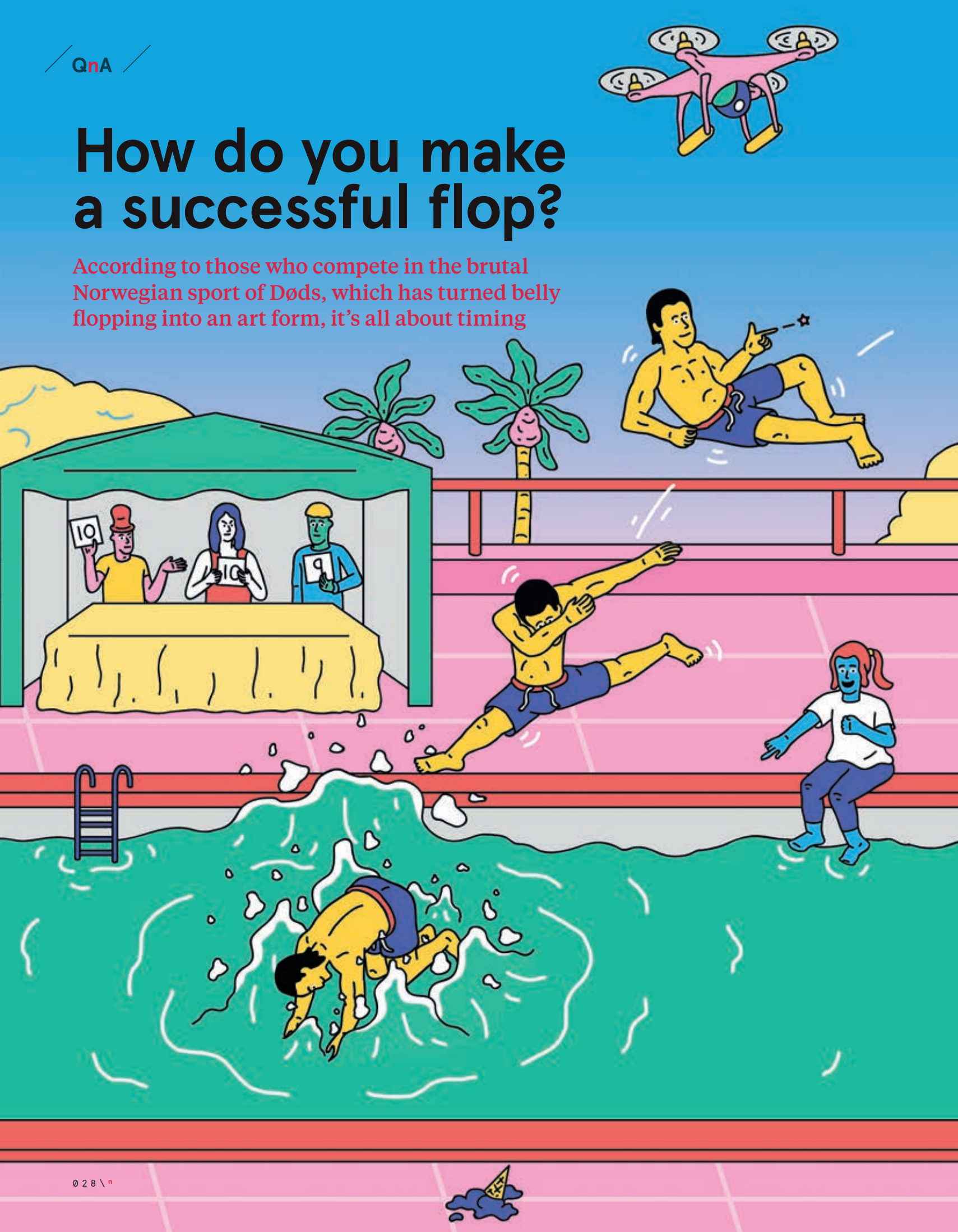


How do you make a successful flop?

According to those who compete in the brutal Norwegian sport of Døds, which has turned belly flopping into an art form, it's all about timing





Words/Rose Dykins → Illustration/James Clapham

Imagine launching yourself off a 10m-high diving platform, pulling some serious shapes on the way down, before curling up into a ball and hitting the water's surface at high speed. In the unlikely event that sounds like fun, then Døds might be for you.

Known in English as "death-diving", the Norwegian sport requires a high tolerance for pain and a daredevil psyche. Less like diving and more like extreme bellyflopping, it requires jumpers to absorb the impact with their bodies as they put on a show.

"It's about closing your body as late as possible before hitting the water's surface," says Paul Rigault, co-founder of the International Døds Federation. "You're judged by your speed off the platform and your style in the air – you might incorporate some kind of jogging or pointing movement."

The key to success, according to Rigault, is in using moves that give the illusion of flying longer than you actually do, to impress the audience. But then hovering in the air for too long can come at a price. "When a jumper fails to close well enough, it hurts like hell."

Døds began in Norway in the 1960s, when a few pioneers started performing insane jumps off the diving platform at the Frognerbadet public baths in Oslo – sometimes hitting the water head first.

Nowadays the practice has expanded to Sweden, Finland and Denmark, where competitors leap around 10–13m from all manner of platforms – including cranes and monuments. Events culminate in the World Championships, which take place at Oslo's Frognerbadet on 19 August.

There's a definite tongue-in-cheek element to proceedings. "We call Døds a cultural arrangement, rather than a sporting event," says Rigault. "It's about that classic summer experience, having some entertainment while enjoying beers and good music. We hype the jumpers like gladiators – they gain this rock-star status. And the after-party is as important as the main event."

Tickets for this year's World Championships are available via Ticketmaster

dodseforbundet.no, ticketmaster.no



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