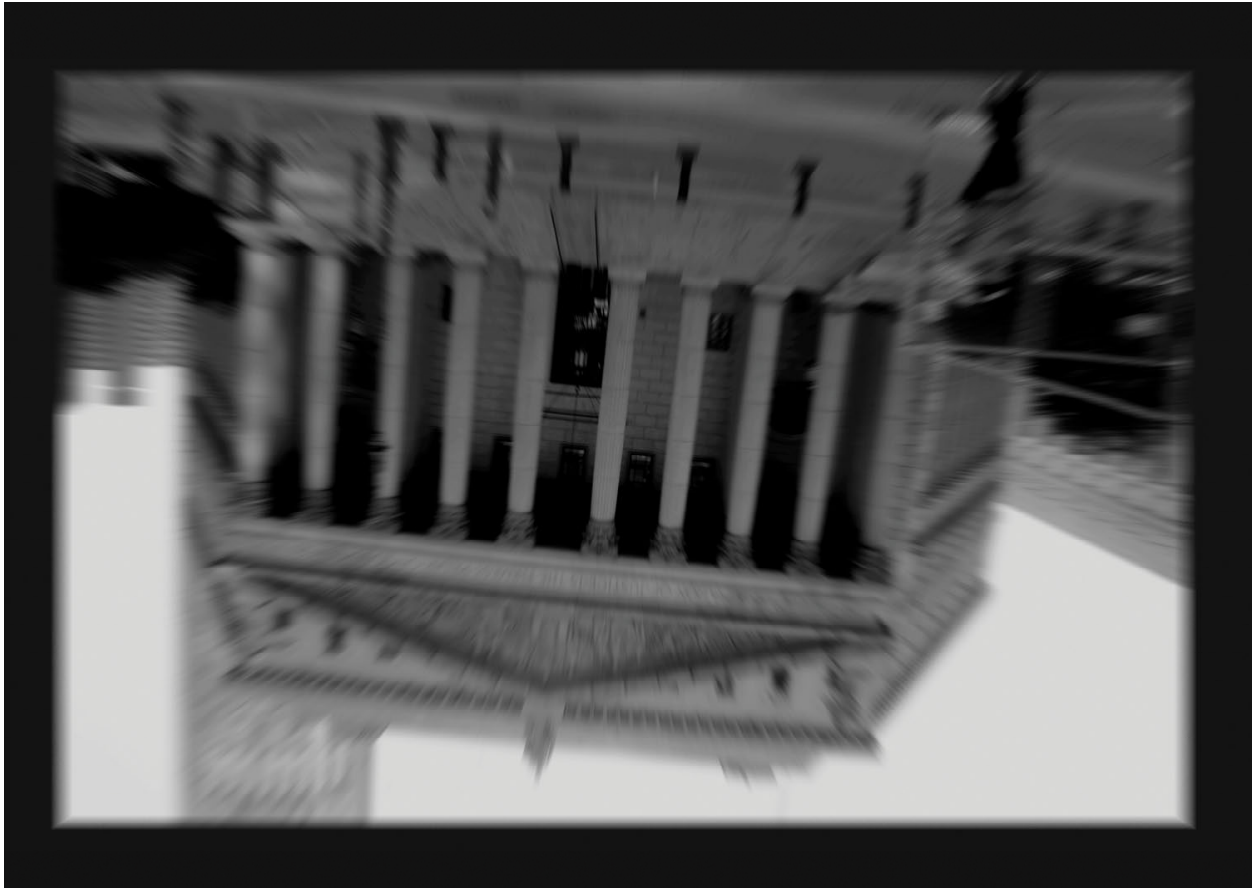


caravan tour — an inverted world

A Proposal for a Transportable Camera Obscura for the Courts of Lower Manhattan

The Lower Manhattan court buildings in their neoclassical grandeur and scale endure as visual tropes of the *solidity of the power of justice*. As we approach the State Supreme Court the body is dwarfed; we shrink in the presence of justice. The rhetoric of power is replete with metaphor; and depending on one's relationship with the power of the state, for the court is the arbiter of the state, this experience contains a multiplicity of meanings, at once sublime and intimidating.



caravan tour — an inverted world transposes the rhetorical power of the edifice of the court by first capturing and then subjecting its image to interrogation. The project proposes a different *projection of justice*. Through the use of a room size camera obscura, a shift in scale and inversion of the facade is achieved—the inversion of the sign, shifts what is signified, and by implication meaning is altered (and in this case also exposed).

The **camera obscura** (Lat. *dark chamber*) is a simple box or small-darkened room into which an image of what is outside is projected using a small hole, and sometimes a simple lens, in one of the sides of the box or room. The image is always upside-down. With a small pinhole the sharpness becomes diffracted, giving a flared or windswept appearance at the edges of the image.

Below is described two versions of this project—one stationary and one roving. The basic concept remains the same for both with the differences being dependent on cost and what might be or not be possible in such a high security area.

The first, and simpler version, calls for a stationary caravan, installed directly facing the court buildings. The caravan will be converted into a walk-in room size camera obscura (as described above). The real-time image projected on the wall, a wall size inverted and slightly distorted State Supreme Court. The image on the wall—a Supreme Court balancing upside down on the apex of its cornice—with a slightly windswept appearance at the edges, contrasts to the solid authority of the original subject standing just outside of this private enclosed space. The *real time* experience of being within an enclosed darkened space in proximity to the actual building gives the impression of participating in clandestine activity, a surveillance if you like. Once the image of the standing on it's head court is implanted in the mind's eye of the observer the *outside world* is forever altered. The court is henceforth perceived differently despite its seeming impervious edifice.

The second, and preferred, version of the project proposes a motorized caravan (or medium sized box truck); and calls for a larger interior space to accommodate seating. The seating is securely anchored facing the *projection* wall—one or two rows of theatre seats. The route is a slow circuitous tour of the unified downtown court system—the projection a slowly moving real-time inversion, one edifice following another—criminal court, housing court, family court, supreme court, federal court, other adjacent buildings and back again. This slow methodical journey, one building turned on it's head after another, a shadow of justice as they pass on the wall. A secretive drive-by movie, the *real* subject outside solidly still as the audience moves by in its dark and clandestine enclosure. The caravan picks up and drops off a new audience on a regular schedule.



caravan tour—the inverted world a Hegelian world of inversion—a mirror of the phenomenology of the experience of consciousness. As consciousness becomes conscious, as consciousness becomes conscious of the fact that it is self-conscious, we watch the silent projected image and in it we recognize our relationship to the exterior world from the point of view of a human-scaled interior perspective.

Duration: unlimited

Location: Foley Square and vicinity, New York City

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