

Insight Out Learning: RISKIT Case Study 3 Handout: Sorcha Dallas Gallery

Company: **Sorcha Dallas Gallery**
Partners: **Sorcha Dallas**
Location: **Glasgow**

Initial Idea and Development

The Sorcha Dallas Gallery was established in 2004 and was developed out of an artist run project called 'SwitchSpace'.

SwitchSpace was a collaboration between artists that developed exhibitions from the front room of Sorcha's flat. This project grew and they began to work with a property agency that offered semi derelict spaces throughout the city of Glasgow in which they could show site-specific work. After a period of time, Sorcha realised that she had become more interested in working with artists, supporting them in their practice rather than showing work herself. From this personal realisation, she developed the proposal that would eventually fund her own Gallery, 'Sorcha Dallas Gallery'.

The Sorcha Dallas Gallery is a commercial space for a chosen group of ten artists. Sorcha works with and it's committed to creating exhibiting, purchasing and commissionable opportunities for them at a regional, national international level.

Model 1: Professional Artist

On completion of her BA(Hons) Fine Art Degree at The Glasgow School of Art, Sorcha decided to continue with her work and began to practice as professional visual artist. Her practice meant that she controlled all aspects of her business. She initiated the ideas, produced work and took the work to market (promoted her work and found exhibiting opportunities).

This model was fairly successful for her but she realised that she was more interested in working with other visual artists, developing their profile and curating exhibitions. Producing work herself became less of a motivating force in her practice. This realisation promoted her to work in collaboration with other artists to create SwitchSpace.

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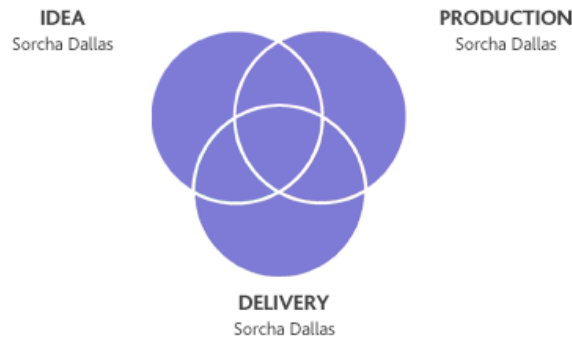
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Benefits of the Model

This model gives full control of Ideas, Production and Delivery to Sorcha. Which means that she would receive all rewards but be responsible for all the work too..

Negative Aspects of the Model

The main negative aspect of this model is that it relied on Sorcha being fully motivated in all areas of ideas, production and delivery. Sorcha indicated that fairly early on in her career that she became less interested in creating visual work and more interested in curating and developing / promoting other artists' professional practice. (See model two and three.) Furthermore, the financial risks are high.

Model 2: SwitchSpace – Artist Curator

The SwitchSpace concept enabled Sorcha to collaborate with artists to create site specific work in Glasgow City's derelict spaces. This changes her role and responsibilities within her business model as she now controls and is responsible for:

- The initial IDEA (working with Glasgow city council to locate sites and develop proposals for projects with artists).
- The DELIVERY (in this case the delivery aspect of the model considers the professional art practice of marketing, promotional materials, creating opening events and press releases, but not the critical judgement or quality of the visual art work produced).
- She has given the role of PRODUCTION of the visual work to another party, the artists. (The Idea and Production crossover section will be the main responsibility of the visual artist who has been engaged on the project. Their role is to produce site specific work supported by Sorcha and SwitchSpace. The artists control their own creative ideas for the site specific work but the initial idea to use the site would be controlled/responsibility of SwitchSpace).

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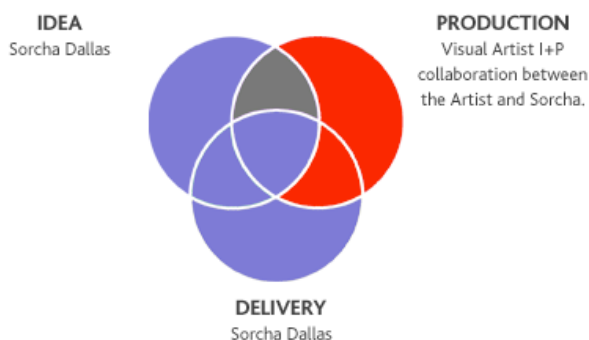
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Benefits of the Model – Artist Curator

The main benefit of this model for Sorcha is that she now can focus more on the areas that she is motivated by; initial ideas and delivery. She has handed over the responsibility for the production of artwork to the artists she collaborates with.

Negative Aspects of the Model

The model requires Sorcha to spend a lot of energy and time sourcing sites and project management. She has no control over what is being produced nor how the artists develop their own ideas for the sites. The reward that she would receive for her own work would also be reduced.

Model 3: Sorcha Dallas Gallery – Curator Agent/Promoter

Sorcha Dallas Gallery was created in 2004 following Sorcha's experience of SwitchSpace. Sorcha had become very interested in representing artists professionally and found that SwitchSpace did not allow her the flexibility or time to fully support and concentrate on a small collective of visual artists. By developing a gallery space that represented a particular group of visual artists she would be able to develop the national and international reputations of the artists and fully support their professional needs.

"I became more and more involved with working with and supporting artists. I felt after working for almost 5 years with a new range of artists at a grass roots level there was a real need to develop a more sustainable infrastructure of support for artists working within the city."

Sorcha Dallas, May, 2005.

The Gallery operates with ten specially chosen visual artists. Sorcha's role is to represent the artists in all areas of their career. This includes supporting them with exhibitions, selling work and marketing them within the visual arts and to appropriate audiences. Sorcha gains commission based on the success of the artists. This is the role of an agent.

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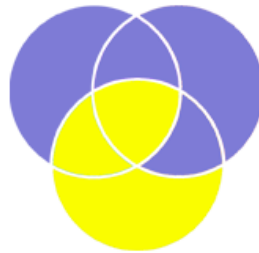
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IDEA
Artist

PRODUCTION
Artists



DELIVERY
Sorcha Dallas

"I have experience more on a local level of having press contacts with people that I write to: independent journalists and critics as well to promote international art magazines. I'm constantly trying to get as much promotion or press for the artists that I'm working with too"

Sorcha Dallas – May, 2005.

Benefits of the Model

This model highlights the area where Sorcha has the greatest motivation and experience. The model allows Sorcha to channel all her experience and knowledge into developing the professionalism and profiles of the artists she is working with. Sorcha has carefully selected the artists and therefore has greater understanding of the type of marketing and support that would be most beneficial for them.

The artists have the responsibility of developing their own work and projects. The responsibility of maintaining quality and exercising critical judgement on the development and production of work lies with the artist – as does the responsibility to hit deadlines.

Negative Aspects of the Model

The model greatly reduces the rewards that Sorcha should expect to receive. She no longer fully controls any creative process (ideas) or work produced (production). It is crucial that she carefully selects the artists that she works with, to make sure that they share common motives and values to enable a successful partnership to happen. She is also reliant on the success of the artists to develop her business and will have to be careful in negotiating appropriate commission rates as the artists grow in reputation and profile.

"We split everything fifty-fifty, so anything we sell fifty percent goes to the artist and fifty percent goes to me. Obviously when they start exhibiting, this is starting to happen now with galleries outside of the city, in London or in Europe. There's a different commission and fee that I negotiate with them."

Sorcha Dallas – May, 2005.

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