

FrenchMottershead Interview - Jennie Klein 12th February 2006, NRLA, Glasgow

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FrenchMottershead is a London-based live art collaborative who since 1999 have created and developed an approach called microperformance to explore the details of urban and social life. In 2006, they, along with Richard Dedomenici, were the artists in residence at the National Review of Live Art (NRLA) the longest running live art festival in the UK. Their association with the NRLA began in 2004, when they showed up uninvited and initiated guerrilla actions with an edition of their *The People Series* from an impromptu stall set-up in the Arches' main bar. In 2005 they returned as invited artists, and from site research and one-to-one conversational interviews with audience members (called micro-classes) created and facilitated *The Enarelay*, which involved handing out microperformance instructions to audience members queuing up for the various performances, on their way to the toilets, or standing in the bar, who could then decide whether or not they wanted to "perform" the suggested actions. In 2006, they premiered three pieces: *A Daily Ritual To Capture the Presence of Everybody*, *Local Review of Necessary Amenities* (LRNA), and *Now That's An Idea*. In this interview, which took place on the second to last day of the festival, Rebecca French and Andrew Mottershead reflected on the success of the NRLA 2006.

JK: I would like to start by asking you to define microperformance and to give me some sort of background on how you came to develop this format. Do you feel it is more successful because you are a collaborative duo rather than a single individual?

RF: We define microperformance as a series of one on one actions or performances that are performed on and by an active audience. That definition has evolved and is probably changing even as we speak.

AM: Essentially, we invite the audience to engage complicity in the creative act. In time it's become a flexible format, we've developed different ways to devise and prompt microperformance, from performing them ourselves, to large scale projects incorporating research, workshops and live events that activate local constituencies as microperformers, to distributing performance instructions using objects, text messaging and verbal delivery in a variety of social frameworks. The outcomes vary in response to the context – which is key to our work.

AM: When we started off we wanted to come up with a way of making work which wouldn't be the 'traditional intervention into the audience kind of work' where it was obvious that something is going on because that person over there is a performer or something, coming off the stage and into the audience but still maintaining the audience and performer division. We wanted to work with a different dynamic that would dissolve this division and arrive at a more enriching experience all round. I may be digressing here, but this is before we had the form or the phrase microperformance and we were just looking for a way to describe the work that we wanted to do. We were interested in the small things that people wanted to do between and with each other...

RF: Performatively every day. There are automatic "performances" that we all do, and we wanted to work around that. For example, we are all sitting forward, looking at each other during this interview. If someone started to look up at the sky we would get very nervous.

AM: Yes, Yes. We also found that we were increasingly getting more interested in working with the skills that people already had—the performative aspects of looking at body language and microtechnologies, the Foucauldian idea that even the way you move your hands and the tiniest gestures and the context in which you are in are powerful tools that can be manipulated, and that we are consciously or unconsciously in control of or being subjected to.

JK: I think that also references J.L. Austin's ideas in *How To Do Things With Words*, where the words have action potential. I see your work as very much playing into that idea.

AM: For much of our recent work we've put the verb very much in the foreground. We thought that these ideas constituted being a microperformer and the idea of the microperformance evolved as well.

RF: Before we met, Andrew used to run Karaoke's as artworks, activating the audience as a performer/art work.

AM: I did one at the Institute of Contemporary Art in London.

RF: We both did types of site-based performance. We started to work together. We were working with another group of friends as well. We were all doing performances in a social situation. We hired a room in the upstairs of a working man's club. Downstairs the members were singing songs for pints, upstairs held our club *Social*. We were crossing the two audiences over. They were coming up and the others were going down.

AM: And we just invited people along for a party, didn't we?

RF: Well, we framed it as an art work.

AM: It was an art work/party. That was an alternative live art platform looking at social rituals and roles. How do expectations shape experience? At what point do we question whether something is real or performed?

We took on each venue's characteristics and added subtle interactions activating audience and performer with many exaggerated social behaviors.

RF: But we had lots of intervention performances like the coatroom attendant would take off your coat and sort of breathe down your neck and these sorts of things.

AM: There was a stripper and we pretended that we'd got married...

RF: that afternoon, because it was the sort of place where people have their engagement parties, and their christenings, and their wakes and it was just sort of a community space.

AM: We pulled out a lot of material...

RF: A lot of things. And what we found from that was that we were really, really interested in the actions that have that ambiguity, where it wasn't just another person obviously performing but the thing was to activate the audience in some way to sort of respond in a way where they weren't sure, but they suspected, or went along. So that was about six years ago where the kernel of this came from.

AM: I think it was only in about 2000 that we came up with and started using the phrase microperformance, actor or performer just did not seem to be adequate words to describe what we wanted to work with...

RF: Yes, in terms of how we talk about and frame these actions and these small performances and label them.

AM: So in that sense it would be *Friday Social Evening* at the West Indian Ex-Services Association...

RF: A performance piece using venues that weren't art venues and activating those for one night only...opening them up to another type of audience.

AM: As far as collaborating, we feel that it definitely makes a difference that we are a duo, rather than working as individuals. Each one motivates the other to get up and go into the studio that day. In developing the various works, we both have a different perspective, experience or observation of contexts, which helps keep a certain flux. Accepting the different ways that we can do the same thing is also important.

RF: Yes.

JK: So in a way, the NRLA is kind of a departure for the two of you because you are encountering an audience that expects you, whereas normally you don't have that audience.

AM: I think it would be a departure if we were to be encountering the audience in one of the usual NRLA forms, i.e. in the black box on stage with rake seating, or in an installation or as a one-on-one etc. But we've positioned ourselves at the NRLA alongside but outside of those expected territories, so in a way what we are asking for is the audience to depart from their expectations when encountering an artist's [our] work – that these alternatives are valid forms. I think also the work we've done during the residency has raised the level of what could be expected from future AiRs (artist in residence). Usually artists showcase their latest work and maybe hold a talk. Few have ever made a number of works specifically for that audience.

RF: In addition, we have always told people exactly what is going to happen. That is part of the framing of our work, you tell people they are going to experience this performance, or that this "performer" might come up to you and do something or ask you to do something. You are told that and everybody expects that. We do always frame that by telling people. But definitely a couple of years ago we were in a situation where we thought we have been working for a couple of years and we don't work in the art world so we aren't getting any attention in the art world, so we started to think more about how we could work within the context of the art world.

AM: So in turn, what we think of as being the definition of micropformance has kind of expanded. It has got the same root but we would have to go back to the dictionary and add two or three more meanings to the word. The instructions on the maps this time (the LRNA), they are sort of an attempt to institute a performance...

RF: Yes, they are performance instructions. When most people take the walks (LRNA) they are performing in our piece. It is the same with the photographs that we take (*A Daily Ritual*). They have this frame, and then within that people can hopefully find their own creativity and perform for the camera in a different way.

JK: It also doesn't force you to over perform if you're not comfortable with that.

RF: No (murmured agreement from AM). It is an invitation.

JK: Could you speak a bit about how you came to form FrenchMottershead? You mentioned that it had its beginnings with Andrew's Karaoke evenings. Do you want to add to that at all?

RF: We met doing the Karaoke. Andrew invited me to do an intervention during the Karaoke, and I did.

AM: Yes, this was part of my idea of asking artists to intervene anonymously into the Karaoke structure and Rebecca did a very good piece. She chose 'Close to You' by the Carpenters – a

sure-fire Karaoke favorite. The clever thing was that she stopped the track after the first few bars, and told a story saying she fancied me and asked that I join her and sing the song as a duet. Because the audience mostly knew me, they went totally wild. I was quite attracted to it because it was about using the language of an everyday thing and the mechanics of Karaoke and twisting it a bit. It was just very effective and really communicated strongly with the audience. They really believed that it was true which was quite interesting. We started to talk more. Just to clarify the Karaoke was a first meeting point in 1998, we worked together again (with others) in 1999 on *Social*, and then started FrenchMottershead in earnest in 2000.

RF: A friend of ours who I was working on these small interventions invited Andrew in to promote some event because he had a knack of getting a crowd to come to things. At the first intervention in the working man's club (*Social*) we started to feel that our ideas were much closer together than those who wanted to dress up and perform.

JK: It is interesting to me that at this year's NRLA this is the most visible the two of you have actually been. But you haven't really been all that visible as the artists in residence in the same way as Richard Dedomenici has. I felt as though that reflected the spirit of your work.

AM and RF: Yes, it does.

AM: We felt it important to have it be so, to be available on a social level since we're not situating ourselves on stage in front of 300 people. The Artists in Residence promo photos are the first time we've ever used ourselves [identifiably] in the images to promote our work. They register our presence and embody a sense of the work we were doing during with the residency, however subtly. i.e. the posing, looking our best and the mottled background suggesting a formal occasion, the folders indicating the fact that we have a plan/s, the manipulation of dates and titles suggesting a future and thereby a history of the NRLA. They also perform a role before, during and after the NRLA by allowing the audience to make that physical connection with us if they wish to do so.

RF: We have been trying to be visible. We have been hanging around a lot.

JK: Right. I'm wondering if you could talk about the pieces that you have done for the NRLA, beginning with *The Enarelay*. What happened, and why did you structure that experience the way you did?

AM: What happened was a sequence of unique microperformance events within the social rituals of a Saturday night at the Arches, facilitated by some on-site research and micro-classes that combined to put the audience in the position of creator, performer and documenter. We wanted a piece that operated 'in the gaps' of the audience experience that promoted a change in their identity. It was bit like pouring quicksilver, which would well up in certain spots before running off elsewhere whilst leaving traces.

On entering the venue, we, via the ushers, presented ticket-holders with a choice of a new rubber-stamped identity - WORK or PLAY, opposites coexisting in the communal experience of the NRLA. In doing so we drew attention to and subverted the mundane routine of getting your hand stamped to guarantee re-entry. We wanted all to consider the question the merits of choosing either identity "Are you here for WORK or PLAY?" PLAY turned out to be the more popular of the two, with occasional people insisting on a pluralist ID. We also wanted to divide the audience into these two opposing factions, so that as the evening developed we could cause some interchange and interference (perhaps even conflict) between the two groupings.

The work began to unfold as participants queued for the main shows of the evening Jérôme Bel, Vlasta Delimar, Michèle Murray and Ben Neill / Bill Jones, or later on as they socialized in the Middle Bar, or even visited the Toilets, where they were presented with WORK and PLAY lucky dips, from which they drew instructions suggesting actions specially written for their chosen identity for each particular event. These were written by us and audience members that had attended the micro-classes earlier in the week.

Queues have always been one of the downsides of going to the NRLA at the Arches. They provided an extremely complicated social system into which we could introduce a number of carefully written instructions. These instructions, which offered one of 23 strategies for improving your position in the queue, provoked a mixture of emotions, from fear and frustration to feelings of injustice. There were 37 microperformances promoting an earnest discussion of work, or a closer physical relationship with the person in front. The Vlasta Delimar queue worked from the basis of "Queues imply a high value placed on time," and 24 touching microperformances crossing the tactile patterns of WORK and PLAY queuers.

The choice of the bar was more obvious, as I'm sure you'll agree the NRLA is heavily social and much action goes on in there, whilst we chose the toilets as a site because they are one of the few times in which you could be alone, private and provide a whole new area in which to look, examine and create something performative.

AM: Personal favorites of mine include for WORK's: discuss with the queuer ahead of the idea that Jerome Bel is merely an epilogue to the drama of standing in line for the show; Ask the queuer ahead if they have had time to cut Kira; Wrap your hand in toilet roll, wipe the inside of the toilet bowl clean. PLAY': Urinate in unison; Point your left index finger 1cm from their arsehole; and Cut in front of a queuer whom you think is younger than you. For a more extensive list please look at the website (www.frenchmottershead.com)! Writing this volume of instructions was a major challenge for us.

For this piece the audience was responsible for documenting the microperformances. With an invitation to "stick this piece of paper on the wall" once their task was done, participants collectively created an installation that traced an alternative social network.

In presenting *NRLA People* (an edition of *The People Series*) as we did in 2004, it was important for us as artists to not just attend the festival as audience (it was our first time there), but to present a piece of work ourselves to programmers, fellow artists and the festival audience, albeit as an uninvited intervention. During the week we'd also worn T-shirts bearing slogans like "I hope you don't think I'm only talking to you because you might be good for my career" or "I'm not very good at networking...but I'm a great artist."

JK: Could you describe the three events that you are doing this year for the NRLA? I want to mention for the sake of the reader that you always have very clever titles. *Enarelay* is pronounced just like NRLA and *Local Review of Necessary Amenities* has the same initials—mixed up—as NRLA.

AM: The game continues in the *Artists in Residence Photos* too. Andrew is holding a NRLA 2006 project folder whilst Rebecca holds NRLA 2060.

RF: I'll talk about the walks then (*Local Review of Necessary Amenities*). We were very keen that our starting point was the NRLA at the Tramway and that we were artists in residence and what those two things meant to us. We were drawing on our own personal experiences with past NRLAs of feeling quite alienated and quite lost. We also wanted to honor Nikki's (Milican) intentions in inviting us to as smoothing the transition from the Arches to Tramway. We thought about what an artist in residence means and what people might be looking for from that. So that

was our site and then from that we evolved that we would do these walks, especially because the NRLA has this daily diary (schedule) with a plan of the building on one side and on the other a list of things to do. Normally this diary is two-sided and the list tells you all of the things that you can do. The NRLA list tells you what you can do within the Tramway space whereas our list tells you what you can do outside. It is compiled for those who need a little respite. The NRLA is very full on and actually being able to take a walk to the rest garden or somewhere becomes an option. These are little performance actions that people would walk here and they would stand and survey the garden or whatever and they would be micro performing for us. It is an activation of text to get people to go outside of their comfort zone.

AM: I would also like to add that it is no accident that the back sheet on this daily diary is absolutely designed to be a counterpoint to the official, front sheet. The hand drawn maps have a more aesthetic quality than the official diary. It might be a more interesting experience to follow this map than seeing one of these artists in one of these spaces at 2 p.m., for example. “Why don’t we go off and do something else?” In a way, although we have been commissioned by Nikki to do something for the NRLA, it is sort of antithetical to the NRLA.

RF: We are slightly subverting the NRLA, but in a very gentle way. We are the artists in residence, but we have made a counterpoint to the experience of the NRLA.

JK: Sometimes you need a break.

AM: And following these walks could take all day (all of the walks were within five minutes of Tramway).

JK: Well, Heart Failure (a walk that leads to a shop selling deep-fried Mars Bars) is probably a little sweet for me.

RF: Its fantastic, but I only had a mouthful. I just wanted to say that the walks are based on necessities as well, on the things that actually would be necessary—you need warmth or you need food, or you need...

AM: It sort of traces the cycle of life. It gives a picture of the local environment. You won’t necessarily be going to the pawnbrokers...

JK: But some people have to go...

AM: Right.

JK: Would you like to speak about *Now That’s An Idea*? This action, which involves contacting people prior to and during the NRLA and asking them to submit an anonymous text must have been a daunting undertaking.

AM: Yes. We began preparing this a few months ago where we were collating lists and attempting to contact all of the NRLA artists who had participated since its inception in the early 1980s. We were attempting to contact all the audiences that had been to the NRLA since the early eighties as well. So the intention was to give the audience and the artists’ equal currency. The ideas of each, the inspirations of each, they have an equal currency rather than the usual anonymity that the audience has vis-à-vis the artist.

RF: Although that anonymity is very much not true—you are visible.

JK: I see you pushing the audience constantly, but not in a particularly aggressive or disturbing way.

RF: We really hope that it is always an invitation, and that people don't have to respond if they don't wish to.

JK: It is not Vito Acconci following someone in the street who doesn't know that they are being followed, which looked really scary from the documentation of that performance.

AM and RF: No, no.

JK: Rather, it is a very gentle invitation to the audience. I liked submitting a text. My particular text (from Richard Adam's *Watership Down*) does look the most "comfort food" of the lot, but I thought why not?

RF: That's the thing. It should be about that idea...that's why they're anonymous wasn't it? People aren't choosing texts based on who donated them and why, or thinking I'm going to have that one because such and such wrote it. But also, there is that factor that you can donate something that you are not necessarily proud of, the thing that you really go to when you need respite.

AM: And we also wanted the piece to be some sort of a portrait of ideas as well, of a discussion of ideas, an exchange that could be continued.

RF: I suppose it is the end of an era as well...the NRLA is in its 26th year and has moved now to Tramway and that there would be this summing up. We've contacted or tried to contact every artist that has ever been involved with the NRLA.

AM: It is a huge number—over 1,000 people.

JK: It's an amazing number of artists.

RF: And when you think about it from Nikki's point of view it's an astonishing achievement, the longevity of this festival and that she would be thinking about these kinds of festivals and ideas 26 years ago is quite amazing.

JK: Absolutely. In fact, I think that Nikki has been organizing festivals for even longer than 26 years.

AM: It is really interesting the way people have engaged with the invitation to submit a text on different levels. Some have committed themselves to assembling something new, or donating books, or original artworks, whereas others have just thought, ok, and typed in their response really quickly. Others have not donated but have gone through a process of examining the question "What ideas have importance to them?"

AM: The texts also act as an alternative body of knowledge to that offered by the adjacent bookshop.

JK: Let's talk about *A Daily Ritual to Capture The Presence of Everybody* (the daily photograph of the people attending the NRLA that was taken in various locations of the Tramway and documented the participants).

RF: Again, for us it is a frame, it is a performance for camera by the audience and that we present something quite basic, that is, we place you and pose you and we want you to look your best. We could have given different instructions but we wanted to keep something very small that people would potentially find quite boring and that within that then they would start to play which

is exciting to see happen. When you look at the first one everyone is quite doing what they are told and now we've got somebody wearing a carpet and people are facing backwards and people have their arms out, etc. It is a really different sort of moment, and I also think that as a performance that drawing together of everybody and then that anybody can come and take part. It is very open and everyone registers their presence in whatever way they want to, even if they are hiding behind somebody else if they don't want to be photographed.

AM: It's an incredibly social piece, not just in the gathering of the performance for camera, but in the way the growing exhibition and how people used it to compare their daily performance. We spelt out the days so as to engender that sense of daily expectation, that 5-day narrative. There is also that surprise for the people pictured at the back, who actually don't expect that they are going to be in focus—and they are. That is a nice technological surprise for people. It is an illusion in a way.

RF: It fits into our identity as artists in residence. That it would involve all those present and that people would go back and say "oh look so and so was here on Wednesday." It is part of that social-ness that happens at the NRLA.

JK: I see it as being more of a part of everything else that you have done, rather than a piece that stands alone.

AM: We're quite sensitive to what is going on in these photographs on a day-to-day basis. We have seen some people stop themselves from going to work or seeing a video installation because they want to be in the picture.

RF: Or they have been running out of one to one performances in order to be included in the picture.

JK: Last night I went racing out of the performance I was in because I had missed the first two photographs and wanted to be sure to be included in the rest of them.

RF: Yes, we are struck by how much people want to be a part of the piece. For them it isn't just about being an audience member, just watching and absorbing. It permits them to give some back as well.

JK: I think it is important to note that the NRLA is overwhelming for new audiences. My first year at the NRLA was last year and the first thing that I encountered was Franko B doing one of his actions where he lay on a draped table with a shunt in his arm. During the course of the action the table cloth was soaked with blood. This year, I walked in and immediately received a diary with helpful walks. I am really struck by the difference between the ways you are approaching the role of artists in residence. Both approaches are relevant, but obviously very different. A *Daily Ritual to Capture The Presence of Everyone* really brings people together. You meet people, you go to look at the photographs, and you *are* pleased that even though you are in the back you are still in focus...

RF: Well exactly. We came to the NLRA for the first time two years ago because we felt that we had to meet people. I hid in the toilets the entire time. Last year we were invited artists and it was a little easier. This year we are quite comfortable. It was only two years ago and we remember how daunting and terrifying the NRLA could be. That is one of the tasks that we set ourselves for our residency as well—to include people in a general way.

JK: The *Daily Ritual* is a facilitator for meeting people. Sometimes taking a very mundane action—in this case the group photograph—is an interesting strategy. There are certain rituals and ritualistic behaviors for which we immediately recognize the codes—such as the group

photograph. At this point, the photograph is—dare I say—a fairly universal phenomenon, at least in any country or culture that has experienced a camera.

AM: Exactly.

RF: People understand that they need to get in the picture and be part of it.

AM: It is definitely about creating that network or potential for networking and the possibility of facilitating relationships that wouldn't necessarily happen easily.

RF: It is much easier to talk to somebody when you have seen their work. We think that the picture allows people a point of commonality. You can say "I saw you in the picture" as an introduction.

AM: I also wanted to add that with the "swap shop" (*Now That's an Idea*) everything is going to evaporate. It's all distributed. Tomorrow people get to select a text not their own and bring it away (After the NRLA FrenchMottershead randomly allocated and posted the remaining texts to those donators who could not attend *The Taking*).

JK: That is another way that you are facilitating contact. People can meet while browsing through the texts. They can sit and talk, as we are, in the room where the texts are displayed. This room, which has books for sale, texts from *Now That's an Idea*, a place to sit and read, and lectures and talks is very nice. There was no room where someone could just sit last year.

RF: That is because of us.

AM: We also have activities going on in here that are not on the program.

RF: It would be nice in future years if some sort of café could be merged with this so that it would be more like a space that people could really sit and hang out.

AM: I disagree. The clink of coffee cups would sort of disrupt the piece.

RF: But it would get people here.

JK: All this is very subtle, and I was wondering why you structure your work in such a way that you are not obvious in what you do.

AM: Much of the work has its basis in overlooked everyday routines, so in that sense the work is embedded and is less obvious than a spectacle. Also we want to introduce the work at a level at which people can have a fuller engagement than with most other artworks. It's up to them to finish the work, to have that experience themselves. We're holding back that information. We're suggesting what to do and maybe how you are to do it but we are not explicitly giving them a full explanation about what the implications of those actions might actually be.

JK: Oftentimes you undermine traditional and expected behavior by asking the audience to do things that could potentially make them very uncomfortable or you place the audience under surveillance, like when you issued an instruction to someone in the Michele Murray queue "to move to the head of the queue." How does the audience respond to these guerrilla type interventions and if someone refuses do you permit the person an exit or do you force the action?

RF: There is always an exit because it is always only an invitation rather than a directive. We are not in the position of bullying people to try and make them do something. We invite people to do

something and if they want to that is great. One of our recent pieces, *Club Class* (2005, a microperformance club), which we did over the summer, does obligate people to participate once they are there, but this is an experience for which people sign up and pay their money to have that experience. In terms of the surveillance issue, that is slightly more blurred, I think, because we are watching people and we do include people in that surveillance. I think that we do it with a charm and a good humored approach. We are not embarrassing people. People did come up to us at the *Inbetween Time* festival (at the Arnolfini Gallery, February 2006), for example, and it was quite interesting how much people were willing to tell us (FrenchMottershead did *Reviewing Inbetween Time*, which involved placing the audience under surveillance and then reporting their results on the last day of the festival). People would tell us gossip, for example, or things that they would think that we would want to know for the review. They would come and tell us some things that were a bit below the belt. We would either make these contributions anonymous or put them in some sort of context. There was a real desire not to humiliate people.

AM: The range or level of participation that we get from the audience covers the complete spectrum from people who just think that they can sit out entirely to the other end of the scale with people that are really excited by the opportunity, by being given permission to do something that they wouldn't normally want to do.

RF: Or feel that they could do within the constraints of what it means to be a member of the audience.

JK: I think one thing that is interesting when thinking about your work is that there are different types of surveillance. We tend to look at surveillance as being always bad, but it doesn't necessarily have to be bad. In fact that goes along with the Foucauldian notion of power as not necessarily being "bad" or "good" but as a force that can be strategically deployed. I see your work as a way of reiterating or re-performing this action that has very oppressive connotations so that it becomes less negative, in fact not negative at all.

AM: Looking back at *The People Series* (an interactive microperformance game, designed for festivals that trades social interaction as a commodity which premiered at Manchester in 2003) the documentation for that piece was hardly the traditional documentation by video. This was documentation by sticking a little red dot onto people, which is a very social form.

RF: People did it themselves. They had the stickers on the cards and then they performed the actions on the cards and then they stuck the red dot on the person that was performed on.

AM: It was a way to record it, and then we went around and photographed the red dots.

RF: It was our documentation of their documentation of their performance. In terms of surveillance, the audience is all watching each other. It is all about who is performing for someone and who is sticking on stickers and who is wearing those dots.

AM: We look for the build-up of those dots.

RF: And then we ask if we can photograph them so that it becomes sort of part of the performance and part of the whole experience.

AM: It also kind of mirrors the way that we generate the material as well because it is mostly observation based—its observation and experience-based. Unfortunately we are voyeurs.

RF: Yes. And again with *The People Series*, everybody is invited to take part as they come in. Even if people chose not to do it they know what is happening. So first, that frames it for us, because people are watching to see what could be a performance but also there is a kind of

implied consent so people know what is happening. They are not being performed on by other audience members without their consent or without their knowledge. We explain first so that people know what is happening and so we're not just sitting in the back leaving people wondering if you are being clever.

AM: It is almost impossible, isn't it, when you are making work where you are asking people to give their impressions of the world that surrounds them to not include any aspects of surveillance.

JK: That is right. I see your work as very political work. It is not political in the sense that you are going out and critiquing Tony Blair or globalization...

AM: Yes, it seems the micropolitical is the way to go. It is also rather amazing how much the macropolitical is dictated by the micropolitical. Like even whether people like each other, or whether a person's hand is clammy.

JK: I think one of the things that theorists such as Judith Butler have stressed recently are potentially effective political strategies. One of the most important ideas in Butler's work is that the political takes place on the micro level and that the best way to enact change is at the local, or one on one level. That is why your work is so interesting. There seems to be quite a bit to be gained from examining what happens as the two of you move through the audience.

AM: We have been invited to colleges and done some teaching where we're trying to suggest to the students a different way of interacting with the people that run the college and to look at them again, to see how they perform in relation to them. We do a workshop at 9 a.m. and then in the afternoon we pose the same idea to the students but applied to the people that make the town run so that they question their relationship to police wardens, librarians, chambermaids. The hope is that you will relocate your relationship to people in institutional positions. And it is also the same within this sector (the NRLA). One thing that we think about is how we can operate and how we can work and improve the way that we communicate with people to develop strategies for our long term survival as artists.

RF: As artists we have critiqued the whole issue of networking as well. When we first came to the NRLA we were very nervous but we were told by Lois Keidan and Daniel (Brine) that we had to come and meet people because the reason that we weren't getting any work was that nobody knew who we were. So to try and help ourselves we had t-shirts made with slogans such as "I hope you don't think I am only talking to you because you might be good for my career." We could sort of somehow start that conversation while being aware that we were having these conversations and that this was very awkward and we weren't comfortable.

JK: And look what has happened. You have gone from doing true guerrilla performances (FrenchMottershead was not invited to perform in 2004 but did so anyway) and you are getting some press.

RF: I'll look over my shoulder and scan the room for someone more interesting to talk to.

AM: And our business cards.

JK: Could you speak a bit about your upcoming plans? I know that you will be presenting *Club Class* at the Tate Modern in October 2006. Is there anything else on the horizon?

Club Class will also be at the London's Institute of Contemporary Arts Feb 2007 which [along with Tate Modern in Oct 06] will form a part of a 4 venue UK national tour which we are producing, full details of which are to be confirmed.

For June 2006 we've been commissioned to do a microperformance project in Peckham Library, a Will Alsop-designed building in London.

We've also been invited by Nikki Milican to run one of the New Moves Winter Schools in 2007.

We're giving a talk on our work in Berlin April 06 and setting up some meetings there, which will hopefully lead to some work there.

We are looking to also do more *Shops* projects – where shoppers and retail staff are invited to create an art work that traces a network of personal purchases and draws them into a group ritual (as happened in *Five Shops* for the ANTI Festival, Kuopio, Finland, September 2005). And we will do a few more *Reviewing...* site-specific performances such as *Reviewing Inbetween Time* which we just did at the Arnolfini's *Inbetween Time* Festival in February 2006 that critiques audiences, not artworks.

JK: Before we end this interview, I'm wondering if you have any advice for artists that are planning to come to the NRLA for the first time next year (2007)?

RF: It's hard to be a stranger at the NRLA, and feel socially out of place, but it's expected and can be dealt with.

However, I think it's particularly alienating to feel creatively out of place. To experience other artists' work solidly for 5 days and not be part of that is hard for artists. So my advice (based on what we did when attending the NRLA for the first time in 2004) would be to look at your practice, look at the context the festival provides (a building with 500+ colleagues – artists, curators, writers, arts administrators and students – all milling around waiting for artistic experiences) and see this as an opportunity to show your work to a captive audience. Could you create a small work for the festival? How will it fit into the gaps that are available? You could place objects in the space. You could make a physical or verbal performance that you do in the bar for whoever is there. You could invite individuals to a quiet staircase and perform just for them. It could be anything as long as it's right for you and your work.

First-time artists can engage creatively with the NRLA and participate actively rather than passively – it's up to them!

JK: Thank you, Rebecca and Andrew, for taking the time to speak with me today. For those readers interested in knowing more about FrenchMottershead, you can consult their web site www.frenchmottershead.com.