



**Creative CityMaking with Gülgün Kayim:
2016 MATC Keynote Address, Minneapolis, MN**

Scott Magelssen¹: I first encountered our keynote speaker, Gülgün Kayim, at the Weisman Art Museum on the campus of University of Minnesota—a newly opened museum designed by architect Frank Gehry. And this was my first week, or first couple of weeks of graduate school at University of Minnesota. Michal Kobialka² had invited a number of prominent, very important scholars. The first week it was Rosemarie K. Bank³, who was our speaker that Friday afternoon. And then, after an afternoon of heady, rigorous discourse, we all had a party at Michal’s house with lots of wine and usually dancing later on in the evening. Gülgün was there at some of those sessions, and I didn’t know her yet, but she was clearly one of the coolest people in the room.

She had been through the MFA program in directing earlier than I arrived, but still was an established member of the discursive community there in Minnesota. In the coming years, I saw Gülgün in a number of different spaces in Minnesota, including a factory warehouse, in the farmer’s market, and in the backyard of Michal Kobialka’s house where she and her fellow

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members of Skewed Visions Performance Company staged a series of tableau vivant pictures of a baroque feast—which, as I remember, eventually culminated in the consumption of one of the guests. [Laughter.]

And so I came to know her as someone who, with her fellow artists, really made interesting and compelling use of spaces all around the city that were important to the audiences. So much so that I was able to invite Gülgün and her cofounder of Skewed Visions, Charles Campbell, to Bowling Green State University—where I taught—and they worked as resident artists with the Bowling Green students and faculty to stage a moving performance that took place in the front seats of cars. Which was based on a performance they did here, only it needed to be reinterpreted for the Northwest Ohio, cornfield-surrounded college town. And the audience members were just the three or four people that could sit in the backseats of these vehicles. There were multiple opportunities throughout the evening to take turns. But their highly-choreographed timing was essential. Walkie-talkies were involved. The police had to be notified to not respond to the fights that were breaking out between drag queens in the cornfield. So I am delighted at the opportunity to be able to introduce her to you this afternoon.

Gülgün Kayim joined the city of Minneapolis in 2011 in the newly created role of Director of Arts, Culture, and the Creative Economy. Previously, she was the Assistant Director of the Archibald Bush Foundation's⁴ Artist Program where she managed a portfolio involving cross-sector imagination, creativity, and innovation. Before joining Bush, she served as the

⁴ The Bush Foundation supports and invests in people, organizations, and creative problem solving efforts regarding any issue that is important to the communities and regions of Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota and the 23 Native nations that share the geography.

Public Art on Campus Coordinator at the Weisman Art Museum and also consulted extensively on site-specific performance, public art, and artist professional development in the Twin Cities. In 2014, Gülgün received a Rising Star Award for Women in Public Service from Hamline University in recognition of the Creative CityMaking program. Gülgün is also a practicing interdisciplinary theatre artist and co-founder of the Minneapolis-based, award-winning, site-specific performance collective Skewed Visions. (You should also bring them to your campus to do art with your students and colleagues.) She is a core member of the international artists' network Mapping Spectral Traces⁵ and Theatre Without Borders.⁶ And her artistic work has been recognized through a number of local and national awards, grants, and fellowships, including a Creative Community Leadership Fellowship, TCG Global Connections grant, Archibald Bush Foundation Artist Fellowship, Shannon Institute Leadership Fellowship Trust, four Mutual Understanding grants, International Peace Fellowship, Creative Capital grant, Jerome Foundation grant, a Minnesota State Arts Board Theatre Fellowship, among others.

Kayim's work has been seen in the U.S., London, Cyprus, and Russia. Originally from Cyprus, she trained in the U.S. and London and holds an M.F.A. in Theatre Directing from the University of Minnesota, an M.A. in Intercultural Performance from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and a B.A. with honors in Theatre and Film from the University of Middlesex London. She also serves as affiliate faculty in the Department of Theatre, Arts, and Dance at the University of Minnesota. Please join me in welcoming our keynote speaker, Gülgün Kayim.

⁵ A trans-disciplinary, international group of scholars, practitioners, community leaders, and artists who use place-based social justice agendas to work with and in traumatized communities, contested lands, and diverse environments.

⁶ A grassroots network of international artists, theatres, and organizations that share a common interest in international exchange.

Gülgün Kayim: Wow, thank you. That was quite an introduction. Especially about my performances with drag queens and cornfields and cars and police. That's a bit about what I'm actually going to be talking about, so... [Laughter.] Not the performance itself, but the conditions of creating such work. Thank you very much for inviting me. I'm very honored and actually very surprised to be invited to such an auspicious group. I've always considered myself relatively an outsider in theatre, although, as you have heard, making performance all my life and coming from training in theatre, I have always been outside of theatre buildings. I've made my work outside of theatre buildings and have kind of wrestled and danced on the edges of theatricality in general, working with many other disciplines, and I'm gonna talk a little bit about that.

I was invited by John [Fletcher] to speak here and talk around your subject matter variety, so I'm going to add a lot of variety to my conversation with you and hopefully start a dialogue and leave enough room for that too. I'm really interested in that. I asked "why me?" Why ask me to come and speak to such a group? And I heard very much that there's a level of crisis in the academe around jobs, which doesn't actually surprise me, given the economic numbers I look at. I was asked to talk a little bit about how I got to my position at the city and hopefully that will be illuminating to you.

As you've heard, I've always had a theatre practice and continue to do so. My interest has been in theory and practice, which is why I have a master of fine arts and a master of arts; those were in the days when you *could* get a master of fine arts in directing. And so my training has been both in classic stage work as well as academic research. I very much have utilized all

aspects of that training, but I've always been interested in the processes and the questions, not necessarily in the outputs of the products of what I have done. I'm always interested—once I've done the work—in the work that I'm actually researching, so that interest is parleyed very much into the work that I do now for the city. But before I go into that, I want to talk a little bit about what I do and why that has really allowed my work to be easier to translate than I think most folks find.

I create what is sometimes known as “site-specific performance”—what I call “play-specific performance.” We were just talking about the emptiness of the word “site.” Site specificity, obviously, is a term that is in theatre or theatrical practice, but I think it gets conflated with environmental performance quite a bit. I encountered site specificity in my work in intercultural performance looking at non-western forms. But also, working at the Weisman Art Museum as a graduate student, I needed a job, and I was finishing, and I had some spare time, so I got a job as a research assistant at the University of Minnesota's art museum. And stayed. And that's where I learned about site-specific. Really looking at the work of architects, planners, visual artists, working in the space of public art. While performance has always been in the space of the public realm, not in the more commissioning environments in which public art lies.

My job was—became, actually—the public art coordinator. I was the first coordinator in that position and learned by watching the dialogue, the narratives, the contested spaces that were happening when it came to talking about creating an artwork. And what were those contested spaces? Well, it was an architect saying it's his vision that needs to be primary here. It's the community saying, “no, it's the use of the building that needs to be primary here.” And

often the artist was coming in between those conversations trying to create another narrative. It's in that space of narrative creation and the consolidation of that narrative into the artwork that I came in. I knew what artistic processes look like because luckily I had training as a stage manager because you do get that as a theatre director. I also understood narrative, because, as a maker of theatre, that's what we do. I asked the person who hired me, "why did you end up hiring me? Me of all people? I've never been involved in making any architectural anything." And she said, "well, it's because you know how to work with designers, you know about narratives, and you understand processes of building things—of putting things together. You just need to figure out how to do that for three-dimensional objects." And that was where I think my training ground really happened—at the Weisman—and I was very lucky to have that, I think.

Working with my colleagues, Charles Campbell and Sean Kelley-Pegg (the other two founders of Skewed Visions), we created our little feisty collective and have made work in all kinds of spaces and places. And each of us bring our different perspectives to the work that we make, so everything that is made by the company is very different. It doesn't have a systemic approach; there isn't a formula for making the work. And I would say the only formula that I have—and I certainly know that's the case for Charles and Sean—is that everything will be different. Every single project will be different, every place is different, every community is different, every topography looks different, so I can't teach you a methodology. I can simply teach you an approach, a stance to take. And that is to ask the questions. And which questions do we start with? And that has been how I have approached not only *my* work, but I've approached training people to do this work, too.

I really am interested in memory, in topographies, in people, in narratives—narratives of belonging and disbelonging and locational identity. I do performances that specialize memory. The quote that I think really embodies the kind of work that I'm involved in now is from [Michel] de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*: "the debris of shipwrecked histories still today raise up the ruins of an unknown city." And that's the place that I am putting my work in at the moment. I'm working in Cyprus inside the demilitarized zone with a number of partners involved in historiography, sociology, geography, and political geography. Those are the tensions in which that work is created. I still do that, and I find time to do that because it's very important to keep an aesthetic practice when you have to also work in the spaces that I have to work in in the city. And when I say "have to," I choose to.

What do I do at the city of Minneapolis? What are the skills I bring that are relevant to the conversation today? One of the primary things that I do is really work with the city. I am engaged in the built environment. I work with planners, geographers, people who are trained in evaluation. I'm at the foundation point at designing or talking about or creating a document guiding visions for the cultural environment in the city of Minneapolis. And that cultural environment is in tension with itself at the moment. I look at the economics of the creative sector and see that people who are creating art are becoming more and more on the fringes. What I mean by that is, in terms of the job numbers I look at, practicing artists are earning less and less of the available dollars. What is happening in my world is the terminology "creative placemaking" has taken over artistic practice. And that is because it's in relationship to the built environment. Do people know what that term means here? Raise your hand if you've heard the word "creative placemaking." Okay, some of you have. All right. I'll give a little bit of a

background because I was explaining at lunch what that meant and was asked to talk a little bit about it.

Creative placemaking is a new term. It's been around for the last 10 years. It actually comes out of placemaking, which is a term that's been used to describe the use of spaces—public spaces—in the public realm. And that term has been dominated by an organization called the Project for Public Spaces in New York City. It's a planning concept, and it looks at the multiple uses of public spaces. It looks at designing public spaces not just for the one use, but for many uses and for many different people. There's a term that is used to describe the kind of work in creative placemaking. It's called "human-centered design," whereby you look at designing a public space from the perspective of people and how they will use it instead of the perspective of the lawnmower or the snow blower. Often, when spaces are designed, you are designing sharp edges because it's easier for you and your equipment. It's not for people to encounter each other. That's the dynamic in design and architecture that has—it's a good thing, I think, that you're actually designing places for people. However, that terminology was co-opted by the creative sector about five – six years ago.

A woman called Ann Markusen,⁷ who is an economist, and Anne Gadwa [Nicodemus],⁸ who was her mentee—a graduate student at the time, at the Humphrey school here in Minneapolis—wrote a white paper for the National Endowment for the Arts called *Creative Placemaking*. And what they did was research what was happening locally: what were the arts

⁷ Director of the Arts Economy Initiative and the Project on Regional and Industrial Economics at the University of Minnesota's Humphrey School of Public Affairs; Principal of Markusen Economic Research; she is currently serving as a research and writing consultant for the Minnesota House of Representatives' Select Committee on Living Wage Jobs.

⁸ Choreographer/arts administrator turned urban planner; Principal and owner of Metris Arts Consulting; researcher, writer, speaker, and advocate.

organizations doing? How were they engaging the audiences? What were they doing to influence the environment? And they termed it “creative placemaking.” And that terminology has become adopted by many funding institutions to drive hundreds of millions of dollars of money towards this action that has still not been really defined. It’s a very contentious term. I’ve heard the words “creative placefaking,” I’ve heard the words “placekeeping”—there’s actually a well-known paper by Roberto Bedoya⁹ talking about the politics of belonging within placemaking—and so I think from the artistic standpoint, that terminology is still being debated. In the meantime, a great deal of money is being poured into defining that.

Has anyone heard of ArtPlace?¹⁰ It’s a national funder. Artspace¹¹ is also a local developer. The National Endowment for the Arts has a number of grants called “Our Town,” “Community Connections,” and “Art Works.” All of these grants require some element of impact to the physical environment. As someone is beginning to define it (and those are usually the funders at the national level), I think there’s still a healthy tension right now—and it’s closing—for the artists to influence what that means. From the perspective of the planners and the people on the other side, the people who are building the buildings and defining the geographies—or trying to—that terminology is... I was just saying there’s a danger of it being adopted into something that they’ve already been doing, called placemaking. And I certainly know, in the document that I just finished drafting for the city of Minneapolis—a cultural plan

⁹ Director of Civic Engagement at the Tucson Pima Arts Council; he supports art-based civic engagement projects and advocates for expanded definitions of inclusion and belonging.

¹⁰ ArtPlace America is a 10-year collaboration among a number of foundations, federal agencies, and financial institutions that works to position arts and culture as a core sector of comprehensive community planning and development in order to help strengthen the social, physical, and economic fabric of communities.

¹¹ A non-profit organization that uses the tools of real estate development to create affordable, appropriate places where artists can live and work.

for the next 10 years—we actually highlight the differences in these terms and say we need to come to some kind of resolution between the builders, the developers, and the artists.

In the city of Minneapolis, the way we've approached trying to do that is through a program called Creative CityMaking.¹² It is an artist-in-residence program, and it comes at the intersection of art and innovation. It's putting artists into collaborations with city departments to influence the outcomes that I've just been talking about. We're currently working with five departments. We have a team of nine artists. Some of them are teams and some of them are individuals, and about half of that team are theatre artists. And what's interesting is watching the development of the work.

Before I go into that, I have another quote to share with you. When I began to draft that definition of the program, I was again drawn to the work that I'm interested in doing, and the work of Mr. de Certeau. One of the quotes that I have that is at the foundation of this is: "The city is an immense memory where poetics proliferate." What do we ask the artists to do? We ask the artists to look at those memories. We ask the artists to gather information from communities to engage in this conflict space, which isn't just a physical space; it's a conceptual space. We ask them to walk with the staff of the city in helping them deliver the outputs they need to do what they need, but at the same time, to deliver other outcomes. To deliver different outcomes, we're asking for imagination to be infused in our city. From the perspective of artists and their partners in this case, which can be people from the inspectors from regulatory services, people from planning (we're doing asset mapping with planning), IT (who

¹² A multi-year, arts-based innovation initiative within Minneapolis City government designed to advance City priorities through in-depth collaborations between City departments and highly skilled community artists.

are doing a racial equity program within IT), the city clerk's office, or the neighborhood and community relations office. All of these artists are engaged in translating the skills that they have as artists into these fields and negotiating a space for their skills to be translated back into the fields that they're working with. It's a very dynamic and contentious space. We are the third year into the program and have begun to see some very interesting results.

In terms of the issues that I've been asked to talk about, it's really in the idea of applying artistic skills into different territories that I think is very interesting. What I have used—and what the artists also use—is this research. What we're doing is dramaturgy of the city; we're asking people to go away and research. We're also asking them to take that research and constantly communicate with communities or planners or whoever it is about what that means. That communication can be in the form of a graph; it can be in the form of analysis; it can also be in the form of a performance, a song, or a dance. Through working with evaluators, I have learned—especially in the space of racial equity—that translating data into a dance, a performance, or a song is a better way to engage communities that have been underrepresented in planning and evaluation processes and who have a great deal of suspicion around the rigid, analytical models that traditional evaluation has taken—especially in the realm of quantitative evaluation. We're asking for qualitative evaluation to begin to shift that difference. Our artists have done things like data jams,¹³ collectively analyzing material that they've gathered. They've used video to collect stories and then transcribe that video and collectively looked at it from lots of different perspectives. They have done performances and asked communities to come and locate themselves within a map of the city in the spaces they

¹³ Technically oriented workshop exercises where people solve problems using data sets.

feel sad and happy—as simple as that. We’ve spatialized all that information, handed it to the Department of Planning, and now we’re using that information for the city’s comprehensive plan, which is a legal document that the city is required to produce for housing, land use, transportation—many of the tangible things that the city is required to plan for.

In terms of the work of artists in residence within the city of Minneapolis, that’s what we’re doing with Creative CityMaking. I can tell you that there’s been a lot of interest. We’ve raised \$1.5 million towards that work, we’re paying artists \$30,000 to spend 20 hours of their time to do it,¹⁴ and we have additional resources for materials—which I consider one of the outcomes that I was seeking to do, which is to provide alternative income streams for artists and other ways for artists to see themselves materially inside an environment like the city. One other aspect of this is it does require a tremendous amount of training for artists to even work in the public sector. One of the things that I have found is breaking them out of their bubbles of art and bringing them into the conversation with inspectors, for example. But when we do that, we see some really interesting work happening. We have two theatre artists right now doing Theatre of the Oppressed work within the regulatory services, training inspectors to see things differently, which I think is really interesting. They came up with that.

At the national level, there are other tectonic shifts. My colleagues in the largest 60 cities meet twice a year, and we’re called the United States Urban Arts Federation.¹⁵ We meet

¹⁴ The City of Minneapolis Arts, Culture and the Creative Economy program hires three artists/designers or teams to participate in Creative CityMaking Minneapolis (CCM), a program that advances the City’s goal of eliminating economic and racial disparities. It is an independent contract opportunity that pays \$30,000 over 12 months: mnartists.org/content/creative-citymaking-minneapolis-0.

¹⁵ Americans for the Arts’ United States Urban Arts Federation is an alliance of the chief executives of local arts agencies in the nation’s 60 largest cities. These leaders advocate, network, and meet to discuss the social, educational, and economic impact of the arts in their regions.

biannually. We also meet along with the Americans for the Arts Conference that happens annually, and we also coincide with arts education, with other leadership committees at the national level, and we talk to the National Endowment for the Arts. At those tables, one of the recurring patterns are these issues around funding—where is the funding coming from?—and a discussion about the streams of funding, such as I’ve just discussed with you. We are also looking at the shifting nature of audiences. Some of the research that I have done in changing audiences is also supported by the work of sociologists such as Manuel Pastor,¹⁶ who is the director of the Center for the Study of Immigrant Integration at the University of Southern California. And he talks a lot about the demographic shifts coming across the country and how we need to pay attention—as directors of arts culture in all these different cities—to the dynamics of audiences. Not just that, but asking ourselves, “Who are those audiences?” And then, “Who is the artist and who is not the artist within the nature of the way art is consumed?” Not just the who of the racial “who” and the generations of who is going to come through your doors, but when they do come through your doors, the question of broadening the idea of what art is has been raised as well. Participatory performance comes up in that scenario. Age differences come up. Also, where people are getting their information on how they’re consuming their information comes up. And there are big racial and age differences within those realms. Culture Track,¹⁷ which has done a study of arts audiences in the region—

¹⁶ Professor of Sociology and American Studies & Ethnicity at the University of Southern California; Director of USC’s Program for Environmental and Regional Equity (PERE) and co-Director of USC’s Center for the Study of Immigrant Integration (CSII).

¹⁷ Developed by LaPlaca Cohen and fielded six times since 2001, it is the largest national study focused exclusively on the ever-changing attitudes and behaviors of U.S. cultural consumers. Recently, it has shifted gears to become a “cultural innovation engine”: culturetrack.com.

and doing them nationally—has raised these issues as well. Really challenging institutions to look outside of their four walls for engaging audiences.

Locally, there has been a festival called Northern Spark,¹⁸ which has embraced that idea of really putting art in every place in the city. Northern Spark happens from sundown to sunup once a year, and it is a festival where every institution opens their doors and allows people to come in—in the city of Minneapolis. The last festival had 58,000 participants, and this is only its fourth year of activity. So, we've talked about funding, we've talked about audiences, we've talked about the pressure to go outside for organizations.

Finally, there's also the economic stressors and the social stressors. Race is the number one issue that my colleagues in those cities are engaging with. The question around racial equity, the question around how to negotiate that—the people at the table asking those questions are cities like Baltimore, San Francisco, Seattle, New York, L.A., St. Louis—all of the cities, including Minneapolis, that have seen unprecedented social strife in that area. We don't pretend to have the answers, but we are very concerned about really pushing arts and culture towards trying to find some of those answers. Again, our Creative CityMaking program is focused on a city's goal, which is called One Minneapolis, around eliminating racial disparities. While the actual approach that we're doing is about imagination, in this case it's in service of that goal. It's asking our departments to reengage with communities around building new

¹⁸ A free, annual, dusk-to-dawn, multidisciplinary arts festival that takes place on the second Saturday of June in the Twin Cities and draws tens of thousands of Minnesotans each year. For the 2016 and 2017 festivals, the theme "Climate Chaos | Climate Rising" will explore the interconnected, evolving, long-term consequences of climate change: 2017.northernspark.org.

practices and innovation towards engaging communities that otherwise have not participated in building cities.

I'm going to come to a close now and give you guys some opportunity to ask me some questions. But there are a couple of other things to think about. The last one is the economic part of what I do. I produce an annual economic measure that looks at data that's been aggregated at the national level, and we track how the creative sector is doing. What I have found has been very interesting. Certainly, the Minneapolis area—the metropolitan statistical area, that is—is very healthy in terms of economic outputs. We're looking at theatre being 13 times above the national average in this region. Largely because we're number one in government funding. There is the Legacy Funding¹⁹—has anyone heard of what the Legacy Funding is here? It's where the citizens of Minnesota have chosen to tax themselves so that they can engage with artistic practice. We're number one because of that reason, and yet when I look at the revenues for nonprofit arts, let's say—it's in the realm of \$300 million which is, again, why we're 13 times above the national average—I think about the other side because I'm also looking at the demographics of job hiring. What I am just about to produce in April is another report that looks at those demographics and says, "What are we doing?" Those demographics, in a nutshell, are that we have a white male majority in terms of those who are hired in the creative sector across the board. We're talking about design, architecture, film, as well as theatre, and we need to engage with that issue. We need to understand why there's a

¹⁹ In 2008, Minnesota's voters passed the Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment (Legacy Amendment) to the Minnesota Constitution to: protect drinking water sources; to protect, enhance, and restore wetlands, prairies, forests, fish, game, and wildlife habitats; to preserve arts and cultural heritage; to support parks and trails; and to protect, enhance, and restore lakes, rivers, streams, and groundwater. The Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund receives 19.75 percent of the sales tax revenue resulting from the Legacy Amendment to support arts, arts education and arts access, and to preserve Minnesota's history and cultural heritage.

gender bias, why there are racial biases in the creative sector, and why people are not able to get the jobs they need to create lives here.

You guys are producing the generations of people who will leave these institutions to get jobs, and I think you yourselves are seeing that there's some shrinking happening in your budgets and your departments. I don't pretend to have all those answers; I'm just looking at the data and saying "given that we have those revenues, why aren't they being translated into full-time jobs?" And we are very intentionally going to be undertaking conversations here in the city of Minneapolis trying to find answers to those questions.

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Question: I was wondering if there was any way you could take the narrative back a couple steps. As an artist, how did you even begin to get on the map of those larger civic organizations in order to begin even baby steps of, what in my mind, "this is like a utopia..."

Kayim: I wish it was! Well, I can talk to you about how I've done it. Again, I don't believe in prescriptive or best practices. You know, every condition, every city—as I have found, talking to my colleagues—is different. Every government is different, and the way it is organized. What we're trying to do in Minneapolis is influence the system from the inside out. One thing I've learned is you need to be able to translate out of the bubble of the work that you do into another sector's interests and needs. And that's where I've learned how to do that translation. And it's been because I've worked with geographers, and I've worked with architects and

planners, and at the end of the day they want to know what you've got to do, what you've got to bring to the table that's useful to them. And I think that's where the real negotiation lies.

I think you've got to find a place where you can be comfortable enough to engage but not sell your soul in that engagement. Basically, do some DNA exchange because it's imperative that planning and architecture and all those other fields actually do engage with imagination. I see what many theatre artists bring to the table is deep questioning. Why do it this way? And what they're doing when they come up against people trained in the public sector is they're pushing up against that training, which says "efficiency and doing things one way is what I need to do"—and sometimes that's because of budget restrictions—but more often it's because of this idea that we've got to be the same for everybody. We've got to do this and best practices have got to lead to the same approach for everybody. And we're saying no. Because right now, everything that all cities are struggling with—especially the ones I've referenced, the 60 top populace cities—are social tensions. And what I've also found in the economic realm is that social tensions are what drives the economics, too. They're there both in the sector that I'm in—we're in—but also outside of our sector that drives the delivery of these outputs. I think you need to understand what you can bring to the table that is going to be meaningful to them.

And when we focused our Creative CityMaking effort in going into planning and said, "Planning, what do you need? We've got some creative thinkers; we've got some money. What do you need?" they told us what they needed. And that's where we began. I hope that helps. Not coming in too prescriptively and definitely not saying "we're gonna do a play." We end up doing a play—I have to say we've done plays, we've done definitely plays, we've done all kinds of things—but that is further down the road. Hope that helps. Any other questions? Thoughts?

Question: I'm from Wisconsin. I drove from Wisconsin. Hadn't been there in a long time. But I'm still very—try to be—connected to politics that happen nowadays in Wisconsin, which have been very dismal for a long time, and a lot of Wisconsin residents turn to Minnesota, and they go, "What's happening there? Why isn't it happening here?" I'm wondering about the relationship between city politics and the things that you're doing here in the city to state government. Also, then, how public education gets wrapped up in some of the initiatives that you talked about.

Kayim: So, as I mentioned, each city system is different, and in the city of Minneapolis we've chosen—meaning the city with a small "c," not the city government, the citizens of the city—we've chosen to decouple public education from city. We don't drive public education here. The school board is a separate political entity. That's the same with the park board. We have a very weird system, which is unusual in the city of Minneapolis. We have a weak mayor system—strong council—which means that we don't get the level of hierarchy that we do in other cities. That may help answer some of your question: is it spread out?

It's a networked system, and in networks, we all know, one area can be strong and do one thing and the other one can be weak and it can still survive. So, networks are actually quite sustainable; however, networks are really hard to deal with. They're really hard to find answers to and they're hard to point fingers at, saying "it was your fault"—"no it was your fault." And that's what we have here, actually. We have issues around transparency and accountability here because everyone says it's the other person who did it. If you have a problem, it's the

other person that did it, and we don't know who did it because we created a system that's done it. Right?

I know about Wisconsin because my good friend Anne Basting,²⁰ who teaches at the University of Wisconsin in Milwaukee, tells me a lot about what's happening there. She's in the theatre department there, and I understand the kind of struggles that she has, especially trying to speak to city hall. Again, to directly answer your question, city government does talk to state government.

In Minneapolis, we have two cities—we have St. Paul and Minneapolis—and we both speak to the state, and we do best when we collaborate on issues that we care about. That's where we try to pool our resources. We do have our own lobbyists, so each city does have our own lobbies, and we have our own interests. Often, the debate and the struggle comes between cities and rural communities because, at the state level, there's always a great sucking sound of resources that cities need that gets pushed back against by rural communities. And we have this constantly. Local government aid coming to cities have been quite—until recently—restricted because it depends who's in power and who's pushing back.

We often go for bonding, especially to build theatre buildings, etc. You know, buildings for arts organizations, and there's often an effort not to put too much into the cities at the state level. Yes, there's a dialogue and a dynamic, and if you're interested you can get involved in that, but also within the metropolitan statistical area—which is the metropolitan area here—Minneapolis tends to have a little bit of an out-weighted voice because it's the largest economic

²⁰ Professor of Theatre in the Peck School of the Arts at University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2016 MacArthur Fellow, and theatre artist who demonstrates the potential of storytelling and creative expression to improve the lives of elders experiencing cognitive impairment.

engine. But we do work collaboratively—very much so—with other entities in the metro area.
Or try to.

Question: I heard a wise person once say that you should create the job you want to have. To what extent do you think you've done that?

Kayim: I did that. [Laughter.] Actually, I've always done that, which is interesting. When I was at the Weisman, I had this opportunity. So why did I stay there? I couldn't get a job in the academe. What I was teaching wasn't the core curriculum. What I could do wasn't recognized as the core curriculum. While I still do teach as an adjunct, I don't teach my specialty. I teach directing and I teach acting. I had to find other ways to earn a living, and this became my day job, essentially. My day job became my night job, and my night job became my day job.

I think that's what you do; I think it's really important that when you bring yourself to work, you find ways to insert into the work that you do the imagination that you have so you don't die. Because it's finding meaning in what you're doing that's important. And, again, going back to what I was saying about working at the Weisman, once I was released from the trying to find out how to do it the way they do it—once I was told by the person who hired me, “Hey, it's because you're trained as a director and I want that”—that's when I was like, “Okay, then we're gonna bring theatre practices into this.” And, you know, the field of public art itself changed.

Suzanne Lacy²¹ wrote a formative book called *Mapping [the] Terrain*,²² talking about temporary public art. What she was talking about was what I recognized as performance. What I recognized is work that I was doing. She was talking about Guillermo Gómez-Peña's²³ work, and she was talking about artists that we know of, and she was calling it public art. I saw the boundaries of discipline beginning to fray, and that's where I've always lived.

I was freelance for 10 years, and then the economic climate got worse and I had to get another job. In all of those roles, I've brought my interest to it, and I think it's no accident that I end up in a city because I have to put people in cornfields doing crazy things and talk to police and tell the folks not to arrest us while we're busy reorganizing the intersection or whatever it is. I think I've been involved with cities for a long time.

When I arrived in the city of Minneapolis, my actual job label was Director of Arts, and I parleyed it into Director of Arts, Culture, and the Creative Economy and brought the interest in the built environment and multiple narratives and all the other things that I've already talked about to that work. I think what I do—especially in Creative CityMaking—is creating, basically, something I wanted to apply to. But I can't, so I do it in my homeland in Cyprus. I do my work in my homeland. I have to reinforce that it's so important that you *are* doing your own work. And that's why I continue to teach. I have to remain honest; I have to become humble as an artist and really understand where my position is—the positionality of what I'm doing as well as the

²¹ A visual artist whose prolific career includes performances, video and photographic installation, critical writing, and public practices in communities.

²² Lacy is the editor of *Mapping the Terrain: New Genre Public Art*, an anthology of essays—by critics, artists, and curators who are pioneers in the field—about the impact of performance art in public spaces.

²³ A 1991 MacArthur Fellow, Gómez-Peña's work, which includes performance art, video, audio, installations, poetry, journalism, and cultural theory, explores cross-cultural issues, immigration, the politics of language, "extreme culture," and new technologies in the era of globalization.

intersectionality of what I'm doing. To me, unless I do that, it's too difficult to be in a role that I take on at the city and *not* also create something aesthetic. I just need to do that to remain human. That was a long answer. Hopefully it provided you with lots of material. Any other questions? Thank you.