

Arts Mission Oak Cliff Culture Document

In this document Arts Mission Oak Cliff (AMOC) provides an outline for the ethos and culture of AMOC. It describes *what* we believe and *why* we believe it by identifying our five core beliefs: Community, Growth, Local, Play, and Value. This document provides definitions for these beliefs and describes how each relates to and serves our mission and our community. It also identifies the ways in which we practice and measure these beliefs in order to act as a guide and resource for our community. Every member of the AMOC community is held accountable to the standards outlined in this writing.

Our Mission

Arts Mission Oak Cliff holds space for a diverse community to cultivate, celebrate, and sustain their creativity while actively engaging and inspiring the public with the arts.

Core Beliefs

[Community: An Artist Sanctuary](#)

[Growth: Grow for it!](#)

[Local: Celebrate Oak Cliff](#)

[Play: Your inner child](#)

[Value: You are worth it](#)

What We Believe

What do our beliefs look like in action?

Community: An Artist Sanctuary

“Beloved community is formed not by the eradication of difference but by its affirmation, by each of us claiming the identities and cultural legacies that shape who we are and how we live in the world.” -bell hooks

We care about people. Our community is made up of Artists, Arts Workers, Neighbors, and The Public.

How we define each faction of community

Artists: Artists are all people who open themselves up to engage with their creativity. This looks like Todd, a foundational investor in AMOC who tends to the garden and mends loose doorknobs to maintain the character of the historic building; Connie, a neighbor who attended The Artist’s Way Series and was inspired to attend her first acting class at the age of 40; or Maria, a local dancer who taught weekly children’s classes at AMOC.

Arts Workers: Arts Workers are people whose work in the arts is, or aims to be, a primary source of income. Arts Workers include those who create art, as well as people who facilitate the creation, installation, exhibition, and/or execution of art.

Neighbors: Neighbors are the residents of Winnetka Heights, South Winnetka Heights, L.O. Daniel, and Sunset Hill, the neighborhoods directly surrounding AMOC.¹

The Public: The Public is all people in the DFW area and beyond who have access to AMOC’s programming. This is a container for all of the factions of community defined above.

AMOC holds space for people to discover and cultivate art. We seek to break down the social and economic barriers between art and The Public by providing space in Oak Cliff, an area that hosts a bolstering artists community, but traditionally receives little financial support for art. We aim to build relationships between artists of varying mediums and levels to inspire

¹ Based on Heritage Oak Cliff’s Member Neighborhoods Map, 2022.

collaboration, mentorship, and risk-taking. A strong creative community elevates each of its members through the celebration of diversity, and the practices of equity and inclusion. We strive to cultivate a safe space for people to ask questions, fail, and try again. Through sharing our stories, our struggles, and our successes, we learn, grow, and support each other to achieve something greater than we could on our own. We steward a sense of belonging by listening to our community. Through interpersonal relationships, post-show conversations, and written feedback, we continue to learn from our artists and The Public in order to support their needs, striving to adapt as necessary and create a safe space for all people who enter our doors.

All people belong here.

Growth: Grow for it!

“When I first dreamt of Arts Mission Oak Cliff, I dreamt of ‘The Farm: a place where people come to grow.’ As people it can be quite tempting to rest on your laurels and reach a point where you feel like there is no point or no place to continue learning your craft. That is our fear and trauma talking. There is always room to grow and improve any practice.” -Anastasia Munoz

Resting on previous knowledge, training, or abilities is often the easiest path forward. AMOC challenges people to keep learning and growing by holding space for continued practice and training. For an artist this can be taking a class in a new medium. For an arts worker it may be renting space to rehearse for an upcoming performance. For a neighbor this may be attending a gallery opening in the Underground or sending your child to a summer camp on stage combat.

We meet artists and patrons where they are and provide opportunities for growth at every stage of curiosity. We want to encourage and empower artists to take risks, to be brave and to try something new or different. We seek to provide a space that allows for equitable growth in our neighborhood by opening our doors for people who seek to be bold in their quest for creativity. AMOC holds space for people to fail safely amongst a community that is seeking to support and guide, not judge and tear down.

And when you fail, we ask you to get up and do it again.

Local: Celebrate Oak Cliff

“We have to support our local artists. It's just that simple. Otherwise, we will have no art.” - Al Jourgensen

Historically, Oak Cliff has been “othered” both in art and in Dallas geography. AMOC did not bring art into this building or this community. From car shows in the building's parking lot to Sunday services in the former Winnetka Congregational Church, art was ever present in the structure that now houses AMOC. We continue to cultivate the creative spirit that called us to the space. It is our duty to celebrate and support what is already here. We aim to continually stay in service to our neighbors and honor the history and culture of our neighborhood by continually asking: How do we intentionally hold space, celebrate, and uplift the residents and generations before us? How does the building and neighborhood history inform where we are going?

One of the primary resources we have to give is space. Although gradually increasing, space for the arts is scarce in Dallas. More specifically, accessible space is scarce for artists and independent arts workers in Dallas. We want to change this by investing in the community in our own backyard. We are not here to import talent from other places. We are here to hold space for local arts.

Dallas can be a wonderful place to be a working artist, however a lack of space and resources has contributed to a culture of competition among arts workers. Many local artists, frustrated, either quit or move on to a different city to pursue their craft. AMOC hopes to contribute to a local arts ecosystem that supports artists by providing resources necessary for a thriving arts community. Although our space and resources are not unlimited, we aim to shift the culture away from scarcity and competition to one of abundance and support.

AMOC was created for the self-producer. If you don't feel like you are being seen, we want to help you make your own opportunity. Let your voice be heard. By investing in local artists we contribute to the unique culture of Oak Cliff. This culture is a large part of what makes Oak Cliff attractive and contributes to the economic viability of the neighborhood. AMOC aims to further establish local artists as an integral part of the neighborhood's culture and success.

Play: Your inner child

“Play is often talked about as if it were a relief from serious learning. But for children, play is serious learning. Play is really the work of childhood” - Fred Rogers AKA Mr. Rogers

This one is simple. We all know what play is—or at least we used to.

AMOC is a playground for the creative spirit.

We want people to have fun, so we give them a playground. With the padded flooring of a supportive community and the intimidating jungle gym of an empty studio, we ask you to *play!*

Through classes, performances, and other creative experiences, we aim to spark curiosity, wonder, and delight. We are here for the inner child in all of us that is often bored or neglected. We remind you to take care of that child—to dance or draw or play pretend. We all started out as children, and we played because we didn't know not to. AMOC hopes to encourage people to explore, reminding folks that the stakes are not always so high. Baby steps are messy and imperfect. They are also necessary. We value the artist's journey, measuring success not in the outcome of a creative endeavor, but in its pursuit.

Working artists often take themselves too seriously. AMOC strives to be a space where people come together to dream of the impossible. We hold space for the exploration of all the *can'ts*, *shouldn'ts*, or *wouldn'ts* that keep people from trying something new. We understand the fear of failure (loss of money, audiences, or reputation), and yes, those are often legitimate concerns with real life consequences. So we strive to calm those fears by providing resources that support creative exploration and set people up for success, whatever that means to them. Work and play are not mutually exclusive.

When you can, be silly or childish. *You will be free again.* And who knows what you might create.

Value: You are worth it

“One's life has value so long as one attributes value to the life of others, by means of love, friendship, indignation and compassion.” -Simone de Beauvoir

Every person has inherent value. We are here to cultivate and celebrate that value.

Either through the consumption of local culture or through your own artistic exploration, we want to help you elevate your own value. We do this by providing professional resources like arts administration, marketing, and production to emerging artists, and by offering creative classes to artists at every stage of creative exploration.

We aim to continue to change the culture of how people value art in Dallas. Let's do away with the starving artist narrative and work to actively cultivate a sustainable arts ecosystem in Dallas that sees professional artists as arts workers. In order for this shift to happen, we must see value in art as a practice, not a product. We invite patrons to connect with local artists through workshops and conversation in order to understand the artistic process as well as the final product.

AMOC exists to collaborate with and radically empower local artists by addressing the core of what holds many of us back—an inability to trust in our worth as artists. Often, that sense of lack is intensified by the inaccessibility of resources, support, community, and care.

We continue to lower the financial barrier of entry that ticket prices and rental rates often create. We want AMOC to be accessible for all.

We strive to offer rich and relevant art to our audiences, and to add value to our neighborhood and to the Dallas arts scene as a whole.

We hope that every person who interacts with our work is inspired to see the value they hold inside themselves.

Our Culture

How do our beliefs work together?

These five core beliefs woven together create the map of our culture.

Each one standing alone can't fully encompass our culture. We need all five, and the relationships and intersections they create, to describe the culture AMOC aims to practice and promote.

Community empowers us to celebrate the individual and hold space for collective creativity. *Growth* inspires us to continue to learn and create, and we call on our community to provide the sense of safety and support that allows us to take risks. We invest in our *Local* history and people to teach us about our past, so we can make better decisions about how we move forward. We *Play* in our creative work and explorations, and remember that growth is born out of taking risks and embracing failure. And we *Value* each element of the journey, remembering it is our duty to be who we are. When we value and cultivate the individual, we enrich our community.