

#artinthetimeofcorona interview with Interact Gallery



Artist Laurie M.
working in her
home studio.

This is one in a series of interviews with our customers to see how they are adapting to the COVID-19 world.

Interact is a progressive studio of artists challenging perceptions of disability located in Saint Paul, MN.

This is their **#artinthetimeofcorona** story.



Interact's first entirely online exhibition, featuring work by artist Katie Bretzman.

How was Interact affected by the COVID-19 virus?

Pre-pandemic, our Saint Paul studio was home to the creative practices of over 70 visual and 30 performing artists every week, plus 24 staff who are also artists and performers, so we really miss being there together.

The pandemic presents new challenges daily, but we're doing the best we can to continue supporting the professional careers of Interact artists. Even though our building is temporarily closed, the artists are still making work. We've moved all our programming online. We're really fortunate to have an incredible studio staff who have been developing an extensive series of virtual workshops. Using group video conferences, Interact artists and staff are holding critiques and drawing sessions, collaboratively reading plays, and staging improv performances from their homes. We're adding new workshops to the roster every week and may offer public programs in the future.

Does the gallery have a daily routine that keeps the studio grounded these days?

We have a daily digital coffee hour with staff and artists that has been really popular. A few pets have also made their way onscreen.

Are you reading, cooking, streaming, or doing any activity that is helping you cope?

In addition to our online workshops, artists and staff have been watching films, refining favorite recipes, and gardening, among other things. Some of us recently saw *Crip Camp: A Disability Revolution* (2020) and really enjoyed it. Artist Victor Van has been cleaning up his neighborhood, practicing daily meditation, and making hand-sewn masks to give away in his community.

With art museums and galleries closed, are you seeing a shift to the internet for viewing/selling art? How is this affecting you?

With more people operating in the digital world right now, we're excited by the opportunity to share Interact artists'

work with new audiences.

On May 11, we launched our first entirely online exhibition, *We Are Not Disposable*. *WAND* is an artistic response to public perceptions of disability, and how access to critical healthcare is threatened for people with disabilities in the face of the pandemic. Our goal is to advance the recognition of Interact artists online and to raise money for the Disability Visibility Project – a digital platform that creates, shares, and amplifies disability culture.

We're grateful to have felt a lot of support from the community around this exhibition. Interact artists have raised over \$2000 from the sales of their work, with 50% going directly to the artists, and remaining proceeds being donated to the Disability Visibility Project. You can view the exhibition at shop.interactcenter.org.

Do you see any positive changes for artists in a post pandemic world?

Lately, being connected with each other online has felt like an opportunity to grow. The artists are making and writing some incredible work from home. In these increasingly digital times, we've been sharing in-progress studio projects with an audience beyond our building in a way that we couldn't have before. You can follow along on [Instagram](#) or [Facebook](#) through the hashtag #ArtWorkingFromHome.

We're so grateful to our community of supporters for keeping up with our work right now, even though we can't hold physical performances or exhibitions. Despite new challenges and uncertainties in today's world, we are fortunate to remain connected with people who value the voices of Interact artists.

During this time of remote learning and creating, we are also raising money in order to continue our programming and retain our talented staff. You can learn more about our mission and

how to donate at interactcenter.org.

We also welcome your inquiries and correspondence at gallery
(at) interactcenter.com.