

INTERACT BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Jeanne Calvit
Patrick Dow
Geraldine Harlan
Lori Leavitt
Ann Leming
Susan Shapiro

“we believe in SOCIAL JUSTICE!”

“we believe in RADICAL INCLUSION!”



ZOOM PRODUCTION IN THE WORKS

People have been discussing the demise of theater for over a hundred years. However, it survived and thrived during the World Wars, the Depression, and other challenging times.

The pandemic is forcing us to find ways to bring our stories to life – at a time when no one can gather together. Interact’s staff and artists have met in Zoom brainstorming meetings to create a collaborative Zoom performance with both Visual and Performing artists.

“we believe in UNLOCKING HUMAN POTENTIAL!”

sample of our awesome online classes!

INTERACT CLASS SCHEDULE					
	Monday 11.9	Tuesday 11.10	Wednesday 11.11	Thursday 11.12	Friday 11.13
9:00a – 10:00a	Click here to join! What's Going On Join this morning to talk about recent events.	Click here to join! Artist Show & Tell What have you been doing while working from home?	Click here to join! Awesome Interact Stories Listen and share your favorite Interact stories!	Click here to join! The Madame Josette Story Hour Join Josette in an hour of folklore and storytelling!	Click here to join! Creative Brainstorming What classes would you like to see in the upcoming weeks?
10:00a – 11:00a	Click here to join Performing Arts! Dragon Dance Integrate posture, movement, breathing technique, sound, and focused intent to set the tone for the day.	Click here to join Performing Arts! Kinesthetic Stretches & Visualization Slower paced movements focusing on flexibility with extended periods of relaxation.	Click here to join Performing Arts! Happy Heart Stretches Let's open our hearts together and stretch our bodies with joy and life.	Click here to join Performing Arts! Safari Stretch Join in on an adventure where we join movement and an epic quest to find a lost artifact!	Click here to join Performing Arts! Dance Party! Request your and dance!
	Click here to join Visual Arts! Sketch & Stretch Stretch with us to get your blood flowing; followed by sketching your surroundings.	Click here to join Visual Arts! Sketch & Stretch Stretch with us to get your blood flowing; followed by sketching your surroundings.	Click here to join Visual Arts! Sketch & Stretch Stretch with us to get your blood flowing; followed by sketching your surroundings.	Click here to join Visual Arts! Sketch & Stretch Stretch with us to get your blood flowing; followed by sketching your surroundings.	Click here to join Visual Arts! Sketch & Stretch Stretch with us to get your blood flowing; followed by sketching your surroundings.



LUCY SAYS:

“I never learned any thing about art at school. After school I got a job cleaning - it was not what I wanted to do. I came to Interact and started painting and drawing. People loved my paintings and bought them. I felt so relieved and proud that I accomplished something as an artist. I gave myself a new name: Lucy Picasso.”

Send in a gift of \$25 or more and we will send you a mask with our logo!



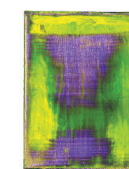
SUPPLY DROP OFF

Staff and volunteers have been working tirelessly to put monthly art supply packages together and personally deliver to the artists. It's another way of maintaining the connection!



GREAT BIG HOLIDAY ART SALE!
NOV 16-DEC 5

shop.interactcenter.org



50% of each sale will go directly to the Interact artist who made it.

Original drawings and paintings!

Handmade hats and scarves!

Ceramics for your plants, shelves, and walls!

One-of-a-kind jewelry, weavings, cards, and ornaments!



“we believe in CHALLENGING PERCEPTIONS OF DISABILITY!”



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.



This project is supported in part by an award from the National Endowment for the Arts.





artist Jill Reedy

“Immediately
I felt like I was
at home.”

The first time Jill Reedy visited Interact Center for the Visual and Performing Arts, she knew she'd found a new home.

Two years ago, Reedy, who said that creating art helps manage her anxiety, epilepsy and traumatic brain injury, was looking for a place where she could spend her days. She'd already been attending a day program for adults with disabilities, but was underwhelmed by its limited arts offerings. ("They said they'd have art as part of the program," she said, "but the art time was very minimal. It was once a week, a half hour a day.")

Reedy talked to her case manager about her frustration. Her case manager told her about Interact, a 24-year-old St. Paul-based performing and visual art center for artists with disabilities. The two scheduled a tour.

"It was the funniest thing," Reedy recalled. "We walked through the door and that's all it took. We both looked at each other in the entrance and I said, 'This is it.'"

Art is central to Reedy's life. She remembers sitting in her mother's lap, drawing circles and talking about all the things that could be made from that one simple shape.

"She showed me how I could use a circle to draw a wheel or a smile or a flower," Reedy said. "I remember just being amazed that I could draw something out of these little circles I was making. From there on, art was always my favorite subject. Any art that I could get my fingers on I dabbled in and tried."

Reedy knew that Interact was the place for her because from the moment she walked in the door she could see that people with disabilities were encouraged to see themselves as serious working artists.

"Their art was hanging up on the wall," Reedy said. From her vantage point in the entryway, "You could see through to a studio; there were all kinds of people doing all manner of different things. I was like, 'Wow. This is amazing.' The whole atmosphere of the place was what I was looking for. Immediately I felt like I was at home."

In the two years since she went on that tour, Reedy has spent three full days a week at Interact. She's expanded her artistic skills and created and sold many works of fiber art. The center quickly became her home away from home and her fellow artists became some of her closest friends.

Then, this spring, coronavirus hit Minnesota, and Reedy feared that her happy life could come crashing down.

"When everything started shutting down, I felt frantic," Reedy said. "I knew that eventually they were going to have to shut Interact down, too. The clock was just ticking before it was going to happen." This realization was a major source of stress and sadness.

"I knew that if Interact completely shut down I'd be lost," she said. "It's the same thing for a lot of other people. It's our life. It's our job. It's where we have our people, where we make our connections."

Jeanne Calvit, Interact's founder/executive director, said that at first she and her colleagues felt blindsided by the reality of the pandemic and its potential impact on the artists.

At first, Calvit said, "We were just living from one day to another. We shut down not really realizing that it would be a long-term thing. I think that at the beginning, everybody didn't get the gravity of the situation."

But as they began to realize that the nonprofit's physical closure could last for months or longer, Calvit and her colleagues began to hatch plans about how they could keep going in times of quarantine.

"We kept our staff on and made sure that they called all of the artists to stay connected with them," Calvit said, adding that as much 60 percent of Interact artists live with physical conditions that put them at high risk of serious consequences if they were to catch the virus. ("They're not going to feel comfortable coming back until there's a vaccine," she said.) After completing a round of calls and check-ins, staff delivered supplies to the artists' homes so they could keep producing their work from a distance.

But Calvit and her colleagues knew that distributing art supplies so people could work at home wasn't going to be enough. They needed to find a way to keep the organization's sense of community going for artists like Reedy who see it as a central part of their lives. After attending a series of Zoom meetings with staff at disability arts organizations around the country, Interact took the next step.

"We decided to offer a series of virtual online classes," Calvit said. "We didn't want anyone to get bored or feel isolated. We created a Zoom community, and the response from our artists was immediate and enthusiastic."

Interact's Zoom community grew quickly. Options for virtual classes, team meetings and studio time expanded, as staff, artists and others stepped up to share their skills and experience. Interact artists were enthusiastic about having this option available to them, and attendance shot through the roof.

"We now offer 50 classes a week," Calvit said. "We mix it up." At semiweekly virtual brainstorming sessions, "A lot of artists give ideas for classes they want, and people volunteer to teach. It is very collaborative and incredibly creative." Participants can take part in a wide range of classes, she added, "from cooking to how to make red curry noodles to poetry, phone photography, theater history and voice class."

KEEPING THE COMMUNITY ALIVE

Moving Interact's programming online wasn't an easy task. Many of the artists didn't have the technology needed to support hours-long Zoom classes. This required staff to scramble to find and update used laptops and tablets and help artists gain access to high-speed internet service.

Brittany Kieler, Interact's gallery director, explained that even with the full support of staff and donors, the switchover to virtual didn't happen overnight. "It was at least a month-long process to outfit artists with technology," Kieler said. "Some would say that we are still working through a few bugs. It's been a long process." And some artists needed special help to expand their comfort with virtual education. "One of our studio instructors took it on themselves to learn how to download the right software and then troubleshoot with the artists. She'd call them individually to make sure that they knew how everything worked."

— From a MinnPost Article written by columnist Andy Steiner



NOVEMBER 2020

a letter from Jeanne



Holiday Greetings and Gratitude as 2020 comes to a close!

This past year has been a roller coaster ride for all of us! Here at Interact, COVID-19 closed our doors in March for what we thought would be a few weeks. Then as we grappled with that seismic shift, the murder of George Floyd rocked our communities with demonstrations for racial justice that spanned the globe.

Today, we are all experiencing seemingly endless uncertainty. But, **troubled times call for resilience and creative responses, so Interact artists got to work.** With a little technical savvy and an abundance of talent and determination, we launched our creative community in virtual space. Interact artists with disabilities now have access to over 50 workshops a week in all aspects of visual and theatrical art making. Brainstorming coffee chats every morning bring us together for creative conversation that keeps our work fresh and relevant.

Yet even as we discovered new ways to sustain our thriving artistic community, there were challenges in store.

You may know that Interact is a licensed Adult Day Program for artists with disabilities. This means that the MN Department of Human Services offers a level of financial support for every artist who attends. But for the first several months of the COVID shutdown, DHS discontinued funding because our programs were not being offered in person.

Many of you stepped up immediately with generous gifts to see us through, and **your support encouraged us** to take our stories to the media, and to give testimony before DHS leaders and lawmakers who hold the purse strings. Thanks to you, we prevailed!

One of our artists recently said, **"I fear losing Interact more than I fear contracting COVID."** Today, Minnesota disability leaders have committed continuing support for our virtual programming – even post-COVID – as a way to transform lives for artists with disabilities throughout the entire state. They credit our artists' powerful stories – and the outpouring of support from people like you – for helping them make that decision.

Without the dedication of our staff, our board of directors, the powerful stories our artists share, and support from folks like you, we would not still be here today. None of us can predict what the next year will bring. But we know one thing for sure - with your support, we will survive and thrive in the years to come.

Please think generously about Interact as this year of immense change comes to a close. We need your support now more than ever to keep our mission and vision alive for years to come: to create art that challenges perceptions of disability.

Thank you!

And best wishes for a New Year filled with peace, health, and creativity!

—Jeanne Calvit, Artistic/Executive Director



Interact is Essential to the Artists

“...troubled
times call
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shop.interactcenter.org