The Longterm Impact of Nothingness or how to build a cloud
by Dirk Hebel

The question is: can an ephemeric structure, built for a temporary event, have a long-term effect that could be associated with the objectives of sustainability?

The so-called BLUR-Building for Swiss National Expo’02 by Diller+Scofidio, New York questions the tradition of trade fair and world exposition buildings. Since the nineteenth century, world and national expositions survive as a spectacle of national and corporate identity and display. It also operates as a display of material production, efficiency and productivity. Therefore, the history of exposition buildings is a history of images, spectacles and conjectures about the future. Any temporary pavillion (national or corporate) is understood as a container that embodies a vision of the future. The future is usually understood as a marriage between architecture and new technology. From the earliest pavillions, including the Crystal Palace, the Eiffel Tower and the Atomium, it is the heroic and masculine architecture of the pavillion that embodies and expresses technological advancement.

BLUR is an anti-spectacle. Being inside, there is nothing to see. It does not hold any technological promise for the future. Nevertheless, it was the most visited pavillion of Swiss National Expo’02. It became well known as „THE CLOUD“. BLUR is made out of the inherent material of the site in Yverdon-les-Bains: water. BLUR is formless, nothingness, without detail, just white noise and yet sustainable in material and its aesthetics as an individual projection surface. BLUR is pure atmosphere. Does it hold any functions that we usually associate with exposition (or: masculine) architecture? Is it even a building?

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