



CULTURAL EQUITY AND INCLUSION

STATEMENT, POLICY, AND PLAN

Approved and adopted by unanimous vote by 18th Street Art Center's Board of Directors at a General Meeting held on September 12, 2018.

CULTURAL EQUITY AND INCLUSION STATEMENT

18th Street Arts Center (18SAC) was founded in 1988 on the belief that diversity is our greatest strength as a nation. We began with a diverse group of artists seeking to create an active, multicultural, brave-space for artistic exploration. Many of our founding artists were engaged in dismantling various manifestations of oppression. Thirty years later, these values remain central to our core.

As an international residency center, 18SAC believes that racial, cultural, ethnic, gender, ability, sexual and language diversity in its program offerings, leadership, staff, and artists leads to greater community wellbeing and a more just, peaceful world. 18SAC's global thought community of artists and cultural leaders are cognizant of the ongoing, messy work to uproot all forms of oppression. 18SAC's environment of creative time and space fosters real, incremental transformation with person-to-person cultural exchanges between local and international artists and 18SAC's audiences.

18SAC also **expands public perceptions of artistic excellence in contemporary art**. Excellent artistic voices develop out of their unique, cultural contexts and play an important role in shifting global attitudes, and our residency programs support, amplify, and connect those voices. Our programs advance new frameworks of artistic excellence to include a diversity of experiences beyond the male, white, cis-gender, and heterosexual contextual experience.

18SAC also strives to connect diverse, immigrant and historically oppressed audiences of color in LA County to artists who may hold similar political or cultural values in common with them. The diversification and cross-pollination of artists and audiences in 18SAC's brave space of experimentation

(through residencies, exhibitions, and public programs) promulgates new cultural understanding that can undermine the forces of oppression.

CULTURAL EQUITY AND INCLUSION POLICY & PLAN

Context: In our Cultural, Equity, and Inclusion Policy, we set out goals and outcomes for each of our three core constituencies: Artists, Leadership (Staff and Board), and Audience. We then lay out several action steps we can take in the next few years to meet these ambitious goals.

We will revisit this document yearly with our staff, board, and select audience and artist stakeholders. We will assess our progress, both qualitatively and quantitatively, based on baseline demographic and organizational data compiled when this policy & plan was adopted on September 12, 2018, and subsequently updated with each revision. Every three years, we will issue a Cultural Equity and Inclusion report to our stakeholders that summarizes the evolution of our goals and how we have made progress towards them.

ARTISTS

Context: 18SAC's number one challenge is our desire to engage more artists whom we wish to champion, yet who are unable access our residency programs due to cost barriers. 18SAC's original nonprofit business model is built upon a mix of earned income from subsidized rents for artist studios, and contributed revenue from grants and individuals. However, even with the subsidies, the low cost rents still present a barrier to access for many artists that 18SAC would like to engage. The Artist Labs program addresses this problem, giving 4-8 lead LA based artists a year, paid artist commissions to develop new work. Other funders also support individual residencies - such as the Danish Foundation, Herb Alpert Foundation, and Taiwan Academy. This plan aims to further remove financial barriers to entry.

GOALS - ARTISTS

- 1) 18th Street's residencies will provide access and avenues for support to international early and emerging artists who are currently marginalized or historically oppressed (specifically queer artists, artists of color, artists with disabilities, and indigenous artists), including facilitating collaborations with other diverse artists in a think tank like environment.
- 2) 18SAC will increase the representation of currently marginalized or historically oppressed artists from under-resourced countries who do not have the same means to find support as European artists, providing access and open avenues for support, including facilitating collaborations with other diverse artists in a think tank like environment to actively combat oppression through artistic ideas.
- 3) 18SAC will increase the representation of currently marginalized or historically oppressed artists who do not have access to resources within the United States (i.e. rural areas, artists as activists, immigrant artists, artists from ALAANA groups, artists who do not conform to market values,

artists not in art schools), including facilitating collaborations with other diverse artists in a think tank like environment.

IMPLEMENTATION - ARTISTS

- 1) Provide anti-oppression training for staff, board, artists, and public to inform the yearly themes of the think tank for artists. This lays the groundwork for curating each cohort around intractable, global issues that address societal oppression.
- 2) Initiate targeted funded residencies that align with each think tank theme and target identified groups (out of those described above).
- 3) Provide clear outreach to artists of target groups with inclusive statements and messaging in our communications.
- 4) Diversify access to our long-term residency program for target groups through additional subsidies, outreach, and awards.
- 5) We also recognize that artists and staff come from many diverse family and ability situations. We are committed to providing accommodations for families, unusual situations, and to maintain a flexible programming structure to support the range of artists we engage.
- 6) Identify new avenues of marketing and communication that increase our reach and improve the pipeline for artists of target groups to apply to our programs.

OUTCOMES - ARTISTS

- 1) Provide 3 additional funded residencies for target groups over the next 2 years that will increase participation of artists from those groups.
- 2) We see a qualitative transformative effect on artists' understanding of oppression in their work as a result of the offered trainings.
- 3) Measure increase of 20% diversity of artist applicants from targeted groups in the next 2 years as an outcome for a revamped, targeted, and inclusive communications and marketing strategy.

LEADERSHIP

Context: This section looks at ways cultural equity and inclusion can be advanced in the board and staff leadership of 18th Street Arts Center. 18SAC has a healthy history of recruiting and cultivating ALAANA groups to the board and staff, and will continue to aim for improvement.

GOALS – LEADERSHIP

- 1) We commit to recruiting a diverse pool of applicants from ALAANA groups for every open position and to carefully consider diversity in hiring decisions. We believe in maintaining a diverse staff that reflects our audience and artists.
- 2) We commit to diversifying our board candidates by both age and ALAANA group status as we grow our board.

- 3) We commit to pay equity, transparency, and advancement (whenever possible) for all members of our staff who meet their performance review standards.
- 4) We commit to providing diversity training for our organization's leadership and staff.

IMPLEMENTATION– LEADERSHIP

- 1) Provide in-depth anti-oppression training to board and staff in order to inform thinking around new programmatic and artistic directions.
- 2) Review and update board matrix and identify target groups for diversification over the next two years.
- 3) Implement up to 2 sponsored board positions over the next 2 years for target groups that may not have the resources to meet the board commitment.
- 4) Implement a yearly performance review process for staff to formalize a process around equity, transparency, training needs, and advancement.
- 5) Create a diversity council on the board (that may include other stakeholders) to head up a yearly review of the diversity policy.
- 6) Provide a diversity training manual and webinar to on-board new staff.

OUTCOMES – LEADERSHIP

- 1) Create and maintain a robust and living Cultural Equity policy that informs the strategy of the organization moving forward.
- 2) Increase representation of target groups in the board by 20% over the next 3-5 years.
- 3) We see a qualitative transformative effect on staff and board's understanding of oppression in their work and decision-making as a result of the offered trainings.

AUDIENCE

Context: 18SAC began organizing its exhibition programs around relevant social justice themes for well over a decade. With our 2019-2023 Strategic Plan, we will take the theme to a new level, applying it across all of our residency programs for each season. Using artist advisors to source a new annual theme of global relevance, every 18SAC artist-in-residence can become a contributor to the project, which 18SAC will package and distribute widely for greater public impact. Los Angeles, as a global microcosm, is the ideal test-bed from which 18SAC's artists' ideas and collaborations can be disseminated globally. Through curating a yearly creative think tank across our programs, we take the next step in advancing our mission and our core commitment to equity, inclusion, and justice through artistic ideas.

GOALS - AUDIENCE

- 1) We strive to connect audiences that are not yet connected to 18th Street Arts Center to artists that might share political, cultural, or community values in common with them. We focus particularly on immigrant and communities of color in LA County, especially those that have been historically or are currently oppressed. This will allow our current audiences to push their boundaries of understanding, and allow new audiences to create a trusting relationship with us (and each other). This increased diversification of audience and artists in a safe space of experimentation that then cross-pollinates will push the boundaries of artistic understanding

and new cultural/social ideas for everyone – all towards the higher goal of deeper empathy and a more just and peaceful world.

- 2) In our public programming, we commit to actively working to counteract the forces of oppression by creating broader access to this brave, experimental space for dialogue, artistic, and cross-cultural exchange; and to ensure that the audiences within this space are diverse in socio-economic and ethnic origin, and represent oppressed groups.

IMPLEMENTATION - AUDIENCE

- 1) We commit to providing anti-oppression training for our staff, board, and artists, but also to the public more broadly.
- 2) We commit to connecting artists to our local audiences more systematically through schools and neighborhood partners, and to strengthening new lines of access and communication to Los Angeles audiences of immigrant and communities of colors.
- 3) We commit to expanding our bilingual communications material and public programs in Spanish and English.
- 4) We commit to programming public content that is both relevant and inclusive to diverse audiences.

OUTCOMES - AUDIENCE

- 1) Maintain and enhance the position of Community Programs Specialist on staff as a permanent position to connect artists to local audiences and target groups.
- 2) We see a qualitative transformative effect on audience understanding of oppression as a result of the offered trainings and public programs.
- 3) We see a measured increase in how relevant audiences feel our content is to them.
- 4) We see an increase in multi-lingual or monolingual Spanish speakers accessing our programming and communications in Spanish.