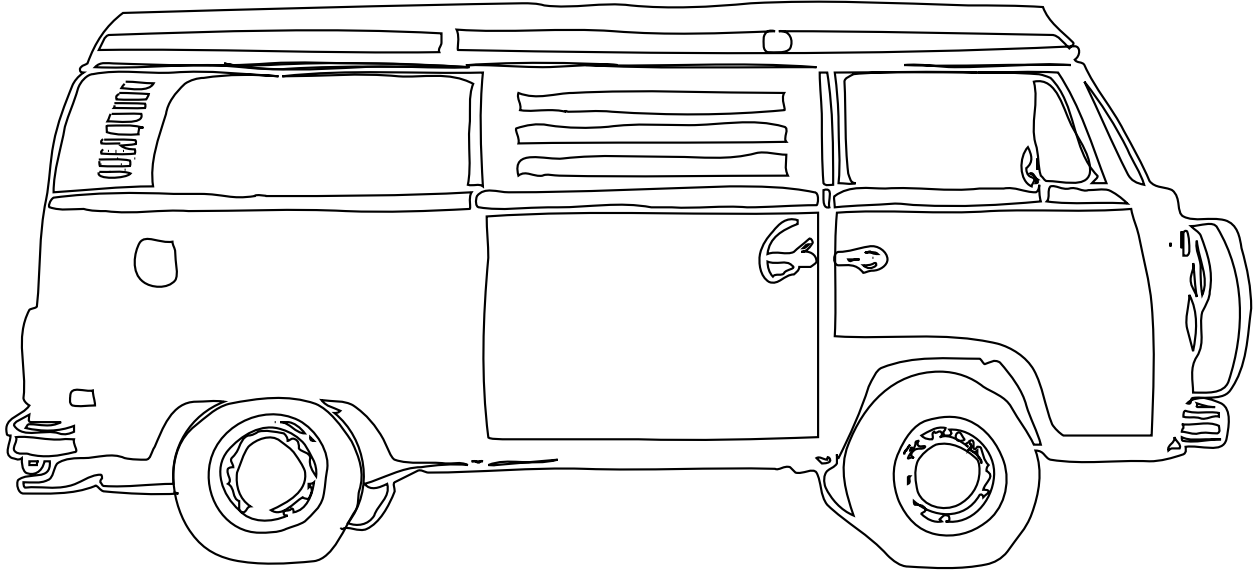


Project Proposal by Robert Labossiere
11 Lobb Avenue, Toronto ON M6J 1N1
416 537-0466 admin@klooj.net

HIPPIE BUS



By May 24, barely two weeks after the great demonstration of May 13, approximately ten million workers were on strike in France... Calling everything into question, the students were able to generate an enormous enthusiasm for the re-examination and criticism of all aspects of public and private life.

- Sylvia Harvey, "May '68 and Film Culture"

Hippie Bus is a project that reflects on the idealism of the 1960s, the protests and other manifestations of growing liberal values, and the social and cultural changes that evolved over the following decades up to the present.

The project involves the acquisition of a VW transporter-type microbus and "decorating" it with graphics that reflect critically on the question of what the 60s meant at the time and mean today.

On the following pages, there are a description of the project's stages and components, an artist's statement, and additional background materials.

Materials

A 60s or 70s VW bus (type T2) will be sought out in the local community using advertisements or by searching Craig's List or Kijiji, or by simple word of mouth. The bus may be purchased or it may be volunteered by someone who is willing to have their bus painted for free. The bus should be in working order, preferably licensed or licensable.

Design

The public and local artists will be invited to join the artist in a conversation about the 60s, alternative culture and critical values, then and now.

Ideas for bus graphics will be developed collaboratively and sketched out in the gallery (as a studio) or using another available local space or via other media.

Production

Local auto body shops will be asked to sponsor the project, donating a custom paint job or doing the work at wholesale cost. Another option is vinyl, the more common way of applying graphics to vehicles these days. This is a more expensive option, but if a local sponsor can be found, it could be possible. It is also an option to paint the bus by hand, the same way most vans back in the day were decorated.

Exhibition

The completed bus will be parked during gallery hours as close to the gallery as possible in whatever parking space can be arranged. Sketches and other materials generated during the design consultations may be presented in the gallery or otherwise, online for example.

Public program

An artist's talk or public forum on "the 60s: then and now," could be held before, during or after the project.



Once you start looking, you find there's no shortage of vintage VW buses around, some in poor condition and others, like this one for sale in Hadashville MB, very well maintained. Vans can be found through Craig's List and Kijiji and also through Facebook's marketplace, some for less than \$1000.



Capital, 1968
serigraph created during the Paris
riots

Source:
<http://library.vicu.utoronto.ca/exhibitions/posters/>
"On May 16th, art students, painters from outside the university, and striking workers decided to permanently occupy the art school in order to produce posters in support of the striking workers. The posters of the Atelier Populaire were designed and printed anonymously and were distributed for free."
Source: <http://www.art-for-a-change.com/Paris/paris.html>

Publication

The Hippie Bus Colouring Book is made up of four printed outlines of a VW microbus captioned by quotes about the 60s, the idea being for people to colour the drawings with their own graphics. The book will be for sale during the show. T-shirts could be done also, an outlined bus that people could draw on using textile inks.

Artist's statement

Many people think of the 60s as a time of idealism, the promise of which was not realized or worse, squandered by a rebellious and spoiled "baby boom" generation. That view is belied by the facts. Without doubt, the 60s represent a significant cultural "turn," when major advances were made in the areas of women's rights, gay rights and civil rights. Progress continued to be made on these fronts in subsequent decades.

Protest and civil disobedience were powerful levers of change in the 60s, and moved in concert with wholesale changes in culture, music and art. The 60s were a time of major shifts in both attitudes and expectations how social life and public institutions should work.

Today, however, we cannot deny that much of the idealism of the 60s, particularly ideas of superseding middle class conventions, like living closer to the land outside the capitalist economy, were not, or merely minimally, realized. Indeed, capitalism and consumer culture were largely unaffected and perhaps even strengthened by a movement that was so tied to appearances.

The Hippie Bus project is situated within these conflicting successes and disappointments. In this context, the project has an obvious ironic aspect but, at the same time, potential to promote critical engagement not only with the ideals of the 60s but also with the issues of today.

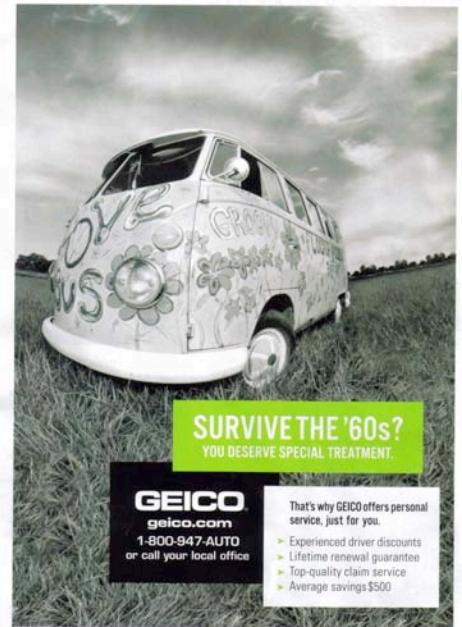


Additional notes

Hippie Bus started out like many art projects do, arising out of a mix of feeling and thinking, memory and present experience. There was an emotion, in this case nostalgia (I once co-owned with my sister a VW van that she painted by hand one summer), curiosity (What's happened to all those vans from the 60s anyway?), wishful thinking (Wouldn't it be nice...) and no small measure of critical concern about the conservatism of our times, my economic precariousness as a working artist, and descending economic recession.

If the Hippie Bus project is about contradiction, it comes by that honestly. The "caravan," as it is known in Europe, has an interesting history, described well by Sean Topham in the recent book *Informal Architectures*¹. From its inception in the late 19th C, Topham notes, the caravan concept was conflicted. One of the first people to embrace the concept, Dr. W. Gordon Stables, builder of The Wanderer (pictured at right) sought to mobilize all the amenities of the comfortable middle-upper class home while other builders saw the caravan experience as a kind of forgoing of the usual comforts in order to experience a more adventurous and independent way of life. However conflicted these two concepts of leisure were, the caravan attracted enthusiasts and development continued apace on both sides and in between, from a vigorous and innovative community of DIY builders of boxes on wheels to corporate manufacturers of sophisticated trailers like the Airstream and high end luxury RVs. In the space between these extremes, the mobilehome evolved to become an affordable housing alternative that today shelters 25% of American families.

The hippie bus also has an inherent mythological aspect. For his project for the Münster Sculpture Fair, re-instituted for each fair since its first iteration in 1977, artist Michael Asher specifies a location in and around the city of Münster where a caravan is parked for the duration of the fair. In 2007 the caravan was stolen (or anonymously moved). It took three days before it was finally spotted. According to writer Stephan Pascher, the Asher caravan is becoming a thing of legend for the local residents, especially since the "theft."²



¹ Sean Topham, "Caravans are Cool," *Informal Architectures* (London: Black Dog, 2008).

² Stephan Pascher, "Phantom Limb: Michael Asher's Sculpture Project," *Afterall*, (Spring 2008).