

July 11, 2007

World's Fair to Have Walls Made of Water

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Filed at 3:01 p.m. ET

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. (AP) -- Walking through walls will be possible and even encouraged. When next year's world expo opens in Zaragoza, Spain, fairgoers will encounter a building with walls made of thin sprays of water. Inside, there will be normal building stuff: a cafe, an exhibition space and overhead lighting.

The water will come from thousands of little jets that can be switched on and off, rapid-fire, by computer-controlled sensors.

The resulting effect will enable images and text to scroll in the water walls. Or as a person approaches, the sensors could shape the water flow to make a door appear anywhere in the wall, and then close it after the person ambles through.

The 5,400-square-foot building also can vanish in moments, as the roof can be lowered from its 16-foot height all the way to the ground.

Surely these are cool tricks, but so what?

The [Massachusetts Institute of Technology](#) architects who developed the idea say it's a boundary-pushing artistic statement, in the tradition of the Crystal Palace and White City of long-ago world's fairs. Current estimated cost is about \$3 million.

"One of the dreams of architecture in recent years has been to create reconfigurable, interactive, dynamic buildings, but of course if you do it with bricks it's not so easy," MIT researcher Carlo Ratti said.

Yet this is not purely whimsical. The theme of the Zaragoza fair is water and sustainable development, and Ratti points out that by using all recycled water, which in turn provides evaporative cooling and no need for air conditioning, the building has a low environmental footprint.

And even if other buildings aren't about to be made of water (ice hotels, notwithstanding), Ratti says future structures should adopt the water pavilion's goal of "total control of every single element, so nothing gets wasted."

On the Net:

Computer-animated demo: <http://digitalwaterpavilion.com>

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