

The New-York Times - USA
May 30th. 2002

- HOME
- JOB MARKET
- REAL ESTATE
- AUTOMOBILES
- NEWS
 - International
 - National
 - Politics
 - Business
 - Technology
 - Science
 - Health
 - Sports
 - New York Region
 - Education
 - Weather
 - Obituaries
 - NYT Front Page
 - Corrections
- OPINION
 - Editorials/Op-Ed
 - Readers' Opinions
- FEATURES
 - Arts
 - Books
 - Movies
 - Travel
 - Dining & Wine
 - Home & Garden
 - Columns
 - Fashion & Style
 - New York Today
 - Crossword/Games
 - Cartoons
 - Magazine
 - Week in Review
 - Photos
 - College
 - Learning Network
- SERVICES
 - Archive
 - Classifieds
 - Theater Tickets
 - Premium Products
 - NYT Store
 - NYT Mobile
 - E-Cards & More
 - About NYTDigital
 - Jobs at NYTDigital
 - Online Media Kit
 - Our Advertisers
- MEMBER CENTER
 - Your Profile
 - E-Mail
 - Preferences
 - News Tracker
 - Premium Account
 - Site Help
 - Privacy Policy
- NEWSPAPER
 - Home Delivery
 - Customer Service
 - Electronic Edition
 - Media Kit
- Text Version

SEARCH Go to Advanced Search/Archive
Past 30 Days

The New York Times Executive Education Center
Looking for Advancement in Your Career?
[CLICK HERE]

Foggy by Design, With Built-In Dew

By FRED BERNSTEIN

YVERDON-LES-BAINS, Switzerland — IT was nearly lunchtime on a sunny day recently when the manager of a sidewalk cafe here asked Ricardo Scofidio, the visionary New York architect, to move his briefcase off a chair. And not politely. "He's unhappy, because he thinks the cloud is driving customers away," Mr. Scofidio explained.

The cloud in question, which had thrown the cafe into shadow, was being generated by 31,400 tiny nozzles hidden in a steel structure suspended a few yards away, over Lake Neuchâtel. The much publicized work of Mr. Scofidio and his partner, Elizabeth Diller, the \$10 million, football-field-size structure was underwritten by the Swiss government as part of the \$1 billion Swiss Expo.02, which opened on May 14 and runs until October.

A long translucent ramp leads from the fairgrounds to the building, which is more cumulus than Corinthian. Think of it as a giant humidifier on stilts.

The architects are not sure what to call their creation: Ms. Diller doesn't like "cloud," which she thinks has kitschy connotations, but her preferred term, "blur," is difficult to translate into the four Swiss languages (French, German, Italian and Romansch).

The blur is only one of a number of unusual buildings, including a "pain pavilion" in which visitors are pelted by hanging rubber tubes, and an entirely dark room in which blind people serve drinks. But it is the Diller & Scofidio work that has attracted most of the attention, in part because it is an architectural high-wire act.

The partners, known for their gutsy redesign of the Brasserie in New York, are, in Mr. Scofidio's words, "always proposing things in advance of the technology." In this case, they dealt with various failures of pipes and filters.

That was not the only wrinkle. At one point, Mr. Scofidio said, building officials insisted on a sprinkler system. "We explained that the building is a sprinkler system," he said.

There was also a tussle with the police over whether boats would crash

into the mist-shrouded building. So far, none have.

The nozzles are governed, via a laptop computer, by Mr. Scofidio and a project architect, Dirk Hebel. As winds, temperature and humidity change, they tinker to get the cloud to stay where it belongs (over the lake, not the cafe). They are "teaching" the computer to ultimately run the system on its own.

The architects' effort seems to be paying off. Some 800 visitors an hour grope their way through the cloud. Squeals of delight issue from all directions. Some visitors wear clear plastic ponchos (distributed free), but umbrellas are strictly forbidden (lest anyone be stabbed).

On the top deck is a series of lavatories. "I knew that if you were up here for any length of time, you'd want to go," Ms. Diller said.

There is also a bar — serving nothing but water.

The architects were still perfecting it three days into its run. "We need more over there," Ms. Diller told an Expo official, pointing to an area where the vapor coverage was sparse.

For Ms. Diller and Mr. Scofidio, getting the blur working turned into an all-nighter. They took Expo officials on a moonlit tour, guided through the building by tiny bulbs embedded in the walkways. Mr. Scofidio described it as a kind of near-death experience.

Though local tourism officials would like to keep the cloud (which graces phone cards, lottery tickets and even souvenir chocolates), the architects say it will be demolished by year's end.

The work of Diller & Scofidio will be the subject of a retrospective at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York early next year. By then, the blur will be just a memory. It is, after all, "an experiment, not a monument," Mr. Scofidio said.

- E-Mail This Article
- Printer-Friendly Format
- Most E-Mailed Articles
- Reprints

ARTICLE TOOLS SPONSORED BY STARBUCKS.COM



Start the day informed with home delivery of The New York Times newspaper.

[Click Here for 50% off.](#)

[Home](#) | [Back to Home & Garden](#) | [Search](#) | [Corrections](#) | [Help](#) | [Back to Top](#)

Weather
[Create You](#)
[Sign U](#)

SHO
NYT Guic

[Buy this](#)

DID
You can sol
Times cross
[Click here t](#)

RE
 Search
 Search
 Find Cc