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DR. LESLIE DEWAN

SCIENTIST



Dr. Leslie Dewan is a co-founder and chief scientist of Transatomic Power, a company that claims its Waste-Annihilating Molten Salt Reactor “can convert the high-level nuclear waste produced by conventional nuclear reactors each year into \$7.1 trillion of electricity. At full deployment, our reactors can use existing stockpiles of nuclear waste to satisfy the world’s electricity needs through 2083.” Dewan received her doctorate in nuclear engineering from MIT in 2013 with a research focus on computational nuclear materials. She also holds bachelor’s degrees from MIT in mechanical engineering and nuclear engineering. Before starting her Ph.D., she worked for a robotics company in Cambridge, Mass., where she designed search-and-rescue robots and equipment for in-field identification of biological, chemical and nuclear weapons. Dewan has been awarded a Department of Energy Computational Science Graduate Fellowship and an MIT Presidential Fellowship. *Time*, *Forbes* and *MIT Technology Review* have all checked out her numbers and awarded her various honors that suggest they believe she is onto something.

Photo by **MARK MASSIE**

DESCRIBE YOURSELF IN CLINICAL TERMS.

I’m a Bostonian, about 5-feet-7-inches tall, with brown eyes and variable-color hair. I like to go running.

WHICH LIVING PERSON DO YOU MOST ADMIRE?

Arthur Ganson, the kinetic sculptor. Seeing his work, especially *Machine with Concrete and Machine with Oil*, is so viscerally beautiful to me and makes me happy to be an engineer.

IF YOU COULD BE THE CEO OF ANY COMPANY, WHICH ONE WOULD IT BE AND WHY?

SpaceX! Their technology is amazing.

WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE YOUR LAST MEAL TO BE?

Smoked salmon and cream cheese on a bagel, with onions and capers.

WHICH OVERUSED WORD OR PHRASE FRUSTRATES YOU MOST?

The word “meh.” It’s lazy and dismissive.

WHAT IS YOUR CURRENT OBSESSION?

I just bought a 3-D printer a few weeks ago — it’s my favorite! I’ve been using it to make miniature plastic models of my nuclear reactor. My entire house smells like melted plastic, but it’s totally worth it.

WHAT WAS THE LAST THING YOU READ, LISTENED TO OR WATCHED THAT HAD A STRONG IMPACT ON YOU?

Watching the landing of the Curiosity rover on Mars back in 2012.

WHAT DO YOU CONSIDER TO BE YOUR GREATEST PROFESSIONAL ACCOMPLISHMENT?

The work I’ve been doing with Transatomic developing our waste-burning nuclear reactor.

HOW DO YOU DEFINE SUCCESS?

Achieving your goals. For me, that goal is to commercialize my reactor design and get them up and running around the country.

WHAT QUALITY DO YOU MOST ADMIRE IN A MAN OR WOMAN?

I’m going to pick two: trustworthiness and innovative thinking.