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The power of heeling

A van pulls up beside you, and someone inside brandishing a camcorder asks you to put on some red shoes and get in the back. Despite the ominous nature of the request, don't run away screaming if this happens to you in Nottingham this weekend: it's all in aid of launching this year's nottdance festival and with a click of the heels. Whereas Dorothy fancied returning home to Kansas, MK Guth and her fellow American artists, Molly Dilworth and Cris Moss, will be whisking people across the city as part of this unique art project. "The idea developed from some work I was doing a couple of years ago," explains Guth from her apartment in Brooklyn. "I was working with mythological images, and I wanted to find a way to bring them out of a photograph or sculpture and make them part of real life."

That experience started with Guth giving a red, sparkly fashion overhaul to a collection of shoes-trainers, sandals and Prada knock-offs among them. After loading them into a van, the team would drive around a chosen city and ask strangers in the street if they fancied a lift somewhere. Donning whichever pair of shoes best suited them, these brave few would then click their heels and proclaim:

'There's no place like...,' wherever they wished to go, and the journey was on.

With the participants filmed and photographed during the trip, the final results eventually become part of a short film where the magic of editing brings *The Wizard of Oz* to life. 'They just say "There's no place like drinks with friends," and in seconds they're there,' says Guth. 'We edit in a spiral with music as they appear in their location. It takes everyday experience and makes it more phenomenal.'

Touching on topics including urban transport, and ideas such as transformation and fantasy, the project is also rather reliant on the trusting nature of the general public. After all, being asked to clamber into the back of a van with a group of strangers while they film you is usually the starting point for something rather less high-minded. So, naturally, the first place Guth and company tested out the service was the friendly, warm and safe environment of... New York City. 'The first time we did it in New York, we were prepared to be abused,' laughs Guth. 'And we were rejected a lot but it wasn't as bad as we thought it would be. Maybe because it's a big city and people are used to peculiar entities, but we actually found people were more wary in Portland, Oregon!'

Now Red Shoe Delivery Service launches this year's nottdance festival of contemporary art and dance in Nottingham. Guth has been doing her homework to ensure they can transport the citizens wherever their hearts desire. 'We've gone over a lot of books and maps, and researched local institutes and neighborhoods,' she adds. 'You have to, because you can't engage with a population without knowing the city,'

Afterwards, Guth will be heading to Australia to offer something slightly different from clambering into vans by creating a travel agency where people stand in front of a green screen and pretend they're in Paris or on the moon. 'You have to transform your way of looking at things to participate.' And with a click of her heels- or rather a click of the receiver- she's gone.

David Baldwin