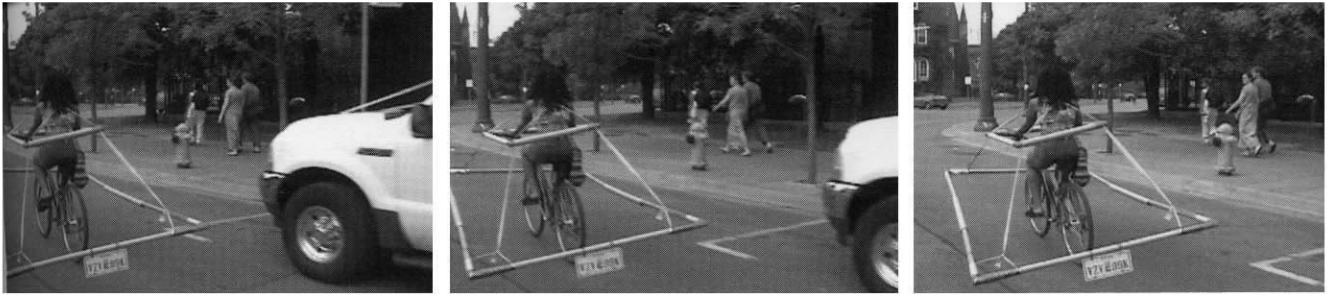


**FREE**  
**parking**  
**space**

## Elementary Exercises in Auto- Intervention

THE PEDESTRIAN MOB



PHOTOS: Christopher Smith

### *Yours to Recover*

### FREE PARKING?

We started the Free Parking Space project because cars are responsible for creating road rage, oil wars, air pollution, and patterns of sub/urban development that are socially isolating and inhospitable to pedestrians. The idea emerged as an amalgam of concrete critiques (critiques of concrete) concerning the ways that cars both contribute to larger global problems, and creates an unhealthy urban environment.

In constructing a car-sized model that can be worn by an individual pedestrian or cyclist, we are not only drawing attention to how cars consume space, money and resources, but also trying to encourage others to independently liberate and reclaim the privileged space that the car occupies in our economy-driven society.

As a response to the wasteful, destructive, and alienating effects of automobile culture, we advocate creatively freeing parking spaces—for performance, for play, and for engagement with the politics of pedestrianism and public space.

Cars take up too much space and are usually occupied by one only person—our project tries to highlight this absurdity by reclaiming the space of the car for a single pedestrian or cyclist.

Cars are isolating, based on the principles of enclosure and separation—the transparency of our model invites engagement and interaction with whomever is “driving.”

The entire structure of our city is based around automobile traffic and parking—our project encourages others to build and disseminate autonomous pedestrian infrastructures that adamantly assert public right to public space.

Cars are inessential—our project points to the fact that most people living in major urban centres don't need to own a car, and that some parts of the city would be better off without them altogether.

### *Autonomous Pedestrian Infrastructures*

We started out with an idea—an idea to construct a skeletal model/framework the same size and dimensions as a car, that you could wear as a pedestrian or on your bike.

We meditated for a while on our choice of building materials, finally settling on cardboard fabric rolls that we could scavenge on recycling day. The design itself came about through a spontaneous, collaborative process in a park on a sunny Saturday afternoon involving hyperactive kids, out-of-work builders, ganja-smoking anarchists, and random passersby.

After putting together the prototype and taking it for a test drive, we ran into some old-school bicycle activists who said that they had seen something similar 20 years ago in Montreal. We discovered that the earlier models—which were constructed out of wood and attached to a bicycle frame—were developed by Le Monde à Bicyclette for an event called “The Space Demonstration,” in June 1981. Due to the clumsiness of these earlier models, they were generally used en masse for singular demonstrations, while our lightweight, strap-on cardboard model lent itself to more creative, everyday sorts of intervention.

Our model is by no means perfect, but it is functional, relatively easy to construct, and can be made for free using scavenged and/or recycled materials.



### *Car(e)less Driving*

On the afternoon of June 9th, 2005, a few people took the Free Parking Space models down to Toronto's Yonge-Dundas Square, in support of an anti-car installation ("Attack #9: Oil Kills") being presented by the Montreal-based l'Action Terroriste Socialement Acceptable (ATSA). While leaving the installation, the group was accosted by two bike cops who had been harassing cyclists at the Critical Mass ride a few weeks earlier. After blocking the bike lane for more than 20 minutes, and further endangering cyclist traffic, the police left the group with two tickets for "car(e)less driving" each worth \$325 and several demerit points.

With free legal support offered by Toronto's Advocacy and Respect for Cyclists (ARC), the case is being contested and should go to trial by the summer of 2006.

The pedestrian mob encourages you to build upon, expand, and perfect the idea of the Free Parking Space, in order to creatively liberate the streets of your neighborhood from the insidious domination of car culture. Check out the basic "how-to" package that we put together at [pedestrianmob.net](http://pedestrianmob.net) and share your own stories of auto-intervention!