

Lauren Boyle

ARTIST

My name is Lauren Boyle. I'm here with you today, I think, because of my work with my – the collective that I started in 2010 with a big group of friends.

I'm part of a collective called DIS. and DIS is –_right now, what we're working on, is like a streaming platform for education entertainment which we worked with artists and academics and scholars and just like great thinkers to kind of translate this really big broad ideas – complex ideas into something that can be watched, you know, in like 5, 10, 15 minutes without simplifying them, without kind of like dimming it down and actually maybe even adding another layer of complexity through like visuals. So, you know, we look for ideas, that don't have clear answers, but maybe propose possible like solutions or an open end or imagine something else. We started out as a magazine back into 2010, which I don't think there can be anything more collaborative or generative than a magazine as a format. And since then we've just basically moved from kind of like rethinking formats, like one to the next, you know, over the last decade – it's a decade now.

DIS is a prefix. So, in English it just kind of takes everything into the opposite of whatever it is. So, it's like taste or distaste. You know, distaste is like oppositional, it's antagonistic, it's like whatever. So, when we were looking for names for the magazine, we had one idea was, that, you know, we would be issue-based and every issue should be a different DIS word, you know, in a sense. In the end we rounded up just having a kind of like publishing like in a kind of much more like fluid rolling way, you know, we didn't publish issues super regularly, but we had different kind of like top(ics), it's like distaste, dystopia, disco, all of that kind of covered culture in a really brought way. But, it was meant to be pretty negative or at least we thought, that it's going to be kind of like very negative and antagonistic magazine that would flip everything on a tab, like upside down in a way. Because everything at that moment was very like, you know,) positive and consumeristic and like – there wasn't really like a good critique happening – in our minds – so we thought that we could kind of like interject something new, by kind of taking an oppositional approach to it. So, that's where the word DIS comes from.

I think it was in 2009, that we started. Simon and David, who's a couple, they are still part of DIS, they send an e-mail out to like a group of friends. It was rather ambiguous, it was kind of vague and they just said: "Let's do something, should we do something?" Because everyone was out of work and was kind of – it was like, just after the financial collapse, the housing market and all of that and kind of like peering into like the great recession. So, we just had a lot of time on our hands, more time, you know – everyone was on unemployment insurance, it felt like – whatever, you know. And we just started having meetings at my house. Just like a big group of friends really, you know, that just got smaller and smaller over time. Based on who had the most interest in staying active and involved and things like that. So, that's, how it began. And we kind of knew at the outside, that it was going to be like a digital, like an online magazine. We weren't going to bother with printing which was expensive and also analog. And that was really created by just the content that we were interested in: like the people we wanted to talk to and the conversations we wanted to have, were all basically about the internet and technology and how it's kind of shifting our minds and behaviors in a way. So, it would have felt really weird to print something like that, you know. Like, you can't print a GIF and you know, whatever. And at the moment, like all the other magazines, that were considered like, you know cultural icons and beacons – it was still like wise and purple, you know. Like self-service – I don't know – you know it's all these kind of magazines that were doing their best just to ignore the internet. And so, I think when we launched, it was like kind of immediately shocking to people.

DIS Magazine probably was like – I mean, it couldn't have happened without Facebook. I mean, the engagement, that we were – the audience we were able to find through Facebook naturally, very organically, just through friends of friends of friends, you know, this kind of like node in a network, happened very quickly and it was kind of, you know, could never be recreated. You know, it was just the right time and the right place. But, by the time,

you know, 2014, 2015/16 like they have been changing the rules and kind of pushing the goalpost in terms of like, how you could reach people. For a really long time you had to actually – (interruption) So, basically like by the time, we did the Berlin Biennial and came back to the States. We had still been publishing on DIS Magazine throughout that whole like period. When we came back, everything had changed, you know. I mean, we were confronted with a new president, like the rise of nationalism, all these things were kind of like coming to our head, but we also realized, that there was – there was just no hope in staying an independent magazine any longer. I mean, there was no means to connect to people, the way that there once was. If you even think about, how many blogs existed in that period, in like 2010, 2014, how many small like, you know whatever. Just like it was just so, there was a lot of media and options, but they had kind of gotten consolidated and consolidated and definitely this magazine was not going to make it in that way anymore. So, we had to think about like a completely new distribution model. At the same time, we had to think about how people were consuming information and how that was really changing a lot. Like people no longer wanted to read, you know like 5000-word essays, like I don't know, if they ever did, but they didn't do it anymore. And there was this huge movement towards podcasts and audiobooks and video, and we thought, that we had an opportunity basically to change original programing, you know. To kind of infuse it with something else and like confront some like bigger, broader issues, that we thought, were really critical at the moment. So, we took the time to think about like other ways of like producing content and distributing content. And what we kind of came up with was, that we would be doing, you know, exclusively video, video – accompanied by text, sure, but exclusively video focus on people who had like a real wealth of information or research in their body of work, but that maybe, you know, got lost in the wall text or a catalogue or got lost, you know, in one of those like myriad of like books that come out every year and take the most interesting ones and people turn them into videos, that kind of basically be like a sort of, you know, it's like a gateway to their studies or something for people.

So, we wanted to think about how could we find our audience without going through the pain of like A) paying tons of money, you know to promote our content on Facebook or Instagram or Twitter, wherever and not have to make like headlines, that are just like really sensational and like news like for 24 hours 7, you know, to try to compete in that space and become like another *Vice* or something. We wanted to think like much more long term, with like a higher, wider perspective. And the only way, that we could see, doing that, was actually just directly working with like public institutions, like particularly – well, public or private universities, public libraries and museums, that kind of provide like every student – you know, that's the goal, that every student has access to DIS.art through their schools. It just becomes a kind of eager of it's like – it's there, you know. So, know we're just in a process of like signing up schools, so that everyone has access to DIS and we don't have to, you know, change the content in order to fit the medium of social media and the normal, like road of content production. I'm not that invested in the nomenclature of like, who is an artist, who is not an artist. I mean, there is probably a couple of reasons for that. One, like who gets afforded the opportunity to do that. You know, like who really gets a chance, to have free time, that they can explore, reflect on the world and then produce something? I mean, it's such a privilege thing, you know, that I just don't – I mean, I do identify with it to a degree, but I just don't try to put it on like a pedestal, as like the greatest thing you can do. There is like labor activism, mothers and caretakers, you know, who are doing like really important work and don't get any credit for it ever, you know. So, there is that – but there also – I just, it's sort of like – is it interesting or not interesting? – you know. That's like what is more important than whether something is like art or someone is an artist or not. When I went to college, I thought, I was going to study fashion. I was always really into art, but I also thought, like fashion would be like a good place for me. And I went to school after like one week of classes, I was just like, yes no, like this is an – it was the wrong environment for me. You know, it was the conversations and the people, that I kind of – I was like, I'm not going to study four years here. I'm going to – and I immediately switched over to like the sculpture and like the art department. And I think that's like kind of how I've always kind of like just been like – as almost – like you just kind of go wherever the most interesting conversations are and that's just where – you know, that changes too in a way. Yes. And I guess, because I don't work in this, like even I probably have hang-

ups about what is an artist you know. Like, working in a studio, making painting, producing things, having art shows. We do have art shows, we do work in studios sometimes, you know, like producing videos or this or that. So, we do a lot of those things, but in the end we're also, like we really are facilitators and organizers in a much broader community, in a sense. Yes, that seems for me to take precedence, personally.

ARTWORK

I think, the work that we do, what we make, is always trying to kind of engage a non-art viewer. Which is probably, like maybe one more distinguishing elements of our practice is, that we're, well, not being straight forward or doing it in a literal way. We're trying to engage people that are not necessarily, you know, like viewing normal contemporary art – viewer, you know. Trying to have like a kind of double meaning with everything in a sense, like, I think, like even back doing the magazine, you know, it was always about sort of like these high-end configurations of the present, in a sense. And, you know, thinking about like – you know, when we thought about fashion, we thought about like nonmarket driven trends in a way, but things that people could absolutely like relate to. First, like as a funny image, and maybe second as an artwork, in a sense. So, like for instance like wearing four shoes at once - Martha Rosler had like a hilarious quote on Facebook, she is like a prolific Facebooker, and she was like, "some people make revolutions, some people wear four shoes at once." You know, it's definitely kind of like a cutting bit of a shave to us, but we appreciated it, because we thought, it was cool that Martha Rosler was like looking at DIS magazine in 2011 or 10 or something. Another part of what our work is – a big part of what our work is, is brainstorming. Just like sitting around the table and being motivated to keep talking to each other after like nearly ten years, like (laughs). So, there is that, that's like probably like the best part in a way of the labor. And then playing matchmaker in terms of ideas and people. So, it's like – because we've been doing it now for so long and we always had like a kind of like wide net of like collaborators or whatever. But it just grows in a way, and so, know it's just like, it's piecing – it's like putting people together. When we did the Berlin Biennial, like inviting like photographers to do the campaigns or, to do – like for the album, you know, asking Isa Genzken and Total Freedom to make a song together. So, like convincing people, that they should work with us and do something that they are not comfortable with, that they have never done before, is like a big part of our work also. And we still do that, we still make people make videos, that have never made a video or become a host, when they're not a host normally or anything like that.

I mean, you know from going to studio visits with artists now, there aren't studios to visit, you know (laughs). Like, you meet in a café, maybe, maybe they show you something on the computer, but most of the time you just have a conversation. So, I think it is very reflective of like where we are, like as a – like in the artworld or whatever, that people are just – it's more about that conversation than it is about showing. Like, oh I made this and I show this. Sometimes someone does in the gallery, sell these interesting parts about them. And that's ok, you know. It's just true. It's just how it goes. Those are like really great people to work with, too (laughs). You know, because sometimes it's just like – it's the ideas, that they come up with. And then you kind of find a way of like, alright, well, we're lucky, because people, I think, at this point people really trust us in a way. And they have always kind of given us like a kind of a long leash to drag them into our projects, in a sense. And give us that kind of like opportunity to have them, do something they are not comfortable with or that they're used to doing. So, those are the people that you can be like, let's – you know, let's make a video, like, ok, like, who should narrate this? What's the like visual concept? What are we doing, you know? When we did like the DISimages, or even – or DIS own – like both of those things – I mean DIS images – like most of those artists never took pictures before, you know. And we found a way to work with them anyway. And really, it's fine. We'll get an assistant, or have them photograph and it's stock photography anyway, you know. Like if you got one big – like box, you're fine. We'll just – like what's the idea, you know? What do you want to say with this stock photo? And then find a way of doing that with them.

I think we've always been doing edutainment in a way. I do think, that like, you know, the rise of documentaries and nonfiction films, many thanks to Netflix honestly, has, like there is this kind of like insatiable thirst for like knowledge in a way and, if you think about like the, you know, the resources, that we have in the world, there is like material and energy which are finite, and then there is knowledge and knowledge is, you know, a renewable resource. It's something, that like the more knowledge you have, the more knowledge you have. It's just like begets more. So, we're really happy, to kind of like move into that place in a more, like direct way, but I don't – but I also think, that – I don't know, like humor and pop culture is a relatable framework for people. So, it's nice, to kind of like have, you know, to use other formats, whether that's like printed content, advertorial, or, you know, for instance like, I'll talk about like the PSA series that we did. We called them like public service announcements which is kind of a lie, because like, I don't know public service announcements are usually for like drunk driving or something, or like whatever (laughs). And what we did was kind of like think about a public service announcement, but in the – for like late capitalism or something like that. But it was – it was a series of videos, a trilogy of videos in which we talked about the kind of like lost opportunity for change, for economic change, after the financial collapse and the global financial collapse. And the kind of like, basically like the uncertain, like opportunities for millennials. So, we made videos targeting specifically this group of people. It was - we started making these films I guess in 2018 and it was like the ten-year anniversary, I think, September whatever. So, they came out like just before the ten-year anniversary of like Lehman Brothers. And we kind of – we use different characters to kind of explain, like what happened and how we got where we are today. And the first part, that we had to figure out, was like, okay, what are the like algorithms, what are the codes that have kind of like increased wealth inequality?

So, we worked with like an economist, Moritz Schularick, to kind of like – basically he had to really like teach us a lot and then we did our own digging and we figured out, that like, you know, that banks, basically like they were foreclosing all these houses and then they have been renting them back to people. You know, they stole their homes, they took a loan, you know, that like from the government that like bailed them out and then they created this new like rentership society in America. I don't want to give statistics to get them wrong right now, but it's a huge shift in inequality, that is happening right now. So, we made three videos, the first video is actually like, A Good Crisis it's called, and sort of like – I think it's like titled after the idea of like, what is a good crisis, who is it good for, you know, in a way. And he's like the main character, the only character really is played by the Night King from Game of Thrones, which also came to be like around, like Occupy Wall Street in 2011, you know. So, culturally it's like, for us it's still like, it's dated in this way, like Game of Thrones. And he goes on, to kind of give like a brief history of like, you know, like wealth inequality in America and also like kind of outs like Stephen Schwarzman of Blackstone, for what he's done personally, to cause like so much inequality in America.

In terms of like the kind of artist, that we look, to work with, it's usually people, who have like a really, like deep knowledge of the subject. You know, someone, who has been like, who has a kind of like a tendency, to get obsessed with something and find out everything about it. And those are the people, that we normally are attracted to, I think, in a way. Now, whenever people have to be storytellers. There was probably a time, where it was like a little bit looser in a sense, like who we could work with, because of the way the platform worked and DIS-Magazine for sure. Now, there is a lot of great artists that we love but they don't – like they can't fit into our particular mode right now, because we're looking for people, who can kind of like resist the temptation to be abstract a little bit and actually communicate an idea, like in a little bit of more straight forward way. So, when we approach people, you know, we always have a conversation of we're not commissioning video art. It's not, you know, this is not video art. It might be video art, I'm not saying, but don't – like approach it – like you approach video art for a gallery. You have to imagine that it's going to be seen on a phone, on a projector, on a flat – like on a flat screen, on apple TV, on a laptop, you know. You can't control, how it's going to be seen, you know. What you have to think about is, what you trying to say and how you going to say it.

And also, now we're working more with also directors, too. Not only artists. And writers as well. So, academics, like for instance like Andrea Shaw Nevins who probably never imagined that she would have like a video made

up like after a chapter in her book, you know, about like the Venus of Willendorf. But, we wiped this chapter and we asked her, can we make a video for you? And she said, yes. She had this wonderful accent, I think she's Jamaican, so, she also narrated it and she wrote the script for it and she did a fantastic job. A lot of people can't translate their academic writing into something, like colloquial and spoken and natural, but she was incredible. Storytelling (laughs). It is like the one – it is the connective tissue between people. You know, it is the distinguishing thing, like you know, marker between us and all other, like creatures. You know, I mean, animals have language, they can communicate. We know this, we know this much. You know, they probably have words, they probably have – they've consciousness of course, and minds and things like this, but they don't have the ability to kind of tell elaborate stories and social constructs and create kingdoms and cooperations and all these things that we basically hold as true, you know, as like a reality. So, I think, storytelling is just a huge intrinsic part, of what it is, to be a human being and what makes humans different from everything else. Yes.

PRODUCTION

You know, like we will help people find, you know, like the production team, the crew, or, you know, or who help them with rewrites or the postproduction, finding like, you know the editor. Maybe will even manage all the editing, the postproduction, you know. It just – it kind of depends a lot on, how experienced there are in like filmmaking. And sometimes like we work with the group recently these girls, and it was – I mean, it's just going to be by them. We did all of the work for them basically. They wrote it though and they performed – they performed in it. So, like intellectually it just feels, it's theirs, you know. And we made it for DIS, for DIS.art, but it's like by them, because we didn't really influence. They don't normally do videos, you know. But it's not ours, you know. It's really very much like – felt like it comes from them, you know. So, that the kind of project, where it's really easy for one person, to step up and kind of like control, you know, and be that mediator between the liaison on between them and the group, or the editor or whatever. And kind of do the rounds of notes and edits and things like that until it's done.

Well, I think we find our ideas like kind of the same places everyone else does, you know. Like, it's – it's just paying attention to like links, that have been shared or where the conversations are going to. Sometimes we go as far as asking people, who are some new writers, you know. We might write to Simon Denny, who we know knows a lot about like Bitcoin or Amazon and ask him, to send us some names of people that we should look into, that are writing about these things. And, we'll do the same thing for like, you know Carson Chan, like, who will – he's an architecture student, you know PhD student, and ask – have conversation with him and, that conversation might lead to thinks like, you know, like - I don't know, like animals, that can talk. And he sends us links about prairie dogs and like, that they have a word for human and then we're like look into that research or this. So, it's really just we do – we kind of try and stay talking to people and seeing, where their work is going and then where it crosses over with our work and then we follow up with questions and ask them for names or links to articles or papers or anything, that's kind of related, if there is – if there is crossover. So, last year we talked a lot about money, you know. This year we're talking more about like humans and their impacts in the world and like the, you know, the climate change and things like that. So, that's a lot of the current stuff, that we're working on right now. But, we're trying, to do it – we're trying to do it in like a non like shocking way, you know – like, I don't know, we're not trying to create like more trauma in people, but rather trying change the psychology around that discussion. So, that it's one of possibility rather than like hopelessness, I think.

MATERIAL

Our material, I think, I mean – I don't know, if I had to be like poetic, I'd be like, it's the network of people and it's our, you know, like, it's this community of people and shared ideas and thinks like that. I mean, it's also our, like distribution channels as well, it's part of the medium I think, of how we work and have always worked. And

that like, how do you, you know, like, how do you reach people and finding methods, to reach people. It's another big part. But in a practical way, we traffic in images, you know. Still images, moving images, headlines, taglines, text, you know, I mean, this is like – that's like the more concrete stuff.

I guess, the medium is the images and the whatever. And the material is like the ideas, the kind of shared google docs and things like that. I mean, if you could see these docs, like the backend of DIS, it's really like a really frantic place. I've just shared – just like constantly sharing hyperlinks, you know. So, we really live in that landscape of hyperlinks. Yes.

So, the material for a video – we'll just take Obama Baroque, just randomly – that was a collection of collaborator hitters, really. I mean, we had like a brief encounter with Sean Monahan and I don't know, how Gossip Girl came up, but we had this kind of like momentary like thought and then we're like, you need to write that, we need to write so, like this is the story, we're doing it kind of – we're doing a series on the financial collapse and like Gossip Girl fits perfectly in, like that's – and we had basically harassed him, you know, to write something for us. And then finally getting a script and then rewriting and that's the process, you know, until we have a kind of voiceover. And then it's about like, you know – actually I think we visually knew, what we wanted, before we knew like exactly, how the script was going to be told. But then as – you know, we've got like Sean Monahan, and then we have the voiceover artist, who sounds just like Gossip Girl from the film, we have Vaquera, a fashion collective, doing the costumes, and Walter Pearce who's doing the casting for us, with his agency Midland, you know. And then we have And or Forever doing the sets for that and then you have, you know, a kind of go to like director of photography and cinematographer and got to like, you know, like a sound designer as well. So, I mean, it's really like a film production, you know. I mean, it really really is, like when we're doing something, it's not even like the – it's kind of like a bit of a bigger scale, than we don't know, we have worked at that scale with so many people. But then you have the cast, you know, like Dese (Escobar), and like Bailey (Stiles), you know, starring and like acting, like never done that before. So, it's a whole – it's a whole enterprise, really, of people. And then there is like trying to get a free studio and equipment and, you know, just that whole – that's the material. That – to create it. And then once you have the video – I mean that is the work. Sometimes it is hard for us to kind of like, I guess, except that, when showing that work, you need more, than just a video. Like, you know – I mean we have shown it just as a projected a couple times, but you do want to create a kind of ambience. So, then we work with like other designers to kind of create like posters and stuff like that. And then we take photos during the shoot, that can be edited later and come up with more taglines and, you know. So, it just kind of becomes this basket of material, that can be used. And they are used in like so many different ways in the end. Same image might go on a museum wall that will go as like a story on Instagram.

I mean, we're not that invested in talking about contemporary art or critical theory like specifically. We're obsessed with world politics, like who isn't right now? It's really hard. But we also don't want to get – but we also want to go little deeper than that and, so on and so forth. So, I think the things that we're looking for right now, are kind of – how do you say like – I think because, you know, as like a – like as a population, we're really having a hard time imagining the time before now, we have a hard time imagining that anything could ever change, you know. So, we are like trying to just imagine another way. So, a lot of the kind of like authors and people who we're reading are people who are speculating on different options, you know. So, like personally, I'm really into like economics and like kind of a new breed of economic theory. One that is not based on like the 1940th countering communism and totalitarianism, but one that actually accepts the twenty first century as a starting point instead of so old fashioned. So, like modern monetary theory is like one, that we're really interested in. Kate Raworth – I think, that's her name – who like kind of developed like doughnut economics. So, we're kind of going down those routes a little bit more.

Well, humor is a great unifier, you know, for people. And I think, that's why we often times like find something kind of tongue and cheek, to lean on. I mean, we have been called ironic for so long, but it's not, like we've never seen ourselves as being ironic and we don't think, it's ironic, to pair, you know, a scholar and academic with like

you know, game of thrones. Like, these things do exist in the same world, you know. So, why not in the same video, I don't know.

MEDIUM

The way, that we kind of see DIS.art is sort of like a – it's like a research lab, it's like a testing like center or laboratory or something like that, where we kind of like play with ideas and things, like that. And we hope, that someday, there is like a kind of like a parallel like you know, street, where we can actually make things bigger and like possibly actually be on Netflix, you know. But we'll always be looking towards the conversations that happening on DIS.art to kind of feel that bigger project, that like major work as well. And I think, we're obsessed with TV, you know. I don't know, I think, we really like it as a format and as a medium and certainly, like many other artists before us, have played with that for communication as well.

The different formats are kind of just like – it's like case by case. Sometimes it's directed more by the artist and sometimes it's directed by us in terms of what we're going to do. If you look at something like, you know, Will Benedict. Like we didn't ask him for a cooking show, that's, what he wanted to do. And we were like: "Great, let's do a cooking show." So, that's obviously something, that's like really popular in general, like cooking shows. But maybe doesn't feel like internet culture. With something like Hannah Black, like *What's in the Box?* with Hannah Black, it's like – the format is, the introduction – I mean, it's two things: it's like late-night TV, but it's also like unboxing videos. But instead of unboxing a product like a new Apple computer or a toy or whatever, a gadget, she's unboxing like theory and ideas and things like that. And she is talking about the egg or whatever.

And then there is for instance like Ilana Harris Babou, who – again this is directed by her, you know, we don't have to - often we don't have to tell people, what to do, to get exactly, what we want. They kind of already come to DIS, knowing, what we're, like what we are like or into, but she has been doing videos for a long time with her mother. And they were always these kinds of like, very like dry, satirical, like commentary on like branded content, particularly like restoration hardware, which is like a huge furniture and like artefact kind of company in the states, which is like expansive and you can get things, that look like they came from another culture whatever. So, it's about appropriation and things like that. So, she appropriates how their YouTube channel like functions to advertise. Except for instead of advertising furniture she is talking about like reparations for African Americans. So, it's always just sort of like this kind of like inversions that are happening in all these places.

So, the exhibitions for us are really like a physical representation of our online platform like in a kind of – that's like almost in a straightforward way. Like, we find different ways of doing them and kind of they are sight specific as well, but there are these kinds of like, especially today, you know, there are these kind of like experiential like immersive spaces for learning in a way. We like that the videos – they seem to – I mean, we're very – we're pretty considerate of the time a person has. You know, they are giving us their time to be there and to watch a video and a lot like artist videos can, you know, drag on and like they can be kind of like big – you know, they take another approach perhaps more politic, perhaps more, you know, just like drawn out. And what we try to do is, we try to kind of like edit a presentation of a lot of videos together. So, nothing's more than probably like five to seven minutes and they kind of like one leads into another. Often times we'll even design a kind of like avatar, that will like, you know, kind of transition between the videos. So, they kind of have a like, you know, there is a thread, and then it leaps back around. And people can kind of just hopefully recreate an environment, that's comfortable and they can sit, and they can watch, longer than they would, if they were just on their computer. And I think it's true that people do watch longer, and they watch more, when they are in that kind of setting in a way.

PROCESS

Sometimes there is ideas, that we could have for five years and never do anything with, you know. And we will come back to them every so often until it's like the right time or moment or, like something clicks for one or more of us. It's hard, because there are like multiple people in the group and you want like to come to consensus as often as possible. But sometimes like, you know, someone has just like a stronger will, to see their idea through, and that one will be the one that kind of like gets made in a way. But it usually does begin with an exchange of like emails and links and just like ideas for things. And some of us are more like analytical than others, like some are more like visual and they just have like visual ideas, that they want to see manifested.

Sometimes we have, what we want to say, but we don't have, what we want it to look. And all the times we have an idea for how something should look, an impression that you want to get from it, but not necessarily like the – the words to express it, you know. So, there is this kind of thing happening and then sometimes they like – they fit together like a jigsaw puzzle. And then you have it and then you're like: "oh great." And what's, you know, really true is, that you can talk and talk and talk about like an exhibition, for really an endless amount of time and then suddenly, okay, we got it. We're done now. You know. And that happens – that moment happens kind of really quickly, once you decide, like, that something does fit together. And then you can move forward and how you going to produce it, which also influences obviously, what it's going to be.

So, we do meet together and we do work in the same room. Almost every day. It's certainly anytime we're in the same city. But even than you need kind of like a record and you need to work independently and then you share, and things like that. I mean, every once in a while we get out like a big whiteboard and start like writing and putting post-its for like larger projects and things like that. But we like to work together as often as we can. But there is a lot of traveling and things like that, so. Yes.

DIS is two couples. So, it's like Salomon and David and me and Marco. We have always lived within, like walking distance of each other basically for the last like, whatever, twelve years or more, I don't know. So, it's been pretty easy, like usually we meet at my house, just because it has a little bit more room. And we sit around the kitchen table, and the first part of the day, we do like personal email – not personal but work emails, you follow up with people, you try to get back to people. And then in the second half of the day, you might have like meetings or have conversations together, to kind of figure out, what are the primary needs, what needs to get done, who's going to do what. And then you kind of go back to doing, what you need to do. So, it depends, like how long you have, to just like converse and like brainstorm. Just depends on, where you are in the process of a project or not. We have lunch there, we cook lunch together almost every day as well. So, it is sort of like a – a very family. It is like kind of a little family.

It's like an office, except we don't have an office.

PRESENTATION

Well, I think we – I mean we [vary] between different kinds of languages like in a way. We have kind of like different characters, that people bring into the platform DIS.art, to communicate in a variety of ways, I guess. I mean, I think I – we definitely – we don't have like a standard oppositional critique, you know. Like, we've developed over time, you know, there is like – we don't do like news paper, you know. We don't like – we don't fall into a certain kind of like aesthetic of critique which I think is like been popularized in contemporary art, particularly in contemporary art that wants to be taken really seriously and be really political and dadada. And for us, we are political, we are serious, we are all these things, but we don't have to – we don't have to, you know, like put on this pretense and like use those like kind of like aesthetic traps in order to be those things, you know. So, that just I think, like kind of a continuous aesthetic language that we've developed. Like, a way of talking about things, that I think, are pretty like serious and important urgent, critical and all these things, but not doing it in the usual standard mode, that we're kind of like really, you know, bored by, I guess.

I don't think people from the outside understand how much budget effects like what you can produce or do. Because we work in video, because we prioritize making and generating new productions and new videos and

new commissions. The installations kind of don't take like – the installations become a problem you have to solve, you know. More than a statement you're trying to make. Like it's a little bit of both, but you're working with like certain limitations and you have to kind of like do your best to – I don't know, like make it as communicative as possible, as immersive as possible, as fierce as possible. But in the end, you know, like it really depends a lot – what you can do. You know, for instance like I mean, I could go to exhibitions like the De Young, with our first show for DIS.art and we were given the lobby, you know, to do something. Which we love lobby art, this is like, this is great. You know, it's a free space, anyone can walk in anytime. You don't have to have a ticket, you can sit down, whatever. You know, we had, you know, endless ideas for things, that we could do in there. But in the end, you know, what is possible? We had – we happened – they happened to have all these screens. So, we were like: " We're using your screens." That's it. And I think, what was really cool, that the artist let us put all of their works on the same screen and have it run almost like a single program. Like a variety show. So, that was really the statement – that we create a variety show. And it was one screen that we all shared, and it was like an hour program. And that sort of was – that was it, really simple. For Casa Encendida, which was like the next show after the De Young, I think we did, we had three rooms, projectors, different kinds of seats in each room. One was with a couch made out of hay, one was, you know, like some pipes, that would normally be underground, kind of like representing infrastructure something like this. And then we had a kind of like exploded, expanded PDF that we turned into lightboxes, so we darkened – like all the rooms were dark, but then you could kind of like, as if it was like the, you know, the stations of the cross or something at church, where you could walk through and see like our thinking, you know. Behind, what was playing on the screen. You got like a little bit more of a backstory in our, like in the topics that were coming up in all of the videos. So, that were like site-specific teach room and whatever it was playing on the projector. Whatever, like that. So, you know, it's like a problem solving, basically.

METHOD

One of the tasks was just giving someone, you know, in groups of two like a paper, something to read. And then they had to kind of like vet it and think about, what, you know, like what was the underlying message, what was the like the big statement, you know, that this work was telling us. And, what were the problematics, what's controversial, what's like interesting, what's you know, maybe challenging, what's complicated about it, like how is nuanced. You know, so, like asking like figuring out that aspect of it. And then kind of like deciding, how you would possibly like make a video out of it. So that was one of the assignments, that they had. And then they had like storyboard it and kind of like think it through. It was interesting, because, what happened to them is, what happens to us often. I think, like three out of four of the groups were able to kind of like come up with an idea, that could be like a series or a video or whatever. And they had - actually only two out of four were able to actually come up with some idea, for like how you might be able to tell that story in a video. The other ones had like deep reservations and problems with the text, that they couldn't really like get passed. And it's interesting, because at least one of them – we had the same problem, because we've been looking at that texts for, you know, almost a year as well. And we couldn't really figure out, how you would approach it for example in a video. Making connections. I think, trying to make more and more connections to things. Yes.

INTENTION

I think, the intention of our work is to grab people's attention and change the conversation in a way. And I think, that – you know, like underlying all of that is this idea, that like who we tell ourselves we are is, who we become. And what we accept to be like the, you know, this is the status quo, the relations and all these things must be reimagined for our future, you know. That's sustainable. And we need to, like basically train each other, to allow our imagination to move beyond the present, you know. Sometimes that means looking way in the past, to know,

that, you know, we weren't always like living in like feudal times – like things do actually change, but we must allow ourselves the capacity to imagine that. So, yes, shifting the conversations and thinking like in a much broader, longer way is something that's one of our major intentions right now.

Well, I think it does start with education. It does start with talking with like, you know, younger people, who, I think like innately know that the way that the system, that they were born into, is unnatural to some degree. So, I think, there is this kind of like unspoken understanding, that there is something unnatural unfolding, you know. And, that there – that the way things are is not the way they must be. So, I think, we want to continue, to like have that conversation with the next generation, as they come up.

Five, ten years ago, like you couldn't even imagine like the presidential nominees in the US talking about reparations. But now they are. And they seriously have been talking about it, you know. And, that's just something, that people really couldn't imagine. Like, just a couple years ago. So, you know, you can push culture and you can shift things. So, even though, like there is a lot to be upset about, I think, if you don't recognize some progress along the way, then you lose complete hope and you don't have anything worth fighting for. Because you don't think, anything can ever change. And that's simply not the case.

When we started out making DIS.art we had that like slogan like inspire – I don't even remember, what it was – and it's like inform, inspire and like mobilize the next generation. And I think that really is, what we're trying to get out, in a way. Connecting with disparate narratives and teaching people, how to connect narratives, that don't necessarily, like make like direct sense, but in fact they make a lot of sense.

ART

So, I think what's true about art is, that it's able to like – it's not scientific, you know. It's not science, like we're not talking – it's not objective and these are the facts and we're lining them up and then illustrate, what's going on, what art does. It takes these – you know, it reflects on the world, the material world, the – like the social world and all these things and even reflects on science and facts. And then it expresses them in a way, that, you know, gives context to them, that can be felt, you know. I think, it's not always meant to be understood, you know, at the time. But it is meant to have consequences, you know. So, it can create change without understanding. And I think, that is the most amazing part about art.

So, at the moment we're working on – we're working up like a, I don't know, it's like a pilot for a series, I think. Called No Homo. And it's kind of like told, you know, like in the distant future. And it's told through a digital archeology of like footage from Homo sapiens. And it's a bit of like a love letter, a goodbye song to like humans. What was a or could have been – but it's spoken in this idea, that we were just like a (flicks) like a flash on earth, you know. And our lifespan was like nothing compared with the dinosaurs or whatever. So, it's – talking about us like we were dinosaurs, but obviously pretty prolific creatures. And it's kind of about – so it has a beauty but also cruelty and different formats. So, it's kind of like a kaleidoscopic like docuseries. But one, that creates a direct link between like the agricultural revolution and like amazon fulfillment centers. So, it's sort of taking all the stuff, we've been consuming in the last like couple years and trying to, like pull out really far and make some really big connections and direct connections in a way. So, we're really excited about that. And that's going to be cool, because we're going to work with like several different writers and directors to going to produce that. So, it's going to be a very collaborative project. And that's pretty cool.

I think the future of art is the ability to kind of make grander and grander narratives, you know. And connections between places. Because, you know, there is this kind of – I don't know, if I said it – Timothy Clarke or something. This derangement of scale, you know, that happens between the private – your private small acts and this larger greater global network. So, I think this – this space between being small and insignificant, but being part of a life energy that's like always moving and circulating and that you're definitely contributing to, is something, that like must be wrestled with.

BIO

Lauren Boyle is a founding member of DIS (est. 2010) a New York-based collective, alongside Solomon Chase, Marco Roso and David Toro. Its cultural interventions are manifest across a range of media and platforms, including DIS Magazine (2010-2017); DISimages (2013), DISown (2014), DIS.art (2018–). Through its own unique platforms, and curatorial projects like the 9th Berlin Biennale (2016), and most recently Biennale de l'Image en Mouvement (2021), DIS enhances and amplifies the possibilities and capabilities of art and its role in the artistic, commercial, educational, and public spheres—folding all into one.

WEB: <https://dis.art>

Credits

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