

On the 'Sedan Chair' and *Crowd Shroud*

By Pippa Garner



Of the many strange and wonderful devices man has created to lug his posterior from point A to point B, elephant-riding to skateboarding, one that holds a special place in history is the Sedan Chair. Consisting of nothing more than an elaborately enclosed chair straddling a pair of lifting poles (zero moving parts), this study in minimalist mobility displays in action the extremes of social stratification: the privileged passenger and the subservient bearers, leisure and drudgery, master and slaves. Riding in a sedan chair, an aristocratic personage is displayed, raised above eye level and passing at walking pace. The sedan chair fortuitously anticipated advanced technology: the hovercraft and mechanical suspension systems (neither of which rivals the original in sophistication).

Crowd Shroud

The rich and famous of modern times would consider such blatant pomposity vulgar. The tabloids and other media now do the dirty work of personal publicity indirectly and in minute detail, freeing celebs of the need to parade before their fanbase. So a modern iteration of the sedan chair would hide the person-of-interest behind mirrored one-way windows. And the elegant anatomical suspension, dependent on a degree of fitness rare in our sedentary society, would necessarily be downgraded to a set of wheels. Still, it would be fitting to reintroduce the sedan chair, as *Crowd Shroud*, if only to offer another option in the vehicular portfolio.