

For Release:
IMMEDIATE



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The Information Machine

For the main event, the audience rises into the Information Machine on the People Wall, a moving tier of 12 rows of seats. Inclined at a 45-degree angle, the People Wall lifts a new audience into the Information Machine every 15 minutes. It is operated by two hydraulic lifts and can carry about 500 persons on each ride into the ovoid.

The People Wall is reached through the entrance side of the maze of walkways, which, with the Information Machine, is elevated over a large reflecting pool. Visitors waiting in the maze which has a capacity of more than 1,000 persons, form a human marquee for the main event. While they wait they are entertained from a catwalk by a group of musicians.

As the members of the audience take their seats on the People Wall, the host of the Information Machine appears in the air before them, descending through the trees, in white tie and tails, from an opening in the ovoid above their heads.

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Riding a small circular platform at the end of a wire-like device, he drops to a point in mid-air to greet his guests and invite them into the Information Machine for the main spectacle. Then, traveling 53 feet in a little less than a minute, the People Wall moves into place within the ovoid as the host returns to begin the show.

A car takes the curve in a road race while the crowd cheers and the checkered flag whips through the wind. A woman decides not to invite that nice Dr. Schlosser for dinner. Across the Kansas night a freight train moves hauntingly in the wake of its own whistle, as its cars are reduced to numbers and the numbers to railroad schedules.

All this is happening, on film, in this ovoid structure 50 feet in the air. It is happening on 15 screens, each of them used when needed, like instruments in an orchestra.

Although there are up to 500 viewers, probably each of them has the sense of a film addressed to him personally. Because the viewer sits at a 45 degree angle, he sees nothing in front of him but the screens. His experience is direct and immediate. The viewer has a sense of being in the film, surrounded by meaningful images; and his peripheral vision enhances the effect, rather than acting as the distraction it normally is.

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As the discoveries of science are more deeply woven into the fabric of our lives, the methods of science seem increasingly remote. Our most prosaic everyday acts -- writing a check, making a phone call -- involve us in a vast electronic network so technologically complex that the procedures behind it may appear to be wholly removed from our lives.

The show is about problem solving and the objective is to show that the methods used in solving even the most complicated problems of our times are merely elaborations of the methods we all use in the homely problems of our everyday life.

Why is running a railroad like planning a dinner party? What sounds like a riddle turns out to be a valid question, visually answered in the film. Both operations -- like others more complex than the first and far simpler than the second -- are seen to rely on a general process of gathering information, abstracting what is essential, building and manipulating a model, and drawing a conclusion.

The theatrical devices are designed to dramatize this idea. The multiscreen technique shows at one time how various pieces of information are related.

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In the road race sequence, for example, each screen displays an aspect of the abstraction: Skid. The driver's foot on the pedal, the swerving car, the frightened crowd, the abrasion of tire on concrete -- each is seen in its simultaneous relationship to the other items that make up the event.

The narration is in English and may be heard through headsets in French, German, Spanish, Italian and Japanese.

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