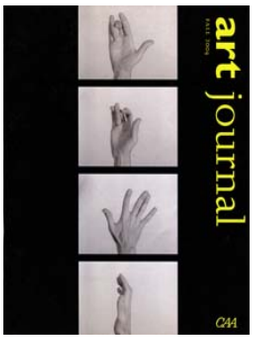

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Patricia C. Phillips

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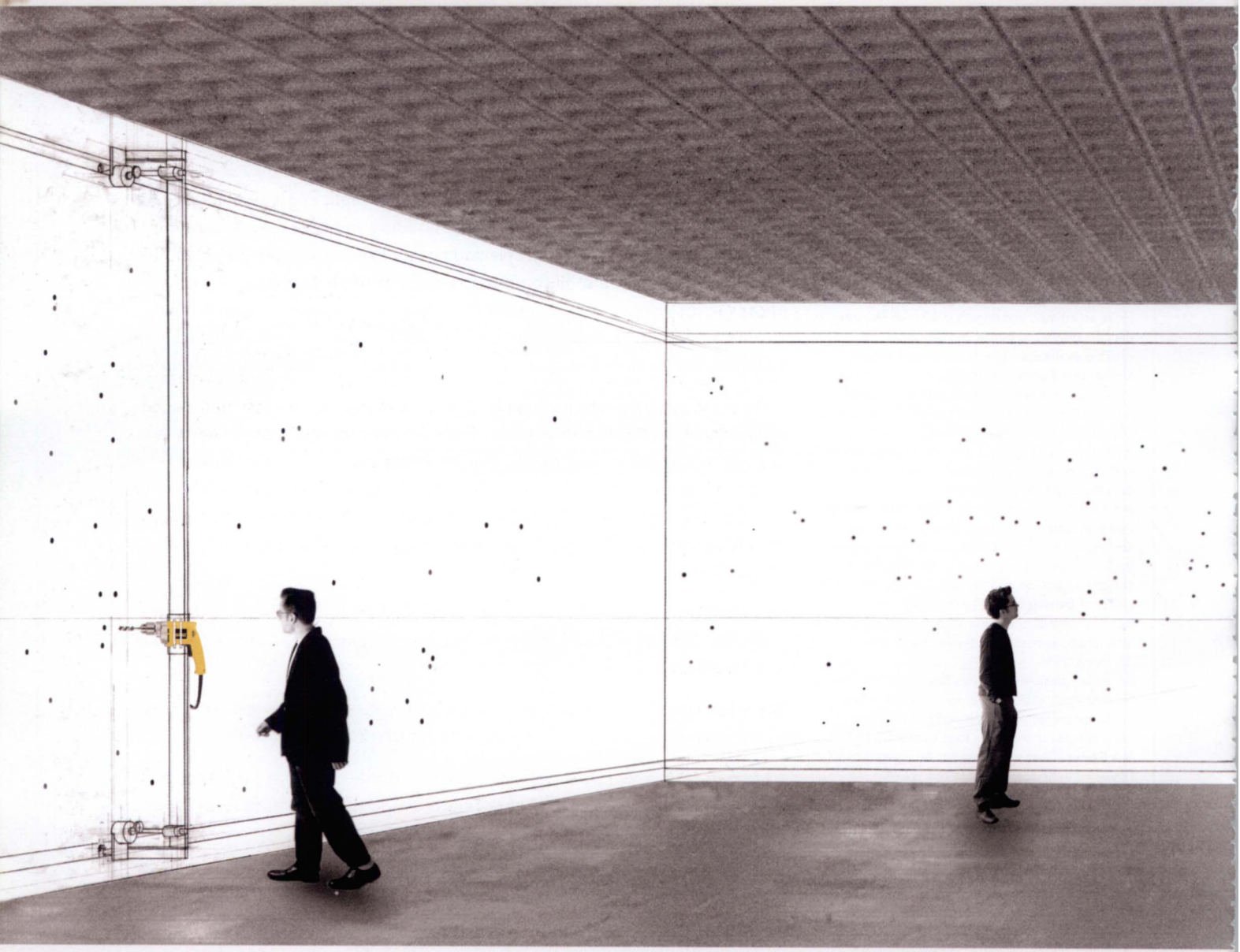


Mural, 2003. Digital rendering of installation view, Whitney Museum of American Art.

Patricia C. Phillips

A Parallax Practice: A Conversation with Elizabeth Diller and Ricardo Scofidio

Patricia C. Phillips: I think it would be interesting to begin by discussing your recent exhibition, *Scanning: The Aberrant Architectures of Diller + Scofidio* at the Whitney Museum of American Art in spring 2003. I imagine that it was a fascinating challenge for you and an important opportunity for viewers to encounter for the first time or reexamine and reconsider the many dimensions of your practice. In its aftermath, perhaps having had some time for reflection, what did you learn from this process and experience of planning a retrospective? You undoubtedly considered afresh your extensive body of work. Do you feel that you made new discoveries or gleaned unexpected insights on your own practice, its development and future?

Elizabeth Diller: The notion of looking back and assembling a body of work was antithetical to the work itself. The work doesn't cohere into a body. We decided right away that the project was to embody this problem.

Phillips: So the problematic genre of the retrospective exhibition became a subject of inquiry right from the beginning.

Diller: Exactly. We had to put together a bodiless body. It was inevitable that once we brought together many discrete, site-specific works, a supernarrative would form. We had the choice to help write that narrative or to try to make legibility impossible. The first strategy would question the need for spatial separation between works. The second would reinforce the need. As architects, the natural place to start was rethinking the role of the white wall and its alleged neutrality. We ultimately subdivided the fourth floor of the Whitney into galleries, one discrete space per work and systematically, over the duration of the exhibition, destroyed that separation with the roaming and errant robotic drill (*Mural*, 2003.)

Phillips: You had to find a way to articulate, exploit, and represent the ambivalence you felt, as well as the inherent tensions or contradictions in this kind of exhibition project.

Ricardo Scofidio: It was a difficult process, in part, because we were working with two strong curators who had their own stories to tell about our work.

Phillips: K. Michael Hayes, adjunct curator of architecture at the Whitney, and Aaron Betsky, director of the Netherlands Architecture Institute in Rotterdam, organized the exhibition. Had they ever worked together?

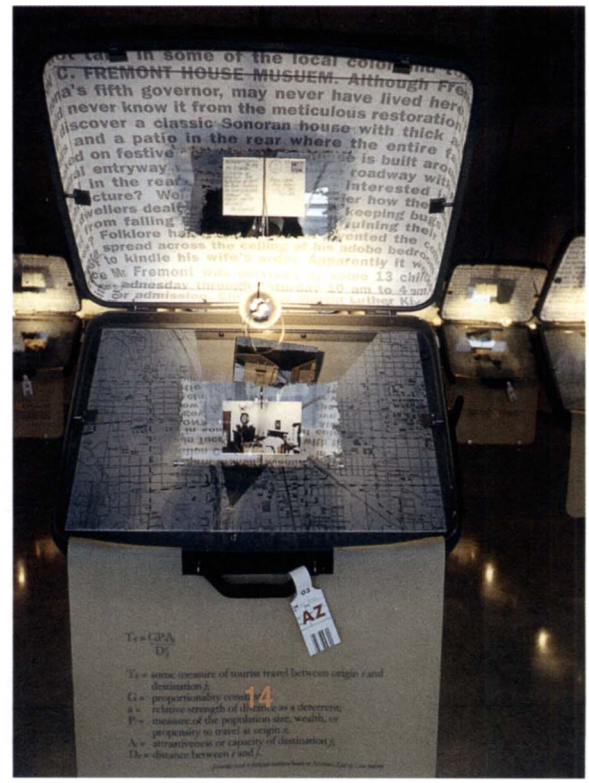
Scofidio: No, I don't think so. Aaron Betsky had hoped to inaugurate the exhibition at the MoMA San Francisco, but left to accept the position in the Netherlands. Meanwhile, Michael Hayes was relatively new to the Whitney and was launching its architectural program. It was fortuitous they came together around our work.

Phillips: I know this request to critique the retrospective may be premature. You undoubtedly feel that you are still in recovery!

Diller: We continue to reflect on the show and our behavior. Even though we knew the retrospective was to be curated by Hayes and Betsky, our impulse was to make it into a self-reflexive project and thus to curate the show ourselves.

This interview took place in New York on November 13, 2003. The transcript was reviewed and edited by Elizabeth Diller, Ricardo Scofidio, and Patricia C. Phillips.

The exhibition *Scanning: The Aberrant Architectures of Diller + Scofidio*, organized by K. Michael Hayes and Aaron Betsky, was on view at the Whitney Museum of American Art from March 1 to May 25, 2003.



***Tourisms: suitCase Studies*, 1991. Installation view and detail, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis. Multimedia. 10 x 60 x 30 ft. (3 x 18.3 x 9.1 m) Photographs: Glenn Halvorson.**

Phillips: Given your process, this is very natural. It was a project in which you had fully engaged the subject matter—or the problem, as you suggest.

Diller: It became very clear that the curators had a different motive. I guess it is not surprising. They were thinking about how to present us: as architects, artists-architects, or architects who are artists. The question had to be decided: was this an exhibition of the creative productions of architects aimed at introducing an art audience to a less familiar shade of architectural production, or an installation in and of itself? Ultimately, it was both.

Scofidio: During the past few years we have expanded our interests to built architecture. Was it better to focus on this newer work or should the show reflect a range that included our earlier practice? The only certainty I felt was that the old work felt mummified and the new work needed exposure.

Phillips: The retrospective is often a process of reification. It crystallizes—materializes—a history of a practice. I think it is often a contradictory or conflicting experience for living artists and architects.

Scofidio: Yes. Some critical reviews failed to acknowledge the age or chronology of the work. It was not just current work.

Phillips: Clearly not. I think I first saw *Tourisms: suitCase Studies* in 1991. In many ways, it remains very fresh for me, but it is one of your older projects. It is important to contextualize this and other work.

Diller: It is interesting that architecture critics generally wrote favorably on the

show, yet several art reviews were highly critical. It seemed to demonstrate the continued endurance of disciplinary boundaries.

I wish we could go back and revisit how the exhibition was packaged. The curators strongly identified us as border crossers between art and architecture. For us, however, the work is always processed through an architectural filter. Of course, many of our earlier works were without regulatory, budgetary, and programmatic constraints typically associated with architecture. And we used an array of media and dwelled on seemingly extra-architectural themes such as tourism, globalization, conventions of domesticity, and visuality, but the work has always been about space.

Phillips: These questions have been central to your work for a long time. I find the different readings of your work from art criticism and architectural criticism very interesting. It is exactly this hybridity that draws me to the work. But I can understand that it can be a liability and create a critical dissonance.

Scofidio: Although critics often write about the formal aspects of the work, we would prefer the discourse to focus on the content. Of course, we had no influence on the curatorial voice that was used in the exhibition. And I think this was a bit of a problem for the curators themselves, who were advised that wall texts had to be simplified for the general public. They felt that this degraded a number of ideas in the exhibition.

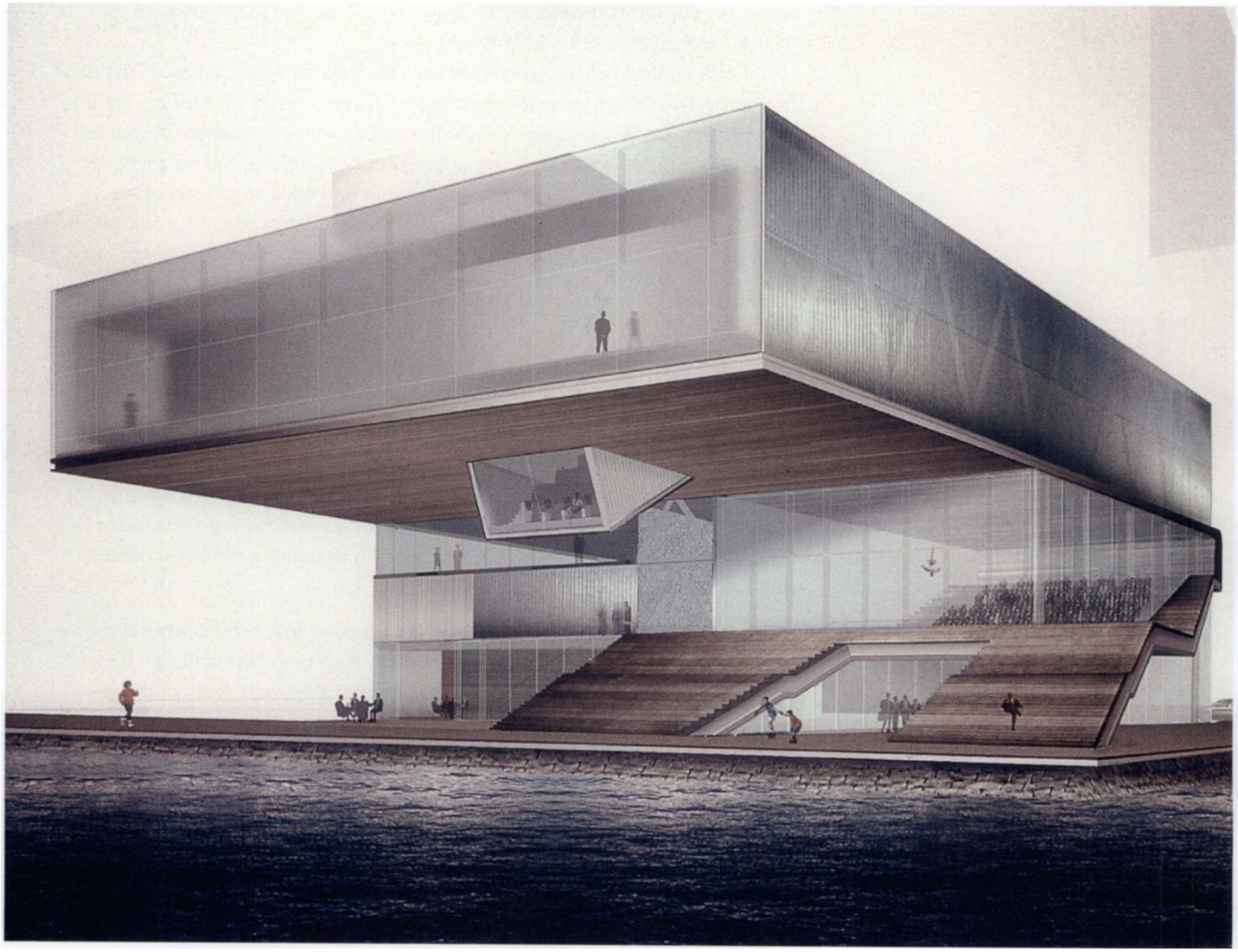
Diller: The show was well received and well attended. We were shocked at the number of people who made multiple visits. We have talked about the difficulties and frustrations of doing the retrospective. On the other hand, much of this work had never been seen in New York and there is something ultimately satisfying to have a major show in your own city.

Phillips: At different moments, you both have mentioned turning more attention—that your practice is moving more—to architecture. Perhaps this question continues, this art-versus-architecture query. A common concern or lament is that when artists or architects who have been very conceptually and theoretically inclined move to more "pragmatic" projects (buildings, public spaces, public art), they often lose their critical edge. There is the worry, perhaps justified by personal experience or historical evidence, that creative possibilities and criticality diminish in a more practical or physical realm. A significant conceptual divide is perceived between theory and practice, art and architecture. Although it may feel like an old and worn issue, it is not easily dismissed. I am sure you have thought about this as you continue to design more buildings.

Diller: Yes, we do hear this all of the time. Our work is not on a predictable course—from works on paper, to installations in public spaces, to large projects for public institutions.

Phillips: I don't think that your work has ever followed this kind of linear, logical accretion of scale and program. Your work continues to be very discursive.

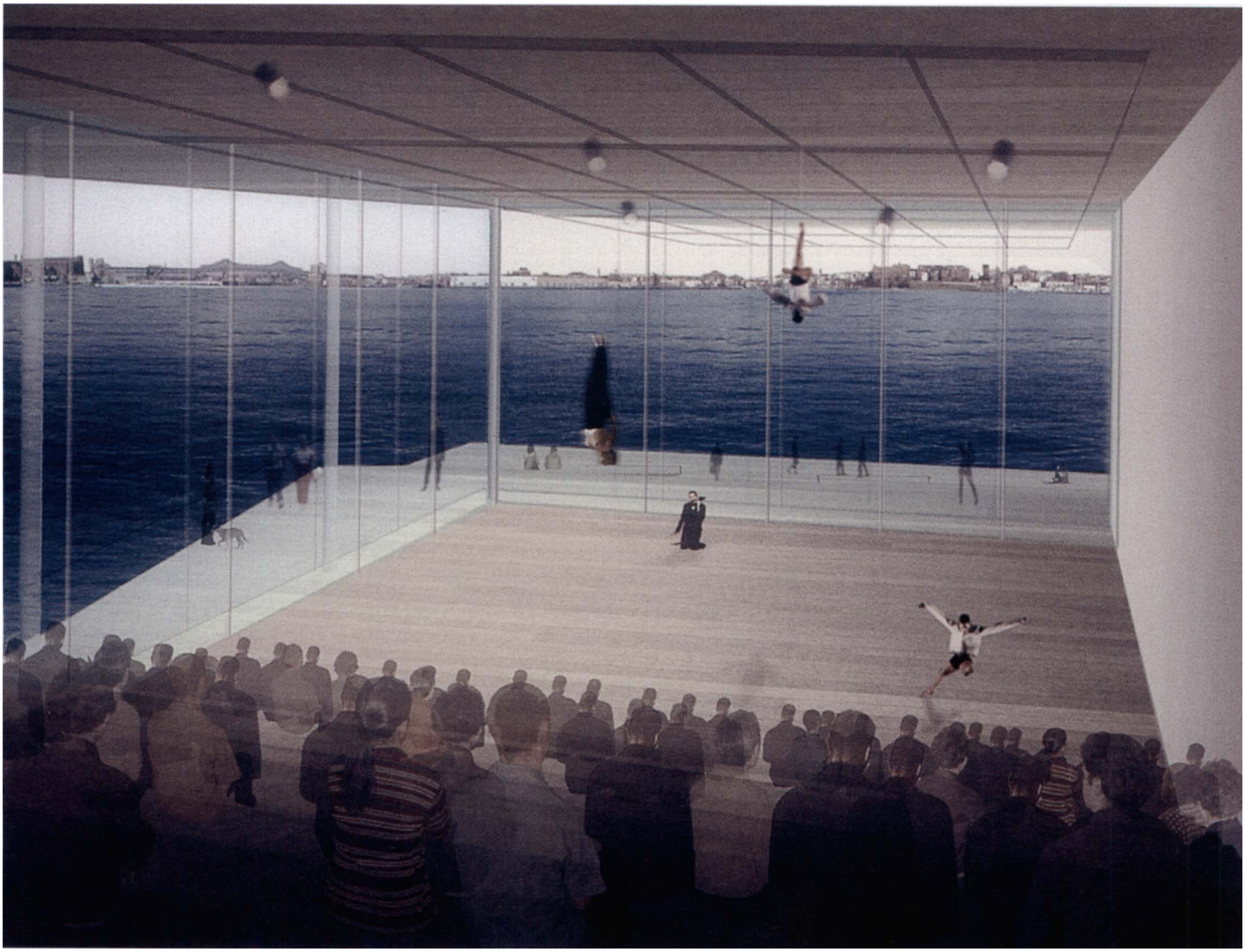
Diller: Chance has a great deal to do with it. Right now, we happen to have a group of great architectural projects. But we were given these opportunities based on our earlier, conceptual, and independent work. As architects, we haven't had to build a practice in the traditional way. In many respects, we are free agents, and



Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, 2001. Digital renderings of northwest view and of theater with stage walls open. Projected completion: 2006.

when an opportunity comes our way that interests us, we are free to engage it. We also are free to decline a project. Each of our current projects has a unique challenge that introduces a new level of complexity we have never met before. For example, some of the larger public projects require a high degree of administration and management; this too is new for us. It can be onerous and frustrating, but on the other hand, the management and politics of urban public projects allow us to engage with any number of interconnected systems. While there is a notching up of complexity, there has not been a relaxation on the conceptual dimension of the work. It is exciting to have the work realized before a broad public and to make permanent contributions to cities. In the past we never chose to stay in the margins just because the work had an esoteric nature.

Phillips: As you have discussed, with the Whitney retrospective you seem to find a kind of excruciating satisfaction in orchestrating the frequently difficult dynamics, limitations, and constraints presented by different projects and circumstances.



Scofidio: As I think about the earlier work, limitations and constraints were always there: budgetary constraints, political constraints—many of the same issues we have encountered with the larger projects. The most significant difference, however, may be that we generated our own problems in the earlier projects, whereas architecture carries with it an external program. We do, however, always find ways of integrating our independent agendas into the program and the work.

Phillips: Another distinction is that many of your earlier projects were temporary—time-sensitive. There were exigencies and a limited duration. Like the historical tradition of exposition architecture, the work was planned and built for ephemerality. While we accept that architecture also has a life span and generally is not enduring, with some of the new buildings and projects there is an entirely different temporal dimension that must require a different way of thinking about the work. This adds another level of complexity. How do you build something that remains fresh and sustains a criticality over a number of years? How do you build something now that continues to represent the "contemporary" well into

Eyebeam Museum of Art and Technology, New York City, competition phase, 2001. Digital rendering.

the future? These must have been issues as you developed your concept for the Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston, for example.

Diller: This is the power and challenge of architecture. We currently are working on two buildings that are devoted to contemporary art: the ICA, as you mentioned, and Eyebeam in New York, a museum and production/education facility for new media. Eyebeam, especially, resists architecture. New media, as we know, is by nature fleeting. It defies definition.

Phillips: In this case the program itself is errant—phantomlike.

Diller: It is an interesting conundrum. Architecture is the most materially cumbersome and geographically fixed form of cultural expression. How can it represent a moving target, such as new media or other urgent cultural and social issues?

Phillips: So do you try to make something that is perpetually amendable or introduce elements that signify the imminence of change in a space? Are there strategies that you find particularly useful?

Diller: Rather than introduce elements that actually transform, we try to introduce concepts that will endure over time or can be reread indefinitely. This is not an appeal for a new classicism, though. I rather think of Duchamp, whose work is perpetually aggravating. How can an idea remain urgent? That regardless of the materials and other physical evidence, the idea maintains an active currency over time?

Scofidio: We also try to avoid the kind of stylistic gestures that might "fix" a building. To a degree, our hope for a museum is that the artists themselves, as well as others who use or work in the building, will introduce change. We are trying to create an architecture that is neutral enough to allow and invite other interventions over time.

Phillips: And these interventions can occur with visitors, viewers, and others who encounter the building. Their participation can create, actually or metaphorically, a fluidity and agency for architecture. It is a relational aesthetics that remains very dynamic.

Diller: Our earlier independent work in art, theater, and dance has influenced our perspective on museum architecture. We necessarily had to consider a position in the reductive argument between, for example, Gehry's Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, in which the architecture plays the role of protagonist, and Herzog & de Meuron's Goetz Collection, in which the architecture passively serves as a neutral background to art.

Phillips: So you locate your ideas about the contemporary museum somewhere in the points between these extreme positions.

Scofidio: No, somewhere off the map.

Diller: We understand the liabilities of an overexpressive architecture, but we also understand the problem of creating an architecture that does not recognize its power as an instrument of the museum experience.

Scofidio: It is a partnership. And this is where working within a very tight budget can be a problem or a blessing.

Phillips: The project for the ICA continues and expands on a number of ideas that have interested you. The site and form of the building create a fascinating and intricate relationship of public and private space. The building literally defines and enfolds a remarkable public space. Like a public amphitheater, there is a great sweep and procession of stairs to the entrance. The building's elevations and windows all insinuate the complexity of watching and being watching—an endless hypervisuality. Do you feel that some of these rich conceptual ideas have not been fully developed or deployed as a consequence of external limitations?

Scofidio: I don't think that our ideas have been compromised. We generally feel the impact of the financial constraints in the expression of the materials and detailing. For example, it would be better to have mullionless glass throughout the building but we just can't afford it. But we are still able to hold on to the gesture even without the desired finesse.

Diller: Building on a limited budget is an iterative process: value engineering, designing, value engineering, designing. There is the constant back-and-forth between the intended idea and the reality that architecture is formed by forces outside the architect's control, such as the scheduling of building-trades workers for the Big Dig in Boston or the hoarding of steel in China. You're at the mercy of endless vagaries.

Phillips: There is a lot of chance. Architecture seems like such a highly regulated endeavor, and yet there are so many uncertainties and contingencies.

Diller: It's dynamic and nonlinear.

Phillips: I hope that I am not misrepresenting his position, but in his essay "Display Engineers," Aaron Betsky suggests that the profession of architecture is dramatically changing.[1] There are so many professions that establish standards, make decisions, and build buildings that the role of the architect is becoming that of the artist or visionary—the creative agent concerned with display. This is not what you describe.

Scofidio: Certainly there is a strong desire to brand buildings by signature architects, but most good buildings are a product of militant defense strategies by architects. A building is a collaborative product of a multiple and diverse expertise directed by the architect as commander.

Diller: I think Betsky is referring to the professionalization of increasingly smaller morsels of the field that the architect as generalist once controlled. The nature of control is different. We, as control freaks, now control the experts.

Phillips: Clearly, you practice full-immersion architecture.

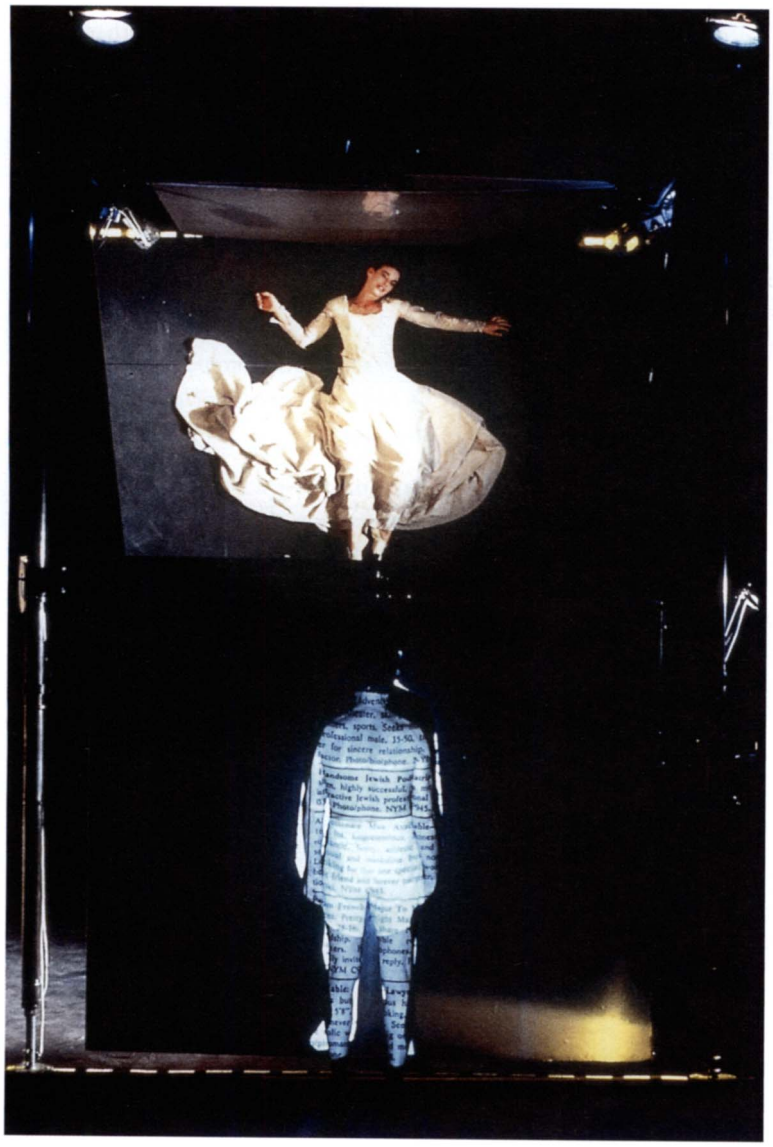
Scofidio: You have to be fully involved and vigilant throughout the process.

Phillips: I just saw *Trisha Brown: Dance and Art in Dialogue, 1961–2000* at the New Museum, so perhaps this question is influenced by my experience. But as I looked back through your projects, it seems that dance and performance have provided a very fruitful laboratory for you. I see the genesis and refinement of ideas about space and visuality in these works. And the collaboration with choreographers and directors seems to have offered a very dynamic model for your own practice. Do you think these creative opportunities have seeded and shaped many of your critical ideas?

1. Aaron Betsky, "Display Engineers," in *Scanning: The Aberrant Architectures of Diller + Scofidio* (New York: Whitney Museum of Art, 2003), 23–36.
2. The 1987 collaborative theaterwork by Diller + Scofidio and director Susan Mosakowski was based on Marcel Duchamp's *Large Glass* and marked the centennial year of Duchamp's birth. It premiered at La Mama Experimental Theater in New York and traveled to the Painted Bride Art Center in Philadelphia.

Scofidio: They have been very important. They were some of our earliest opportunities. I think of *The Rotary Notary and His Hot Plate (Delay in Glass)*, for example.[2] The work proved to be prophetic of aspects of our later projects.

Diller: In the past decade the core of our work was museum-commissioned installations and works for experimental theater. Now we are designing the theaters and the museums. We feel we are equipped for the task because we have spent so much time on the other side of the wall. But this does not mean a permanent shift of focus in the work. We would jump at the opportunity to work with the right director or choreographer. The last few theater pieces have concentrated on the problem of "live" versus "mediated," and we still have a lot of work to do on this issue. Culture presumes mediated experience to be of a lower order than authentic experience; mediated is considered qualitatively less than "live."



***The Rotary Notary and His Hot Plate (Delay in Glass)*, 1987. Theater piece directed by Susan Mosakowski. Performance shot, La MaMa ETC, New York City. Photograph: Michael Moran.**

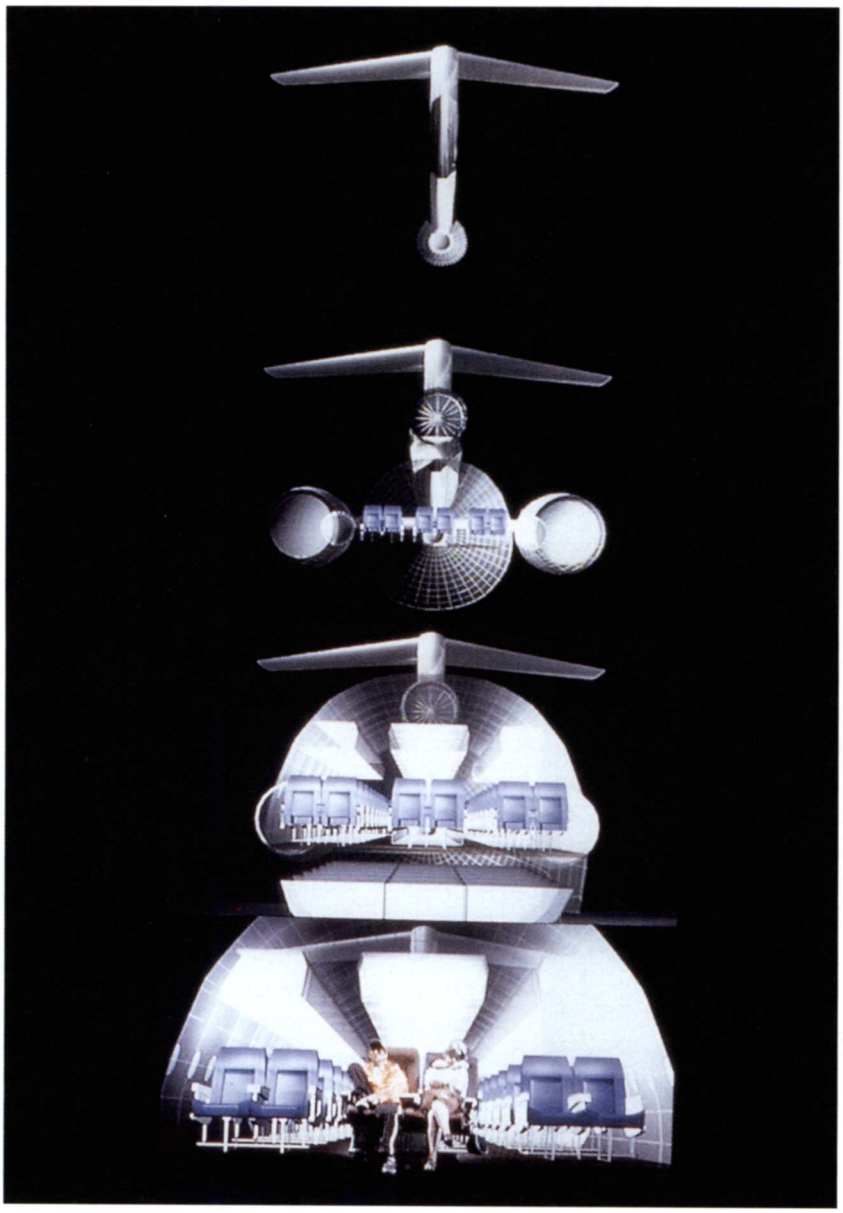
Scofidio: A more salient question might be, what is not mediated?

Diller: One has to wonder why people still go to the theater. Why does theater survive when audiences have access to many forms of mediated entertainment at the touch of a button? Is it an antidote to our media-inundated culture? Clearly, there is something about the space of performance that is still desirable, but not at the exclusion of these different forms of experience. Contemporary audiences are equipped to deal with multiple registers of information. It is particularly fertile ground to consider gradations of "liveness" and mediation such that the categories might ultimately become indistinguishable. This theme is also explored in our architectural work. So, you are right. It has been a great laboratory. And over the years we have developed a thirst for directing a production ourselves.

In all of our collaborations, we worked with directors and choreographers from the very inception of a project, developing a visual language, staging principles, and content. *Jet Lag* (1998) was the closest we came to jumping off that cliff. We initiated the project with two true stories we wanted to intersect. The pair of stories on obsessive and thwarted travel were inherently undramatic and for that reason we wanted to put them on stage. We invited a director and a writer. But as soon as the temporal development came into play, as well as the work with the performers, we realized we didn't have the skill set we thought we did. The director Mariannne Weems did a tremendous job.

Scofidio: We always step back from those areas where we feel we don't have the expertise.

Diller: Yes, but I think we were delusional for a moment. Won't it be great to have this creative authority? We collaborate frequently with writers, but to put it all together ourselves remains a big reach.



***Jet Lag*, 1998. Theater work, collaboration Diller + Scofidio and Marianne Weems. Digital rendering in collaboration with D-Box.**

Phillips: Something that seems promising for the future, perhaps.

Diller: The temporal dimension of theater is very different from architecture. Architecture is slow. The lapsed time between conception, development, and realization is attenuated over years. The space between inspiration and the encounter with the public is completely disconnected. There's a great deal of satisfaction in the immediacy of theater —between conception and audience response.

Scofidio: This was what was so important about our early pieces. They were fast. They came and went in two to three months and ended up in a New Jersey landfill. We had incredible opportunities to observe reactions and responses to the work in real time.

Phillips: Many of these early projects offered interesting, compelling little snapshots that served as instigations for more ambitious work. Certainly, for many of us your most breathtakingly dramatic project is the Blur Building (2002) created for the Swiss Expo 2002 on Lake Neuchâtel in Yverdon-les-Bains. Formlessness is an intriguing idea. And if anything can constitute formlessness, which is a contradiction in terms, it is this ethereal, ephemeral project. I think it is quite a brilliant and subversive project in the history and context of exposition architecture that has a long, distinguished history of display. I don't want to ask you to do another post-mortem as I fear I did with the Whitney retrospective, but what are your thoughts about this featureless, formless, and errant building?

Diller: The project stemmed from a critical look at the tradition of heroic, nationalistic exposition architecture.

Phillips: The best and brightest. A hyperbolic display that is generally momentary.

Scofidio: The Blur Building was like a Polaroid. A fast project that was incredibly difficult. And we knew it had a limited lifetime.

Diller: It was a new opportunity and responsibility for us. Unlike many of our other projects, this project in a world exposition presented the responsibility of making a work for a mass audience. Prior to this, we never thought much about audience. Our work in museum and theater contexts unconsciously targeted distinct subcultures of which we were members.

Phillips: This does seem to be a critical juncture and change for you: the scope of the audience and the way that you think of an audience for your work. The Blur Building and ICA have shifted the scale significantly. Previously, you often related to a self-selected, overdetermined audience. Now you are dealing with an inadvertent audience, as well as changing publics over a considerable duration.

Diller: The Blur Building had to work for an audience of every social and economic group, young and old, culturally diverse.

Phillips: In some respects, you were engaging a genealogy of the audience.

Diller: Absolutely. This was a landmark for us. We knew we would not be talking to a constituency of highly informed arts and architecture enthusiasts who generally follow our work. We felt that if we couldn't reach a broad cross section of the population, the project would be a failure. In the end, Blur was successful because it translated for intellectuals, such as Hubert Damisch, who wrote about the project twenty years after his important book, *Theory of the Cloud*, as well as for the typical eight-year-old. A visit to Blur was mandated for all schoolchildren in Switzerland.

Scofidio: One thing that continues to intrigue me about the Blur Building is how different and distinctive the process was for us. With most of our other projects, we develop a concept with some knowledge of how to execute it. But when the Swiss government selected our team for the exposition, it felt like we had jumped out of an airplane without a parachute. How do we take on nature? How do we make a microclimate? It was tough, and the solution came down to the wire.

Phillips: I can imagine the anxiety this project must have produced. Fog is a rather unmanageable material. Even in relatively stable interior conditions, it is wildly unpredictable. To create something at the scale of an exposition building and at the mercy of weather, wind, and the elements must have been daunting.

Scofidio: We always work with collaborators who have the expertise in areas we don't, but in the case of the Blur Building we realized there was no such thing as a cloud engineer. We consulted with the Japanese artist Fujiko Nakaya, who first realized a fog structure for the Osaka World's Fair. Her initial impression was that our objectives were untenable.

Diller: But she didn't give up on us, and during prototyping it was her idea about irregular nozzle concentrations that saved the day.

Scofidio: Everybody we spoke to with any experience with fog warned us how unmanageable and unpredictable it is. If the humidity is too high, the fog just grows

above and following pages:

Blur Building, Yverdon-les-Bains, Switzerland, 2002. Four views. Cable-supported structure with 30,000 high-pressure fog nozzles. Dismantled. Photographs: Beat Widmer.

and grows out of control. In the case of our site, there was the risk that the "building" could spread to the highway and completely obscure visibility for motorists. On windy days, the fog could just blow away from its source. Despite these troubling warnings, we were determined to defy nature.

Phillips: It is interesting that the material could be controlled—that it sustained some formal consistency and integrity. It was not entirely inchoate or shapeless. It was this kind of internal tension that made the project so evocative and seductive.

Scofidio: We had to teach ourselves a lot. Much to our surprise, we may be the foremost experts on fog at the moment.

Phillips: Conceptually, what have you taken away from your experience with this project? Does it make you think differently about the nature of architecture, the relationship of stability and instability in buildings, or what a building can be? So many of your projects interrogate the visual, watching and being watched, and surveillance. The Blur Building intensified these experiences and ideas; it blurred, diminished, and subverted visuality.

Diller: Absolutely. People visiting world expositions expect to see nationalistic displays and representations of progress. In any case, they expect to see something!

We decidedly wanted to defy these expectations. To make a building in which there was nothing to see and nothing to do. It was a building about nothing.

Scofidio: The reality of the architecture profession is that one successful project often makes—or marks—a career and typecasts the architect. When we finished the Brasserie (2000) in the Seagram Building, restaurant entrepreneurs called from around the country and abroad. We wanted to move on; we had no interest in designing endless restaurants. The Brasserie was of particular interest because of the perversity of its location: in the windowless basement of the premier glass-and-steel building of the modernist era. The opportunity allowed us to rethink the legacy of modernism at the same time as the culture of dining. Fortunately, no one has asked for another Blur Building.

Diller: We're often asked about the application of the Blur Building to future work and permanent projects. Formlessness and atmosphere may have a currency in architectural theory at the moment, but we see no direct application of this project to future work. The project was indulgent, and it needs no justification through further application.

Phillips: I agree that the question of application is problematic, but my interests are more conceptual. How does this project fit into a larger view of your practice

and some of the enduring issues that have driven your work and continue to preoccupy you?

Scofidio: Many of our projects explore the relation between technology and space. With Blur, the technology was extensive, expensive, and very complicated—both hardware and software—but our intention was to sublimate the technology into only and simply effect. It was like a magic trick. A great effect that took a lot of artifice—and few asked how it was done. Architecture is nothing other than special effects.

Phillips: You may poach something from an earlier project without repeating its effects.

Scofidio: We rarely repeat ourselves and just shoot for the next challenge.

Diller: But there is an evolution of ideas and the Blur Building is very much a part of this. We've taken concerns that were addressed in the theater into this project, such as flirting with attention span and redefining spectacle. We had to ask, how do you make a spectacle that is not focused but diffuse, with an audience that is not collected but wandering? How do you make a spectacle without a dramatic arc, but through an attenuated sense of discomfort?

Phillips: Let me ask about another form of spectacle. We seem to have a growing mania for memorials. But it is a very fraught relationship. Have you been involved with any memorial projects?

Diller: We collaborated on the Viewing Platform at the World Trade Center site the month following 9/11. It wasn't a memorial but rather an act of public service done out of a sense of civic duty. We needed to make a dignified place for looking, out of the way of the clean-up effort.

Phillips: A place to connect vision with memory and trauma.

Diller: Following 9/11, I became increasingly interested in the history and future of commemorative architecture.

Phillips: I think this is characteristic of so much of your work. Typology may be an outdated notion, but your work generally is an examination of the language and rhetoric of architecture. A reconsideration of commemoration has acquired a particular earnestness and urgency.

Diller: In the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, Maya Lin created a new language of commemoration. Her project remains brilliant, but it inadvertently produced a new orthodoxy. The challenge now is to imagine a language that can speak through abstraction without depoliticizing the site/situation.

Scofidio: A *New York Times* reporter tracked us down in Maine the day after 9/11, asking what we thought should be done with the site. Most architects he asked said rebuild, but build bigger and higher. The reflexive architectural response is always to build. Perhaps it's a therapeutic response to trauma or just knee-jerk architectural ego. We suggested to "not erase the erasure." Our instinct was to wait.

Phillips: The idea of a memorial does seem to be at an impasse.

Diller: The communicative power that a memorial must have is the issue—and not just for those who have experienced firsthand a trauma or loss, but for generations to come for whom the event will be remote. What can a memorial do for them? Maya Lin was able to carry power through a poignant intersection of landscape, the abstraction of words, and interactivity. But when the veterans of Vietnam are no longer around nor the families of its victims, will the memorial maintain is power?

Phillips: I think you have suggested that architecture is both a target and a weapon. I'd like to tie this into issues of teaching and pedagogy. What is the relationship between your work as practitioners and teachers? Is it a cooperative or adversarial relationship? Does your teaching change as your work changes?

Diller: Ric and I have very different approaches. It is one thing we don't share. I am at Princeton and he is at Cooper Union. I teach graduate students and he teaches undergraduates. I tend to teach what I am interested in at the moment. For example, I've run studios on topics such as boredom, domestic pathologies, wartourism, and other cultural subjects. But I stop short of bringing current studio work and themes into my class.

Scofidio: I don't bring our studio to school either. I feel strongly that there are fundamentals that undergraduates need to know. This gives them something to critique.

Slow House, North Haven, New York, 1988–90. (Unrealized.) ¼" scale model.

In this beach house, a long corridor leads from the entrance to a large picture window, in front of which an electronic image of the ocean view is displayed. The viewer may zoom in or enlarge the image and record it or portions of it.

Diller: The Princeton semester began several days after 9/11. Most of my colleagues showed up with programs and course outlines they had carefully prepared during the summer. I couldn't use architecture as a diversion from world events, so I immediately ditched my planned curriculum and used the studio as a vehicle through which to make sense of architecture's role in the current political/cultural matrix. It was real-time teaching: the students and I, together, were thinking through these problems for the first time.

Phillips: The events of 9/11 raise preeminent questions of architecture. What do buildings mean? What is civic and public space? What is the public's perception of architecture?

Diller: Our work is nothing other than a string of questions about architecture. More assertively, it is an attack on the core of architecture. But one has to have a great respect for what one chooses to attack.

Phillips: I think that criticism can feel very generic if there is not a full engagement with the subject—architecture, Minimalism, public art, or whatever it may be. It is the critical way that your own work is so very situated. A profound attraction—and deep knowledge—is central to your aberrant practice.

Scofidio: We both try to teach students how to make architecture so that we can teach them how to unmake it. It is a paradoxical process.

Elizabeth Diller and Ricardo Scofidio are artists/architects and founding principals of Diller Scofidio + Renfro. Since the formation of their partnership in 1979, they have produced a large body of work including architecture, planning, public art, museum-commissioned artworks, experimental theater and dance works, books, and Web projects. DS+R currently has twenty permanent employees and an extended family of outside collaborators. Charles Renfro, a collaborator in the studio since 1997, has recently been promoted to partner. Diller is professor of architecture at Princeton University. Scofidio is professor of architecture at Cooper Union. Their most recent book is *Blur: The Making of Nothing* (Abrams, 2004).

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