

## LAUREN DENITZIO

### THE HOUSE OF A SUBJECT AFFECTING THE NORMATIVES

interview by

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*What is your name?*

Lauren Denitzio

*How long have you been at this residency?*

A week and a half, I still have two and a half weeks left. I am here for a month.

*Before coming into the residency, Did you had a plan or a project that you wanted to work on?*

In general yes, I have been making **zines** where I am from, in Brooklyn, about collective houses, specifically queer and feminist collective houses or apartments with four or more people where I use mostly photography and some drawing to document them.

I planned on coming here and trying to talk to people and make another zine or two from houses here trying to see the similarities and differences between them and talk to people about what makes that important.

I spent most of my time so far exploring the city, getting in touch with people about that and continuing other work that I am making.

I planned on it just being the time were I could have a month to myself with no other major responsibilities to get to know Berlin and spend some time in a studio space, a space to myself. It is a kind of a plan but also a space to be away.

I end up looking to a lot of photography and text work. That helps me brainstorm, to have a lot of things around me.

*Could you elaborate in the project around the houses?*

I think it is about how living more intentionally and collectively has to do with the kind of space you want to create for yourself and the people you want to be surrounded by, looking at someone's home as a **safer** space. Trying to think about that as a space outside of more heteronormative, neoliberal standards like the way you are supposed to grow up and get married and live with one other person. If that is not your situation, how do you deal with that, constructing a situation that works for you. For a lot of people it ends up being living together with many people in houses that are communal and intentional.

*Which kind of house interests you here in Berlin?*

I am talking to one friend who lives with four other people that consider themselves to be feminist or queer or queer friendly. That is an apartment that is more intentional.

Then I am in touch with other folks who live in a building where each floor is a separate type of collective, actually specifically call themselves collectives. I am going to try to photograph their house.

I also went to a house meeting at a squat that is all women, something that I don't think exists in New York.

*How was the experience at this squat?*

It was ok. I mean they are very nice, they had to talk to everyone about it first, whether I am allowed to take photos in that space, because most of the times you are not allowed to.

At the very least it is something that I think I can learn from as an artist, interacting with those spaces .

*How do you experience this spaces in Berlin?*

Berlin has a different history and a different relationship to gentrification, because how that happened in East Germany after the fall of the wall.

New York its getting so gentrified, its already so gentrified and it is a very expensive place to be.

I don't think the spaces look so much different but I think the reason behind them does. This (Berlin) feels like a more international place, with all the young people coming here than New York does.

But still no matter where I go I can find people who shares my politics and ideas.

*Which are these politics and ideas?*

I think radical feminist thought, about how patriarchy works and how things are connected and how capitalism is a problem. How you navigate that in a way that acknowledges different people's experiences and different expressions from different economic situations and different backgrounds.

I think that it is funny to me when I can go to different cities in Europe and my band played in some squats where they have safer spaces policies and I would not speak the language but I knew exactly what it said. I think things like that being universal or at least between certain countries is fascinating.

I do not know how to give a short answer to that.

*It is not meant to have a short answer. It is a wide question but it helps to understand why you do your work.*

*Is it to give visibility to a collective living out of the normative?*

To a certain extent, but I think I am most interested in visibility in a documentary sense than I am in terms like the way in which different people approach the work. I enjoy thinking about the work that I make specially, things that are drawing and painting and photographs that are kind of, a way to shift the way you think about the world or you think about a space and the people there rather than trying to tell someone's life story or having slogans there. I think is more like asking questions than trying to explain anything.

*Is asking these questions a way to contextualize it in a bigger map?*

Yeah

*Are these houses a new alternative to live within a bigger structure?*

Yeah

*I think it is quite interesting that you are thinking about the house and not about the people, most of the times we think about the persons but not about what they create or have created.*

I think I am interested in portraiture in theory and I have in the past certainly focused on people but I think, specially in terms of visibility I feel it has been done to a certain extent. I am not interested in just taking pictures of feminists.

I feel I have been into abstraction as well and into reducing spaces, like if I were looking at a space

only choosing certain things to highlight about it and to overlap things in the way that is disorienting. I would hope that it makes people ask questions about what they are seeing.

*Is it that you think more about what persons do or the effect they have? What do you think are the effects of what you do?*

I think it is about asking questions and being able to present different ways of looking at the world and to put a certain aesthetic out there. I guess I like to think about it like this: if I were walking into a gallery, What would I get really excited to see? What would make me feel interested and connected?

The feeling I have when I connect to something is different than the one I have when I think something is aesthetically beautiful. I don't necessarily know what the factors or the point is but I feel like it is important to put this things out in the world.

*What are your standards of a good life?*

I think it is less about thinking of the concept of the good life as something that is attainable rather than thinking that most people are told that in order to be successful you have to have accomplished certain things, or have a certain level of stability, make a certain amount of money. I think I am really both fascinated by and kind of invested in detaching from that and thinking about other ways of approaching the concept of success and what you want your life totally separated from, or not dependent on the things that the media tells people are standard.

My hope for the good life is just to be happy and be able to keep doing all the weird things that I have ended up doing in the past fifteen years that I never thought I will do when I was kid. Not being dependent on money or other people's approval to be happy, I guess.