

Interact

DECEMBER
2023



2023 Community Report | *a letter from Jeanne*

Another year of creating art that challenges societies view of disabilities has come and gone. Working with the talented neurodiverse artists and staff at Interact is one of the most joyful experiences. I feel lucky just to walk in the door everyday and have artists come up to me and show me their newest creations or sing me their newest song. **This year we are going to be focusing on our artists' stories.** Their voices will be at the center of our messages going out in social media, newsletters and shared with

the media. We will have open houses to invite the community in to see our artists in action. Thanks to all of you for your continued support and for attending our events. Your support is very much appreciated and will help us sustain our vision to transform lives by unlocking human potential through the arts.

Happy Holidays,

Jeanne Calvit, Founder/Artistic Director

"A Fond Farewell from Raleigh Wolpert"

A whirlwind seven years at Interact has gone by in a flash and what an amazing ride it's been!

As I wind down my full-time position at Interact, my heart is filled with gratitude and memories.

When I first walked through the doors, I knew immediately how magical it was and instantly felt it was a good fit for me. The artists give me unconditional love and even though I love them back it's hard to compete with their consistent affection. What a gift it is to be somewhere and feel comfortable in your own skin! There is a magical energy that permeates throughout the building during the day.

As I sit in my office, I hear music and singing from the performing arts area that makes me want to get up and dance. Or as I walk to get coffee, I pass by amazing visual artists that have me in awe of their talents.

I am grateful and admire the incredible professional staff who always put one hundred percent of their passion for artists first and foremost. I'm also grateful to Jeanne Calvit who I not only worked for but who became my friend. For the past few years, I've worked side by side with my co-worker Phil. If I start talking about how incredible he is, teardrops may fall on this page. Last but not least, I'm going to miss the incredible families and amazing people who volunteered, donated or cheered on Interact artists.



I forged many relationships in my years at Interact with people who inspire me every day including the opportunity to work with dedicated board members. As I am stepping down from my

position on January 1, I encourage you to reach out or call me for coffee anytime! I will still be working part-time on special projects for Interact. And if you haven't experienced Interact like I did, I encourage everyone to come and visit next year. There will be exhibits and partnerships and performances that will make your hearts sing.

And since my job requires reaching out to supporters, you can always put a donation in the enclosed envelope and send me a note, or use the QR code on the newsletter! Your support of Interact would be an honor to me!

Interact will always be in my heart. It's been an amazing journey.

Have a wonderful holiday and a beautiful, peaceful New Year,
Raleigh Wolpert/Advancement Director

Limited edition mugs produced in collaboration with Los Angeles-based coffeeware company notNeutral are now available for preorder! Snag one featuring drawings by Michael Engebretson, Andrew Seymour, or David Wright at gallery.interactcenterarts.org.

*****mugs for sale!*****



news from performing arts

Currently, there are still several spots open in our Performing Arts Department!

At Interact we focus on possibilities, not disabilities. You do not have to be an accomplished artist to join our community. Rather, we look for individuals who are **highly motivated to grow their artistic skills in a creative environment.**

The Visual Arts Department waitlist is now open!

To join our program waitlist, please attend a Visual Arts Department open house tour and then submit your completed application packet. Your name will then be placed on the program waitlist, and you will be contacted when a spot opens up!

For more info:

interactcenterarts.org/support/become-an-artist/



Hell is Empty...

Eight months of collaboration ended with this year's theatrical production of ***Hell is Empty and All the Devils are Here... Again*** at the Luminary Arts Center.

Jeanne Calvit, Founder/Artistic Director:

"Once again, Interact's large company of neurodiverse actors has created a biting satire about the dramatic, and sometimes frightening, times we live in. Humor is our superpower. We believe humor can provide a safety valve for divisive times and can bring people together around communal laughter."

Audiences and critics agreed, it was an overwhelming success this year.

Kendra Plant, Artfully Engaging:

"Watch out Brave New Workshop! Interact Theater's Hell is Empty and All the Devils are Here... Again! is a vibrant musical satire, delivering both political and social comedy alongside fun original music. This collaborative production features an ensemble of actors, singers, and dancers (with and without disabilities), showcasing the power of diversity and community. I was impressed with the quality of this professional show: a live band, beautiful large projections, and great lighting and sound."

Jared Fessler, Broadway World:

"My first experience with an Interact Theater production exceeded all expectations. 'Hell Is Empty and All the Devils Are Here...Again' was an absolute delight. The script was not only humorous but cleverly wove in Minnesota references, Disney elements, political satire, and pop culture nods. It was a whirlwind of laughter and cultural insights."

Ashleigh Grizzell, Audience member

"Hell is Empty and All The Devils Are Here... Again, is a genius, well-crafted, and hilariously fun testament to the times we live in. I laughed, I cried, and I left the show feeling like I learned something about myself, my community, and our collective humanity. Expertly done, Interact performers and artists! This is a cultural gift to the Twin Cities performing arts scene."

Liam James Photo

news from the gallery

by Gallery Director,
Brittany Kieler

This year brought a number of exciting new partnerships and exhibitions for Visual Arts. Interact Gallery held solo exhibitions by Bonnie Thorne and Michael Engebretson, as well as *California Girls*, featuring the work of Eric Sherarts alongside the late David Bauman, an Interact alum. *Glaze Haze*, a ceramics exhibition, featured 26 artists, and we released *Day and Night Spell*, a poetry and comics zine, at the reception. We held group exhibitions at the Minnesota Landscape Arboretum and the Textile Center, and Interact artists presented work at NIAD Art Center (Richmond, CA), Circle Contemporary (Chicago, IL), Second Shift (St. Paul), Fresh Eye Gallery (Minneapolis), New Studio Gallery (St. Paul), and Visionaries + Voices (Cincinnati, OH). Interact Gallery hosted residencies for fiber artist HML and painter Bonnie Thorne, as well as corresponding studio visits with international curators and artists like Jennifer Lauren (Manchester, UK) and Lauren dela Roche (Edwardsville, IL). In conjunction with solo exhibitions, Michael Engebretson hosted Ryan Fontaine (curator at Hair + Nails) and Bonnie Thorne hosted Carolyn Payne (Executive Director at SOOVAC) for gallery visits. Amidst these exciting exhibitions and projects, we've continued to expand our audience, increasing the recognition of Interact artists both locally and abroad. Michael Engebretson's solo exhibition, *Transdimensional Multiversal Cosmic Traveler*, was covered by *MPR*, *Star Tribune*, and *White Bear Press*. Artists and staff appeared on local news programs like WCCO, CBS, and Fox9. HML was interviewed in *Art Et. Al.*, an inclusive, international platform for arts writing.



visual arts

We were thrilled to begin a new partnership with HGA Architects & Engineers this year, which led to an exhibition by 15 artists at their Minneapolis offices. We also partnered with Creative Enterprise Zone to support the creation of a mural by Michael Engebretson, which will reside indefinitely at 2147 University Avenue in our neighborhood. Studio On Fire published a limited edition letterpress print by Michael Engebretson, donating all proceeds to the artist and Interact. Virginia Townsend presented work at Minneapolis-based creative agency Bold Orange, where she gave an artist talk and sold all of her featured paintings. Finally, this fall will see the release of three limited edition mugs by Andrew Seymour, Michael Engebretson and David Wright, produced in collaboration with Los Angeles-based coffeeware company notNeutral.



interact writing workshops



This year, in Writer's Workshop, our talented group of poets and writers continued to hone their craft and find their voice through working on a variety of writing prompts focused on freeform poetry, fiction, and creative nonfiction/memoir-writing. In May, in collaboration with Comics Club cohort, they released *Day & Night Spell: a poetry and comics anthology*, which is available for purchase online through Interact Gallery. Currently, the Writer's Workshop group is focusing on developing short stories, with plans to create more publications in the near future.



Ways you can help Interact thrive!

Interact is the **only** combined Theater and Visual Arts organization for artists with disabilities in the U.S. that produces work at this level of quality and professionalism.

- See our Performing Arts Shows
- Come to our Gallery events and bring friends
- Buy original artwork at our reasonable prices
- Shop our Great Big Holiday Art Sale
- Advocate for Interact at the MN Legislature
- Sign up for our newsletter at interactcenterarts.org

Does your employer support Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion?

- Invite them to come visit us in action during a weekday
- Hang art in your company's space
- Visit and give a talk about Interact
- Share your talents by joining our Board or Advisory Council

And of course... **give generously** and encourage friends to do the same.

Want to learn more?

Sign up for our email list:

interactcenterarts.org click **Get Involved**

Dan Mauck

My name is Dan Mauck, and I am proud to be a member of Interact Center for Visual and Performing Arts. I'm proud to be an Artist with multiple disabilities.



Before joining Interact Center for Visual and Performing Arts, I was working in a sheltered workshop called MRCI. Every day we would have various jobs—mostly assembly work—including sorting materials and repackaging. I had coworkers I considered friends, but eventually I got bored. Bored with labor, bored with being paid less than minimum wage...just B-O-R-E-D! I originally came to Interact Center as a musician, but after ten plus years, and a slew of live performances both on and offstage, I've expanded my career to include theater, dance and even voice work. In many ways, Interact has saved my life and the lives of others who I love and am honored to call my Interact family. We're more than just performers. We are actors, musicians, dancers, singers, and songwriters. More than anything, Interact Center isn't just a day program or a place to work and learn; it's a community, a family, a home away from home. My experience is one of many.

to donate

To donate, please scan the QR Code >>



the mission

CREATING ART THAT CHALLENGES SOCIETY'S VIEWS OF DISABILITY

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.

Our Values

- Excellence in artistic expression
- Radical inclusion
- Unlocking human potential
- Social justice
- Fiscal prudence

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.

the board

Mary Kay Kennedy
Board Chair

Lori Leavitt
Vice Chair

Patrick Dow

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Monica Little

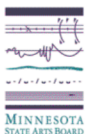
Susan Shapiro

Jeanne Calvit
Artistic Director/
Founder

*** thank you, funders & sponsors! ***



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