

## A LETTER FROM THE BOARD CHAIR



Dear friends and family of Interact,

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 our artists, staff, volunteers, patrons, sponsors, and donors. Our programs thrive because of all who are engaged.

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 original work shown in galleries and on stages throughout the region. We continue to pursue new opportunities for artistic collaboration and together we will create an even brighter future for the Center.

Because 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  
Interact Center for the Visual and Performing Arts  
Board Chair



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Interact Center for Visual and Performing Arts  
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[interactcenter.org](http://interactcenter.org) | (651) 209-3575

## INTERACT FOUNDER SEES DISABILITY AS A LAUNCHPAD FOR ARTISTIC EXPRESSION

BY ANDY STEINER, MINNPOST



Jeanne Calvit describes the beginning of her decades-long career creating art by and for people with disabilities as a “total fluke,” but it didn’t take long for the work to become a passion.

As founder, artistic and executive director of Interact Center for Visual and Performing Arts, Calvit leads a 21-year-old nonprofit dedicated to challenging perceptions of disability through art.

She’s known that she wanted a career in theater since she was a young adult, but Calvit always imagined that she’d work in a company with nondisabled actors. Then her life took a shift. Calvit had been active in the Twin Cities theater community for several years when a friend asked if she’d be willing to lead a new theater program at a summer camp for people with developmental disabilities.

“I had zero experience working with people with disabilities,” Calvit said. But she was intrigued by the opportunity — and hungry for the work. She and her then-business partner wrote a grant for the theater program and got it funded. After staging three shows over three weeks with a company of enthusiastic actors with developmental disabilities, she was hooked.

Calvit loved the sense of freedom that disabled actors brought to their work. And, perhaps because she had no formal experience in the disability community, her definitions of the meaning of disability — and ability, for that matter — were wide open.

Working in collaboration with disabled artists quickly became central to Calvit’s definition of art. For a few years, she recalled, “I kept doing theater with nondisabled actors, but then this work became a passion. I realized that there were already plenty of people who are out there directing ‘normal’ actors and putting out ‘normal’ shows. I realized that I was the only one out there at the time who was doing something that was not just theater for theater’s sake. It was something bigger. It was changing people’s lives.”

In 1996, Calvit turned her passion to change lives into a career when she founded Interact. Today, the St. Paul-based organization is recognized worldwide for creating high-quality art and theater with a spirit of radical inclusion. Widely popular Interact shows like “Bubba Nielson Endangered Species” and “Madame Majesta’s Miracle Medicine Show” have earned the organization broad acclaim.

“PEOPLE IN THE ARTS DON’T USUALLY RETIRE UNLESS THEY HAVE TO. YOU DO ART BECAUSE YOU LOVE IT. IT’S NOT JUST A JOB.”

Because she finds passion and meaning in her work, Calvit, 65, sees no reason to even start thinking about retirement. “Artists don’t retire,” she said with a laugh. “Picasso didn’t retire. Look at Maggie Smith. Nobody asks her to retire. People in the arts don’t usually retire unless they have to. You do art because you love it. It’s not just a job.”

From the beginning, Calvit has embraced a broad definition of disability. “When I started Interact in 1996, I made sure that we included all disabilities, including people with mental illness,” she said. “But we couldn’t get any funding for people with mental illness at the beginning, so we found ways to work around that.” Calvit said she believes that people with mental illness, just like artists and actors with developmental disabilities, take an open and innovative approach to their art. “People with mental illness are super talented,” she said. “They come at their art from a different perspective, with fewer limitations.”

(Story continued inside)

## Interact Center for the Visual and Performing Arts

ART-MAKING APPROACH AND IMPACT Interact Center creates art that challenges perceptions of disability.



<h3>What is Interact's approach?</h3> <p><b>PERFORMING ARTS</b></p> <p><b>Devised Theater</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rehearsals: 5.5 hours/day, 3-5 days/week</li> <li>Dramaturgy: Studying visual, audio, and print media and discussing as a company</li> <li>Performance creation: Character-building, plot development, and script-writing through improv and theater exercises</li> <li>Intensives*: 6 intensives/year             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Improv</li> <li>- Articulation</li> <li>- Movement</li> <li>- Singing</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><i>*Sometimes taught by guest artists</i></p> <p><b>SERVICES COORDINATION</b></p> <p><b>Daily needs and Adult Day compliance</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Individual care: Each artist has an Interact advocate</li> <li>Daily needs: Transportation, Medication, Coordination with case manager, Finance management, Communication with housing provider</li> <li>Adult Day compliance: Monthly goal-setting and check-ins, Yearly meeting with case manager, Daily physical exercises, Adult Day billing, Up-to-date disability risk and management plan</li> </ul> <p><b>VISUAL ARTS</b></p> <p><b>Guided artistic development</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Individual praxis: 5.5 hours/day, 3-5 days/week</li> <li>Workshops*: 4 workshops/month, Various media, such as water color, ceramics, and others</li> <li>Group critiques: 1 session/week, Discussing artists' own and others' work</li> </ul> <p><i>*Sometimes taught by guest artists</i></p>	<h3>What does Interact do?</h3> <p><b>THEATER PRODUCTIONS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2 full theater productions each year (all Interact performing artists are featured)</li> <li>20 performances for each production (40 performances total each year)</li> <li>About 10 tours per year (1-2 performances and 1-2 workshops per tour)</li> </ul> <p><b>RESIDENCIES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2 domestic or international residencies per year at schools, hospitals, or art organizations</li> <li>About 3 weeks of arts learning and 2 performances or exhibitions per residency</li> </ul> <p><b>VISUAL ART EXHIBITIONS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2 Interact exhibitions each year (all Interact visual artists are featured)</li> <li>About 12 additional exhibitions at which Interact artists are featured (1-2 Interact artists are featured per exhibition)</li> </ul>	<h3>What is Interact's impact?</h3> <p><b>IMPACT FOR INTERACT ARTISTS</b></p> <p><b>Artistic impact</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Improved artistic skills</li> <li>- Increased knowledge of art form(s)</li> </ul> <p><b>Impact on artists' sense of self</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Artist identifies as an artist and positive contributor to community</li> <li>- Increased self-esteem or self-worth</li> <li>- Increased confidence/Increased self-determination to learn and try new things</li> <li>- Improved ability or capacity/Increased autonomy</li> </ul> <p><b>Social impact</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Improved sense of belonging or social acceptance</li> <li>- Deepened social network/More relationships with others</li> <li>- Improved relationships with family and friends</li> <li>- Increased socialization/Increased interactions with others</li> <li>- Improved social skills/Improved communication skills</li> <li>- Increased interactions with wider community</li> </ul> <p><b>IMPACT FOR GUEST ARTISTS</b></p> <p><b>Impact on artistic practice</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Deepened artistic capacity</li> <li>- Increased commitment to making own art accessible</li> <li>- More relationships with artists with disabilities</li> </ul> <p><b>Understanding of disability</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Improved perception of disability</li> <li>- Increased understanding of disability</li> </ul> <p><b>IMPACT FOR LEARNERS</b></p> <p><b>Artistic impact</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increased knowledge of art form(s)</li> </ul> <p><b>Understanding of disability</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Improved perception of disability</li> <li>- Increased understanding of disability</li> </ul> <p><b>IMPACT FOR AUDIENCES</b></p> <p><b>Artistic engagement</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Engaged by art/Recognizes value in art</li> </ul> <p><b>Understanding of disability</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Improved perception of disability</li> <li>- Increased understanding of disability</li> </ul>
<h3>What are Interact's values?</h3> <p><b>RADICAL INCLUSION</b></p> <p>Interact produces excellent art because of its artists' diverse ability levels — artists with and without disabilities, from the mainstream and the margins, create art together.</p> <p><b>PROFESSIONAL QUALITY</b></p> <p>Interact holds its artists to professional standards in artistic output as well as in behavior and conduct.</p> <p><b>FOCUSED ON STRENGTHS</b></p> <p>Interact recognizes and builds on each artist's individual creativity, potential, and ability.</p> <p><b>ENRICHING LENS OF DISABILITY</b></p> <p>Interact values the unique perspective of its artists with disabilities, and highlights that perspective through theater performances and visual art exhibitions.</p>		

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IN PARTNERSHIP WITH WILDER RESEARCH, APRIL 2017

**Feast of Fools**  
NOVEMBER 11 — DECEMBER 9  
DIRECTED BY JEANNE CALVIT

NOVEMBER 11 — DECEMBER 9

PRESENTED BY **Interact**

TICKETS: [feastoffools17.bpt.me](http://feastoffools17.bpt.me)

Tickets: 1.800.838.3006

THE LAB THEATER  
700 N 1st St | Mpls  
[www.interactcenter.org](http://www.interactcenter.org)

## Feast of Fools

NOVEMBER 11 — DECEMBER 9

Evil kings, wise fools, starving villagers, and fortune-telling outcasts... Interact Theater's 40+ actors with and without disabilities brew this wild harvest into the Medieval *Feast of Fools*. Featuring **Kevin Kling** as the masterfully foolish storyteller who brings the action to life, Interact turns The Lab Theater into an enchanted kingdom of intrigue, evil doing, and redemption. Add a five-piece orchestra with original music by **Aaron Gabriel**, and enter the rabble.

**The Lab Theater** 700 N 1st St, Minneapolis, MN 55401  
ASL: Saturday, November 25 @ 7p  
AD: Thursday, November 30 @ 7p and Saturday, December 9 @ 3p

**TICKETS: [feastoffools17.bpt.me](http://feastoffools17.bpt.me) | 1.800.838.3006**  
General Admission: \$22 | Students: \$10  
DIS/Cover Tickets: \$5 each for patrons with a disability and their companion/staff

## JEANNE CALVIT ARTICLE CONTINUED:

Because it is an organization created with disability rights and access in mind, Interact has become home for many talented artists who struggle to find their place in the traditional arts community, Calvit said. "We have a guy in our theater program. He was a professional actor in the local theater scene, but because of his anxiety disorder, he found he could no longer compete with other actors. At Interact we deal with the anxiety and work through it. He is now one of our leaders."

"It has been an amazing journey watching people flourish doing theater and doing visual arts here," Calvit said. "You have a support group if you're having a bad patch with your mental health. We're not going to kick you out. We're going to work with you." Interact staff encourages funders, audiences and participants to expand their definition of what it means to be disabled, so they hope that the individuals who participate in their programs will also eventually learn to expand the way they define themselves.

"People's disability can become their singular identity, but when they come to Interact and participate in our programs it changes. After working with us, their identity changes. It is now, 'I'm an artist,' not, 'I'm disabled.' Disability is no longer their only identity. Art is fulfilling for everyone. If you are using your full potential, if you are expanding your creativity, you are going to be happier, and you are going to expand your idea of what you can achieve in your life."



## ARTIST STORY

### THANK YOU TO OUR VOLUNTEERS:

Katie Anderson  
Lynda Anderson  
Julietta Benson  
Theresa Bush  
Shirley Cavallaro  
Maeve Clancy  
Tyler Conway  
York Febres II  
Aleah Felton  
Andrea Feltz  
Jenna Fitzgerald  
Richard Graham  
Meghan Grover  
Daniel Hance  
Huy Le  
Thomas Mahowald  
Alison Martin

Mary Methven  
Sarah Nelson  
Camille O'Leary  
Tracy Perry  
Nick Polaczyk  
Nina Roberson  
Patricia Robinette  
Ben Schave  
Andrew Sterling  
Will Tracey  
Hannah Viederman  
Joshua Wankel  
Erin Ward  
Phoebe Wong  
Benjamin  
Zaban-Boylan

I was drawn to the Visual Arts program because I was inspired by the other artists' work and thought it was interesting how each artist has a unique style. I wanted to come to Interact to improve my skills as an artist. Before Interact, I had not made art since 2005 and I spent most of my time at home watching TV. Interact has helped me with my OCD. Creating art keeps my mind occupied and increases my self-confidence.



Steven Masesi  
Interact Visual Artist since 2017

### Board of Directors

Robert Spikings (Board Chair)  
Maaja Kern (Secretary)  
Mary Kay Kennedy (Treasurer)  
Patricia Bachmeier  
Lori Leavitt  
Susan Shapiro

### Administrative Staff

Jeanne Calvit  
Artistic & Executive Director, Founder  
Jan Gillen  
Operations, Reception & Transit  
Coordinator

Katherine Smith-Flores  
Advancement Coordinator

John Thew  
Staff Accountant

Raleigh Wolpert  
Advancement Director

Glenis Zempel  
Operations Director

### Artist Support Department Staff

Deb Holtz  
Artist Support Department Manager

Derek Meier  
Services Coordinator, Visual Arts

Erin McKillip  
Services Coordinator, Visual Arts

Karen Prince  
Services Coordinator, Performing Arts

### Performing Arts Department Staff

Vanessa Davis Healey  
Stage Manager, Department Manager

Aaron Gabriel  
Music Director, Performing Arts Instructor

Colette Illarde  
Choreographer, Performing Arts Instructor

James Lekatz  
Actor, Performing Arts Instructor

Scotty Reynolds  
Actor, Performing Arts Instructor

### Visual Arts Department Staff

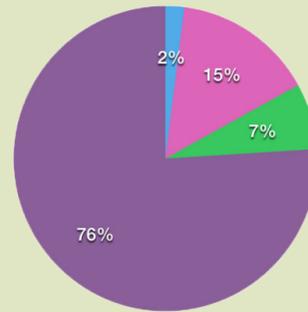
Stacey Robison  
Visual Artist, Department Manager

Joli Grostephan-Brancato  
Visual Artist, Arts Instructor

Deb Helmke  
Visual Artist, Arts Instructor

Presley Martin  
Visual Artist, Arts Instructor

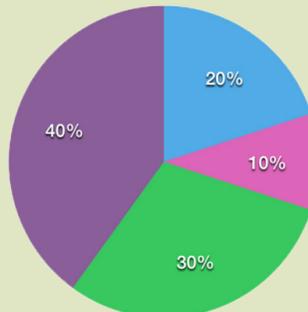
Simone Needles  
Visual Artist, Arts Instructor



## REVENUE

TOTAL: \$1,757,577

- Grants (\$262,512)
- Contributions (\$127,769)
- Program Service Fees and Earned Income (\$1,329,727)
- Other Income (\$37,570)



## EXPENSES

TOTAL: 1,684,231

- Visual Arts (\$502,618)
- Performing Arts (\$676,981)
- Administration (\$341,848)
- Fundraising (\$162,784)

Below: Mike Harris Jr., *BEEr Garden*, 2016



## 2016 HIGHLIGHTS

2016 was a significant year for Interact. The Center marked 20 years of changing lives and minds through radical inclusion. For two decades performers have staged over forty original shows in the Twin Cities, and traveled to five continents including Australia and Thailand. Several thousand visual and performing artists have come through our doors over the years to collaborate and create art, act, sing and dance. To toast this milestone, Interact threw a big party on November 30th, 2016, at the Lab Theater. The board, donors, artists and staff came together to raise their glasses to the past and celebrate the future. And a bright future it is!

### PERFORMING ARTS HIGHLIGHTS

**Teaching Residency at Mississippi Creative Arts Magnet**  
January 7 - 28

**Mayo Clinic Performance**  
February 8

***Hell is Empty and All the Devils Are Here***  
April 29 - May 21

**Frogtown Farm Collaboration**  
June - October

***What Fools These Mortals Be***  
November 18 - December 17

### VISUAL ARTS HIGHLIGHTS

**Interact Group Show, Workhorse Coffee Shop**  
March 16 - May 2

**Interact Group Show, Basilica of Saint Mary's**  
June 5 - June 30

***Creature Faces and Fantasy Places***  
June 30 - August 19

***Our Nature***  
August 26 - September 23

***Miracles and Happenstance, Soo Visual Arts Center***  
September 10 - October 22

**Saint Paul Spring and Fall Art Crawl**  
April 22-24 and October 14-16

### THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS



Carol Markham-Cousins



### THANK YOU TO OUR FUNDERS



This activity is made possible by the voters of Minnesota through a Minnesota State Arts Board Operating Support grant, thanks to a legislative appropriation from the arts and cultural heritage fund, and a grant from the Wells Fargo Foundation Minnesota.