



2019 – 2023 Strategic Plan

The Artist Liberated



Strategic Plan 2019 – 2024

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Attachments:

- A. Implementation Plan (Work Plan and Timeline)
- B. Projected Budget (plan period year to year)
- C. Artist Residency Organization Comparison Chart
- D. Graphic Images from Future Vision retreat
- E. Future Vision List of participants
- F. TBD - other background information as relevant – the new site plan?



VISION

18th Street Arts Center is an international cultural commons. It is both a place and a movement of artists from around the globe who imagine, research, and develop significant, meaningful new artworks to be broadly shared with the public, artworks which foster democracy, human rights, and cultural equity.

18th Street is an ideal environment – equitable, accessible, and inclusive for artists and the public to freely explore their creativity.

We believe that:

- **Art making is an essential component of a vibrant, just, and healthy society**
- **Creative action is a vital part of individual wellbeing**
- **Humanity benefits when artists are valued**

With this plan, 18SAC will realize its full potential by broadly sharing the work and ideas of our artists in residence, so they may have an impact on society.

We will accomplish this through distinctive, curated artist residencies and public programs, commissioning new bodies of work, expanding and improving our system of support for artists, and strengthening our partnerships at home and abroad. Our artists will meet our audiences on and off campus, with multiple modes of direct engagement. And we will invest in sustaining our treasured Santa Monica campus as a stellar environment for artistic excellence and exploration for future generations to come.

MISSION STATEMENT

18th Street Arts Center's mission is to provoke public dialogue through contemporary art-making.





FOREWORD

As 18th Street Arts Center (18SAC) approaches its 30th anniversary, it does so with a commitment to artists, to help them realize new artworks which have the potential to make our world a better place. From its inception, 18SAC has been a civic gathering space and crossroads for artists and the public to transmit knowledge, ideas, and culture through art.

18th Street Art Center originated as a testbed to amplify the voices and work of artists. Our roots are grounded in the emerging movements of feminist and gay rights, social and performance-based arts practices, and multiculturalism of the 1970s. 18th Street began and grew out of *High Performance Magazine*, possibly the only critical publication in the world covering performance and social practice art when it began in 1977. 18SAC has since played a small but notable role in the global exchange of ideas through the thousands of artists who have worked and lived here. **Now 18SAC aims to move confidently into a leading role in the artworld for alternative cultural diplomacy. We seek to share the ideas of our extended artist community, broadly and boldly, and to open up our Santa Monica home and our global network of friends to benefit more artists and excite bigger audiences.** By strengthening and expanding our network of partners, we are creating a new and resilient platform to unite and elevate artists' visions.

On Sept 17, 2018 the Board of Directors voted to adopt this new strategic plan. Our plan aligns ambitions and resources over a five year period. It is a balance of aspirational programming with financial sustainability. Once accomplished, 18SAC will have fundamentally strengthened its artistic standing, financial health, and facilities. We've detailed the implementation of each goal in the plan in a series of objectives and tactics with assigned responsibilities, timetables, and measures of success.

The Planning Context

In 2017 18SAC initiated a feasibility study for a capital campaign, a new strategic plan, and a business plan at the same time with consulting help from the Center for Nonprofit Management William Jones, and Dr. Joel Fadem. Over 45 stakeholders (artists, funders, civic leaders, and partners), plus Board and staff, were engaged in a mix of one-on-one interviews, and two facilitated all-day retreats. A trove of articles about the current state of nonprofit arts, the art



market, funding trends, and artist's practices were reviewed and digested. Additionally, staff collected and analyzed comparative data on five artist residency centers, two that are similar to 18SAC today, and three that represent the scale and capacity of where 18SAC aims to be in the future.

The feasibility study, a separate document, grew out of a years-long capital planning process for our site that began in 2007 when 18SAC's Board of Directors explored and declined a partnership with Community Corporation of Santa Monica, to develop permanent artist live-work housing using affordable housing funds. During the great recession, 18SAC used the time to instead develop a modest redevelopment approach to update its aging campus. The Board voted to keep two of its five buildings, and to build one new structure that would encompass all the desired improvements. Our architects, Brooks+Scarpa, designed a 3-story building that the Board approved in 2016, and these plans have now been submitted to the City of Santa Monica planning department for feedback. A capital campaign for 18SAC is imminent.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As the end of 2018 draws nears, three things stand out. Los Angeles has unquestionably become a leading artworld city; Santa Monica City's contemporary art offerings have greatly diminished, yet it is a destination and home for elite tourists and arts patrons who avoid driving beyond the 405 Freeway; and American democracy is going through major upheaval around the world. **In this environment, 18SAC is poised to take a leadership role, both in Santa Monica and LA, as the foremost alternative cultural exchange and diplomacy partner, and to use our unique platform to advance artists voices and ideas broadly, artists who provoke social responsibility, democracy, human rights, and cultural equity.** This plan matures 18SAC from being a place, into becoming a movement. For thirty years 18SAC has actively been fostering contemporary artists through cultural exchange on our home turf in Santa Monica. We have given supported residencies to dozens of the world's outstanding artists, hundreds of notable artists, and thousands of developing artists. **18SAC has the history, experience, relationships, and perfect location to go big - to share the work of our artists with citizens at home and abroad, and with the international art world, which has arrived in Los Angeles.** This plan grows the staff, board, and resources necessary to better fulfill our unique role in the region's artscape.



This plan places 18SAC on the map and in the sights of LA's art patrons, the art world, Santa Monica's residents, and international tourists. We accomplish this by curating each residency season around a new socially relevant theme, so that we may tell a cogent story about the impactful work and ideas artists are developing here in their residencies. We will disseminate this story and secure mainstream attention for the work to benefit the artists and 18SAC, with the aim to inspire social change.

Growing citizen engagement with our artist's work, is key to this plan, and we accomplish this through better civic partnerships within Santa Monica, and collaborations with LA arts organizations. To engage the diverse range of Santa Monica families and the sophisticated travelers visiting Santa Monica from around the world, we will offer new programming consistent with these group's interests. The best way to scale-up quickly is through collaborations with arts organizations who desire a presence in Santa Monica, and through partnerships with civic groups already invested in the city. 18SAC will also review and refresh existing partnerships with current resident organizations on campus, and our international partners abroad. Strengthening and expanding our network of partners, creates a resilient platform to elevate the voices and ideas of the artists we invite to work with us.

Artist residencies remain as the foundation of 18SAC's work and this new plan. Supporting diverse, professional artists in realizing their best work by facilitating the risk-taking, production phase of their creative process is the core of our work.

Strategic Plan

Goal I.

Become a globally recognized purveyor of artist's ideas and artworks that provoke social responsibility, democracy, human rights, and cultural equity.

Objectives:

- 1.1 Organize 18SAC's residencies, exhibitions, and programs around an annual artist-led, socially relevant theme and disseminate the collective body of artworks broadly. *Working with themes allows for a coherent communication strategy about the value and impact of artists' work on society. It ties the origins of new works conceptualised at 18SAC back to our residencies.* (staff time)
- 1.2 Commission a new body of work by 1 Los Angeles artist every two years, with the aim to propose the work to a significant art fair. *Budget variable.*
- 1.3 Grow the number of fully underwritten visiting and LA-based artist-residencies for professional artists. *Of approx 30 visiting artists per year, half are self-funded by individual artists. 100% of our local resident artists pay rent. Move towards more partnerships with local museums, galleries, art schools, and international funders for both local and visiting artists to be awarded residencies at no cost to the artist.* (see Goal 4.1)
- 1.4 Form a new Artist Advisory Council of 18SAC mentor artists and alumni to act as ambassadors and shape programmatic directions. (staff time)
- 1.5 Expand 18SAC's international network of contemporary art curators, historians, writers for studio visits, and to help communicate and disseminate artists' research from thematic residencies. *Artists need curators and writers to help develop their work. Organizing these visits regularly will add significant value to our residencies.* \$5k



- 1.6 Increase 18SAC's Cultural Asset Map datasets as a resource for artists working with the annual theme to develop projects in our local community with educators and policy leaders. *The Cultural Asset Map is a valuable resource for artists that greatly condenses their research. The projects they develop in our community, can have direct social benefit to Santa Monicans. (See Goals 2.2, 4.3) (staff time)*
- 1.7 Work with Santa Monica Travel and Tourism, and Santa Monica's elite hotels to offer unique, exclusive fee-based tours of our artist studios to visiting tourists.

Goal II.

Grow citizen engagement with our artists, on and off campus, in multiple modes of creative expression.

Objectives:

- 2.1 Reorganize the current array of 40+ free artist-led public events around the new socially-relevant annual artist theme. (Goal 1.1) (staff time)
- 2.2 Continue to curate 1-2 family-friendly campus-wide art festivals combining open studios with featured local cultural assets. (Goals 1.5, 4.3, 5.5) \$20k
- 2.3 Develop new fee-based art workshops that build on artist-led and community-led engagement models. *Santa Monica draws a large, wealthy, international tourist population looking for unique adult and family experiences. This program would be tailored to them and local residents, and would build sponsorships with Santa Monica's hotels, and a new partnership with Brentwood Arts Center.*



- 2.4 Work closely with Santa Monica Travel and Tourism and our Culture Asset advisors to build both local and tourist audiences.

Goal III.

Strengthen the institutional infrastructure – staffing, governance, funding, facilities, and technology – to create a thriving organization for the 21st century.

Objectives:

- 3.1 Strengthen and refine Board composition and governance practices for greatest impact in meeting our mission.
- 3.2 Grow staff capacity to meet the goals and vision of 18SAC.
- 3.3 Adopt and annually review our Cultural Equity and Inclusion Plan.
- 3.4 Strengthen 18SAC’s financial management and funding capacity to successfully oversee a capital campaign, endowment, and planned giving program.
- 3.5 Explore ways to fund an endowment to diminish reliance on rental income for general operating costs.
- 3.6 Remodel and optimize our campus into a more accessible cultural commons over the next 5 years to better host the public and support 21st century artistic production and presentation. \$15mill
- 3.7 Build an enthusiastic community of major donors and influencers who support 18SAC's artistic programs, operations, and capital projects.

Goal IV.

Strengthen and grow our network of trusted institutional partners at home and abroad, who value and support cultural exchange and artistic production.

LA is a very desirable city for artists seeking to advance their careers. This goal aims to widen our circle of funding and programming partners in preparation for expanding our fully funded artist residencies and commissions that we can award to outstanding artists.

Objectives:

- 4.1 Review and refresh existing partnerships with current resident organizations on 18SAC's campus.
- 4.2 Strategically cultivate 1-2 new visiting artist residency partnerships annually with international funders for multi-year agreements.
- 4.3 Meet annually with LA's leading cultural institutions, art schools, and galleries to share visiting artist schedules coming in the next 2 years. (see Goal 1.3)
- 4.4 Establish new institutional partnerships to underwrite 7 new fully funded, year-long fellowship residencies to award to LA artists over 5 years. (see Goal 1.1, 1.5)
- 4.5 Strengthen our Cultural Asset Map relationships to develop 1-2 "themed" artist projects in collaboration with Santa Monica's School District, Library, and/or Parks. (Goals 1.5, 2.2, 5.5) \$20k
- 4.6 Develop a presence for 18SAC at selected international art fairs. (see Goal 1.2 & 5.4)\$10k



Goal V.

Effectively communicate our value in supporting original artistic research and production to our diverse audiences of artists, academic and cultural partners, and the general public, world-wide.

Objectives:

- 5.1 Publish and globally disseminate the documentation of collected artworks and research generated in response to the new socially-relevant annual theme. (Goal 1.1) \$30k
- 5.2 Invest in the development of a strategic, coordinated, and realistic marketing, communications, and public relations plan. \$30k
- 5.3 Explore an organizational name change and updated mission statement, to better reflect our work.
- 5.4 Strategically promote 18SAC at select international art fairs and conferences. (see Goal 4.4) \$5k
- 5.5 Brand and market 18SAC's CultureMapping90404.org initiative. (Goals 1.5, 2.2, 4.3) \$10k