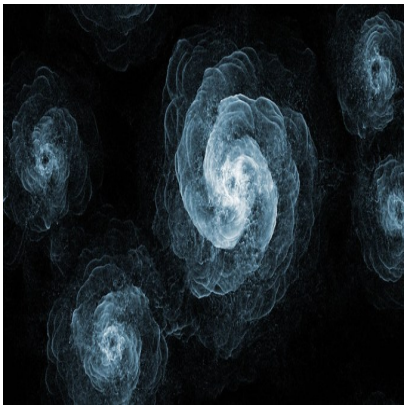
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2020 Sundance Spotlight Interview: Sam Doerge

Description

Posted by Larry Gleeson

First-year New Frontiers Central Festival Coordinator, Sam Doerge, is making the most out of her 2020 Sundance Film Festival experience.



New Frontiers Central Festival Coordinator, Sam Doerge. (Photo by Larry Gleeson)

First-year New Frontiers Central Festival Coordinator, Sam Doerge, is making the most out of her 2020 Sundance Film Festival experience. Doerge has a background in art having majored in Visual and Critical Research with a minor in Sculpture at the prestigious School of the Art Institute of Chicago. In addition, Doerge is the Programming Coordinator for Denver Film and is the Art Director for the Telluride Film Festival.

While working as the Telluride Art Director, Doerge came in contact with *Spheres*, a three-part virtual reality series written and directed by Eliza McNitt, produced by Jess Engle, and executively produced by Darren Aronofsky. *Spheres* made a huge splash at the 2018 Sundance Film Festival and it sold for a seven-figure sum. Producer Jess Engle is attending this yearâ??s festival as a producer for the augmented reality installation, *Breathe*. New Frontiers Central is in its second year of operation as the festivalâ??s second venue for New Frontier programming.

Having dreamt about Immersive Storytelling and voraciously reading about installation management, Doerge seemed to be in the right place at the right time to explore the exponentially growing field of virtual reality/augmented reality. Always an admirer of the New Frontier at Sundance from afar, Doerge seized the opportunity to apply and was consequently offered the New Frontiers Central Festival Coordinator contract.

With the enormously talented artists, including Diego Galafassi (*Breathe*), and their assistants, Doerge coordinated a process whereby the Sundance personnel could augment and amplify the immersive virtual/augmented reality experience. Working closely with her manager Boji Wong, a mother of three who singly managed the New Frontiers Center last year, the duo trained staff, volunteers, and docents to facilitate a smoothly operating, cutting-edge installation for the artists and patrons alike. Doerge believes the 12 hour working days (New Frontiers Central first day wound up being the longest, 7:30AM â?? 2:30AM, concluding at the end of the artistsâ?? Opening Night party) has offered a wonderful opportunity to learn from highly professional and highly respected peers.

What also is working for Doerge as the New Frontiers Central Festival Coordinator at Sundance is the overall working environment, the strong sense of community inside New Frontiers, and the opportunity to learn. And, as anyone who has ever been in the fray of a battle knows â?? planning helps! Nevertheless, â??being in the moment making decisions that balance and manage expectations of all parties involved have been the keys to a smoothly operating New Frontiers Central,â?• according to Doerge. And, as the environment is in a constant state of change, each day and, in reality, each moment, has its unique characteristics requiring a moment-to-moment response.

With several fully realized sculpture creations to her credit, Doerge understands how to bring a vision to fruition and had a sincere appreciation for watching the New Frontiers Central come to life. Moreover, Doergeâ??s New Frontier Central experience has brought her into contact with seasoned professionals possessing high skill sets such as Jamie McMurry, New Frontiers Production Designer, and Shari Frilot, Chief Curator. â??Shari Frilot has impeccable taste. The best Iâ??ve ever seen,â?• said Doerge.

The New Frontiers Central is in its second year of operation. Thus far this year, the docents have provided unswerving support in ensuring the artistâ??s needs are being met with VIPâ??s, industry professionals, and festivalgoers all clamoring for a chance to experience the exhilarating displays. Furthermore, the installation seems to be operating smoothly as two previews on Saturday for the publicists and the press and industry professionals were conducted successfully.

With the three weeks of coordinating Immersive Experience under her belt, Doerge plans to return to her Denver Film post and Telluride Art Director position with a fresh perspective and looks forward to the challenges ahead â?? including the 2021 Sundance Film Festival with run dates from Thursday, January 21st, through Sunday, January 31st, 2021.

Until then, Iâ??ll see you at the movies!

*Featured photo: A still from *Breathe* by Diego Galafassi, an official selection of the New Frontier Exhibitions program at the 2020 Sundance Film Festival. Courtesy of Sundance Institute.

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