

TAPIS VOLANT

REVERSE CULTURAL
ENGINEERING

HEHE



Founded in Paris by Helen Evans and Heiko Hansen, both graduates of the Royal College of Art in computer related design, Hehe is an artists' collective whose work aims to rethink the existing technological systems that surround us, namely transport, public advertising and pollution monitoring, to give them a new social and critical usage. They see the development of technology as a kind of fractal image, at the centre of which lies the original invention, surrounded by a cluster of later, increasingly marginal innovations. This cloud of recursive innovations prevents us from seeing the up-to-date potential of the original invention, thus fuelling endless successive refinements. By going back to the core invention and navigating freely through time, space and culture, Hehe believes it is possible to reinvent an older technology without accepting long-established conventions. For this they use an artistic process they call reverse cultural engineering: starting from the original concept of the invention, they re-imagine the design decisions that were at some point in history considered unfavourably, but that could be equally valid for tomorrow. It is a clever conceptual hybrid between détournement, re-appropriation and a sort of fantasy design archaeology.

Train and Flying Carpet are early outcomes of such a method. Between urbanism, vehicle design and automation, Train explores the aesthetics of movement and travel. Inspired by the Paris railway track 'La Petite Ceinture', which ran along a busy ring road and ceased operation in 1934, Hehe drew on the origins of the railway to propose an individual

perpetuated vehicle. The individual train raises questions about the reality and 'real fiction' of traffic, challenging the language and aesthetics of transport, particularly those that have become so ubiquitous and unquestioned. It has also a poignant nostalgic and poetic relevance, as the vehicle potentially reveals hidden and disaffected parts of a city. Train recalls Tarkovsky's 1980 movie *Stalker*, in which the three protagonists enter the forbidden 'Zone' after a long rail journey made on a self-powered rail trolley. Flying Carpet is another vehicle of the same series. Installed on the disused tramline running through the centre of Istanbul, it becomes a timeless transport design that exists only in the imaginary world of fiction, yet stimulates our thoughts on what transport is and could be.

[above]
Tapis Volant
2005

Wheels, battery, motor, switch,
wood, foam, textile



Tapis Volant
2005

[top]
Saint Denis, France

[bottom]
Driving along Istiklal Avenue for
'Vehicles of Registration and Omniscient
Observational Mechanics workshop'
(VROOM) at 'Istanbul Fragmented'