

"I've done a lot of things here, acting, dancing, and writing. I like it very much. Now I'm working on my dreams."

- Michael Brindley, Interact Actor

Tasjanja Brooks



This activity is made possible by the voters of Minnesota through the Minnesota State Arts Board Operating Support and Arts Access grants, thanks to a legislative appropriation from The Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund.



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SPONSORS





I find it hard to believe we're about to wrap up 2019 - twenty-three years creating art that challenges perceptions of disability!

We have grown from 5 artists with disabilities in 1996 to 105 artists today, with more on our wait list. In the past year we added ceramics and textile arts departments to our Studio. And we launched our first e-commerce platform to increase artwork sales, thanks to an Innovation Award from the MN Department of Human Services.

Interact artists with disabilities are making their mark out in the community like never before with opportunities like professional growth visits to museums, galleries, and theaters; and being the featured keynote at the Arts Midwest Annual Conference in Minneapolis, and the MN Department of Human Services Odyssey Conference in Duluth.

Yet as we approach our 24th year, we are facing the greatest financial challenge of our history. Many of you may know we are licensed by the MN Department of Human Services as an Adult Day Program for artists with disabilities - a partnership that has ensured 70% of our funding. Until now.

Now, we are facing across-the-board funding cuts of almost 30% in financial support for

people with disabilities. We're not wasting time—we are building a stronger business model that includes strategies to increase ticket sales and sales of artwork, along with increased financial support from arts, disability, and social justice funders.

But we cannot weather this storm without your help. Today, your contribution will send a message that Interact's unique approach to equity for artists with disabilities is essential to the fabric of our humanity.

An artist recently told me, "Before I came to Interact I felt like I was flawed and needed to be fixed. Now I feel like a valued member of society, a creator and an artist. My life has meaning, and I look forward to every day." Each of our more than 100 artists have a story to tell about how Interact has shaped them, and what a joy it is to be part of such a life-affirming community.

I invite you to be part of Interact's continuing story of belief in human potential with your gift to sustain our vision.

Happy Holidays! We hope to see you soon!

Jeanne Calvit,
Founder and
Artistic Director



Greetings Interact Family, Friends and Supporters!

I am so honored to be working alongside our Executive Director, Staff, Artists, fellow Board Members and each of you, as we create art that challenges perceptions of disability. I thank Robert Spikings for his generous leadership these past years.

On a solid 23 year history of growth, in a spirit of Radical Inclusion and pushing boundaries, together we continue to expand our reach, making it possible for more people of all abilities to express their creative potential, to enjoy the benefits of stable employment just like everyone else, and to put that work out into the world for others to experience and enjoy.

And it is an endeavor! In 2019, we've worked together to develop a new five year Strategic Plan.

With a solid foundation, we want to stretch our creativity and share our unique approach with a broader audience. It's definitely a precipitous moment in Interact's growth.

We wish to thank you for all your support over the years. You've made our work, and the creativity and visibility of our artists possible. Thank you for continuing to spread the word, share the new website and online store, attend performances and art shows, volunteer and Give to the Max on November 14th and throughout the year. I promise you, it is recognized and pays off.

Dr. Jan Hoistad
Board Chair



OUR MISSION
Interact Center's
mission is to create
art that challenges
perceptions of
disability.

Our Vision

We push the boundaries of traditional art forms by including the unique perceptions of our company of artists with and without disabilities.

We expand the meaning of "accessibility" beyond mere physical structures by positioning artists with disabilities as active participants in the creative process.

We believe that when artists with disabilities and their audiences share appreciation for creative work together, it has an inclusive, healing impact on all.

We dissolve ideas of who "can" and who "cannot" by creating opportunities for artists with and without disabilities to work side by side every day.





"I began to feel an empowerment and solidarity with the performers and it felt like I was entering a home I didn't know I had."

- Actor, storyteller, and humorist, Kevin Kling describing his first experience as an actor with Interact

Spring Fling to Honor Kevin Kling

Last June over 150 guests joined us at the Calhoun Beach Club to celebrate Interact's 20 years of collaboration with nationally recognized actor/storyteller Kevin Kling! Kevin is known for his popular commentaries on NPR's *All Things Considered*, and for eating things before knowing what they are.

Along with Kevin's stories of being hit by lightning

and other fantastical real-life events, the evening included cocktails, dinner, a silent auction, and models showcasing wearable art - and helped us raise funds to support our mission to "create art that challenges perceptions of disability." Interact Theater performed a preview of the summer show last year, and the evening included the talents of special guests Eriq Nelson, Dan Chouinard, and Simone Perrin.

"This absurd, diverting evening, in the best sense of the word, engages every individual and audience member in the company's heartfelt Hot Dog Daze."

- Broadway World Review



Hot Dog Daze at the Lab Theater

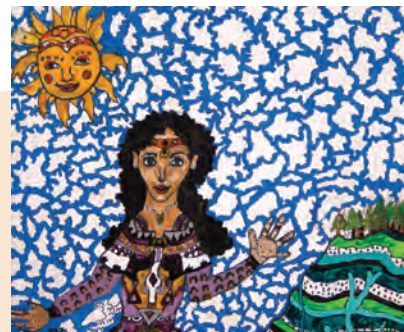
Interact's 40+ actors with and without disabilities livened up summer in Minneapolis' North Loop with Hot Dog Daze - complete with an after-show, hot dogs, beer, and photo-op party on the outdoor deck of The Lab Theater. Set in the style of a Jerry Lewis-like telethon, this collection of quirky scenes, songs, and side-acts held a mirror to society and its unavoidable foibles.

With a rave review from Broadway World Review, Hot Dog Daze was directed by James Lekatz and Heather Bunch, with original music by award-winning Aaron Gabriel, and choreography by Kymani Kahill, and was emceed by Brave New Workshop veteran Shanan Custer and Blackout Improv founding member Kory LaQuess Pullam.

We look forward to seeing you at next year's show!

Art @ Bridgewater

In May Interact presented "Work with Your Quirk," a four-week exhibition at downtown Minneapolis' Bridgewater Lofts. This Mill District destination is known for its vibrant Art @ the Bridgewater building-wide exhibitions program. "Work with Your Quirk" celebrated Interact's philosophy that differences - tall, short, with a disability or without - are qualities of who we are, and that those qualities are what drive creative expression.



Peter Hagen

"The performance was amazing!! It was my first time seeing this group, and I'm hooked! Thanks for sharing your talents with all of us!"

- Lisa Tousignant, Lutheran Social Service of MN, Manager of Healthcare Partnerships



DHS Odyssey Conference - Interact Performs!

The 2019 DHS Age and Disabilities Odyssey Conference was a success! This two-day forum brings together trusted sources on aging and disability services. With this year's theme, "Bringing Possibilities to Light", the conference committee, the Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS), and the Minnesota Board on Aging (MBA) were pleased

to welcome attendees, presenters, sponsors, and exhibitors to the Duluth Entertainment Convention Center. Interact Theater was invited to perform a program of original stories and songs on August 1 and received a standing ovation from the over 1500 attendees.



RANDOMLAND: Interact at The White Page

Held at The White Page Gallery October 16-22 in South Minneapolis, RANDOMLAND was an exhibition featuring 20 signature visual artists whose work spans a broad range of forms and ideas. In 20 distinctive artistic practices, Randomland highlighted the diverse material, aesthetic, and collaborative investigations that take place daily in Interact's ceramics, fiber arts, and mixed media studios - uniting disparate artistic interests in the spirit of radical inclusion.

The exhibition was organized by an in-house curatorial team that included Interact artists and staff.

RANDOMLAND was presented in conjunction with the launch of Interact's new webstore as well as the release of the first issue of the Interact Zine.

Performing Arts Highlights

Throughout the year, the Performing Arts department at Interact has been working hard and enjoying a variety of activities. Here are some of the highlights:

- Mississippi Creative Arts Magnet Teaching Residency
- Profiling Professionals, a series of arts business development workshops: Michael Matthew Ferrell, Victor Zupanc, Jenny Friend, Wu Chen Khoo, Nancy Waldoch, Annie Enneking, Kate Sutton-Johnson, Margo Breivik, Bob Stacke, Miguel Gonzalez, Montana Johnson, Zeb Hults, Alexi Carlson, Kory LaQuess Pullam, Shanan Custer
- Ongoing vocal workshops with Sheridan Zuther
- Performances at the State Fair and The Lab Theater, and throughout the year for Interact open house events
- Unarmed Stage Combat Workshops with Annie Enneking
- HERE.THEM.NOW. movement workshops with Beth Graczyk
- Coming up in December, the artists are looking forward to Musical Theatre Dance Workshops with Regina Peluso of Collide Theatrical Dance Company, Neutral Mask Workshops with Bob Rosen, and Interact's Holiday Party!

"The artists at Interact prove they have something special to share with the world...every actor steps out on stage unashamed to share a piece of who they are..."

MN Daily Newspaper



Visual Arts Highlights

Underwater Exhibit

In March, Interact hosted close to 100 guests at a closing reception for our Artist Advisory Council-curated "Underwater" exhibition. The event featured a community question-and-answer session with disability advocate and gold medal Paralympic swimmer Mallory Weggeman, and a brief talk with Interact Artists Kramer Hegenbarth and Jennifer Londer.

Arts Midwest Conference

During summer 2019, Interact artist Zack Mohs was commissioned to create a painting that was used for the annual Arts Midwest conference. Zack's artwork was featured on all promotional materials, conference signage, and in the conference catalogue.



Zack Mohs

In September a delegation from Interact attended the Arts Midwest Conference Luncheon in August where Jeanne Calvit spoke and a video for Interact was presented along with onstage performance.

Barbara Barker Center for Dance Art Submission

In Fall 2019 Interact artist Andie Kiley submitted work to a call for mural art at the Barbara Barker Center for Dance, where she was one of two finalists. While the Barbara Barker Center ultimately chose the work of Muralist Pablo Riesco, they decided to purchase Andie's submission, "Covering of a Page", to hang in their beautiful main office area. A delegation from Interact attended the Center's 20th Anniversary, where Andie was honored for her work.



Artist Stories

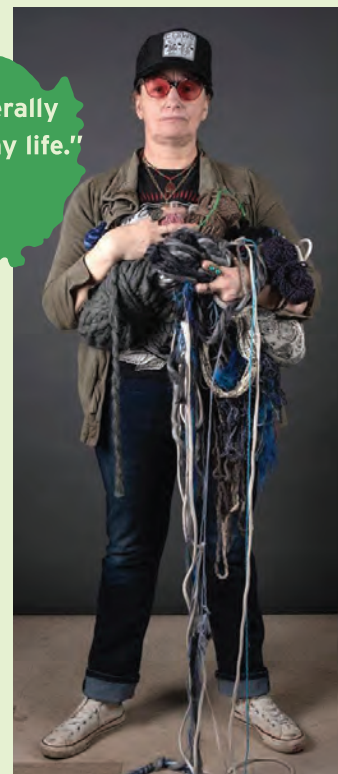
HML

"I found myself at a point where I was trying to make a decision on what to do with my life. My choices were either nursing or artist. I chose to go into nursing. I was in healthcare for about 20 years but due to my mental health and chemical dependency issues, I lost all of my friends, family and my profession. I had burnt all my bridges and was utterly alone. After being sober for three years I still had so many mental health problems and resigned myself to having to get SSDI. I found myself bored, hopeless and incredibly lonely. I realized that I could now fulfill my desire to be an artist. I got on the internet and looked on google for arts and disabilities in Minnesota. The first thing that came up was Interact. I spent another two years trying to arrange to get the funding.

By the time I had my experience day I had a list of projects and sketches of the things I would like to do. It was exactly what I needed, because while I was waiting my mental health kept getting worse. I am now doing better than I have in about a decade. I am so grateful for everything at Interact. I can't say anything bad about it. From the great supportive inspiring staff, to the community of friends, and the educational experiences, I have found myself working in areas I never imagined. I want to end by saying that Interact is an amazing place and I am so grateful to be a part of it. It has literally changed my life."

"It has literally changed my life."

- HML



Many of the actors give knock-out performances in featured roles. As ... Kidney-Foot Jenny, Stephanie Muue is a determined fireball, radiating a depth of intelligence far beyond her station in life: she is stunning singing the melancholy 'Remember Storyville.'"

- Regional Review by Arthur Dorman of Talkin' Broadway

Stephanie

Stephanie is a proud first generation African American woman. Stephanie was born in a rural, small town in South Dakota, where she often felt isolated.

All her life she wanted to be a star. Her interest in performing arts started young when she would watch celebrities on Nickelodeon. Stephanie knew that one day that would be her. Dream big!

Stephanie was diagnosed with a learning disability and struggled to manage her anger and mental health. There were occasions where Stephanie sought treatment for alcohol and substance abuse.

After Stephanie graduated from High School, she became extremely depressed as she was training

to become a janitor. She felt her life was going nowhere and her dreams had been forgotten. This began a series of hospitalizations for her mental health.

Stephanie heard about Interact and knew it was the place she had been searching for her whole life. Stephanie joined the Performing Arts department in 2016 and has since appeared in four main stage shows. Her performance in "Hot Funky Butt Jazz" premiered at the Guthrie Theater and garnered rave reviews.

Stephanie says Interact gives her a place to learn the skills of her trade. She's reclaimed her hopes and dreams of having a career as a professional actor and star!



"Interact taught me that I am an artist."

- Luke



Luke Lyons

Luke

Luke experienced a Traumatic Brain Injury at age 50. As a result of his TBI, he experienced hemiplegia, or a general weakness to the right side of his body. Over the years, Luke has trained his left hand to be his dominant hand and is now living a life as a thriving, successful artist!

"My disability came late in life. I lost everything; my job, my marriage, my independence. I didn't know what to do. Everything was gone."

One day during Luke's physical therapy session the heavy depression he was experiencing from his new status as 'disabled' became too much. "I remember just lying on the floor. I was done." Luke was admitted to an inpatient mental health facility.

After returning home from the hospital, Luke remembered hearing about a place called Interact Center for the Visual and Performing Arts.

"Interact gave me direction... a reason for being. I was so broken when I got to Interact, both mentally and physically. Interact gave me the strength and opportunity to forge a new life."

"Interact is more than just a place to come and make art. It's a place where you can come to rebuild yourself. The staff here... they just push you up! It's incredible, the confidence I got from Interact."

"I now tell people when asked what I do, I am an artist and I work out of Interact Center for the Visual and Performing Arts."



"The raw honesty of these performances [by Interact's actors], the complete lack of self-consciousness and oblivious joy of being on stage..."

- Graydon Royce, arts critic



Ceramics Studio

This summer we opened the doors to a new ceramics studio! Complete with kiln and pottery wheel, the studio offers artists the opportunity to expand on three-dimensional practices. Ceramic sculptures, planters, mugs, and busts are all in the works. We are excited to see how artists continue to grow their practices in the new studio.

Satellite space at 755 Prior

We're pleased to announce the upcoming opening of a new satellite space at 755 Prior Avenue North, located just one block away from Interact. In addition to housing the enormous collection of visual art by Interact artists, this additional area is full of potential. Acting as a satellite studio, the space is perfect for large scale, collaborative, and installation-based works, as well as workshops and events.

Interact Launches our First Online Artwork Sales Website!

After months of writing, planning, and designing by our talented staff and web management team, Interact launched a refreshed website this past fall. Everything there is to know about Interact is now discoverable through new features, highlights, videos, articles, and much more! www.interactcenter.org

And even better! Interact artists can now reach an international audience..... just in time for the holidays. This bold leap forward was supported by an Innovation Award from the MN Department of Human Services, in recognition of Interact's history of forging space for voices that have long been absent from public dialogue. Shop.interactcenter.org

"Our family have been long-time fans and advocates of Interact, as well as enthusiastic participants and patrons of the amazing artistic works the Interact artists create. And now, how wonderful is it that we have access to the Interact Gallery online! I bought this lovely State Fair painting with a simple click...hooray!"

-Rick and Murph Dow



Donors Impact Interact

Your donations are vital in offering the most professional level of supplies, equipment and staff that Interact can offer.

Your gift to Interact provides for programming such as master classes, field trips, special guest artists and professional art supplies and artist compensation in the Visual Arts Department,

as well as artistic enrichment, theater rentals, costumes, guest artists for shows, sets, professional staff and artist compensation in the Performing Arts Department.

Your donations also make our building accessible to artists of all abilities so thank you!

Meghan Aanenson
Aisha Alexander
Marty Allen
Dea Anderson
Ann Arvesen Gjelten
Ann Aubitz
Brian Aubitz
Sandra Aubitz
Patricia Bachmeier
Terri Banaszewski
Virginia Bandt
Cheryl Bates
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Gregory Beckstrom
Judy Bell
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Doug Bourie
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Laura Joseph
Kathy Karkula
Maaja Kern
Lynn Kittel
Julia Klaas Hally
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Ann Leming
Michael Leming
Steve Leventhal

Troy Linck
C C Lindstroth
Monica Little
Ava Liu
Ann Lowry
zohreh mahdavi
Cristine Marchand
Gerilyn Mauck
Media Loft
Katherine Mennicke
Mary Methven
Rene Meyer-Grimberg
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Paulette Zoe
Sharon Zweigbaum

Donors as of November 1, 2019

We are delighted to announce new staff in 2019!



Colleen Krick | Licensing & Recruitment Director

Colleen Krick volunteered at Interact in 2014 and is excited to come back as the Director of Licensing and Recruitment. She holds a Bachelors in Psychology from the University of Minnesota, where she also studied family social sciences and art (specifically ceramics and photography). After obtaining a Master's in Business Administration with a focus in healthcare management and administration, Colleen held a wide variety of jobs in the healthcare industry ranging from PCA work with adults and children with special needs, to management of group homes, and most recently working with an insurance company managing the ins and outs for Autism and ABA therapy payments.



Kymani Queen | Actor, Performing Arts Instructor

Kymani is a Twin Cities based generative artist, writer and musician who has spent over a decade honing her artistry through her work with youth and young performers, MN regional theatres and most recently Interact Center for the Visual and Performing Arts. She was first introduced to Interact as an accompanist in the role of Dabby Coles in the 2018 production of Hot Funky Butt Jazz.



Nora Rickey | Fiber Arts Instructor

Nora Rickey is a visual and performance artist and educator working at Interact as the Fiber Arts Instructor. Nora received her BFA in Drama from NYU Tisch School of the Arts, and currently performs with Mixed Precipitation, teaches at the Textile Center, embroiders panties, and makes other large and small scale art pieces. You can see her work on: mnartists.org/norarick



Jeremy Jones | Ceramics Specialist

Jeremy Jones has joined the Interact team as Ceramics Specialist. An MFA graduate from Wichita State University, Jeremy's work focuses on the transient, ephemeral nature of life, time and the human experience.



Max Sparber | Advancement Coordinator

Max Sparber is an author and arts professional from Minneapolis. As a playwright, his work has been produced more than 40 times nationally, and his poetry and short stories are widely anthologized. Max is also a longtime arts journalist, having written for City Pages and MinnPost.



Natalie Mazarol | Gallery and Collections Manager, Visual Arts Archivist

Natalie Mazarol has a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Print, Paper, Book from the Minneapolis College of Art and Design. She earned an Apparel Technologies Diploma from the Minneapolis Community and Technical College. Natalie has a professional background as a bookbinder, seamstress, and graphic designer. Her personal art practice includes drawing, painting, and textile work.



Shannon Twohy | Artistic Instructor, Administrative Assistant, Volunteer Coordinator

Shannon is a freelance theater director, actor, and playwright from Minneapolis with a formal background in visual arts and professor of Baby Yoda. She came upon Interact in high school as a volunteer and they have not been able to get rid of her since.

Board + Staff

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Thank you to our volunteers - you contribute so much to Interact!

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INTERACT CENTER FOR VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS
2019 Community Report

John Riddle

