

[00:00:36] **KL:** You're listening to *This Thing We Call Art*, a podcast about how, "It's such a mess." We're like so chaotic and we are just like pulling it together and we literally don't know what we are doing. We're just like learning by doing and making mistakes, and that means you can too." I'm your host, Kelly Lloyd, a visual artist, essayist, and educator currently based in the U.K. I've been interviewing people in the arts about their livelihoods since 2017, and today you're going to hear a conversation I had on the 1<sup>st</sup> of November 2022 with 12ø collective's eva duerden and Lou Macnamara.

12ø was a collective motivated by interesting processes rather than shiny exhibitions. We created projects that exploited the gaps in our knowledge and our eagerness to learn. We strove to create a programme that promoted, challenged and encouraged artistic practice in all its manifestations rather than scoring points for the CV. For us to do this, it's paramount that we had an open, flexible, and supportive approach, catering to artists' development and their individual needs.

eva is a third of the group formally known as 12ø. They are a quasi-artist/designer in Berlin but still make works that prod their definitions of 'aspiration', 'cheating', through bootleg kopfkinos.

Lou Macnamara is a London-based Cinematographer, Camera Operator and Technician across a range of projects. Their recent cinematography credits include, 'Passing Through' (2023) a short film for Trans Media Watch, 'The Miracle on George Green' (2022) an artist film by Onyeka Igwe and 'Call Us CRIptic' (2022) a documentary behind the scenes at the Barbican Theatre. Lou has also co-directed investigative documentary 'Keenie Meenie' (2020) for Declassified and artist moving image hybrid project 'It's Personal' (2021) commissioned by Film Video Umbrella.

I met Lou at Keep it Complex Conference in 2019, and then Eva at a 12ø meeting shortly thereafter at a Wetherspoons somewhere in

central London.

I spoke with eva and Lou over Zoom while we were each in our homes. The audio quality for this season is varied, so remember that the transcripts for all these conversations are available on the project's website [thisthingwecallart.com](http://thisthingwecallart.com).

Our conversation was two and a half hours-long, and while I wish I could share it with you in its entirety, today, you'll listen to excerpts from it. I'm going to drop you about eight minutes in...

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[00:02:59] **LM:** I feel like it- the vast majority of the projects, like each individual project, all happened in like 2016. When I actually looked back at the- they all happened between June and like Septe- like October of 2016. It's wild. cause in my head that's a lot more spread out. But they're like, we just did like, we just spun around frantically for five or six months and then like actually churned out so many projects. But then like, we also just learned how to do, and wanted to do, more like sustained, longer-term projects that involved a lot more partners and collaboration and time.

[00:03:33] **ed:** Didn't we do- we did like three projects a year. And then, I think we did the maths once. We were like, three projects is the most realistic amount we can do while also having jobs and lives. (LM: yeah) And it was like, okay, well one's 30/30. And then at one time it was the curation residency. And then we're like, okay, we get to pick one other thing. And I can't remember, I feel like that was filled with something else as well? And *backend* maybe.

[00:04:01] **LM:** But that was like 20... 2018 maybe, where we started realising that. 2016 it was just a period where, they were like small things, you wouldn't even remember them as a project. But we did like, we wanted to do a monthly event called *First Thursdays With*. (ed: Oh my God.)

And we did something every single month for that for like three months running. On top of doing like, I don't know, *Nawki* and a curation residency and like... that's what I mean by we were like, spinning. We were doing more than one event a month. [LAUGHS] There was a period where we were doing the podcast with Caitlin [Merrett King] for the curation residency *and* doing a full Art Licks weekend moving sculpture park. At the same time. And then like a live event as part of Art Licks weekend, for the podcast.

[00:04:41] **ed:** Why did we do this? No one was asking us to do this. (LM: No. No, nobody needed it.) There wasn't like, this great appetite. [LAUGHS] People weren't like, "Give us more projects! We need more projects!!" They were just like, "Thanks for 30/30. See ya." And we were like, "No, we can do two at the same time!" [LAUGHS]

[00:05:02] **KL:** Why- I mean that's- why did you do it? Was 2016 really just kind of like a year where you're like, "This is a make-or-break year." Or... what was even happening in 2016?

[00:05:12] **ed:** Maybe 2016 was the year that we were like, "We wanna do all these things!" And we were really excited about all these projects, and it wasn't any way of like smushing them together, it was like they were all very much individual things. And then I think we were just being young and unrealistic probably.

[00:05:31] **LM:** And also, like quantity over quality. We were just doing things that didn't take that much time. But they did take time. They felt really big and difficult at the time, but they're much easier to execute than like anything we did later.

[00:05:44] **KL:** And then what happened in 2017? Did you have a conversation that was like, we need to stop doing this? And then also is that around when you stopped using your house as like an event and exhibition space?

[00:05:59] **ed:** No, I think the end of 2017 [SIGH] looking at our CV... is the, I think at the end of 2017 maybe we decided we were no longer gonna use the house as a project space. But 2017 was really busy too. cause that was, that was *Nawki*, which was with, um, oh God, how many spaces? 1, 2, 3, 4, 5... nine spaces and, like, 50 artists. I can't remember. It was like a ridiculous amount of artists.

[00:06:33] **LM:** And we didn't even go to most of it. We like, drove around delivering posters to everyone.

[00:06:37] **ed:** [LAUGHS] Then we had *on plon air*, we had *Wednesday Night Live*, and then that's when we were sort of like in the full swing of Group Show Podcast with Caitlin. So, 2017 was still busy, and that's not including *30/30*. So that was still- I would say 2017 was still a really busy year. I think the difference between 2017 and 2016 is - there's a couple of the projects in 2016 we were asked to do. So, like, going to New York we were asked to do. The residency with Embassy Gallery, and the sort of residency with The Royal Standard in MUESLI. So, these were things that people had asked us to do, as opposed to us, um, curating off our own initiative, I think, and us responding to it. And 2017, for some reason we decided to match that.

[00:07:35] **LM:** I think 2017 we just... that's our first **Arts Council** funding. So, like, we were also suddenly, we'd applied for that and then were able to pay people and like, have some budget for the projects. (ed: mmm) I think we applied for like, I don't know, nine or ten grand, and we split it across so many projects and so much stuff that now it seems like silly, tiny amounts. I don't think we paid ourselves.

[00:08:02] **ed:** I think we got paid.

[00:08:03] **LM:** I think we got like a nominal fee at the end.

[00:08:06] **ed:** Oh my God, no we did! I feel like we got like 190 pounds. I feel like it was a really specific amount, and I was like, "Oh my God, this is so exciting!" And like now in hindsight, that... we worked it out. It was like naught point naught, two p[ence] an hour or something. (LM: yeah) I think we worked that out. We'd applied for Arts Council with 2016 as a kind of reference. So, we'd been like, "Look, we can do like seven things and it's totally fine!" And then promised we'd do that again, but with money this time. So, I think that's why 2017 was so busy, because we felt like, well we did all that with no money; now we have to sort of, [SIGH] yeah, give Arts Council the same bang for their buck kind of thing. Um, which is ridiculous. But yeah, it was that, I think that's why we felt we needed to sort of match it.

[00:09:04] **LM:** But I also don't think it was that stressful to do all this stuff because like we- okay, so we'd go to New York and be away, like be there and be doing the thing. But like, the amount of planning that took is actually like a couple of days of emailing three artists, making sure we got our visas and booking our flights. (ed: We were babies!) Yeah yeah, totally. But like, I mean, in comparison to like the projects we do now, there's so much more that goes into before the event day, or like the public bit, whereas like, *Fresh n' Frozen* or any of the *First Thursdays*, like they did take planning, but we did most of that planning for everything within like- and we met weekly for a day, and we'd just sit there and work through everything.

[00:09:46] **ed:** Yeah, I know what you mean, on paper it doesn't seem like it's stressful, but I think it's the fact that we were all working full time, minimum, probably trying to do our own practices around that too. And these were all overlapping. It wasn't like, "Okay, let's sit down and like, we're gonna do this project. We've got like two to three months." It was like, no, this is two to three months and we're already trying to finish this podcast with Caitlin, and I remember there was a period where we all sort of like divided our kind of responsibilities. But then that caused problems, I think, because we'd all be like, fighting for time in our meetings. We'd be

like, "No, we really need to talk about this!" [LAUGHS] And, yeah, cause I think it was, it wasn't so much that each thing took so much time, it's just that we were all probably really tired and they overlapped. So, it was the hindsight, it was that like, knowing that even though *Nawki* is in like three months, okay, that's ages away. It's like, yeah, but how long is it gonna take for people to get back to us? And for them to make their work? And that was, I think that was like the learning then. Of being like, what is a good amount of time to actually care for the artists that you're working with? And the organisations to accommodate for them to actually make the work. So, yeah. Okay, it was only a day of emailing, but time management was the issue maybe.

[00:11:06] **KL:** Um, maybe before we get any further... do you want to introduce yourselves?

[00:11:10] **LM:** Yeah, sorry, we just started talking about our calendar. You didn't actually ask us that question. [LAUGHS]

[00:11:10] **ed:** We're like, "Let's pull up the CV!"

[00:11:11] **LM:** I just have October 2016 open in my calendar and it's wild cause it's only 12ø stuff. I had no other life, I guess. Or I just didn't use a digital calendar, I think. Anyway, sorry. eva, introduce yourself.

[00:11:32] **ed:** So, I'm eva. I'm an artist and a designer, I think, and I'm currently living in Berlin. I am a third of the group formerly known as 12ø.

[00:11:46] **LM:** Um, I'm Lou Macnamara. I work as a camera person and camera technician. I sometimes make artist film and documentary. I like to do cinematography and shoot other people's films. And, um, I am one third of the collective formerly known as 12ø.

[00:12:07] **KL:** Cool. They already know who I am. [LAUGHS] Also, I am the remaining third of the collective formerly known as 12ø. I don't know if that's the right way to say it. Isn't it... [LAUGHS]

[00:12:20] **LM:** It makes it sound like the collective is still ongoing (KL: exactly) It's changed its name but won't tell you its new name. [LAUGHS]

[00:12:25] **ed:** Or that it's like, in a legal dispute, like Prince, of the ownership of it. That's why I wanted to say formerly known as!

[00:12:36] **LM:** I am allegedly one third of 12ø collective.

[00:12:41] **KL:** Of the former collective...12ø.

[00:12:43] **ed:** The now deceased... 12ø collective.

[00:12:50] **LM:** I was one third of 12ø collective.

[00:12:51] **ed:** Ah, but 12ø, okay, so 12ø in some respects is dead, right? (KL: yeah)  
We are a group of three friends that tend to meet together as a trio, which was also the group formerly known as 12ø. So, it *is* the group formerly known as 12ø, because we are still this group of friends. Like, so we just don't go under the name of 12ø anymore... I would argue that 12ø always got in the way of our friendship. And actually, we would hang out and spend the first few hours of whatever time we did spend together just talking. And then the, like, last third of whatever time we had together, we would do 12ø.

[00:13:36] **KL:** I would argue that 12ø facilitated our friendship! I mean, obviously I wouldn't know either of you had I not like, you know, been a part of 12ø. And then also, I don't know, I mean, especially during the pandemic, right? Like, I spoke to you both more often than I spoke to basically anybody.

[00:13:52] **LM:** Yeah. And when we met up during the pandemic, we weren't doing 12ø stuff. I was trying to think of like, actual times we've hung out as a three outside of 12ø. Or like when you moved your stuff to my dad's house. That was outside of 12ø. Whereas the rest of the time it's like, that kind of like, we've institutionalised our friendship. We're friends because, like I'm not, I wasn't friends with eva before 12ø either. Like, as in we were acquaintances. But we became friends through 12ø. (ed: Yeah. That's true.) And same with us and you, Kelly. So, like, then there's like those points where either 12ø gets in the way of the friendship, as eva's putting it, or like also our friendship gets in the way of 12ø all the time. Like we're trying to have a meeting, and we spend an hour and a half out of an hour and 45-minute meeting catching up because we're friends. And not doing 12ø stuff. It's a very blurry line.

[00:14:42] **KL:** Yeah, what was 12ø collective?

[00:14:45] **ed:** So 12ø changed, I think, I think it was intrinsic to 12ø that it always developed with what we wanted it to do. So, it was never just like fixed on one thing. So, we used to do exhibitions and then we were like, that's out. Other people do better exhibitions. Not interested in doing that. Doesn't mean that they're not valid, it was just not the thing that we felt was the thing that was missing. I think 12ø start- the idea of 12ø starting was providing something that we wished we could see happening already, particularly for graduates. And then when we were no longer graduates, we were like, what would we wish we saw for, um, young or emerging DIY art spaces or, um, collectives? And so, then we're like doing *backend*, and *30/30* was still relevant. So, I think it was, maybe quite selfishly always something that we wished somebody else was already doing.

[00:15:46] **LM:** And I remember us sitting down at one point, like fairly early on, and going like, "We shouldn't do it if we're not interested in it and it's not fun." Like, we shouldn't feel like we have to create an institution. This was when we were still doing more exhibition-y things or type, kind of like



event visual projects. And, but we'd realised then that we didn't wanna do this as like a career move to become a gallery or become gallerists or curators at that point.

[00:16:12] **ed:** I think we all tried that though.

[00:16:17] **LM:** Yeah. But we realised that wasn't our goal for 12ø. (ed: no) Because when we started out there were a lot of similar-scale organisations, like our kind of peer network, who seemed to be doing that kind of thing, where it was like either to build a platform for themselves as curators, gallerists, or show their own work or their friends' work in order to platform themselves as artists. We knew we weren't doing that, but we weren't quite sure what we were doing apart from things that we felt we wanted to see. But we didn't have like a clear strategy.

[00:16:53] **KL:** Who's "we" and "us"?

[00:16:54] **ed:** So, beginning "we and us" is Chloe Miller, Jeff [Ko], Jacob Watmore, and me. And then by 2016 – is that right, Lou?

[00:17:10] **LM:** Yeah, I joined in April of 2016. And by that point it was just you and Jacob.

[00:17:16] **ed:** Yeah. And then Jacob left in 2018, I think?

[00:17:22] **KL:** 2019.

[00:17:27] **LM:** 2019. Yeah.

[00:17:45] **ed:** Uh huh. Okay. So then, Jacob left, and Kelly joined soon after. And then it was us three for 2019 to 2022.

[00:17:51] **KL:** How did the original four people meet?

[00:17:51] **ed:** The four original people of 12ø - Chloe, Jeff, Jacob, eva - all lived at a place that the name of the address informed the name 12ø. And we all knew each other from Central Saint Martins (C.S.M.). And we all kind of graduated around the same time? I think Jacob graduated the year after. But me, Jeff, Jacob all studied fine art sculpture, and Chloe studied textile design. And that's how we all knew each other. And then Lou, we met, we knew at C.S.M. too. And then Kelly and Lou met at a workshop?

[00:18:31] **LM:** It was a conference.

[00:18:34] **KL:** Yeah, it was, what is it? The Keep It Complex Conference? (**LM:** yeah) And you were talking about *backend*. And then I was like, "Ooh, that's so interesting." And then...

[00:18:41] **LM:** My mouth was full of cheese. [LAUGHS]

[00:18:55] **KL:** And then I walked up to you while your mouth was full of cheese to be like, "Hi, I want to, I don't know, talk. Or let's talk more about stuff."

[00:18:55] **LM:** ... I knew, um, eva and Jacob from Central Saint Martins, and Jeff. Actually, I was like closest with Jeff. He was the only person I knew really, really well. But then Jeff left the collective, but I got to know Jacob because I was working at the bar at Central Saint Martins with them and we were colleagues, and um, Jacob would tell me about 12ø's projects. And so over that kind of period I would be like, "Oh, you should really apply for funding. Because I was working at a small gallery where I was learning how to write Arts Council project grant applications. And so, Jacob kind of introduced me into 12ø from that.

[00:19:30] **KL:** You also mentioned something in terms of like 12ø's projects always having like a gimmick to them. And I feel like, you know, Sophie Chapman posted a response to our breakup video. Something like, "Did more work for artists than many NPOs, um, and did it with a lol." And then, like, you know, when I got there, it seemed like the aesthetics of,

you know, kind of pastel website, super low-low-pixel bunny, you know, like were already pretty set, like, this kind of sense of play, you know. And the sense of what you were saying, eva, in terms of like the things that you want to see, the things that you want to participate in, being a directive for 12ø projects. Is, yeah, fun and play and gimmicks and pastels, is that a part of 12ø? Is that 12ø?

[00:20:31] **ed:** Gimmicks, pastels and lols? Mmm... I feel like... I don't know. I feel, I'm speaking on behalf of four people in the beginning, but I think the beginning of 12ø was sort of uh, feeling this kind of disillusion or demoralised feeling about what we were presented with, particularly at C.S.M., as like role models, right? So, there was like Auto Italia and Arcadia Missa, which just seemed like really unattainable goals cause they had, they'd been established for a really long time, and they'd set them up in a different time and under different circumstances. And it always just felt a bit like, yeah, unattainable. Not that necessarily that's what we wanted, but there was no other, kind of, "This is how you can work in the arts" under your own sort of terms.

So, I guess it was all sort of gimmicky and silly because we just found, we were like, it is kind of a bit of a joke. It just felt... [SIGH] I'm trying to put myself in that place. It, yeah, I think it was as soon as we started doing the projects, we realised there was this sort of like ego around it, and a lot of people would be maybe like impressed or... It's sort of this illusion, right? Kind of like Instagram. It's like, it seems like this glossy thing. And we were like, "No, it's such a mess." We're, like, so chaotic and we are just like pulling it together and we literally don't know what we are doing. We're just like learning by doing and making mistakes, and that means you can too. So, I think, yeah, the gimmicky silliness of it was partly to make us feel better, but also just being, I guess, sort of realistic and not trying to sort of posture ourselves as being, you know, these really slick curators. We were like, we're just people that like these projects and they won't always be as shiny as possible, but hopefully we'll do it better next time, and look after people while we do it.

[00:22:51] LM: I remember as well, one of the ways that we spoke about the, the like, kind of - gimmick sounds maybe like, um, like a kind of negative way of putting it, I guess? But like the kind of, like, conceit maybe, of like, these projects, is that each of them had like a conceit to be a framework, and we thought that was an interesting way to curate and to make artwork, because a lot of the stuff we saw by artist-led organisations kind of, yeah, look like these kind of mimicking of like serious gallery shows with white walls and people put their pictures up on the walls and people came and had drinks at a private view, and um, everybody kind of carried on doing the work they were already making and putting up on the walls. And we liked the idea of creating a framework, sometimes based around an artist we knew we wanted to invite to do it, we thought it'd be a fun framework for them, might be like a starting point or a framework that just, you know, somebody spurted out, and we were like, "Okay, cool, let's run with that." And then we could go to those artists and invite them and say, "Okay, well we've got this really specific framework for you. Do you want to do that? Do you want to respond to it?" And we thought that was like an interesting way for people to get challenged to make new work and also to have kind of group shows in a sense, like shows where it was more than one artist at least, where they made sense together, not just because they were hanging in the same room, um, or because of some kind of slightly forced theme to bring together works under a theme. But they were like made specifically for a framework. So, like, there were so many projects like that. Like, *did you pack this bag yourself?* was like, the framework was making it to fit in the hand luggage and to be able to travel in the hand luggage. *Fresh n' Frozen* was to make stuff that was deliverable, either like on demand (fresh) or prepackaged (frozen), [LAUGHS] deliverable artwork. The, um, *Nawki* had like a really specific time limit, that was kind of putting a, turning it over from artists to turning it to curators, and going to organisations saying, "We want you to curate within this specific framework and this timeframe." And you can choose the artist for that. So, we don't choose the artists anymore, and we maybe meet and work with more artists that way. And artists we haven't come across before. But there's still this like, overarching framework to it. What

was, um, what was the sculpture park one called? Oh, *on plon air*. And we thought it was so funny!

[00:25:14] **ed:** I thought that was, I still think that one's funny. (LM: I still think it's funny.) But I, just like listening to you describe them all now, I've like, it makes me feel quite like, angsty, like angsty teenagers that left art school and were like...I don't know, I'm just putting myself in the mindset of like, *did you pack this yourself?* Right? Because we were like, "Oh my God, we're gonna go to New York! Ha, lol." What? We've been asked to go to New York. That's hilarious. How the hell are we gonna get artwork there? And it was like, you know, the proper way to do it, the proper way to like handle someone's artwork is to have it crated and have it shipped with art handlers and, you know, for it to arrive at the location. We were like, we don't have that money, so we're gonna have to take it in our hand luggage. And probably a lot of people are gonna have to do this too. And like, why don't we just be honest about that? Rather than people being like, "Oh my God, you had a show in New York, that is amazing." You're like, "Yeah, you know, did it properly and professionally." It's like, no, this is probably the reality of it, so why not be really honest about it? And same with *on plon air*. It was like, let's have a sculpture park. Oh, but we gotta put it in a van at the end of the day, and we'll be back here at 8:00 AM tomorrow morning to set it up. No one will know that we took it down! And-

[00:26:31] **LM:** It moved to different parks each day. The sculpture park popped up in a different park in London, like- [LAUGHS]

[00:26:38] **ed:** Yeah! Also, *Fresh n' Frozen* too, because now I'm thinking about it, it was thinking about how we like digested art through Instagram, particularly through Frieze Week, right? Because Art Licks coincided with Frieze Week, or just before. And it was like, you know, this thing. You digest this artwork; you don't even look at it for a second. You're just like, "Cool. Yeah. Nice." And it was like, what else is that easily consumable in this sort of- is it better that you get it forever and it arrives at your

doorstep? I don't know. So, they were all sort of kind of- I dunno, it seems a little bit too much to say it was satirical. But like, it felt funny. It felt like we were making, I don't know whether we were the joke, or the art world was the joke. I don't know.

[00:27:23] **LM:** And at the same time, I think Sophie's right. Like, or at least we like to think that that gave the artists involved an opportunity, as well as us an opportunity to experiment and learn new skills. Cause every time we did a project, we helped out on everything. So, we learnt like a whole new raft of skills ourselves as artists and practitioners and curators. And the idea was, it gave space for each of those artists to experiment and try something they wouldn't have otherwise done, work in a collaboration with someone they might not have otherwise done. Um, yeah, and like, hopefully that's what, I guess, Sophie means about artists getting something out of 12ø.

[00:28:03] **KL:** We broke up! Why did we break up?

[00:28:06] **ed:** Why did we break up? Yeah, why *did* we break up? [LAUGHS]

[00:28:11] **LM:** Should we get back together? Should we get the band back- [GASPS]. In 10 years, we should get the band back together and go on tour. Cause we're like-

[00:28:15] **ed:** A tour of what though?

[00:28:16] **LM:** I don't know. But you know like how the Spice Girls and everybody like get back together 10 years later because they're like out of money?

[00:28:27] **ed:** After they've like sold all the names and the rights to songs. So, like... Just kidding. We have no money... [LAUGHS]

[00:28:34] **LM:** Um, why did we break up?

[00:28:36] **ed:** Why did we break up? [LAUGHS]

[00:28:38] **LM:** I think... but I might be wrong. Um, but I think that - probably lots of different reasons - um, but that we were like kind of, we weren't in sync in the same ways as we were like a couple of years ago. (ed: yeah) Of like, being on the same kind of wave of how we work. So, um, part of that is living in different places makes, like we can't all meet up in one place. But even when we meet up in one place, it's like we're no longer in the same kind of groove of like, it's like we're pulling in different directions, maybe? In terms of how we work and... um, and so we still want to achieve the same thing, but we just, our methods or like our style or schedule and stuff is different. So, like, scheduling between the three of us became, like, nigh on impossible. Like it's always hard to schedule with anybody, all the busy people, but like, it's definitely harder to schedule a 12ø meeting than it is anything else that I do. So, I guess we just have like really conflicting schedules and live in different places, and like maybe have different levels of engagement with, like, the visual arts and caring about artists as a priority. In that I don't care about artists very much.

[00:30:14] **KL:** Hot take.

[00:30:14] **ed:** I think... because for me anyway, um, 12ø was always like a vehicle for me to work with other people that I really enjoyed and found really interesting and have really interesting conversations. And I feel like I still have those things. I think the thing that is missing for me is that it was a vehicle for me to learn new skills in an environment and with people that were also excited about learning things. And I feel like the things I wanted to learn no longer fit into the sort of remit of 12ø. Like we could have shoehorned it, but it would've been then like not applicable to either of you. You know? So, it was sort of, I think our different practices in the expanded term just didn't align in the same way? Even though I still find these conversations we have in 12ø, or had in 12ø, and I have with other people really interesting. Like when I get annoyed about, (um, not naming any names), but like people that are curating and I hear about how they're

curating and how they're treating their artists and I'm like, oh my God, this is so frustrating. Why are they not giving you any notice on how you get paid or, um, how you are going to hang your work in an exhibition? And literally like meeting with you two days before? Like things like this. So, I still find these practices really interesting, but I don't want to do it anymore. [LAUGHS]

[00:31:57] **KL:** I think also something that came up in our conversations was this agreement that you both had made with one another, maybe with **Jacob**, I don't know, years ago, where you were just kind of like, if this is no longer serving us or if this is, like, no longer working, then we're not gonna push it. (ed: yeah) And I don't know if you could kind of re-articulate that in the words that were actually yours, but I just thought that was quite interesting in terms of like a way that you had already set out, like, when you knew something, when you knew it was going to be over. (ed: mmm)

[00:32:36] **LM:** I think we said if we're no longer having fun with it, then we shouldn't continue doing it. But then also, when I was working in arts organisations and galleries and frustrated with the ways of working there, 12ø gave me an opportunity to do something different and model that differently. And I think, at least for me, I either wanna do stuff because it's like, I'm really interested in it and really passionate, like nerding out about cameras, or because it gives me a sense of purpose. And I think the sense of purpose comes from like a selfish point of view. Ultimately when I'm like carving out time for other people, it's because it's something I care about and think is worth changing. So, when I was really engaged in the art world, then that was something I really cared about changing more. And it's not that I like- it was a bit of a like, yeah, hot take when I said I don't care about artists. I do care about artists. I think the art world is very important. I care about lots of specific artists. I think it's just deprioritised for me, um, partly cause I do a job that takes up so many of my hours. But also, I think just like getting older and getting more precious about my time means that I have to be more careful with what I pick to prioritise or be



more considered about that. And where I want to prioritise, my purpose is towards things that change the industry and environment that I'm operating in on a daily basis. So, I think that's probably, like, the reason for me. So, I could see the value in the projects. I was like, this is really cool, and this is really great, and this runs really well. But I didn't have like that driving force to do it for myself anymore. It was like, in theory, I think it's great. [LAUGHS]

[00:34:32] **KL:** In our breakup messages, we said we are no longer working together so we can just be friends. And also like, our lives are moving in such, you know, different directions. And, you know, I was just wondering if both of you could talk about these directions. Um, maybe a good transition would be, you know, I wanted to ask you, Lou, about the camera trainee workshop that you run with Samara Addai? So yeah, can you just tell me a bit about like, what direction has your life moved in? What are the ways that you are, you know, working in your field to kind of make things better for, you know, um, yeah. So, what, what are you up to? What are you doing?

[00:35:24] **LM:** So, direction has taken a big shift from doing stuff with cameras and documentary and videography jobs on the side of working art galleries, to that becoming my main job and figuring out how to, um, how to make that my main job and main income, uh, through being a camera assistant on TV drama features, music videos, commercials. And um, through moving into that world, then like recognising how many barriers to entry there are and um, how un-diverse and un-inclusive it is in our department. So, um, one of the things that me and one of my colleagues, Samara Addai, who's really amazing, and had- or we've both been kind of trying to independently do our like small amount to change, uh, change that, where we had hiring power, or where we could support other people. Um, and we've just formalised that into, over this year, running workshops, and like a subsequent mentor scheme to get trainees who are from backgrounds that are underrepresented in the camera department into our department. Which, again, is like really selfishly motivated cause

that's the department I want to be working in in like three years' time, and not waiting 10- or 20-years' time for that. So, I'm just trying to speed up the processes. Um, where I have like power or like resources to be able to do that.

And I think that's also a thing of getting older. I'm like, I don't wanna wait. I just, where I can make stuff happen, I wanna make it happen. And then also, weirdly, I've transitioned from being a kind of like arts organiser and curator into like, becoming an artist again, slightly unexpectedly, through like, making films and documentaries. That's like slightly transitioned back into the art world for me, through a collaboration with an artist called Kyla Harris, who you both know and who's taken part in 120 projects. Um, but us trying to make reality TV together has weirdly started intersecting with the art world again on another, another realm. And like, I've been working on artist films as their cinematographer, which is a really fun way to be in the art world still, of like, I get to be a technical nerd person who makes things look pretty, um, on behalf of an artwork, rather than having to be, like, in charge of the artwork or the artwork be my baby, which I really like that being somebody else's job. Um, yeah. I think that's, that's like a summary of where I'm going. Or where I'm at. How about you, eva?

[00:38:12] **ed:** Where am I at and where am I going? Mm, I'm not sure. Huh. So, I feel like maybe mine's like an unorthodox answer because maybe it's more of a comment on like, the way I choose to live as opposed to my practice. And I don't want this to become like a boring philosophical manifesto. But I feel like, you know, I lived in London for 10 years, and it was great, and it was sort of like, kind of perfect in many respects. And then... after 10 years of living in London, I was like, fuck it, I'm gonna move to Berlin and have to start all over again! And I think maybe that sort of, um, kind of gives a background to sort of maybe what path I'm onto, um, of just sort of maybe trying to create my own problems. Not because anyone should have any problems. But like, I guess just disturb my thinking, maybe. Or what I already know. And yeah, I said at the beginning that I'm an artist/designer, air quotes. Which feels a bit weird to

describe myself as that. Hmm... [WHISPER] How do I talk about what I'm doing? Hmm, I make objects. I make, I make strange little things in my room, that hopefully someone will wear one day. I don't really know how to talk about it to be honest.

[00:39:59] **LM:** Can I ask you a question? Can you see yourself using - cause I feel like as 12ø we like amassed these soft skills of organising and planning and logistics and budgeting and care, even if we did a lot of them badly, and with, like, a budget that barely adds up, but it somehow did. Um, I guess both of you, I'm interested in like, do you see yourself using those skills in other contexts?

[00:40:27] **KL:** After 30/30 happened in 2020, um, you know, Artquest had offered us money to kind of do it again in May. And, you know, I needed the money, [LAUGHS] and it was in the middle of the pandemic. I also needed something to do, you know, to, like, save myself. But then I think maybe it was eva being like, "No!" Like, just because we can continue this doesn't mean we should. What is this adding to the project itself? And also, there's a reason why we do it only once a year; it is exhausting. And also like the hope is that other people, if they find it valuable, will, like, continue on their own paths using the things that they did and the structure and borrowing those things and being able to kind of like, they don't need us to continue to run this project for them! Nor would it really add anything to the project, nor would it make our lives any better. Even though it would've made it better financially. But like, was it a point in which it was like, an option. It wasn't something that we had to do. You know?

And um, and I think that's also, like, a learning lesson. I mean, as is us breaking up, right? Like, sometimes things are over, and sometimes things can be more what they are if you like, leave them alone as opposed to just like pick at it until it dies, you know? And so, [LAUGHS] I think that's a really valuable lesson. Like... you don't always have to be the one like gripping the wheel [LAUGHS] in order for really good things and good conversations to happen. Especially because if you were, then it would be really difficult for you. You like wouldn't be caring for yourself.

And also, it may not add to the project. And also, certainly wouldn't maybe add to people's ability to connect with the project. Um, anyways.

[00:42:28] **LM:** I dunno if this is gonna sound like an old person looking back with hindsight type thing, but like, or like harrumphing about the new age. But like, I do feel like there's a pressure for things not just to be shiny, but to be like, ongoing. For there to be an endless feed of stuff. And I remember really enjoying Caitlin's podcast proposal, because I'd kind of been super interested in creating a podcast, but I hated the idea of the pressure that you'd have to, like, do it weekly forever and ever, and otherwise - or monthly forever, whatever what it was - and if you don't do that, then it's a failure somehow. Then it's like something that's died in the past. And it was really nice to be like, oh, this is a proposal for a five-episode thing. And then we ended up doing a sixth live show episode. But it's like, you can do it and you can execute it, and then you can be like, okay, that's done now, that's fine. I can move on. Um, maybe there's something nice about filmmaking like that. Like you put in loads and loads of work on it, but then when it's done, people come to the screening, and it's done. And that's in your catalog of work now. You don't have to like, have this endless blog-like feed of, um, something continuing.

And it's nice, I feel like talking to people about the 12ø breakup, I'm like, it feels like the healthiest breakup. It's like, instead of slowly simmering until it just fizzles out because nobody- it doesn't work anymore or something, we've figured it out, talked about it, and then it can still exist. It can still be valuable for what it is. It's not a failure because it didn't continue forever. In the same way it's like a relationship isn't a failure if you don't get married and live together for the rest of your lives. You can have short and long relationships over your life that like, teach you so much or like bring something to your life. Um, and they still have value even if they don't extend forever. I don't know. There's, it's such a weird social thing that like, there's this pressure for things not to be valuable if they don't continue?

[00:44:28] **ed:** Yeah. I had a friend, who I will not name, who did say this about 12ø when I was like, "I don't wanna do it anymore!" I think it may have been around the sort of time where I was like, we shouldn't do 30/30 again, or just after. And the friend was like, "What? You can't stop 12ø." And I was like, "Why not? Like, why not?" And he was like, "You're just throwing your toys out the pram, and you're throwing away something that you spent eight years doing." And I was like... I just, you know, it was interesting at that time sort of seeing- and like, yeah, he made valid points too, but I was sort of like, this is, this is really interesting that it's like, it's not valuable anymore if it stops. You can't be, like you say, it can't be like, yeah, it was good for the time. That doesn't mean we should keep doing it. Like, there's loads of things that were good at the time; doesn't mean we keep doing it, because it sort of kills it somehow. It kills it more than ending it and being like, it's done. And it was good for what it was. Actually, like, drawing something out until it really does die is like, worse, I think.

[00:45:45] **LM:** Yeah, it's um, I think there's actually a word for it in economics. It's called "sunk cost theory." So, the idea is, because you've already put loads of money or time into something, even though it's irrational and it's unlikely to be successful, you keep doing it because you've already put that amount into the endless pit. And so, it feels like if you stop, then the money or time that you've already put in is wasted, so you continue to waste more. I'm not saying that the time was wasted, but like that's people's attitude to it. Like you've put in eight years. (ed: yeah) Like no, but that you had a good eight years. [LAUGHS]

[00:46:23] **ed:** Every year you add after that is now a waste.

[00:46:27] **LM:** Yeah. You didn't lose those eight years. Like, yeah. And it's nice that I think it is like, yeah, it will be like, have some legacy and be remembered (ed: yeah) by people in different ways and for different things. And also, that we can like, hang out without having to do work. That's so exciting.

[00:46:46] **KL:** Yeah. I feel like I've been quoting you, eva, to everybody, where it's like, "Now we can enjoy our professional divorce together." [LAUGHS] Um, yeah, I mean I feel like something that I'm quite conscious of is, um, just, I feel like the world is full of a pile of like defunct art projects and like forgotten art spaces. And, you know, I'm interested in archival work, like documentation. Like what- how can we make sure that people know that something existed? Um, and I don't know why that is so important to me, because like you said, right, the people that participated will know that they existed. And then they'll die and then, you know, time will move on.

So, like, this kind of pressure to make it like bigger, better, more efficient, more marketable, ongoing - what does that do to kind of the nature of how we understand like, artist-led projects, small arts organisations, and whether they have been successful or not after they've ended? Everything ends.

[00:48:12] **ed:** I feel as though, when you were talking, like, yeah. What, what, what we're asking is sort of like, how do you measure success, right? I feel as though there's such a rigid idea of what looks successful. In the same way that like Lou was saying, you know, people are like, "Oh my God, it's ending? What??" Or like, it's not bigger, it doesn't have a permanent space. And these are sort of all the things that we had a problem with the whole time we were doing 12ø. These were the things that we were trying to undermine the whole time, like... that it wasn't a successful exhibition in New York just because we got all the works crated. Like, we could do a successful exhibition by putting everything in our hand luggage and being honest about it, and it would still be a valid show and the artists' work could still be cared for in a different way that was accessible and affordable. Yeah, I feel like I have a problem with the way that success is defined for these organisations. Because for me anyway, 12ø's success is probably in ways that isn't written down, isn't documented, um, probably isn't properly quotable, traceable. It'll be in like, you know, in the way that we worked with Bella [Milroy], and then Bella works with somebody else, and like Bella probably doesn't even remember why she feels a certain way about one thing, but it's, you know, one of you said

something when she wrote her application and therefore, she said that to somebody else. And it's like, I feel like that is the sort of, I'd say that's the success, and it's not quantifiable.

[00:49:52] **LM:** Yeah. That's why it doesn't feel like it goes on the defunct pile for me, because it didn't ever have the intentions of trying to succeed by existing long enough to become institutionalised or be big enough. And therefore, we can't fail at that if that wasn't the intention in the first place. Even though other people might misread that as being your intention, cause they assume that's what arts organisations are doing. And the project's always changing, like maybe as part of that as well, like there not being longevity and repetitiveness. And 30/30 being the only one where that happens, and that then is continuing, it's being taken on.

Um, and it kind of made me wonder like, as well - 12ø never breached past being a side hustle in terms of income. Like, we did get to the stage where we paid ourselves on stuff. But like, even say when you were talking about getting paid for another month of doing 30/30, even though it was a very generous offer from Artquest, we were still on budgets where it was like, it was nice to have in a pandemic or, uh, better than nothing. But it was never like this could take over to be like a day-a-week job or two-day-a-week job that you could slot in around, you know, another part-time job and then like make it very sustainable. And we never even had a conversation to try and do that, I guess. I feel like we didn't consider it. Probably for those kind of reasons of not, like it not being of interest, but if we'd really wanted to figure out how to become an NPO and turn it into an organisation of the scale of Artquest or something, we probably do have the connections to find advisors or people who could have told us how you do that, you know? But we didn't even ask, so I guess we didn't want to. [LAUGHS] But I'm wondering, in an alternate reality, what that would've looked like.

[00:51:42] **KL:** I'm gonna ask you the last question that I ask everybody. Did we talk about what you thought we would talk about? Uh, do you have any

questions for me? Or do you have anything else that you'd just like to say?

[00:52:00] **LM:** I wanna ask - cause I feel like you are in a weird position here of being the interviewer but also part of the collective being interviewed - so I want to ask you, cause I don't think you really got to answer, why you think we broke up. And also, if there's any other questions that you have an answer to that you don't feel like you- that we answered, that you didn't. Like, as your third-of-the-collective-formerly-known-as-12ø hat on rather than interviewer hat on.

[00:52:32] **KL:** Uh, one third of the-

[00:52:33] **LM:** Alleged collective formerly known as 12ø.

[00:52:35] **KL:** [LAUGHS] Um, why do I think we broke up? Yeah, I mean, like, you know, I think I really have a sense now when things are just too hard, you know? I care about all this stuff, and I really want to do all of this stuff. But like, if I did all of it, it would be deeply unpleasant because this is actually impossible. Is there any way that I can cut out half of this? Or is it more valuable just to be like, no. You know?

And so, it felt that way about 12ø, where it was just like, on its face, it was becoming impossible. Um, it was like, we live in three different places, [LAUGHS] we all three have jobs. We are going in different directions in terms of where our creative lives live, and what part they have in our lives in general. And yeah, so I think it just kind of got to the point where it was like, it's just not gonna work out. And it felt better just to call it. Like, I think I might've said to you, Lou, wasn't I like, "Pick up a bottle of Prosecco at the petrol station on the way, I think we're gonna break up tonight." [LAUGHS] And then we had Prosecco for our breakup., you know? That feels a lot better to me just to, like, call it. You know, obviously I'm very sad, but it's like I'm very sad that I don't, that we don't live in the same city. I'm very sad that like I don't get to talk to you as often, you know? But all of those things were already true and had



nothing to do with 12ø. And they're also things that I kind of can't really fix at the moment, but that doesn't mean they'll be true forever.

Um, it's over. This interview. [LAUGHS]

[00:54:18] **LM:** This was really nice. It was like an opportunity to... yeah. It feels really good to have an opportunity to discuss it all. (ed: couple's therapy) It's like another framework, you know?

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[00:54:39] **KL:** Epilogue. On the 5<sup>th</sup> of January 2023, eva duerden wrote this to me, "since our conversation, [I have] been surviving a berlin winter, with rest, mundane joys and learning to use an airbrush."

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of January 2023, Lou Macnamara wrote this to me, "I have been continuing to shoot documentaries, short films and artist moving image projects, alongside running a fourth round of Camera Trainee workshops with Samara Addai and Focus24."

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[00:55:12] **KL:** You can find more information about 12ø collective and our work at our website [12collective.com](http://12collective.com); about eva duerden and their work on Instagram [@eva.duerden](https://www.instagram.com/eva.duerden); and about Lou Macnamara and their work at their website [loumacnamara.com](http://loumacnamara.com). Links to what we spoke about today, as well as other interviews with people in the arts, are on the project's website [thisthingwecallart.com](http://thisthingwecallart.com)

Beginning in April 2023, 30/30 will be hosted and facilitated by Artquest, participation will be free, and participants will also be able to access peer mentoring and network support. To find out when registration for 30works30days opens, subscribe to the Artquest email newsletter which you can sign up to on their website, [artquest.org.uk](http://artquest.org.uk), or follow them on Twitter [@ARTQUESTLONDON](https://twitter.com/ARTQUESTLONDON).

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The logo was designed by eva duerden, the episode artwork was created by Giulia Ratti, and the theme song was made by Alessandro Moroni. This podcast was produced by me, your host, Kelly Lloyd.

Thanks so much for listening, and tune in next week for my conversation with jina valentine.