

# The ENTREPRENEURS

FROM THE EDITORS AND BUREAUX OF MONOCLE MAGAZINE

● THE BUSINESS HANDBOOK FOR PEOPLE WITH BRIGHT IDEAS

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## MAKE A MOVE

Meet the makers, creators and grafters who took the leap, started businesses and found success and a happier way of working. *But be warned: you might want to join their ranks.*

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**Kristin Hjellegjerde**

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The gallerist who made a splash by taking the path less travelled.

Stories of industry outsiders who go on to run internationally renowned galleries aren't frequent in the art world. But ever since she opened her first outpost in Wandsworth, south London, in 2012, Norwegian-born Kristin Hjellegjerde has gone against expectations. "People were, like, 'Good luck down there,' but it was all I could afford," she says from her airy space in London Bridge, her second outpost in the city, which opened in 2019.

Hjellegjerde studied literature, criminology and history and worked jobs ranging from modelling to property sales in New York, Los Angeles, Singapore and Bangkok before moving to London. It was here that she finally decided to pursue her passion for art. "If I worked for somebody else I would have had to start at the bottom so I decided to open my own gallery," she says. "I had worked in real estate in New York so I knew I was good at selling."

This no-nonsense approach has helped her to amass 41 artists, many of whom have stayed with her since day one. Hjellegjerde specialises in up-and-coming creatives and her shows now frequently sell out within days. But money was initially tight; it took about six years for the business to become profitable. "Nobody knew who I was," she says. But her perseverance paid off. "If I had allowed myself to have a plan B, I would never have succeeded."

Best outside chance



While many of her competitors are experimenting with pop-ups in locations close to holiday destinations for the wealthy, Hjellegjerde has decided to invest in two new ventures that are not on the art map. First, she has taken over a derelict German castle. "The whole place was run down. But it was a win-win situation because the owner needed us and we needed him," she says. Then, last summer, she transformed a former shrimp factory in Norway into another new space; the opening show sold out before she could even hang it and the gallery now receives about 100 visitors a day. "I just want to build great connections: it's about having a great life and my artists having a lot of joy when they present their work," she says. "Be nice and generous and something good will come out of it." — CHR [kristinhjellegjerde.com](http://kristinhjellegjerde.com)

**Lesson learnt:** Don't let a seemingly tough-to-crack industry scare you off. If you are determined and brave, you can carve out your own space. Sometimes it's the least predictable ideas that yield the best results.