet-robed royalty, a swooping-caped devil, and lavishly sparkling gypsies, creating a luscious palette that artist Pieter Bruegel would have envied. (Alas, he missed the show by dying in 1569.)
- Michael Wangen's visionary talent wrapped the stage in lighting that painted the story – golden days of sun and crops to feed the masses, dark times during the rule of evil and greed, and the luminous return of the goodness of heart.
- Composer Aaron Gabriel created a Medieval score that came to life through the magic of five master musicians... flutist Julie Johnson, violinist Carolyn Boulay, accordionist Dan Turpening, percussionist Bob Stacke, and Aaron Gabriel himself directing and on keys.
- Assistant Director and lead Manouche Josette Antomarchi told us that Feast of Fools had all the flavors she loves most: "comedy, medieval-mystery, wild magic, and a story filled with surprises. A juicy slice of life. Oui!"



Performing Arts Highlights

NATIONAL ANTHEM

Last year, Interact was invited to sing the National Anthem for the MN Lynx, St. Paul Saints and MN Timberwolves. Each venue had 6,000-8,000 people in attendance and the Facebook video for the MN Lynx performance was viewed over 2,000 times. The arrangement by composer Aaron Gabriel was new and very challenging. The audiences cheered emphatically when the 12-member Interact singing ensemble performed it in these mega-venues.

MN STATE ARTS BOARD (MSAB) ARTS RESIDENCY AT MISSISSIPPI CREATIVE ARTS SCHOOL (MCAS)

Eight Community Artists, ten Interact Teaching Artists and three Interact Staff spent four weeks at MCAS in St. Paul creating visual art pieces that were featured in (two) 90-minute performances on February 15, 2018. Over 200 students presented classroom performances based on the theme 'A Universe of Friendship.' Stars, spaceships, aliens and astronauts filled the stage as well as beautiful visual pieces using techniques like graffiti art, paper mache, foam sculpture and scenic design. Friendships were formed on and offstage and the final performance - attended by over 500 people, was followed by a large-scale community meal supplied by neighboring restaurants.



Board of Directors

Robert Spikings (Board Chair)

Patricia Bachmeier

Jeanne Calvit

Patrick Dow

Dr. Jan Hoistad

Lori Leavitt

Ann Leming

Susan Shapiro

Staff

ADMINISTRATION

Jeanne Calvit

Jan Gillen

Deb Holtz

John Thew

Raleigh Wolpert

Wesley Wright

Glenis Zempel

Executive Artistic Director

Operations, Reception and

Transit Coordinator

Artist Support Department Manager

Staff Accountant

Director of Advancement

Advancement Coordinator

Director of Operations

VISUAL ARTS

Joli Grostephan-Brancato

Deb Helmke

Laura Joseph

Brittany Kieler

Brita Light

Presley Martin

Erin McKillip

Derek Meier

Simone Needles

Department Manager

Instructor

Gallery Director

Gallery Archivist and

Collections Manager

Instructor/Advocate

Instructor/Advocate

Client Services Coordinator

Client Services Coordinator

Instructor/Advocate

PERFORMING ARTS

Heather Bunch

Aaron Gabriel

Vanessa I. Healey

James Lekatz

Karen Prince

Scotty Reynolds

Instructor/Actor

Composer/Music Director

Production Stage Manager/Department Manager

Artistic Associate/Actor

Client Services Coordinator

Instructor/Volunteer Coordinator/Actor

Thank You to our Wonderful Volunteers!

VISUAL ARTS

Sydney Culshaw

Ali Dickson

Kaitlyn Kugler

Mattie Kovatovich

Kaitlyn Kugler

Olga Samsonova-

Rogovitskaya

Eddie Weinstine

Morgan Wallmow

Lexus Stokes

Stevie Wachtler

Olivia Webster

Chang-Hsin (Frank) Wu

Chuman Xiao

Frank (Fan) Zhang

PERFORMING ARTS

Dan Britt

Theresa Bush

Shirley Cavallero

Haley Hajjali

Susan Horowitz

Kristin Olsen

Mary Methvan

Danny Reinan

Patricia Robinette

Anne Syrstadeng

Timothy Wheeler

Meredith Casey

Our Mission

INTERACT CENTER CREATES ART THAT CHALLENGES PERCEPTIONS OF DISABILITY.

In all of our work, Interact

- Creates art in a spirit of radical inclusion.
- Inspires artists and audiences to explore the full spectrum of human potential.
- Transforms lives by expanding ideas of what is possible.

OUR VISION

We push the boundaries of traditional art forms by including the unique perceptions of our artists. We expand the meaning of "accessibility" beyond physical structures for artists with disabilities by playing an active role in the creative process. Artists share in the audience's appreciation of the work which has a healing and integrating effect.

We exemplify the idea of community integration by supporting artists with and without disabilities working side by side every day.

Interact Artists Receive Microgrants

The Minnesota Microgrant Partnership offers modest grants to persons with disabilities to achieve person-centered goals around:

*Competitive employment *Inclusive housing *Community integration

Interact artists have received microgrants for anything from bikes for transportation to voice and acting lessons.

One of our artists was so thrilled with his microgrant that he wrote this note to the Artistic Director:

"Thank you so much for everything you've done to get me the microgrant, and for every part you've played in helping me become a better artist, a better performer, and just plain better all around. Interact Center is my home away from home, I am so happy and honored to be a part of a phenomenal organization like this. Before I learned of Interact I was in a really bad head space, I had no idea what I was going to do with myself or how I was going to make a living, but Interact Center has helped me in more ways than you will ever know. In a way Interact has helped me to find myself. Does this mean that I am a perfect human? HELL NO. I still have a long way to go before I ever achieve the title of PERFECT. Thank you again for your part in the microgrant and thank you for helping me find a new place to live. LITERALLY."

Yours Truly,
Michael Wolfe



Thank you to Our Funders and Supporters



Henry L. & Grace Doherty Charitable Foundation

SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR LEGACY FUNDERS

