

Thumbs That Type & Swipe: The DIS Edutainment Network

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La Casa Encendida presents *Thumbs That Type & Swipe: The DIS Edutainment Network*, an exhibition that proposes a reflection on the hybrid, “hyperlinked” present, where the future is glimpsed as a suspended state and the post-contemporary has become a new unit of time.

The New York-based DIS collective consists of Lauren Boyle, Solomon Chase, Marco Roso and David Toro. Their work, spanning a wide range of formats, was initially conceived as an online magazine but has recently been reformulated as “dis-art”, a video platform offering a hybrid of artistic education and entertainment (“edutainment”).

Thumbs That Type & Swipe: The DIS Edutainment Network is the result of the collaboration between various international writers, innovators and artists. Presented in three immersive installations, the exhibition includes works like *The Restaurant*, a politically themed cooking show by Will Benedict and Steffen Jørgensen; *MAD*, a debate programme about mother-daughter relationships by Casey Jane Ellison; McKenzie Wark’s zany lecture on Paul B. Preciado; a “circle time” session where some complex economic issues are explained to children; and a documentary short on seasteading (home-steading at sea) in Tahiti by Jacob Hurwitz-Goodman and Daniel Keller.

For their part, Ilana Harris-Babou presents *Reparation Hardware*, a tutorial about restoring furniture that turns into a reparation proposal for the African-American community; Christopher Kulendran Thomas investigates relocation and its relationship with technology in a world where the Cloud erases citizenship; and the magazine Maroon World disentangles the connection between home ownership and inequality.

DIS ties together the continuous broadcasts devised by Darren Bader, Kim Laughton, Anastasia Davydova Lewis, Ryan Trecartin, Amalia Ulman and Malte Zander with the presence of Chus, a virtual announcer inspired by curator Chus Martínez and created with Culture Sport who, with musician Ian Isiah’s voice, jokes about the future of learning and the conservative nature of art.

DIS It was born out of an endless email thread between a group of friends in the wake of the financial crisis. In 2009 we started producing shoots and commissioning texts, and in 2010 we launched *DIS Magazine*. It felt like a clean break with the decade that had come before. There was a real cultural, aesthetic and mental shift taking place—particularly across the Internet.

LGE There is something potentially destabilizing about your images, even an ugliness about them. How would you define the aesthetics of the “post-Internet” world, which DIS has frequently used?

DIS It's not a term we always identify with, but *DIS Magazine* in some ways established the framework for what people now call post-Internet art by creating the types of images now facilitated and distributed by sharing networks before many of those networks even existed. What seemed at first a fringe vision has now become the norm as talk show hosts post face-swap pictures on Snapchat while on national television... Now, when we look back on early DIS, it feels more like pre-Internet compared to where we are today—a place where fake news outperforms real news on a daily basis.

Early DIS was a world of fake trends and speculative stories. We made images



Shoes in Shoes

simply to tag them and infiltrate Google Images. We imagined consumer trends, like wearing four shoes at once—you are looking at ballet flats inside Texas. We called it “Shoes in Shoes”. We also made extra-large hoop earrings just so we could report on them.

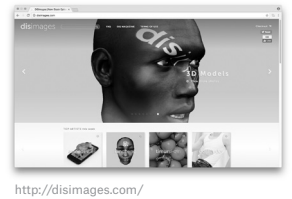
LGE Many of your exhibitions are presented as alternatives to the usual displays, to the extent that they become a different type of platform. What is the process behind this? How do you create the contents of your works?

DIS DIS was never quite a magazine (we've never had ads, nor a hierarchical structure), and most of our endeavours are genre-nonconforming, but we are attracted to modes of production that lead outside of the prescribed art spaces, markets and institutions. Building platforms for activity and energy

is at the core of what we do. One of our key attempts to decentralise has been through image-making, and a goal to bleed into commercial markets and across Google Images search. In all of our endeavours there is an attempt to manipulate or reimagine systems.

LGE You have undertaken projects like DISimages and DISown, and now you are here at La Casa Encendida with *Thumbs That Type & Swipe: The DIS Edutainment Network*...

DIS Yes, DISimages [2013] was a fully operational stock photography agency that enlisted artists to produce royalty-free imagery. And DISown [2014] was a retail platform conceived as a laboratory to test the current status of the art object.



Now DIS is transitioning from a magazine to a video platform for “edutainment”. We are not focusing on video because it's new, which it's not. We are driven to video because people are not reading. While it's never been easier to get informed, a “post-literate” future is a real threat. We have a thousand tabs open with good intentions and read not one. We like to think about the new platform as a mental gym—imagine PBS for Generation Z, *The Century of the Self* meets *Sesame Street*, theory as self-help, or an art school that you can stream. Micro-trends and emerging behaviours provide insight into macro-societal shifts as disparate themes intertwine to decipher meaning from the continual flux of information around us.

LGE The idea of “the future being the present” seemed to permeate the 9th Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art, which your collective curated. How was the future present in the work of the artists who participated in the event?

DIS A lot of artists use the lie that they are talking about the future in order to talk about the present: Cecile B. Evans, Simon Denny, Hito Steyerl... It's much harder to describe the now, to talk about the present, than the future. So one exercise you can do is tell yourself that you are talking about the future as a way to focus on emerging behaviours. It's a way of retroactively defining the present.

LGE In a hyper-industrialised, globalised and neo-liberal society, where does art fit in? How does the art world react to this new reality?

DSE Our Chus character, which helps narrate the show, would say:

“Art is in fact radically conservative.

Art has the fantasy of change but actually cannot change so much.

It is a stable substance.

Art itself is not progressive, it mutates.”

We tend to look outside the art world. The goal for the new DIS network is to challenge doctrine and train oneself in complexity. The aim is to inspire, inform and mobilize a generation around the critical issues facing us both today and in the future.

LGE Your work often references hyperlinks through social media, and technology in general. What is the discourse underpinning all of this?

DSE If you think of Wikipedia, history has flattened out and exists non-hierarchically. Today’s so-called ahistoricism is essentially a product of hyper-editability, of hyper-history. The obsession with virality introduces new rules to the game of historiography. The “eventfulness” of events tends to be measured in terms of virality: views, clicks, followers, etc.

What’s interesting is to study the various processes by which history is written, as opposed to “History” as this monolithic, authoritative structure of knowledge. The loss of historical memory may be a direct effect of increased, widespread participation in DIY historiography (i.e. everyone writing/editing their own Wikipedia articles). We are interested in connecting the dots in order to make sense of a present in which narratives are no longer clearly prescribed, and more than one side of a story co-exist and contend for our attention.

LGE *Thumbs That Type & Swipe: The DIS Edutainment Network* is the title of your project at La Casa Encendida. What do you mean by educational and what do you mean by entertainment?

DSE Education can’t survive in a world of entertainment. Constant stimulation demands constant spectacle. What’s the Netflix original series of learning? The future demands not just our expertly honed skills in watching, but also understanding. If radical entertainment is the new brainwashing, streaming could be the praxis.

LGE How did you select the artists involved in this show?

DSE The work presented here is the result of the collaboration between an international group of writers, filmmakers and artists. It’s also interwoven with the new platform we launched in January: “dis.art”. We like to think of it as a testing ground for future entertainment—how can a cooking show help us examine broader themes? In really different ways, this group addresses the nature of “belonging” in a rootless-seeming, networked world, and the changing relationship to the way we own, lend and give our time through occupations, bodies or other forms of value-creation.

LGE Lastly, what is your vision of the present?

DSE There is a period of immense reconfiguration taking place. The issues are right on our front doors. The focus for us is on understanding our complicated relationships with the world we are in—our internal conflicts as consumers, as political beings, as people who want to do good within the world, as people who feel powerless, as people who are complicit, as people who are just people, as individuals within a system, as individuals who generate content for this system.

DIS is proud to be partnering with .ART as its exclusive domain provider and thankful for the generous support from La Casa Encendida, the Danish Arts Foundation and the Young Museum.

.ART is a new domain created for the world's creative community. .ART provides a meaningful namespace and online identity for websites, blogs or email addresses.

DIS thanks Special-Offer's Brent Freaney, Liz Franczak and Sam Cormier for the Design and Development of DIS.ART. Overall sound design by Aaron David Ross. Sequence edit and graphics by Rodan Tekle.

Exhibition

**Thumbs That Type & Swipe:
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02.02 — 13.05.2018**

Rooms

A, B and C

La Casa Encendida

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lacasaencendida.es

Opening hours

Tuesday to Sunday
from 10 am to 10 pm.
The exhibition spaces
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