

December 24-30, 2010

FACE TO FACE WITH...

Sarah Gish

Owner | Gish Creative

As a mother, artist, entrepreneur and native Houstonian, Sarah Gish is in a unique position to affect the city's cultural landscape. Her art challenges viewers with unique transformations of ordinary objects, such as hubcaps. Through her 10-year-old company, Gish Creative, she has created "Gish Picks," a weekly e-newsletter that serves as a guide to cultural activities for families; "The Summer Book," a guide to Houston day camps for kids; workshops; and various columns. Her activism led her to create such events as the Houston Gay and Lesbian Film Fest, the Fourth Friday Divas, Save our Landmarks and Happy Birthday Houston. Gish was interviewed by Christine Hall.



How did you get your start?

I started my company in 2000. I had been the Houston city manager/publicist at Landmark Theatres, where I oversaw the Greenway and River Oaks movie theaters. I realized I needed a change. I loved the marketing aspect of my job, but didn't like the operational side so much. Not to mention, my job was no longer compatible with raising children. I brought my first son, Alexander, to work with me for a year, but I couldn't work out a similar arrangement for my second son, Matthew, so I knew it was time to leave. Gish Creative was founded because I wanted to do marketing and public relations more than anything else. I have always gotten clients through word of mouth, and my first clients were all organizations I had worked with when running the movie theaters.

You're changing Gish Creative's approach. What are you doing?

Basically, I make art that I consistently sell. Although Gish Creative started out as a marketing company, these days I prefer to enrich people's lives by teaching them how to become authentic and by opening their eyes to all the interesting art and culture found in Houston. I started doing workshops for adults and families like I Can Fly! and one for women called TNT/Transitions and Transformations, where I serve as a personal mission guide for clients on an individual basis. I have branched out with my income streams, but I still offer some of the same services I did when I was focused solely on marketing, such as short-term marketing consultations, party photos, editing, writing and graphic design.

Why the change now?

This year was my 10th anniversary in business, and milestones inevitably bring about reflection. I think that change happens gradually and then comes into sharp relief when it's done.

So, although it looks like I've made the changes now, they've been fermenting a long time. After the death of my brother in 2004, an experience that affected every area of my life, I realized that I no longer had a passion for marketing other

people's businesses. Instead, I wanted to create my own products and market them. I couldn't end my old business practices immediately, because I needed to keep the income flowing, so a few years back, I began to slowly morph my work so that I focused

more on what I loved. This year, I made a conscious decision to stop taking new PR clients — a simple act that immediately began to reap benefits: There was more interest in my products, more people were aware of what I was doing in the community, and I was able to team up with all kinds of organizations in a number of interesting ways.

You continue to publish things like Gish Picks and "The Summer Book." How is that going?

They are going great guns. The revenue on both products has tripled since their creation. Their popularity has increased, and they have become a consistent resource for families that are looking for interesting things for kids. If a family wants to stay home and watch TV, then I'm not the girl for them.

Where would you like to see your business in five years?

I'd like my business to be more focused on connecting with the community. I want to continue to help organizations connect to their potential customers and to help people connect to themselves, their surroundings and their families. I want to give back to those who have given to me. ■

