

A NATION OF SPEED at the National Museum of American History
Content Document (excerpted)

Spectacle of Speed

Evel Knievel (1975)-Daredevils and the Spectacle of Speed, Jumped 14 Greyhound Buses

Artifact: 1972 Harley-Davidson XR-750

Artifacts: Knievel Jump Suit and Boots

Interactive: Calculate Knievel's speed, angle, and thrust to see whether his motorcycle lands correctly on the opposite ramp or crashes

Interactive 5: Calculate Knievel's speed, angle, and thrust to see whether his motorcycle lands correctly on the opposite ramp or crashes

The purpose of this interactive is to allow the visitor to see that the stunts of Evel Knievel were more than just pure sportsmanship where speed was a crucial factor. The Knievel motorcycle from the NMAH collection is currently designed to hang in the entrance of the gallery to welcome visitors to the exhibition. This interactive will help showcase the motorcycle's connection to the thrill of speed. In order for a motorcycle jump to work, numerous factors need to be taken into account such as friction, the angle of the ramp, and the speed at which the motorcycle leaves the ramp in order to travel the right distance. This interactive will showcase the importance of understanding the physics of speed in a way that may not be obvious to most visitors. The interactive could include clips from actual jumps if they can be located in sufficient resolution.

Visitors will enter the gallery underneath Evel Knievel's motorcycle, which will be suspended as if it were "jumping" off a ramp and into the air. The motorcycle will serve as distinctive marker to draw visitors in since they will not be expecting to see that artifact in the National Air and Space Museum.

Since "Speed and the Popular Imagination" is a bridge between the two major units, it could take up its own standalone space and/or integrated into appropriate locations (i.e., Evel Knievel's motorcycle)