

Case Study Analysis – Synergy Art Series

This organization does not actually exist, but is part of the AAD612 Cultural Administration project.

Synergy Art Series is a new nonprofit arts organization Eugene, founded in 2014, which facilitates an artist residency program each quarter in response to a selected topic or social issue and stimulates cooperative partnerships across the community to develop outreach and other programming around the residency theme. Each series encourages audience crossover between organizations and art mediums and promotes visual art as an important catalyst for exploration of contemporary topics in Eugene and Springfield.

Case Study Analysis Part I – Environmental Scan

I. Economic Scan

Synergy Art Series is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization. A portion of its income is earned but a large part of it is contributed, from sponsors, donors and public funds. Because Synergy Art Series focuses all programming and outreach around a visual artist residency for each series, the organization is much more focused on process rather than product, as process usually takes a key role in developmental residency programs. Due to the greater emphasis on process, the sale of completed artwork, which may be an important revenue source for other galleries, is not as much of a dependable income source for SAS. This is accentuated even more when the organization brings in resident artists who may focus on highly experimental artwork, or site based installations that cannot necessarily be purchased. Therefore, SAS must rely more heavily on contributed income or fundraising activities.

The organization focuses on a new contemporary issue or topic each quarter, always centered on a visual artist residency. This allows SAS to continually expand its funding search to granters that may have an interest in the specific quarterly theme. This may also be why SAS has access to a wide range of private and corporate donors. Its flexibility of focus, constantly rotating every three to four months, allows the organization to gain a wide audience of support. Synergy Art Series also benefits from being one of the few contemporary art spaces and one of the only established residency programs in Eugene. It does not have to compete against many other Eugene/Springfield visual art centers for funding. The organization has not yet experienced much success with national funding, but this may be partly due to the fact that all of the public funding streams have experienced recent declines in the past decade. Local

funding has become the most prominent by far, which state below and then national at the bottom so it is likely that the organization applies most often for local grants. Much of SAS's community engagement and outreach is coordinated through multi-media online forums so it is very likely that it has increased reliance on online giving, with more and more participants interacting and responding through SAS social media, blog and website. SAS is a very new organization, founded in 2014, and its' financially history does not extend very far. The organization's greatest difficulty is funding four different series for each year and bringing in a resident artist for each series, specifically emerging artists with experimental work that does not necessarily generate income.

II. Demographic Scan

Synergy Art Series caters to a varied audience for each of its series, but generally tends to focus more towards young adults. SAS hopes to encourage visual arts exploration at an early age. Arts engagement increases with educational attainment, increasing dramatically with some college education, but SAS is working to improve interest in the visual arts in high school and early college students. The first of the thematic art series focuses on empowerment and equity among women and directly markets to girls and young women ages 12 to 20. The series is aimed at all women in the Eugene and Springfield community but is specifically targeting this audience for marketing and programming.

The population of Eugene in 2013 was 159,190 and there were approximately 18.2% of persons under the age of 18 and approximately 51.1% of the population is female. We can estimate then that 14,613 people are females under the age of 18. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014) This is still a fairly large demographic so it makes sense that the organization might realistically only be targeting less than half of that number, or those girls ages 12 to 18. The University of Oregon is also a target, specifically freshman and sophomore students. In the fall of 2013 there were 2,198 female freshman undergraduate students (median age 18.8) entering the university. Most of these individuals, especially those under age 18, are Oregon residents, but some of the incoming university students may be not be familiar with the area. The university attracts a large number of students from California as well as other western states and many international students. Approximately 12% of UO students are international or about 263 female freshman undergraduates. (University of Oregon, Office of the Registrar, 2014)

Even though the university attracts students from many other states and countries, Eugene is not very ethnically diverse. It is likely than many of those who come to Eugene for university education end up leaving after graduation. According to the national U.S. Census Bureau, the Eugene population is

almost 86% white, and almost 82% white alone (not Hispanic or Latino). This is even greater than the state average of 83.6% white or 78.5% white alone. Overall, the state of Oregon is less ethnically diverse than the nation as 88% of the Oregon population is white and 77% of the national population is white. Only 2% of the Oregon population is Black or African American alone, when the national average is over 13%. Oregon is consistently less diverse than the rest of the nation as a whole across all ethnicities. It is important for the organization to have an understanding of this lack of diversity but also to be aware of how it may help to encourage diversity in the community by bringing in artists of different ethnic backgrounds and exploring culturally diverse topics. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014)

Eugene boasts a highly educated population and the presence of the university contributes to a large population of young adults in their twenties. The statistics, as well as the presence of a dominant research university, tell us that many people in Eugene are likely highly educated. Approximately 93.5% of persons age 25 or older have a high school diploma, compared to the 89.2% state average, and 39.8% of the Eugene population has a bachelor's degree or higher which is significantly higher than the state average of 29.2%. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014) Even though SAS may be targeting a younger audience it is likely that most of these individuals are enrolled in an education system.

Synergy Art Series focuses on the large population of young adults in the Eugene and Springfield area but this does vary depending on the content of each series. The steady presence of youth and university students allows for fertile base of explorative, open minds to engage with the often challenging contemporary material that SAS presents. It's most recent series concentrates on the power and equity of women. Therefore, other information must come in to play. Of particular interest is the fact that only 29.9% of firms in Eugene are owned by women. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014) This is even lower at the national level. The Oregon Commission for Women presented that, in 2012, there is still more women concentrated in lower-wage industries and poverty is more common among women, often due to their role as a primary or sole caregiver. (Oregon Commission for Women, 2013) In general, Eugene has a relatively high poverty level with 23.1% of the population below the poverty line, compared to 15.5% of the state population below that line. The median household income of \$41,525 is also less than the state average. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014) This may have an effect on arts participation that depends on ticket purchases or donations or participation that depends on ownership of certain technology devices. Their research also covers wage disparities that still exist between women and men with similar education. Their 2012 report demonstrates that, on average, Oregon women earned 78% of what their male counterparts earned. While the amount of the wage gap varies depending on which

industry the woman works, it occurs across all education levels and across all industries. SAS also is focusing heavily on issues and victims of domestic violence in this series. According to the same report, in 2010, it was estimated that 27.2% of Oregon's female population (about 409,000 women) were victims of rape at least once in their lives. In this same year, 55.7% (837,000 Oregon women) were victims of sexual assault other than rape during their lifetime. These numbers indicate a need for increased awareness, which SAS hopes to provide in its arts programming during this series. Lastly, Oregon women made up 28.9% of the legislature (26 out of 90 seats) in 2012 and Oregon ranks 15th in the country for women in legislature. There is not a single state with equal women and men in legislature. Colorado, with 41%, ranks first. These statistics only provide only a narrow glimpse into the need for empowerment among women, specifically young women. (Oregon Commission for Women, 2013)

III. Cultural Scan

The organization is one of the few contemporary art organizations in Eugene and Springfield and it serves as a nucleus for contemporary art exploration in the community. Synergy Art Series only has four full-time dedicated staff members and a small, intimate Board of five people who are active participants in the community and strong advocates for the mission of the organization. The major needs of the organization are in development and entrepreneurship so it specifically set out to recruit board members with financial management knowledge as well as start-up business experience. The Synergy Art Series facility functions as both an administrative space and an artistic space with a dedicated artist work/live studio and art gallery. The facility also has a resource room to support the contemporary visual arts as well as information on the various artists that have or will participated in the SAS artist residency as well as information on partners who participate in each series. The organization was established in 2014, and because it is so young, it is heavily reliant on the few members of its staff and board as well as its volunteer base. Volunteers assist with marketing and outreach, event operations and gallery staffing. SAS is also a very collaborative organization, seeking out many partners for each series and working with many different arts and non-art related organizations throughout the community. The organization is a very tight-knit community that is passionate about reviving the visual arts in this area and inspiring young adults to discover the relevancy and social power of contemporary art.

Eugene is a constantly vibrant community that boasts a wide array of arts and cultural activities. Consumers nationwide are more price-conscious but tend to choose quality over quantity, and are increasingly aware of the environmental impact of consumer choices, especially food choices. (Brooks,

2011) SAS recognizes that it must be critically conscious about the way that it affects the community and environment as well as provide high quality programming that is cost-efficient, unique and relevant. The Creative Vitality Index, last released by the Oregon Arts Commission in 2010, provides valuable insight into the health of the creative economy in Oregon and in each of its counties compared to a national index. It interprets data on employment and community participation to provide a synthesis of the vitality of the creative economy in this area that provides a full picture of the range of arts in Oregon. The state has consistently performed above the national norm of 1.0. Lane County falls slightly below the national index at 0.93. The index demonstrates that creative workers, arts organizations (nonprofit and for-profit) and many supportive people are part of strong creative whole and that the creative economy in Oregon is vital to its greater economy. (Oregon Arts Commission, 2010) Within such an economy there is greater emphasis on personal exploration and discovery in reaction to a world in which so much has been personalized for us. (Brooks, 2011) This existing arts culture within Eugene and all of Oregon provides a great asset to SAS as well as an opportunity for the organization to develop creative methods of engagement which allow participants to explore and discover on their own. SAS facilitates interaction with resident artists, workshops and group art projects in schools and throughout the community, as well as online discussion surrounding contemporary art, the work of resident artists, and the exploration of specific social and cultural themes.

Eugene has a plethora of performing arts organizations but it seems that the visual arts have experienced more of a struggle. Synergy Art Series is working to help fill that existing gap in the Eugene arts community by encouraging participation in the visual arts through unique programming and creative outreach and engagement. The NEA Survey of Public Participation in the Arts is the nation's largest population survey of arts participation trends. In 2012 they reported that large segments of the adult population are taking part in at least one kind of arts activity, so we know that there is a strong interest in arts activities across the population. Nearly half of the nation's adults (49%) attended at least one type of visual or performing arts activity that year. Museum-going saw a decline. Twenty one percent of adults visited an art museum or gallery in 2012, down from 23% in 2008. On the other hand, festivals are becoming a more popular entry point to the arts, especially for younger adults (ages 18-24), and showed an increase in attendance in the NEA survey. The drop in participation for theatres and museums and increase in festival participation may be due to changes in technology, shifts in behavior, or a move away from traditional delivery of art and culture. (National Endowment for the Arts, 2012) SAS is reverting away from traditional methods by supplementing gallery exhibitions with a working resident artist involved not only in the studio but in the community as well. SAS works with partner

organizations on additional arts programming centered on a theme or topic relevant to the resident artists work and of interest to the community, therefore broadening its audience and increasing its impact while providing varied experiences and methods of participation.

Technological innovation has led to greater diversification of arts and culture, greatly increasing exposure to art forms that previously may have been obscured by traditional forms and their attached media. Amateur artists are being discovered and followed more easily. Participation is being welcomed in new forms as touch screens become more prevalent and the digital world opens up an entirely new realm of interaction. (Brooks, 2011) Synergy Art Series relies heavily on digital media as a platform for participation, sharing and dialog. SAS utilizes its website, blog, social media and the creativity of its volunteers and audience to respond to content and build upon it in the digital dimension, sharing experiences and information. The NEA estimated that more than 2/3 of adults (71%) accessed art through electronic media from TV and radio to handheld or mobile devices. Mobile devices are also appearing to narrow gaps in arts engagement, and wider audiences now have the capacity to participate. It is important for SAS to utilize technology and digital media in order to reach broader audiences and encourage greater interest in the contemporary visual arts. The survey also demonstrated the increasing emphasis on sharing. "One in four adults (26%) e-mailed, posted, or shared photography in 2012. One in five adults (21%) e-mailed, posted, or shared music. Fifteen percent shared their own photos, and 13 percent shared film or videos. SAS encourages documentation and response to content through discussion as well as the sharing of photographs, music, video, and supplementary materials to enrich content and experiences. (National Endowment for the Arts, 2012)

IV. Other Environmental Elements

The organization does encounter some political challenges in regards to use of space for nontraditional visual art displays or exhibitions outside of its gallery as well as possibly controversial or experimental art pieces. A good example is the upcoming SAS resident artist, Tatyana Fazlalizadeh, a female street artist and activist for women. SAS is in the process of organizing an outdoor site-specific multimedia painting in the community as well as a studio workshop and collaborative installation in its gallery. Much of Tatyana's work is considered to be street art and is therefore somewhat controversial, especially in a community with strict graffiti policies. SAS is posed with the challenge of working around concerns about street art as well as finding a suitable location for a permanent art piece.

Case Study Analysis Part II – SWOC Analysis

	Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Challenges
Cultural Product	New emerging artists that have not yet been introduced to the community; intriguing multimedia art forms and art experiences; engaging visual art participation opportunities for audiences; challenging and interesting content	Contemporary art can sometimes be difficult for audiences to fully understand; barriers of relatability and approachability	Little competition in the Eugene visual arts sector; vibrant arts community; very collaborative community and possibility for many beneficial partnerships; greater interest in nontraditional arts	Not a strong existing following for visual arts in the community; few existing visual art spaces; little exposure in the community to experimental visual art
Pricing	Very affordable pricing for workshops and special events for students; only a small fee requested for gallery attendance; artwork sales encouraged	Workshop fees may keep low-income students/families from participating; low pricing makes it very difficult to generate income; experimental (often site-based) artwork makes decreases likelihood of art sales	Can attract wider audiences with lower pricing; great accessibility; opportunity to market high quality experience and low cost (low commitment and great reward)	The public may perceive low pricing to equal low quality; may have trouble competing with other organizations with greater earned income; potentially less funds for marketing and operations
Place (Access)	SAS is fortunate to have a facility with a gallery space, administrative office space as well as an artist live/work studio; central downtown location; disability accessible; high walk-in pedestrian traffic; good use of digital media for involvement	Limited street parking; the only other parking option is paid parking; competition with many other business and organizations;	Opportunity to expand to wider audiences through different program themes and creative digital engagement and outreach. Opportunity to engage student learning and partner with school	Decreased museum and gallery attendance may have an effect on gallery visitation; less earned income means less funds to spend on marketing and outreach; not everyone may have access to technology devices for digital participation; SAS is a new organization and has not yet developed a solid support system
Promotional Efforts	Poster contest for each series (unique printed materials for each series); ability to use visual art in the community as outreach; employs creative	Very limited funding for paid print or digital advertising as well other traditional media such as radio, TV and magazines; little experience with	Opportunity to experiment with creative marketing tactics and digital media; utilize creativity of volunteers and	Generating enough funding momentum to market four different series each year; coordinating volunteers under one marketing director to organize and

	guerilla marketing tactics; strong online presence through website, blog and social media (digital engagement/sharing)	what will work and not work because the organization is so new	artists in order to stand out and generate interesting visual media	distribute marketing and outreach materials; coming up with cost-effective and creative marketing ideas
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