

CENTER FOR TACTICAL MAGIC

Transporter



Transporter

A Social Witches' Cradle

The concept of the Transporter is based on the old medieval torture device known as a "witch's cradle", in which an accused witch would be placed in a sack and hung from a tree. The sensory deprivation experience would induce visions and hallucinations that were thought to punish the witch. However, in the 1960's and 70's people began experimenting with altered states for less disciplinary reasons. During this period, the "magic bus" also became an iconic site for such activity. In this vehicular version of the witches' cradle we are replacing the sack with a microbus, specifically a 1968 VW "Transporter". The windows will be entirely blacked out, and visitors will be invited to climb inside the darkened interior and recline on one of the waterbeds. On the outside others can push and swing the bus around as it is suspended just slightly off the ground.

Equal parts metaphysical technology, urban amusement ride, and a subversion of use-value, the Transporter is a sort of bizarre reckoning of 1960's radicality and the current political environment of torture and contemporary "witch hunts". The two vehicles used to create this Witches' Cradle – hippie bus and construction crane – serve as ideological opposites connected by a single strand. The crane – utilitarian, powerful, and imposing – is used to construct an ordered world that constantly rebuilds itself in an effort to maintain hegemony. At the other end of the equation, the idealized "magic bus" of '68 represents a free-wheeling, sub-cultural drive towards a more autonomous, optimistic and empowered society.

While the crane's cable essentially tethers the bus, limiting its movement, it also enables it to perform the impossible and transcend the physical laws that usually keep it grounded. Although it floats just slightly off the ground, the suspension is enough to allow free movement in any direction with little effort.

The journeys that travelers have taken over the years in these buses have often extended beyond the borders of nation-states and into the far reaches of altered states of consciousness. Accommodating multiple people at a time, our new vision of the Transporter is a social witches' cradle designed to continue the journey and deliver its passengers to magical destinations within the socio-political landscape.

To manifest this project we would need the following:

- a construction crane capable of lifting a minimum of 4 tons + operator
- a 1968 VW microbus
- black vinyl for the windows
- suspension straps or cables to lift the bus
- 3-4 free flow waterbeds + framing materials (easily available on Ebay)
- a designated outdoor location

The crane can either be a large construction crane or a smaller hydraulic tractor crane capable of lifting the bus. The bus does not need to be driveable, but may require a custom paint job. Additional costs involved include vehicle transport costs to the site, and possibly, lighting, signage, and staffing at the site.

Transporter

Additional Comments...

Theoretically, the Transporter should function in much the same way as its historical counterparts and produce altered states of consciousness for the passengers/travelers. I haven't tried this yet in bus-scale, but on a smaller scale it is quite effective. Obviously, trying to achieve altered states is nothing new, and it is often treated either recreationally or esoterically but rarely is it attempted socio-politically.

My personal feeling is that those who attempt magical journeys are often thwarted by their own passivity or, conversely, by their pre-determined expectations. One hope with this project is to structure a journey that accounts for both the past and the present in specific ways rather than in general terms, such that one might glimpse an obtainable (and desirable) future. This is conceived as an active structuring of the travels (or perhaps the mode of transportation) without over-determining the destination.

Specifically, the Witches' Cradle aims to invoke a history of institutionalized torture that parallels a current attitude within state affairs. At the same time, the Witches' Cradle presents a precedent (or at least a conceptual proposition) for subverting the tools of oppres-

sion and using them for a sort of self-liberation/transformation. This blend of historical context and contemporary context hopefully facilitates a vision of a (brighter) future context.

I suppose the attitude is one of cynical idealism; an acknowledgment that things are pretty ugly and hope that things will get better if we restructure our approach. Is this an effective strategy? One can only hope and try. The goal here is not say, "Torture is bad." Everyone agrees with this. Nor is the goal to normalize torture by making it flashy and fun. If I were to try and limit this project to a single, main goal I would say it is to create a unique space wherein one can begin to contemplate a course of action rather than dwell on the past or the present. Perhaps this strategy exists somewhere between discursive metaphor and interventionist action.

As sub-goals, this project hopes to reposition legitimate metaphysical practices outside the realm of new-agey anachronisms by producing occult tactics with everyday materials. Ideally, this serves as a model for all sorts of other transformational activities.

