State of the Arts

Kevin Moriarty and Anne Pasternak

October 14, 2010

Dallas Museum of Art
Horchow Auditorium

Carolyn Bess: …as well as special guests. This month we celebrate the one year anniversary of the opening of the AT&T Performing Arts Center, so please join us for Art in October, a month-long celebration filled with exciting new performances, exhibitions, programs and special events presented by the Dallas Museum of Art and all of our Arts District partners. I encourage you to come back here on Tuesday, October 19 for a special event with best-selling author Steven Johnson presented by Arts & Letters Live.

Johnson will discuss his newest book *Where Good Ideas Come From*: *The Natural History of Innovation* and will further explore creativity with information from diverse fields such as neurobiology, urban studies and internet culture. He presents a unique perspective on how we generate the ideas that push our culture forward.

And I hope you'll mark your calendars now for our next State of the Arts program on Thursday, November 11th. Joining us that evening will be Graeme Jenkins, music director of the Dallas Opera and scenic designer John Coyne, whose work was just featured in the Dallas Theater Center's production of *Henry IV*. I'd like to thank KERA, our program partner for the entire State of the Art series, and especially Sylvia Komatsu, Anne Bothwell and the entire Art & Seek team for their support. My thanks also to Energy Future Holdings for its generous financial support of the series.

Now, I'm pleased to welcome and introduce Jeff Whittington. Jeff is host and senior producer for KERA and KXT radio. He produces the award winning radio show "Think" and serves as host for the show "Anything You Ever Wanted to Know" on 90.1. Jeff also produces the live in-studio performances and videos for KXT 91.7. Since KXT's debut last November, over 60 local, national and internationally acclaimed musicians have appeared live in the station's studio.

This transcript is provided for access and reference use only. Cited content must refer to the original recording, rather than any transcript provided. Review the Dallas Museum of Art's Terms & Conditions *for more information.*
http://dma.org/TermsConditions/index.htm

Jeff's work for KERA has been honored and recognized numerous times including several Best Of Dallas awards from the *Dallas Observer*. Jeff's a graduate of the University of North Texas where he holds degrees in Music and English and he's also a song writer and a musician. Please join me in welcoming Jeff Whittington who will introduce our guests Kevin Moriarty and Anne Pasternak. Thanks again for joining us.

[00:02:16]

Jeff Whittington: Thanks very much Carolyn. Good evening to all of you. It's a real pleasure to be here this evening. It's an honor to be here for our second installment of this season's State of the Art series. KERA and our Art & Seek unit are also thrilled to share the Dallas Museum of Art's commitment to celebrating our incredible visual and performing arts scene here in North Texas and beyond. And I'd also like to thank all of you for being here tonight to participate in this ongoing conversation with arts leaders.

We do have a great series planned this season and tonight is no exception. Kevin Moriarty joined the Dallas Theater Center as artistic director in 2007. He's the sixth person in the organization's history to hold that position. In his three years in Dallas, Kevin has become known for his innovative and even daring interpretations of classic as well as new and progressive works and also as a major champion of local talent right here in North Texas.

Before coming to Dallas, Kevin served as the artistic director of the Hangar Theater in Ithaca, New York, a position he held for seven years. During his tenure at the Hangar, Kevin directed world premieres of plays by Itamar Moses, Roberto Aguirre-Sacasa, Kenny Finkle and Kathryn Walat among others. Kevin has also served as the Head of Directing for the Directing Department for Brown University's MFA program in Providence, Rhode Island and he was an associate artist at the Trinity Rep Company, a Tony-Award winning theater also based in Rhode Island. His directions there included *Richard II*, *Richard III* as well as *The Merry Wives of Windsor* for which Kevin won an Elliot Norton Award for Best Director. He's also directed plays Off Broadway and at regional theaters nationwide. He directed the national tour at the Broadway production of *Jesus Christ Superstar* starring Sebastian Bach and Carl Anderson.

[00:04:00]

Moriarty is a graduate of the University of Wisconsin and a recipient of a Drama League Directing Fellowship. His directorial debut with the Dallas

Theater Center was *The Who's Tommy* which received rave reviews. In his review of the production one critic wrote, “In Kevin Moriarty, Dallas seems to have its own theatrical Cecil B. DeMille, only deeper and more sincere.” In its annual Best Of Dallas Awards, the *Dallas Observer* said, “Being in a Moriarty show has become the new benchmark for what it means to be a Dallas actor.” The Dallas Theater Center began its second season in the Wyly Theatre this fall with a critically acclaimed production of Shakespeare’s *Henry IV* and it opens *The Trinity River Plays* on November 5th.

Since 1994 Anne Pasternak has served as president and artistic director of Creative Time, a New York-based public arts organization that has a history of commissioning, producing and presenting adventurous public artworks. During her tenure there, Anne has served as a catalyst for projects that give artists the opportunity to innovate and to reflect while also engaging millions of people with works of art.

The organization has also increased its commitment to both emerging artists, especially those working with new media, and to established artists who wish to explore fresh opportunities to experiment and engage new audiences. Anne has overseen artistic projects throughout New York City nationally and internationally including Tribute in Light, the twin beacons of light that illuminated the former World Trade Center site on the 6th month anniversary of 9/11.

Anne and her colleagues at Creative Time are guided by a passionate belief in the power of art to create inspiring personal experiences as well as foster social progress. The collaborations organized by Creative Time allow artists to engage in a dynamic conversation and offer new ideas about who an artist is and what art can be, pushing culture into fresh, new directions. Leading artists who have worked on projects with Creative Time include Vito Acconci, David Byrne, Felix Gonzalez-Torres, Red Grooms, Jenny Holzer, Takashi Murakami, Sonic Youth and many more.

[00:06:07]

Creative Time also promotes collaborations with other institutions such as the Dia Art Foundation, Lincoln Center, the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Whitney Museum of American Art. In 2007, Creative Time expanded its focus to include national and international projects working with artists, sites and partners in cities such as New Orleans, Baltimore, Chicago and London. Creative Time was also one of two recipients of the

Inaugural Meadows Prize Artists' Residency, awarded by SMU's Meadows School of the Arts in 2009.

Anne and her colleagues have been using the residency time and the resources to bring together members of the arts community, urban planners, school and city officials and other stakeholders to lay the groundwork for a process that will help lead to a master plan for the arts here in Dallas. And finally, just today *Art and Review* named Anne Pasternak one of the top 100 in the art world.

Please help me welcome Kevin Moriarty and Anne Pasternak to our State of the Arts program.

[Applause]

[Laughter]

Jeff Whittington: Well, thanks so much for being here.

Anne Pasternak: Thank you for having us.

Jeff Whittington: I'd like to start to have each of you talk a little bit about how you got started and what it is you do and Kevin, I wonder if you could tell us a little bit about when you knew that the theater was the place for you.

Kevin Moriarty: Well, for me it would've been in my early twenties, professionally speaking. Personally speaking, I've been obsessed with all of the arts my whole life. I grew up in a very small rural town in Indiana, went to college as a music major and then became a public school music teacher. And at that point of my life, I thought I would end up being a conductor. Specifically, I thought I'd specialize in opera. And I was going to go to a music school, Eastman School of Music, as a conducting student and my parents said, You should take a couple of years and make sure you know what you want to do before you get that deep into terminal degrees and all of that.

[00:08:29]

So I became a teacher, a public school teacher, and while being a music teacher I started directing the school plays, first as an assignment from the Principal and then as an avocation. And at some point, amidst all of that, I thought, Wait a minute, I think I could go deeper and more fully than I could do in rural Minnesota with public school students and so -- well, that was it.

Jeff Whittington: Anne, what about you? How did you find that you needed to work in the art world?

Anne Pasternak: How many of you are going to the TED Conference? Okay, then I'll tell a different story. [Laughter] So I grew up in Hartford, Connecticut and every time somebody, a family member, a friend of the family came to town to visit us, we always wanted the Wadsworth Atheneum, the historic museum. And I was always dumbfounded by the Contemporary art and almost all the Contemporary art there was actually on loan from an artist named Sol LeWitt who I'm sure is extraordinarily well-represented in this museum. And it became this moment of curiosity for me about contemporary culture and what was happening that people would make such strange objects.

And so then when I went to college somebody told me in freshman orientation that you should take art history, it's an easy A, and I thought I was going to be a psychologist but I did sign up for art history and that started a lifelong passion with art.

Jeff Whittington: Okay, so Kevin what everybody wants to know is Dallas home now?

[00:10:05]

Kevin Moriarty: Very much so. It was a faster transition than I thought and I think an easier and deeper love affair than I ever could've imagined or wished for. I definitely feel embraced by the community and part of it now.

Jeff Whittington: But you said people are still introducing you in your presence as the *new* artistic director.

Kevin Moriarty: Yeah, I have a feeling that I'll be introduced as the new artistic director until the moment where I'm summoned into an office to be fired, hopefully many years from now [Laughter] that'll be my first clue when I'm not referred to as new anymore.

Jeff Whittington: Well, talk a little bit about coming to North Texas. What was the moment like when you got the call and how did you prepare for the transition?

Kevin Moriarty: Well, the moment of getting the call was momentous, terrifying, exciting, it was such a huge change for me. I mean at the time I was running a graduate directing program at Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island, I was running a summer theater in Upstate New York, and in every way my life was embedded in Northeastern culture in terms of this

life of the city and my social life and all of that. And it felt like going to the great unknown. I didn't have any deep friends or family, no history in Texas.

Jeff Whittington: Had you visited Texas?

Kevin Moriarty: I had only been here very, very briefly when a tour that I directed came through Dallas, and then for the interview process I had been here at several points. What I knew was the opportunity to come to a city that was in the act of reinventing itself artistically and civically, and part of that was building these unbelievable buildings, specifically the Wyly, with all of that flexibility. I knew that that was an opportunity that I couldn't possibly pass up and it wasn't until I was actually on the eve of physically doing the move a few months later that I thought, what I have gotten myself into? But it's turned out really amazingly.

[00:12:15]

Jeff Whittington: Anne, do you think new blood is an important part of the stew that makes a thriving arts community?

Anne Pasternak: Absolutely. Don't you?

Jeff Whittington: Well, yeah, sure, I mean -- and the question I'm getting at is what else does an arts community need to thrive?

Anne Pasternak: You know an arts community needs a number of things to thrive. It needs job opportunities for artists. It needs, of course, artists of all disciplines. It needs exhibition opportunities whether it's a gallery or a museum or alternative space or a theater space. It needs art schools. It needs residency programs. It needs affordable live and work spaces. It needs a community that cares about art. That's pretty important actually.

Jeff Whittington: Do we have those things here?

Anne Pasternak: Absolutely. I mean it's not just in the Arts District. I mean, there's incredible patronage if you just look at this museum for example or every building in the Arts District. You certainly have fantastic art schools. You have world class collections. You have affordable live and work spaces. There's opportunities for employment for artists here. I think Dallas has a lot of what it takes, it just needs a little bit more. Do little things here and there and Dallas is close to being perfect.

Kevin Moriarty: I'm curious, I don't mean to step on your toes, but I'm curious from what Anne just said. One of the things that -- and we're in different mediums with visual art and theater-- but the first thing that you said the city needs is artists. And one of the questions certainly that we grapple with in theater is the question of, Does the community need artists to live inside of it and then make work there? Or do you simply need artists at the moment that the work is happening? For us, that literally means should we look for playwrights and directors and actors elsewhere or from here and how much should that balance be? When you're talking about the visual the arts, it's a somewhat similar question.

[00:14:19]

Somebody could create a great sculpture anywhere in the world nowadays and through the internet we can connect buyers and all of that sort of thing and you could then bring it and put it on your home or on the streets or in a museum. Does it matter if we actually have any sculptors living in Dallas?

Anne Pasternak: Well, I think it does actually. First of all, and it's a very good question, first of all, I think an American culture, especially since the '80s and '90s post-cultural wars, artists -- and I'll talk about this on Saturday -- but 96% of Americans value art but only 27% value the artist. And I think part of it is because they don't know that artists are living in their communities and they think about artists as fringe elements or unpatriotic or amoral, all these things that were kind of fed to us in the '80s and '90s which are not based in much reality or whatsoever.

And I think there are artists who are participating in communities, they're educating our children, they're educating in schools, they're working at community centers, they're working to instill infrastructure changes like changing legislation, working with government. And I think that the more people know the artists in their community and what artists are actually doing beyond being hermits in a studio, the more familiar artists will be to us and the more people will be engaged with art. So I think there's a real impact to having artists live in our communities.

Jeff Whittington: And do you think that attitude comes from the sense that -- and this probably speaks to the theater too -- art is something that someone did and now it's in this exalted place and it's not changing, it's there and it's been done, it's settled. And there's a plaque on the wall and it says what date it was created and what years the artist lived, and maybe it's the same thing for the theater. Do you think that because of the way the

institutions have worked, that that attitude has been fostered in some way, I mean, accidentally?

[00:16:15]

Anne Pasternak: Yeah, I mean, I don't know what you think, but I think that there are a lot of reasons for that. I think that's the reason I think art institutions historically have done a good job telling people that they're not educated enough or informed enough to really appreciate art. And that the didactics in institutions tend to talk down to people and be very difficult to decipher even for those of us who are educated in this field. And I'm always amazed working publicly--

I work with an artist closely. I've had the privilege of hearing their thought process as they develop a project and I think I know pretty well what they're thinking. And then somebody will come up to me on the street and say, "So what is this about?" And I'll say, "Well, what do you think it's about?" And they'll say something that was so obvious that I had never ever thought of and they're 100% right. And so it's just about asking that question back to people, "What are you seeing?" I think we're trained not to look anymore.

Kevin Moriarty: And I think that training-- I think this is really serious challenge for those of us who make art or for whom art really matters in our lives in relation to the broader culture is that I think it works on both sides that there's a vested interest, I think, for those of us who are artists sometimes, which often you're in a great position of vulnerability when you make something that's new, you think, "I'm afraid everyone will say that this thing that comes from me is boring or stupid or not of a value."

And so there's a temptation sometimes for the artists to say, "Only some of you have the right or the ability to speak about this or engage with it" as a form of self-protection. It's that thing of kind of like, What do you think of my new hair cut? Don't tell, don't tell, oh tell me, tell me but only tell me if you like it. And if you don't like it, well, what do you know about haircuts anyways? You're a heathen or whatever.

[00:18:04]

And I think that it requires kind of great generosity and vulnerability for artists to say, "Well, what do you see? What do you hear? What are you experiencing as you're looking at this work?" And to be open to that response, which is isn't the same as even asking, Is it good or is it bad? But just say back to me what this is that you're experiencing right now.

That takes a vulnerability from the artist and it also takes a vulnerability from institutions because part of how institutions derive their power is from being the gatekeepers and so there's a certain -- it's important that the Board of Trustees at Dallas Theater Center believes to some extent that I am worthy of selecting plays and playwrights and artists and things like that.

So it could be in my best interest to kind of foster the cult that I know more about theater than anyone else, just to preserve a job or as well as to kind of preserve my self-image. So those two things I think are also at play there.

Anne Pasternak: Well, we do value knowledge.

Kevin Moriarty: Right.

Anne Pasternak: Yeah.

Jeff Whittington: Well, they're letting us have this conversation right here in an institution.

Anne Pasternak: Right.

Jeff Whittington: No one's just called security or anything. Yet. Anne, I'll have you talk a little bit about this in just a minute, Kevin what do you hear when you ask people what they see because I know that you, at the end of a performance, you'll open up the floor for questions at the Theater Center?

Kevin Moriarty: Yeah, after every performance of every play that we do, we invite audience members and sometimes it's 25 or 30 and sometimes it's a hundred to stay afterwards and engage in a dialogue with one or more of the artists in the production. And often those dialogues move toward peoples' personal thoughts or reflections, things in the contemporary world that they feel strongly about based on or in response to what they just saw. Sometimes, it becomes a question about aesthetics or about the intent of the various artists.

[00:20:16]

For me, when I'm directing a play, there's a period, the first week of performances where we're in previews, where the play is still being made, it's not done yet. We're rehearsing every afternoon for five hours and then we invite an audience in who pay money in the evening though not as much as after opening night to see the preview. After those

performances, I often invite anybody to stay and I ask them questions, and when they ask me questions, I just throw it back at them and I won't answer. I'm very careful about that during that time.

And I'm essentially asking them, "Tell me the story, tell me the resonance." I'll often go through all the leading characters in the play and I'll say, "Describe the characters, just throw out words." Those things then change what we do in rehearsal the next day. We'll make changes to the writing, to the design, to the blocking based on -- we don't ask people what did you like or what did you not like and when people share that and played about it but frankly, I'm not listening for that and there's not much I can do about that.

If you say, "It makes me mad when…or I hate this." There's not a lot -- I mean that says as much about, something valid about you but it says much about you as it does about the work of art. What I am listening for is the moment where somebody is describing to me a story that is different than the story we're trying to tell, or when the central image or idea we assume everyone is going to focus on, people are entirely not focused on at all. So in those cases we go back and often make really big changes.

Jeff Whittington: If they're getting something you're not looking for them to get is there something wrong with that? I mean are you going to try to make a change to correct that or do you ever have a moment where you say, "Wow, that's kind of neat, maybe we should stick with that."

[00:22:05]

Kevin Moriarty: Yeah, this is one of those gut things, you kind of feel it in your gut. When somebody describes back to you a moment that is different than you ever intended but is resonant with what the author and the designers and the actors are attempting to do, that kind of opens up new avenues. Usually what that makes me do is make a couple of other changes to support that or keep that in play. Especially, if it's something only one person is seeing in it which usually means they were focused visually on something at the periphery that perhaps then should somehow be expanded on or pointed out or they caught a line that otherwise would've passed by.

But sometimes it truly is the people that audience members are really focused on something that is actually opposite of where we're trying to go. And then in those cases, I'm pretty aggressive about changing lines and blocking to change that, especially with canonical works that with -- I

mean oddly, it's harder and more important to do with established works than new works. With new plays and the playwrights right there, they're listening to the audience and that really is about -- it's as much about the playwright trying to figure out what is this thing I've made and they're listening to the audience to find out, so they can then make that better.

But on canonical works, people often will come in with very strongly held opinions about this is what is going on in Hamlet. And if you're trying to make an argument and a production is essentially a reading or an argument of or about a play, when you're trying to make that and an audience is steadfastly holding on to the version that was a famous movie or that the college professor told them or what Harold Bloom says is true about Falstaff or something like that. I mean just on *Henry IV*, a lot of people come to watch *Henry IV* having read Bloom's very, very, very, persuasive essays.

[00:24:02]

I love those essays, they're great. I was very consciously trying to fight against some of his ideas and hearing audiences say back to me essentially Bloom's reading of the play in previews would make me go in with a red pen, new blocking and rip out design elements until we kind of said, "You have to look at this freshly."

Jeff Whittington: Do you get -- the art that you support at Creative Time, it's not a ticket buying audience necessarily. It's the purest, probably feedback that--it's across the board. What surprises you about what people see in those projects?

Anne Pasternak: First of all what I would say what he does is really hard and I really commend him. It's amazing and it's amazing that you embrace that feedback process because it means you have to think so fast and I cannot imagine the pressure cooker you're under when you're doing that. That's really great.

Kevin Moriarty: It's the fun part of it too.

Anne Pasternak: Okay [Laughter]. You know I don't mean to be difficult, I don't know how to answer that question because I think that the responses are as different and varied as there are people and it varies from project to project. So I haven't really noticed that there's certain tendencies that I tend to hear. What I do notice is that children are really super engaged when they discover things in public spaces that are unusual and they go

right in and they get it and they love it and they have fun and they're fearless, and adults are very fearful.

And I always love to imitate art people at a museum. You can always tell somebody is a curator or a critic, you know how? [Laughter] That body language says, I'm absolutely closed off to having an epiphany, which is why we're all in this business, right? Adults in general will always ask you in a kind of defensive way, often a defensive way, and if you just talk to them and say, "Well, you know, what do you think?" I find that people are really open to having that conversation and surprise themselves.

[00:26:05]

Jeff Whittington: Are you surprised yourself by some of the reactions?

Anne Pasternak: All the time. I always learn from people. I don't have all the answers. In fact, I find that usually they have better insights to an artist's intention than I do. I'm always discovering through other peoples' voice.

Jeff Whittington: Who does Creative Time have to please?

Anne Pasternak: Nobody. We're an independent, non-profit organization and our mandate in fact insists that we don't have to please people. It says artistic experimentation is really important because if artists have an opportunity to try new things and take risks, they may not only push their practices forward but they might push culture forward in some interesting and unexpected ways; and that public spaces are places for freedom of expression and free creativity and a place for sharing and engagement, but even a place for provocation.

Remember, that's what the public spaces were originally designed as, places for the populace to come together and argue with one another. And so we still believe that it's very important that the experiences you have in public spaces aren't necessarily meant to please everybody. It's okay to provoke people, challenge them, get them upset and riled up.

Jeff Whittington: So art should be provocative?

Anne Pasternak: I don't think art should be anything but I think it's great when art is provocative because what that means is that people stop, pause, think a little bit. I mean listen, we're surrounded in our cities by corporate advertising. It's a numbing experience and there's so many distractions day to day. So if you have something in the public realm that actually

gets you to think and engage with somebody else, I think that's a positive thing.

[00:27:58]

Kevin Moriarty: I think it's a key necessity in a democracy, too, is that -- I think public spaces -- I think the only way that a democracy can thrive is for ideas to constantly be in play and for the kind of interplay of the population to push toward better ideas and towards reconciling opposites that -- for a democracy to work, there has to be a point where complicated opposition, all ideas somehow find a meeting place, otherwise you would have stasis and nothing would ever change. And I think any time -- I think it's a not *the* role of art but it is *a* role of art to keep that ball in the air and that absolutely means doing things that sometimes politicians or commerce can't do, which is get people talking about something they wouldn't otherwise talk about, which leads to eventually shifts in attitudes or reassertions of already held common values.

Anne Pasternak: And isn't it funny that often when artists are engaging with let's say issues of war or poverty or whatever it may be, education, and they're uncomfortable to people that somehow or other the artist isn't supposed to do that. And I've never understood that because fundamentally what the artist is doing is participating in democracy. It's a fundamentally American and patriotic thing to be doing.

Kevin Moriarty: Right, and if you think about the things that tend to provoke people, they tend to be issues of war and peace, economics, class –

Jeff Whittington: Religion.

Kevin Moriarty: Religion and sexuality. Well, I've just named the four things that matter probably more -- well, other than family-- the things that probably matter most to everybody in this room and the things that we all share. I mean everybody in this room shares a personal engagement with issues of sexuality and faith and absolutely war and peace and economics. I mean those are the things that matter to us.

[00:30:11]

But none of those are things that are necessarily easy to talk about. There's a lot -- there's huge amount of each of those that in this forum officially as Kevin Moriarty with the microphone in front of you all, there's no way. If you start asking me questions about intimate moments of my sexual life or details about my economic life or complicated

theological questions, I would consider that rude and I would dodge and try my best [Voice Overlap] to avoid.

[Laughter]

Jeff Whittington: Thank you.

Kevin Moriarty: That's impressive.

[Laughter]

But on the other hand, if I was -- as an actor, if I was playing a role, as a director if I was making a play, I could address any of those things. And I could create a safe space because instead of having to talk about your own immediate experiences, you could talk about what --

Anne Pasternak: The issues.

Kevin Moriarty: The work of art itself…

Anne Pasternak: Yeah.

Kevin Moriarty: …is provoking and that essential for democracy to flourish.

Jeff Whittington: What play doesn't address one if not more than one of those four issues?

Kevin Moriarty: Right, yeah.

Jeff Whittington: It's theater.

Kevin Moriarty: Right.

Anne Pasternak: You know I always like to tell to people that art is not a banal thing that you put on a pedestal, table or hang on a wall. Art is really about producing meaning. It's about ideas and the better the ideas and the better the delivery and execution of the ideas, the better the artwork is. So you know I'm always trying to encourage ourselves as a staff, as a board, as a community to challenge what we think art is or how an artist functions in society.

Jeff Whittington: So, bringing us back to, you wanted to ask…

Kevin Moriarty: I just want to say even something you know -- sometimes people say to me, Well, why can't this work of art, why I can't just play, just be happy or just funny or why can't work of art just be pretty?

[00:32:00]

And I don't think there's anything the matter with beauty. Beauty is actually a value that I think is of great importance in the art and sometimes in the 20th century, the late 20th century especially, I think we may have at times downplayed the importance of beauty. But even then when we're talking about something is visually beautiful or something is happy, something is comic or joyful or makes me feel good at the theater or when I look at it on a wall, we're essentially saying that it somehow can reassert beliefs that we share, that it conforms to values that we have in some way.

So, that also matters. I think keeping those things in play--and you can really see that when you move back in time. If you look at a work of art that's more than a hundred years old from a wide variety of different cultures, whether it's a play or painting or piece of music, you can really see and sense a lot about the people themselves, the time, what they valued.

Anne Pasternak: Or sometimes you can't. I mean you know it's so funny looking at a Courbet painting in which you know some women are giving alms to a peasant girl, and you can't imagine that that painting was so radical it took down the salon.

Kevin Moriarty: Right.

Anne Pasternak: You know my point isn't that beauty is in the eye of the beholder and we can look at lots of paintings in these galleries that look just really beautiful. You think, "Oh, they're just abstract paintings." But in fact, they came out of a particular moment with artists with very strong beliefs that were reacting to the world around them. They were reacting to certain conventions in their society and chose a particular kind of form. And in a sense, they're deeply political not in the sense of am I pro-war or against war but they're very political, they're very much of their time.

Jeff Whittington: Kevin, do you weigh these issues when you select plays for a season?

[00:34:00]

Kevin Moriarty: Yes, I mean, I think one of the great challenges and one of the great joys of my job--I think it's my obligation to be a part of the community, to constantly try to find ways to listen to the community and live in the community and of the community, and then to pick plays that somehow are reflecting the community back at itself. And I think -- and I don't think

I always do this right. But when I get it right, some of those moments in a season celebrate the things that we have in common. And some of those moments push on the edges of that or ask questions, or look at experiences that are different than our own. And I think that's -- I think probably at the most fundamental level that's the biggest job I have, and I think that's probably to a large extent the job of a lot of curators as well. I think that -- to try and be in the moment and then somehow speak to that moment or with that moment.

Jeff Whittington: Should the Dallas Theater Center goer, your typical patron or season ticket holder or someone that comes to everything, should they be pushed? Does the audience need to be pushed?

Kevin Moriarty: Well, I think an audience probably wants to be pushed. I don't it's so much a question of should or not. I mean if you simply went to a play and saw two people eating dinner and getting along just pleasantly and saying you know, "How was work today dear?" "It was fine." "How was everything with your work?" "Fine" I mean if that just went on for 30 minutes, I think that would probably be the most radical act you could do for theater but that would be -- truly, I can't imagine -- audiences would probably -- then no one would make it to 30 minutes, you have -- I mean in stage time, that is really -- I mean two minutes of harmony would be -- [Laughter] mind numbing. I mean audiences would revolt.

[00:36:00]

So, I mean even -- it's just so radical, you can't even think about it! I'm starting freak out a little bit trying to imagine audiences saying, "No, no just show us that everything is all right."

Anne Pasternak: Wait for the next season.

Kevin Moriarty: That would be wild. So, no, I think audiences want to kind of be pushed and provoked and all those things. I think different theater artists and theater companies, just like different museums and different musical organizations, have different mandates in terms of how many people they speak for or with and what their obligation is to the broader community. We are a largely kind of encyclopedic institution. Our mission is to speak to a very, very broad section of the community-- in a perfect world, every single person in the community would be ideal.

And so that does mean there are some ideas or not ideas but perhaps experiences that are so specific that they just wouldn't be of interest to the broader audience. And so there are things like that that we concern

ourselves with, but I don't think that's about ideas. I think that's more about experience of ideas, if that makes sense. I think I got lost, I'm sorry.

[Laughter]

I'm not sure what questions you're asking me.

Jeff Whittington: Anne, you've been coming to Dallas several times in last year. How are we doing? I mean how are things working here as far as reaching that live, broad audience that Kevin is talking about, and how is the Arts District in its almost completed state? Is that helping? Is it bringing more people together, or what are you seeing? What are you hearing?

Anne Pasternak: You know I don't -- as I said, I'm not an expert on these issues and I haven't looked at the statistics. Everything that we're doing here in Dallas is to listen to artists, listen to people at the institutions about what they think Dallas could use in a sense, what would take Dallas just that next step to making this a great city for art to be made.

[00:38:13]

But my sense is that when big events happen, you know when there's a big new production going on, when there's an opening at the museum for a hundred hours, people turn out. People are excited to come and experience things together. And so I think that's a wonderful thing. It seems to me that -- and you guys tell me if I'm wrong, I'd love to hear about this--that Dallas like many cities is a very event-based city.

Jeff Whittington: What do you think Kevin? Is it -- are we hitting the goals with the Arts District or is something missing?

Kevin Moriarty: I think we have made a phenomenal start. I don't think that anyone -- I think this is a moment in time in terms of the Arts District, which goes back more than 25 years. And just like 25 years ago, I don't think that anyone with their hopes and dreams for the Arts District would have said, "That's it, we've done it, the DMA is here! You know you can look at Flora Street, it's complete!" and it's so obvious it's not complete now. There's still construction going on.

Anne Pasternak: Was it defined? Was there an end-goal other than world class city, world class art destinations? Was there something more specific than that?

Jeff Whittington: I think we're supposed have something decided before we leave the stage tonight.

[Laughter]

Kevin Moriarty: I can't answer the specific question. It may be -- there might have been an original vision that was bounded by geography or representation of various types of art or things like that. For me, I think with those of us who are really, really are engaged, the audiences and the donors and the city leaders and all of us really, really want the Arts District itself, and even more the arts throughout the community, to kind of really grow to fruition. I think what we're talking about is the city where art is a part of our everyday lives. A city where not only do we come together around big events which are important in the same way that holidays are very important for a country. We all celebrate Independence Day or for a religion.

[00:40:30]

Everybody comes together for you know -- the family all comes home, you celebrate or commemorate in a certain way. Those are important. It would be hard for a great nation or a great religion to continue without those peaks. But I think, at least what I hope for the Arts District, what I think we've started on--and the work is to dig, let's roll up our shirt sleeves and get to work—is to keep going, is to actually not just keep those giant holidays but the everyday practices. I feel like I'm a minister saying you know, "We gotta get people into the churches on more Sundays or not just on Easter" whatever that would be.

And not just in the churches. I mean the analogy I guess wouldn't be I want people once a year to follow certain moral ways if I was religious leader. But actually to say what a great religion does is it infuses people's lives in all the invisible ways as well as those peak moments. Civic virtues are the same way, believing every human being should have a free and equal voice in society. So you don't want to just remember that on Independence Day. You would not just study that in school, though every child should study that in school if the democracy is to flourish, and you should celebrate that on a couple key holidays. But you actually want that to be living and breathing in people's daily lives.

[00:42:00]

Anne Pasternak: And that goes back to the point of why it's so important for artists to be in our communities, to be living in our communities and working in our communities. And it's interesting that in all the conversations we have about the arts flourishing in Dallas, one thing people never seem to say is that I'd like to see public art, which is something that interrupts you on your daily commute, or on your way that the grocery store and you don't

have to pay admission. You don't have to go to an event. It's just kind of there living with you and your community. I think that's kind of interesting.

And I think the other thing that's so critically important is of course arts education. And you have a wonderful non-profit organization that's really working to put arts education in the schools which I fear, otherwise, might not exist, Big Thought.

Kevin Moriarty: Yeah.

Anne Pasternak: It's doing some really fantastic work. And if you're not supporting it, you should be.

[Laughter]

But you know arts education, not from kindergarten to first grade but from kindergarten to senior year in high school, is of critical importance for the field. Because if they're not growing up as artists working on creative problem solving and all the kinds of skills that you learn through art classes, then we don't have much hope for them to become arts enthusiasts later in life.

Jeff Whittington: Are you hearing some of this from the stakeholders you're talking to here?

Anne Pasternak: Hearing the importance of K through 12 arts education?

Jeff Whittington: Sure.

Anne Pasternak: A lot of people talk about the role of arts education.

Jeff Whittington: Okay.

Anne Pasternak: But it's just a fact. I mean there are lots of studies on this.

Kevin Moriarty: Well, I think you know a really great arts ecology, what I think you kind of hope for is that people are making art and not just the professional official artists, but people in their own everyday lives are in some way engaging with creative expression that celebrates their unique points of view or experiences or emotion. You also hope that they have the opportunity to engage in kind of formal moments that they can go somewhere or come together to experience art in museums or in theaters, in parts where they are experiencing other people's ideas other

than their own in a forum in which they can then share and evaluate their responses based on that.

[00:44:25]

You know that's a great thing if you go see a great movie, a great play, hear a concert, and go to a great art museum. You're not only having your primary experience which is the first and probably most important thing but you can also then engage your friends at a cocktail party or go online and look at what people have written, critics and fans on blogs. You can read books. So, you start to engage in a dialogue about the art that opens you up.

And then the third thing I think is really important in a great arts ecology is those moments where you bump into art as part of your everyday life. And those are those moments -- we already have that to the extent that you jump in your car and turn on the radio and a piece of music surprises you and takes you away from the grocery list in your brain. But what you want are those moments where walking down the street or turning a corner, on your way to dinner, or walking the dog, that you stop for a moment and go outside of yourself and into something bigger. And I think in a really great dynamic arts ecology you have all of those things together.

Jeff Whittington: Is that hard to get a city to embrace the public art aspect?

Anne Pasternak: No, no I don't think so at all. In fact, it's interesting because a lot of cities are starting their own public arts programs. They've been looking at cities like London, Paris, New York where you have Christo's Gates and they hear these financial arguments that makes such good economic sense.

[00:46:03]

Oh, it brought $600 million of taxable revenue into the city. The good news is that we're starting to measure things. And interestingly enough, it's not just our Mayor in New York City who loves measurements of how public art not only feels good and engenders a sense of community and all those kinds of things, but actual dollar values on it. I mean some people would be a bit cynical about it, but I actually embrace it.

But the National Endowment for the Arts for several recent years has been doing a lot of studies on the impact of arts on our cities. And did you know for example that people who participate in the arts, which might be going to theater once a year or walking into a gallery twice a

year something like that, are two times as more likely to volunteer. They vote, contribute to charities and go to church more significantly than people who are non-arts participants. They also exercise two times as much and are nearly two times as likely to participate in outdoor activities. Who knew the arts are so good for us?

And then there's the statistics about prisoners and children and arts participation that are really kind of mind blowing. And then economic sense. I mean the arts make really strong economic sense. I think in 2008 or '09 we were something like a $166 billion industry in the United State. That's hard to argue with.

Jeff Whittington: You can't argue with that in Dallas either.

Anne Pasternak: Right.

[Laughter]

Jeff Whittington: You know we're -- a great example in Dallas of where I feel like this really does happen or kind of organically gives you the arts is NorthPark Mall. That is a perfect example of it. And I've never seen any mall remotely like that in my whole life. And when I first came to Dallas, I said -- well, I just got in here and I said, "I need to go on the weekend and buy some new sneakers, where should I go?" And somebody said, "Oh, go to this mall NorthPark." And I said, "Okay" and I jumped to my car and I'm wearing a T-shirt and jeans and it's my off day and I haven't washed my hair or whatever. And I'm not -- all I'm thinking is, I've got an hour, I'm going to run in to the mall, I'm going to grab a pair of sneakers.

[00:48:10]

And so I'm in a private space essentially, I'm not thinking publicly. I'm not thinking about bettering myself or connecting with the broader community or anything else. I just want to some shoes. And you walk into that space and instantly I just stopped, dead in your tracks, and think, I'm looking at giant metal man [Laughter] and it just like stops you and never ceases to amaze me. And you stop and you just think, "What are these giant men doing, and are they enslaved or are they liberating and why are they towering over us?" I said, "Why are there three of them? Why aren't there four?" You know I mean, "And why are they in this arrangement?" And your mind starts to racing and filling in the gaps and then you stand back from that and you think, look at all the people, moving around here. And this is a maybe two or three-minute

engagement on the way to buy shoes. That is awesome and it doesn't get old.

What's amazing to me is that -- so I'll go to NorthPark to see a movie, so that's going somewhere to have a mediated experience of art. I'm choosing to go see *Social Network* because I've read good reviews about it and I want to hear the story. But I'm confronted by works of art, some of which I've seen many times before but based on who you're with or the time of day or where the light is, you stop and see it anew. And sometimes you don't, sometimes you take out your iPhone and sit down and you lean against the planter next to a piece of sculpture and you're not even paying any conscious attention to it at all. But you're just in -- you're just sharing space with something bigger than you, wider than you, deeper than you.

[00:49:53]

And that's also really cool. The same way that Mozart can do that early morning on your iPod while you're drinking coffee and reading the *New York Times* or at the symphony, you can sit there and really delve in to the exact details of the moments of polyphony or how the chord structure works or whatever. It can work on both those levels. That's what I wish would happen for the whole city. That's what I wish the Arts District to do. I wish people would be shopping and rushing about and dragging their kids and their dogs and their groceries, and be confronted by works of visual art and by people making art in the moment.

Anne Pasternak: See, I think it's actually less important in the Arts District. I think it's more important in other areas of the city. I'm not so sure -- I believe in arts districts but I think it needs to be spread out through the city. So, what would happen if you had an artist in residence in West Dallas for example? This is a very interesting moment in the city and you know…

Kevin Moriarty: I completely philosophically agree with Anne about this. This is a challenge of Dallas and the modern American cities as compared to the cities that were kind of built and designed significantly before automobiles that I'm still grappling with and I don't know the answer to, which is that in the cities that pre-date automobiles, which is most of the great European cities as well as quite a few of American cities, you can say put art whether it's somebody doing a play outside or whether it's a work of public visual art, you can say, democratize it, spread it throughout the city and put it where the people are. Because in any neighborhood in New York, almost any of the boroughs, there are--but

certainly in Manhattan, any neighborhood--there are clusters of people milling about all of the time. I mean even late at night.

Jeff Whittington: Sure.

Kevin Moriarty: So, it's not that hard to say find out where the people are and put the art there. What's challenging I think about Dallas and my guess, I'm reading this into the impulse behind the Arts District all these years ago, is that--and this why NorthPark Mall is such a great example because where do we get out of our cars, and all congregate to eat, to shop, to see a movie? It's at the mall.

[00:52:14]

Jeff Whittington: Right.

Kevin Moriarty: But what is harder to find here is where that is, the cross sections of people are outside in the community. Even our great sports teams tend to be in places -- even American Airlines Center which is in the city, tend to be places you drive to. You park, you get out of your car and you walk into it. So it's harder even moving a block or to away from those venues. It's hard to find this place.

Anne Pasternak: It's true but maybe it's not about people coming to it. Maybe it's just for the people who are in those neighborhoods and there's a value to that also.

Kevin Moriarty: Right, absolutely. But ultimately, the sad part about that, the only sad part, is that neighborhoods tend to be somewhat homogenous, and I think in the great democratic ideals, whether you're talking about public education or whether you're taking about public art, in a great democracy you're not talking about homogeneity. You're talking about the melting pot. You're talking about the moments where everybody of different backgrounds and experiences and incomes and races and ages are clashing together. That's the dream I think.

Anne Pasternak: I just make this one point and just that --

Jeff Whittington: Sure and then we're going to take a few questions.

Anne Pasternak: Yeah, yeah, absolutely. So, I completely agree with you and this is one of the reasons why I have no interest in working in Los Angeles because it's completely a driving culture.

Kevin Moriarty: Right.

Anne Pasternak: But actually in Dallas, people do show up.

Kevin Moriarty: Yes, yes, absolutely. We show up for those events like you said. And obviously we're here tonight, and I think it's actually one of the things I love about Dallas and it's been a real joy to me is it's a very social city. People get out.

Jeff Whittington: There's a lot going on.

Kevin Moriarty: And there's a lot going on but also people just-- well, it's part of this incredibly friendly culture which is not fake. When I first arrived it was a little unnerving to me because I tell you in Boston, you can go to the same Dunkin Donuts every single morning to get the exact same coffee everyday for seven years, and have the same person serving you that same cup of coffee, and each morning they will look at you and for a brief moment with contempt and hatred.

[00:54:33]

[Laughter]

And not for a moment will they ask you how are you doing, much less know your name. In Dallas, I walk down the street, the second I arrived, I walked down street and people who've never seen me before, they look me straight in the eye. They smile and they say, "How are you doing?" and they really want to know how you're doing.

Jeff Whittington: Welcome to Texas.

Kevin Moriarty: Yeah, it's a good answer.

Kevin Moriarty And if you don't want to answer, if you go, "Fine" and keep going. [Laughter] What's the matter honey? You know they even like they really [Laughter] It's impolite to stand in an elevator and kind of just keep your phones on and read on your iPhone like people kind of have an expectation. Well, we're in an elevator. We got nine floors to go. Let's have a quick chat. That is something that's really great about Dallas, and I think that is another reason why I kind of believe that organically, there's a hunger for artistic engagement because that just belongs in that mix somehow.

Anne Pasternak: Yeah.

Kevin Moriarty: Well, let's get a few questions from these folks, if you have a question. Yes, go ahead.

Audience Member: I, until September, was the president of a local dance group and we are a non-profit and it's all volunteer run, and we dance because it's fun.

Male: Yay!

Audience Member: And it's an extremely accessible folk dance, it's American folk dance called Contra dance and we always have live music and we find that -- or I find certainly, I think the other dancers do too, we don't want to dance to canned music because there's an interaction between the music and dance and the musicians are much as part of the dance as the dancers are.

[00:56:20]

So for me, this is just you know -- it's a nirvana thing to go, to have a really great dance. Sometimes it works, but sometimes it doesn't. When we have lots of newcomers, it's a lot harder but I remember that I was a newcomer once and it's pretty nice for it to be accessible. We don't need lessons and all that, just through people in, "Hey, let's dance."

And during my term as president, it really occurred to me a lot that there's no interaction between the all-volunteer folk group that we have and the "arts community". So I started trying to find out about arts groups and what was going on, and the truth is we're self-funding. We don't need money, like grants or anything. But I just felt like, this is artistic what we're doing and we make it ourselves and in fact we say that we make our own amusement.

Jeff Whittington: And your question is Where's the point to interact?

Audience Member: How is there -- I mean it sounds to me like you're saying as artists that you feel like there needs to be a connection with the community and people need to be able to make their own art and appreciate the art of others. And I would like to know have you all looked at folk groups, when I say folk, I mean people that make their own stuff and try to have connection somehow with them?

[00:58:02]

Kevin Moriarty: It's a good question. Anne how do you deal with that in your work, in New York and elsewhere?

Anne Pasternak: Well, I'm not sure I'm going to answer the question so tell me if I'm off. I mean I work with people who make their own stuff all the time, that's what artists do. So what we try to do is based on the artist's idea, try to target the community that it's going to be richest in, whether the site is historical and has a reference that's meaningful for the artwork or that there's inherently a community that's going to be engaged in the subject matter. So we may not do a project that relates to issues of immigration in Wall Street or Battery Park City, but we might do it in Queens, a neighborhood that speaks more languages that any other place on the planet, where immigration is real issue.

So we think about the audience based on the artist's intention and the work itself and then we try to connect from that point. It's a lot of work.

Jeff Whittington: And I think that -- I think what you're saying, correct me if I'm wrong, is that there's been some discussion about the Arts District and the organizations that are established in these new buildings and facilities, is there an opportunity and where is the opportunity for local homegrown or more volunteer organizations to interact with those established, sanctified arts organizations? Is that kind of what you're…?

Audience Member: Yeah, where I think the thing is you have volunteers and then you have people who are you know -- they dedicate their lives to making their living doing it. And to me, there's a disconnect there, and I think it's a travesty that there's a disconnect.

Kevin Moriarty: I think it's a great point. I have to confess that I don't have an answer. You've pointed out something that does seem to be an interesting area for us to explore. I know one of the hopes in the Arts District as a whole is that when City Performance Hall is complete, when the outdoor spaces are all finished and all of that, that there will be more opportunities for performance spaces and kind of the natural interactions of people performing and bumping up against each other.

[01:00:23]

I also think it's true that for that for those of us who work in institutions, like I do at Dallas Theater Center, it's easy for us to collaborate with or be

in touch with other institutions. So we can put out a call as we did when we created a couple months ago, this festival, a city-wide festival of Horton Foote's work. Horton Foote was a great Texas playwright who recently passed away.

So we called up, or emailed actually, all of the professional theater companies in Dallas-Fort Worth and in between, and invited them to come to a meeting. And at the meeting we said, “Hey, what can we do to celebrate Horton Foote's work? How can we all work together?” Well, that’s not that hard because we have a small but dedicated staff at the Theater Center and it’s a finite list of other professional groups and you can find those lists and you can meet those people and then you can reach out to them and find ways that we could support each other's work.

And the same thing is true with educational institutions. You can find those lists and know who is in charge. They're kind of top down in terms of how they run. You can go to superintendent or a principal or a neighborhood and say, "Where are the schools? Get me into the school, get me to the arts teacher, let's find a way to collaborate."

What's interesting when you get to the level of groups made of enthusiasts or dedicated volunteers or highly skilled amateurs is that the structures don’t -- I can't, off the top of my head, think of an easy access structure for us to simply send out the email or place the phone call and say, Hey, everybody who makes plays but doesn’t do it under some form of professional organization with a board or a staff. That question of how do you find each other is part of it, too.

Jeff Whittington: The network -- yeah network needs -- it sounds like the network needs to be established.

[01:02:13]

Audience Member 2: As vice chair of the Cultural Affairs Commission and member of the Public Art Committee, we welcome you and if you’ll just go on dallasculture.org, you can find many, many different ways in which you can be part of the fabulous, energized cultural city plan. One of them being a panelist on our fabulous panels to decide what artwork we would commission in the city for libraries, community centers, and there are a vast number of

programs at our five different city-run, city-owned community centers. So, as they say, see me after class.

Jeff Whittington: Other question.

Kevin Moriarty: [Voice Overlap] a lot of about these issues and that's really helpful.

Jeff Whittington: Yes sir.

Audience Member 3: This question's for Anne. I remember years ago, and it's still a very good memory, when I was living in Chicago a sculpture by Picasso was constructed on the plaza at the City Hall. And it was a violent reaction among the people, first of all, they try to figure out what this three-story structured was. So people thought it was a horse head, from another angle it looks like a woman's head. But beside that, it generated a great deal of controversy, now I'm wondering when you're working with the artist in a particular states or community, do you try to assess what the reaction is going to be for this?

Very quickly also, I heard but I don't remember the story that there was a monumental sculpture put in Washington, D.C that people were very angry about. It was actually removed. So my question is how do you assess what the reaction will be, particularly with a piece of abstract art?

Anne Pasternak: You know it's a really great question. And you know I think that very often the art world, the art historians and the curators and the institutional directors and the critics, fail the public and the processes often fail the public.

[01:04:04]

I, in fact, have a letter to the editor at the *Art Newspaper* that apparently came out today that's about this subject. I think that it's a complicated question but let me put it out there. I think that when you're commissioning a major sculpture that's going to be permanently in a landmark plaza, there are certain processes that should happen in terms of engaging the community, making them aware, what are the artist's intentions, what are the processes, how is this going to impact you, work with the media to sort of tell the artist's story and why this is happening.

Chicago, when it was commissioning Calder and Picasso and artists of that stature, was really trying to have it be a world class destination

through signature public art projects by major famous artists. It's not entirely different from what Dallas is doing with famous architects creating theater and museum spaces. Quite honestly, it comes from a similar kind of impulse and tradition, don't you think Meredith?

So what we do at Creative Time is always temporary work. So we get away with murder sometimes. The good news is that we can say things that maybe politicians or other people don't want to say. And if people don't like it, it's okay because it's going to be gone before you know it. We did a project in Coney Island called the *Waterboard Thrill Ride* where robots actually were waterboarding before the whole waterboarding controversy, or right on the cusp of it, had exploded. I have a great board that they let me do something like this, because we actually waterboarded the lawyers in real life. But it's a whole other subject.

But the thing is that it's temporary, so we have a certain amount of freedom to come and go but I think that when you are commissioning permanent work, there's a different kind of conversation and responsibility. And I guess the earlier point of the very famous case was Richard Serra's *Tilted Arc*, which was in Federal Plaza in lower Manhattan. That was the one that was removed.

[01:06:06]

And I remember, I was a young gallerina--as they like to be called these days--at the time and I just thought it was appalling, how people refused to acknowledge what the public's complaints were. They had to walk around the sculpture to get into the front door of their building, it was rusting. All of this was very intentional by the artist; his work is very much about power and change. And I think if maybe the art world could have had a decent, open, honest conversation including the artist with the public about why the artist had these intentions, why that could be considered meaningful to them, that sculpture, which was quite an extraordinary sculpture, might still be there today.

So I think that the conversation needs to be thoughtful and thought out in advance of the project. And we at Creative Time always try to think about what are all the controversial reactions are going to be to our work and you can never really predict it. And I always love telling the story about how -- do you mind if I do this really quickly?

After 9/11, few years later, we had these Jenny Holzer projections all over the city. Then one night they were being projected on the façade of the historic New York Public Library. All of a sudden, tons police cars come and bomb squad because somebody had called 911 saying, “Oh, terrorists are speaking on the façade of the New York Public Library." I mean you can't imagine--this was a projection of poetry. You know what I mean? It would be the most unsubtle way for a terrorist to communicate. But then around that the same time, we had work with a Danish artist--remember the whole Danish cartoon controversy?

Jeff Whittington: Yes.

Anne Pasternak: So he thought it would it be interesting if we had sort of posters sniped all over the city of a classic Arabic joke with no information about it.

[01:08:01]

And we thought, oh this could be so controversial, but here we go. And we were prepared with our media statements, etcetera. Not a peep. Not a peep. That project absolutely failed because it didn’t spark any discussion or calls to 911 whatsoever. [Laughter] But we try to think about those things as thoroughly as we can before we do them.

Jeff Whittington: I'm so glad you told the Public Library Jenny Holzer story because that’s great.

Kevin Moriarty: If you set the bar at people calling 911, for your art ---

Anne Pasternak: For success, yeah.

Kevin Moriarty: That’s a pretty -- that’s a specific but high metric to reach.

Anne Pasternak: Yes.

Jeff Whittington: Yes, I'm at the Dallas Theater Center and they're communicating with terrorists on the stage.

I think we have time for one more question if there's one more question. Yes?

Audience Member 4: I have a comment and a question. Thank you very much for appreciating our southern hospitality. Not many people get that and it is different. And also it's very simply question, do you think we could [inaudible].

[Laughter]

Jeff Whittington: Could you talk a little bit about the Wyly and the seats and the rest of the theater?

Kevin Moriarty: Yeah, I hear ya. The truth is that all of us are very, very aware that among the Wyly Theater's many, many virtues as a space it has allowed us to do things that for more than 50 years we never could have imagined as artists, whether that's very accessible, big, bold musicals where we wouldn't have had an orchestra pit or fly space or wing space, dressing room space, [Voice Overlap]

Anne Pasternak: He's spinning right now.

Kevin Moriarty: Or the flexibility of the space. But listen, the things we hear all the time: I don't like the seats, they're too hard. I have to walk down to go up to get into the building. Those two things we hear a lot of.

[01:10:14]

Anne Pasternak: I have an idea for you.

Kevin Moriarty: Yeah?

Anne Pasternak: Make like a cushion and then you sell it for a lot of money and it's branded Wyly Theater and everybody will be happy and they'll bring it home and to the football games.

Kevin Moriarty: We've definitely thought of that, no, I can say --

Jeff Whittington: You fit right in in Dallas?

Kevin Moriarty: Believe me we've thought of that. What the AT&T Performance Center is doing is they were replacing all of the seats. They're adding a cushion that's a couple inches thick to the bottom of it to -- I guess to the top of every seat, and slightly changing the pitch of the seat. And that has been underway since the first week that we opened the season this year with *Henry IV*. During *Henry IV*, in fact each -- the company that's doing this takes away about 20 some chairs at a time and refurbishes them and then brings them back.

So during *Henry IV*, the actors, when they would come in each night before the play would happen, when they were doing fight call, practicing

the fighting before the play, they'd look at the theater and they'd see where these new cushion seats were. And they'd say, "Okay, that's where the happy audience members are going to be tonight."

And the sections have gotten bigger and bigger. Within the next month, the whole theater will be done. They will still be those green chairs. They will not be the same as permanent theater seats. The virtue of that is those seats, you can't move anywhere that you want, you don't have infinite possibilities. Those are always going to be there, staring right of us in a fixed relationship. But certainly, we hear that concern a lot and I suspect that will be on an ongoing dialogue.

When I first got to Dallas, I spent a couple months looking back at the history of the theater centers specifically at the Frank Lloyd Wright building, which 52 years ago had been built for the theater center, this is before the Wyly had opened. What I kept reading in real time commentary, meaning in the moment 1959, the audiences said and they kept saying for about 10 years, We hate the seats, they're uncomfortable. Why can't they be conventional normal theater seats?

[01:12:04]

And you can't get in to the damn building because Frank Lloyd Wright designed it so they had to park far away and then walk up a hill to get in. And I thought to myself, what was Frank Lloyd Wright thinking in 1959 and what were the staff and leaders of the theater center thinking that they said, "Well this seems like a great building"?

Two years later, we opened the Wyly Theater. The two things I hear are: damn, the seats aren't comfortable and it's a different major, major genius architect. Damn the seats are uncomfortable and you have to go up a hill to get in or out of the building. So I don't know what that says, the more things change, the more they stay the same. But we really do here and we really, really are working with ATTPAC to change that.

Jeff Whittington: Who here has seen show at the Undermain Theater in Deep Ellum?

Kevin Moriarty: Yeah.

Jeff Whittington: Then you have sat in the Frank Lloyd Wright seats.

Kevin Moriarty: Those are the original Frank Lloyd Wright seats from the Theater Center which 25 years later after the building was built were eventually all removed at which point they were given to Undermain and new seats were put in, so…

Jeff Whittington: Well, please help me thank our guests tonight and thank you so much for being here tonight.

[Applause]

Our next conversation is on Thursday, November 11th, right here, same time 7:30 with Graeme Jenkins, the news director of Dallas Opera and John Coyne from Theater Projects, who also designed the set for *Henry IV* at the Dallas Theater Center. So thanks again.