

Fundamental Tenets of ArtsWest

“It never was in the power of any man or any community to call the arts into being. They come to serve his actual wants, never to please his fancy.”

-- Ralph Waldo Emerson

1. The arts are intended to be methods to an end, not the end itself.
 - a. They effect social change.
 - b. They evince a sense of wonder.
 - c. They elicit conversation.
 - d. They create communities at each performance or exhibition from a diverse set of communities.
 - e. They change behavior.
 - f. They have an opinion.
 - g. They affect, offend, delight, and transcend.

2. ArtsWest **IS NOT**:
 - a. Safe, but risky
 - b. Relevant, but revelatory
 - c. Universal, but targeted
 - d. Venerable, but activist

3. ArtsWest **IS**:
 - a. Risky
 - i. Real risk flirts with fantastic failure, but is required to produce fantastic inspiration
 - ii. “Measured risk” is an oxymoron, and inevitably leads to mission compromise
 - b. Revelatory
 - i. Relevance is too low a goal for our work.
 1. The tag in the back of the shirt is relevant for a description of content and washing instructions, but the design of the shirt can *reveal* personal characteristics of the wearer.
 - ii. As a baseline, artistic production will be of high quality in order to best represent the revelatory power in the art.
 1. High production values do not comprise a tenet of ArtsWest by themselves. Instead, Artswest believes that strong production values offer the best possible open gate to achieving artistic goals of requiring conversation and improving the imagination.
 - c. Targeted

- i. Universal appeal is impossible. If you point in all directions, then you're not pointing anywhere at all.
 - 1. Something for everyone inevitably turns into nothing for anyone.
 - 2. If ArtsWest were to produce artistic events outside its mission, it would be an act of arrogance, not inclusion.
 - 3. If ArtsWest were to produce artistic events outside its mission, it would usurp the missions of other theaters, causing competitive commercial behavior, and quelling community support.
 - ii. ArtsWest is not only a part of the West Seattle community, but it is also a part of the greater Seattle artistic community. We do not work in an artistic vacuum.
 - 1. Within a successful artistic community, as with a business district, there is diversity.
 - a. However, within that business district, each store offers its own wedge of influence, its own product, its own distinct personality.
 - b. Within the artistic community, there can be similar diversity if each purveyor offers a distinct personality. In this way, ArtsWest can stand behind its product and give permission for other purveyors to offer their distinct product.
 - 2. No organization executes ArtsWest's mission better than ArtsWest.
- d. Activist
- i. The purpose of telling stories, either through visual art or three-dimensional theatrical art, is not about the telling, but rather about the information reaching its target.
 - ii. Therefore, artistic achievement can only be measured by the response to it. Good art must, in some way, evoke a response by offering a change in deep, personal perspective.
 - 1. Offering that kind of effective change in perspective is an exercise in activism.

2. Offensive art, as a product of some particular kinds of avant-garde performance, is an equally ineffective tool to require response as bland, inoffensive art.
3. Programming must have a purpose based on reaction.
4. Organizational security comes from the reaction of the crowd, not the trappings in which they sit.
5. Every ArtsWest event must have the ability to create a personally meaningful experience - not for its artists, but for its audiences and its community.

Practices and Programs

*What ArtsWest does
And the manner in which it is done*

1. ArtsWest is a professional arts organization, producing theater seasons and exhibiting visual art with a thematic link to the onstage art.
 - a. Visual and performing artists will always be paid a reasonable rate.
2. ArtsWest ensures that its artistic goals do not outweigh, nor are outweighed by, its financial progress. ArtsWest is a fiscally responsible agent of the arts.
 - a. ArtsWest will only undertake artistic projects for which there is a reasonable expectation of financial viability.
 - b. The relation between earned revenue and unearned revenue will stay within ten points of its current 45/55 ratio, respectively.
 - c. It is the duty of the board of trustees to ensure adequate resources for the organization. To that end, the board of trustees advocates ArtsWest, making certain that the organization is supported by the community.
 - d. It is the duty of the staff to ensure that resources are spent wisely.
 - e. From time to time, ArtsWest will rent the facility for non-ArtsWest events. At no time will these events endanger the mission of ArtsWest.
3. ArtsWest also produces “After Hours” cabaret-style events, educational events, Seattle Playwrights Studio events, and ArtsWest Artists Association events among its ancillary programs.
4. ArtsWest is not a building, but virtually a living, breathing entity whose constituents treasure their relationships with artists, company members, volunteers, audiences, contributors, and trustees.
 - a. It is the responsibility for everyone to make sure that everything gets done.
 - i. While there are leaders and management setting and attaining their respective department’s goals, ultimately the success of ArtsWest is dependent on all of us reaching all of our goals.
 1. As much as possible, we will help each other in attaining goals when asked, even when that means that we are crossing departmental lines.
 2. Whenever and wherever possible, we believe in the power of “yes, and” and eschew the weakness of “no, but”. It is

better to fail with gusto than to fail for not having made the attempt.

- b. Artists are equal in our eyes and deserve respect, whether they are performing artists, designing artists, technical artists, administrative artists, volunteer artists, or audience artists.