

Nina
Jan
Beier and
Marie
Jan
Lund
Biography

London-based Danish artist duo Nina Jan Beier and Marie Jan Lund are both Royal College of Art graduates, and have worked as a duo since 2003. While studying they formed the art-platform Janfamily and published a number of publications in this name, culminating in book and exhibition tour 'Plans for other days' published by Booth-Clibborn Editions and distributed worldwide. They have had regular solo shows at M+R Gallery in London and in V1 Gallery in Copenhagen. They have made larger solo shows at art spaces such as Spacex Gallery in Exeter, Aarhus Center for Contemporary Art and Overgaden - Institute of Contemporary Art in Denmark. Recent groupshows include 'This is a gettogether' at Skuc Gallery, Ljubljana, 'Indica' at Rifleman Gallery, London, 'Abstract Things', curated by Harrell Fletcher at Laura Bartlett Gallery, London and 'Collectivity' at YBCA, San Francisco. Most recently they made a large-scale staging as part of the event programme Actions and Interruptions curated by Catherine Wood in Tate Modern. Future projects include participation in the group show 'From a Distance' at WallSpace curated by Vincent Honoré in New York, the group show 'Laughing in a Foreign Language' curated by Mami Kataoka at Hayward Gallery, an event at Late at Tate in November curated by Heidi Reitmaier and a solo show at the Tokyo gallery Wako Works of Art.

Interview with Nina Jan Bejer & Marje Jan Lund

Hi Nina and Marie, how's the weather over London today?

Good thanks

Born in Denmark, why did you both choose London for study and work?

We went to the Royal College of Art to study and never really left again.

What drew you to the path of art?

Actually we did take the long way round and tried out more applied art forms, but soon recognized that this is the field where we can express our ideas in the clearest and most untainted way.

How did you two know each other?

We shared a friend

Your artworks are naturalistic, harmonious, filled with introspection and interesting concepts, where and how did all these ideas come from?

We spend a lot of time analyzing situations at the same time as consciously trying to keep space for intuitive fascinations.

In the creative process, how would you two divide the work and coordinate with each other?

After working together for 4 years we have developed a quite simple collaborative process. The work moves back and forth between us and at one point it is done.

What would you hope the audience to comprehend after seeing your works?

To see the space between things rather than the things themselves.

From the book Janfamily, it seems that every member's thoughts are very close. How did all the members come to know each other? How was

the Janfamily born?

We were a group of friends who all worked in visual medias and indirectly influenced each other, so Janfamily was created as a platform to show our work side by side and make these connections visible.

The question "How to" is a question frequently found in the book Jan Family. Does this particular question often occur in your everyday life?

For the book 'Janfamily - Plans for other days' we decided to use that format to somehow distill our ideas and present them as pure strategies.

Since when are you two interested in human body limbs and psychological changes?

We always found a connection between the way relationships manifest themselves psychologically and physically. Between people and between people and their surroundings. So somewhere between the objects we make and the situations we initiate, we feel we can capture our field of interest.

Your artworks concerned a lot about "connection" and "mutual understanding". They are expanding through our established thoughts on issues, tracing changes in "relationship"; showing an art form without restraints and explanations. How did you ensure that the visual presentation and message delivered by the artworks can echo with the audience?

We try to stay true to the nature of these transitory issues we deal with and not attempt to explain them as much as just pointing them out. This way we would like to create some legroom for the viewer to interpret and understand a situation using their own tools and references.

The status and activities showed in

the artworks seems very daily life, yet to another extend very fantasia like. You deliberately repositioned everyday ideas. Are these rules and ideas extemporaneous?

Our interest springs from everyday observations, which we then try to push by formulating an instruction or another form that gives body to a subtle interaction that might otherwise have gone unnoticed.

"The Play me series" seems to be a challenge for the limits of patience and endurance, why did you come up with this idea? Its is a highly interesting piece of work, it does not seem real from the photographs, yet it is in fact the portrayal of rebellion, which makes people feel extremely delighted. How exactly did you design each task? People need to finish every task in each picture, which group of people had the most difficulties in accomplishing?

The Play me series is a series of both videos and photographs where we set up abstract games for different groups of people to play out. We initiate each situation but leave it to play out following its own internal logic and set of rules that become apparent as the participants launch into the tasks. Be it asking a big group of people to place themselves according to the length of their hair, exchanging clothes in the snow or breathing in time, all the videos focus on the space between the individual and the group.

Based on references to social games, customs and mannerisms, most of the instructions impose certain limitations onto the individuals by challenging their sense of personal space and free will. We try to provoke the competitive drive in the participants and their reactions to being part of a group. Each situation springs from the actual setting of the group in question, and we try to

create an instruction that enhances the tensions that are already present in the context. We have used a general approach of letting each situation run for however long the participants can bear to hold the moment, to give the participants a sense of ownership over the situation. We ask a question and they answer it however they see fit.

The photographic documentation captures only a fragment of the situations. Because we are interested in the mental space that relies on the viewer's references to fill in the remainder.

We try to make almost ritual actions for the participating groups.

As we did in another video 'Reminiscence of a Strike Action' work where we asked a group of old socialist revolutionaries of our parents' generation to keep their eyes closed for as long as they all could do it. This video becomes almost a kind of memorial for a shared past and maybe even past ideals. The conclusion of the ceremony: "when is the time to open their eyes again?" indirectly references the strike situation, where the participants are forced to either trust or check up on each other to make sure the solidarity is intact.

And as an answer to your question on which group has difficulties accomplishing it must be our families. We have experienced that these situations turn out most interestingly when there is some pressure present in the situation and also the authority of the camera pushing the situation, so since our families got used to this they haven't been very good material for our experiments unfortunately.

"The Weepers" requires 13 actors crying, why are they required to cry at the same time? What kind of

message are you trying to deliver through that short film?

We are interested in pushing a very private expression into a shared one. And also the tension between the young aspiring actors, where the competitive element of the criteria for success, collides with the contagiousness of the action.

Could you tell us about the event you did in Tate Modern Exhibition? What is the theme for this occasion? What are you trying to bring up through this exhibition?

We did the event 'Clap in Time' (All the people at Tate Modern) this spring in the context of Actions and Interruptions, a day-long exhibition at Tate Modern that proposed 'performance' to be a facet of everyday behavior, we encouraged the regulars at the museum, including the staff, friends and visitors, to pause what ever they were doing and clap in time when they heard the sound of clapping. We are interested in breaking the behavioral codex of a museum space and the act of clapping as the ultimate collective action that both includes everyone clapping and the people who refrain from it, and thus are being clapped at.

In November we will do some other events at Tate Britain in connection with the Turner prize exhibition. For example one which is called 'The Difference between Humans and Walls', where we have asked a group of uniformed employees of the museum are to stand, blocking different passages in the exhibition. When someone asks to pass they will disperse and regroup somewhere else. They will be doing this on a running basis on and off throughout the evening.

Have you two been to Asia? Are you planning to hold any exhibition in Asia?

We have been invited to do a solo exhibition organised by Mami Kataoka at the gallery Wako Works of Art in Tokyo in the late spring.

What are elements that can bring you inspirations?

People watching.

Both of you were born in Denmark, would you mind telling us your childhood?

We share the same kind of upbringing, both being children of parents of socialistic conviction. We have recently started revisiting these beliefs in our work, recognizing our interest in collective behavior fundamentally being rooted in our background. We are interested in searching out where their strategy failed and what we are left with.

What are your plans for the future?

We are working on a number of exhibitions and events, for example a large scale public event in the suburbs of Copenhagen, which we are very excited about.

We wish you all success in the future and thank you reminding us the beauty of human's everyday life.

Thank you.

Common Objects

13 objects, leather, ceramic, wood, 2006

Common objects is a series of objects in leather, ceramic and wood that in different ways provoke a collision between balanced and disharmonious collective situations. The objects do not make sense when taken into use by a single person, but function as a natural invitation for others to join in, still once taken into use they create friction between the users. The objects reference tools or instruments but lacking practical function their sole purpose is to evoke a situation between people.

The maraca-looking object with the dual handle is easily recognized and usable on your own, but the unemployed handle becomes an evident incitement for someone else to join and consequently the sound becomes irregular and the action resembles most a struggling handshake.



Common objects 是一系列皮革、陶器和木制的物件。它們全都曾從不同方面激起平衡與不協調之間衝突的集體情況。當一個人使用時，這些物件都毫無意義，但它們卻是邀請他人自然加入的請柬。當被群體使用，它們就領使用者之間產生摩擦。

那有雙把手響葫蘆狀的物件容易辨認，而且一個人絕對可使用；但那空出的把手確實成為其他人加入的刺激。當兩個使用時，那響葫蘆發出的聲音會變得不規律，兩人的動作就像在掙扎地握手一般。