



AS YOU ENTER THE IAC BUILDING, you might notice how the heads of people sitting in reception are dwarfed by a giant globe projected on a 20-foot-wide screen behind them, as if in some Barry Diller-esque restaging of the war room in Stanley Kubrick's 1964 film, *Dr. Strangelove*. You might also notice a trackball perched atop the reception desk. If you feel emboldened, give it a good spin. This should send the projected Earth into a high-speed

MEDIA WALL

A bank of 162 Color Kinetics blasts creates high-definition imagery for events or IAC self-promotion. [The flowers shown here are advertising the company's dating Web sites.] The output of the wall's 18 projectors is synced by a roomful of computers.

by PETER HALL



Part of IAC's multimedia extravaganza is the largest high-definition video wall in the world, at 11 feet high and 120 feet long.

Behind the screen, McCann Systems used an angled-mirror technique from the days when grand movie theaters were being chopped into multiplexes with tiny projection rooms.



rotation, but beware: early iterations of the globe spun so swiftly that onlookers lost their balance, according to Frank McCann, whose company, McCann Systems, helped build it. "We had to slow it down," he says. "At one point you would get vertigo."

On the opposite side to reception, facing the West Side Highway, is part two of this multimedia extravaganza: the largest high-definition video wall in the world, at 11 feet high and 120 feet long. In April, shortly after its inauguration, the wall was showing a gentle ambient array of shifting colors produced by a bank of 162 high-

output LEDs hidden behind the glass. But IAC plans a whole cavalcade of illuminated spectacles to turn the wall from, say, a glowing white slab to a game of interactive Pong or a bed of blooming video flowers.

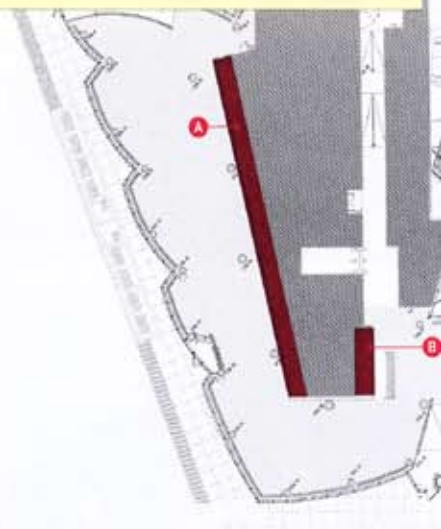
The elongated media wall was the brainchild of Bruce Mau Design, which, as the building's graphics consultant, proposed a "giant presentation device for large audiences" positioned level with the eyes of the thousands of motorists who drive down the West Side Highway each day. Many similar concepts have germinated and then terminated en route from rendering to reality, memorably the giant media wall planned for the new Penn Station. Here, how-

ever, the desire for size emanating from IAC's boardroom trumped precedent. Several technological solutions were dismissed, according to IAC's chief administrative officer, Jason Stewart, including an acrylic rear-projection screen [couldn't get it flat enough] and a liquid crystal display [too expensive and "cubey"], before IAC and McCann came upon a new way of rear-projecting onto a thin laminated "film screen" sandwiched between two sheets of glass. Unlike standard video billboards, which use LEDs to render moving images at a resolution that becomes legible only when viewed from a distance, this method would allow ten-point type to be read from a foot away. The glass sandwich would prevent damage to the screen, a crucial factor given that IAC planned to use the lobby area around the globe and video wall as rentable event space.

"When the idea crystallized that we could do a high-definition image you can touch," Stewart says, "it allowed us to feel that we were innovating."

To project a 120-foot-long high-definition video image requires not one but eighteen sequential projectors perfectly calibrated with computer software so that the point at which one projected image starts and the next takes over is barely discernible—a process called "edge blending." When Al Gore stands in front of a giant projected graphic of CO₂ emissions in *An Inconvenient Truth*, edge-blended projectors are working behind the scenes. To choreograph, translate, edge-blend, and calibrate the imagery requires an entire room of computers. All in all, says Steve Zink of Warren Z Productions—which produced the software system and the spinning globe—it uses enough power to "run a small house or two." So much for LEED certification.

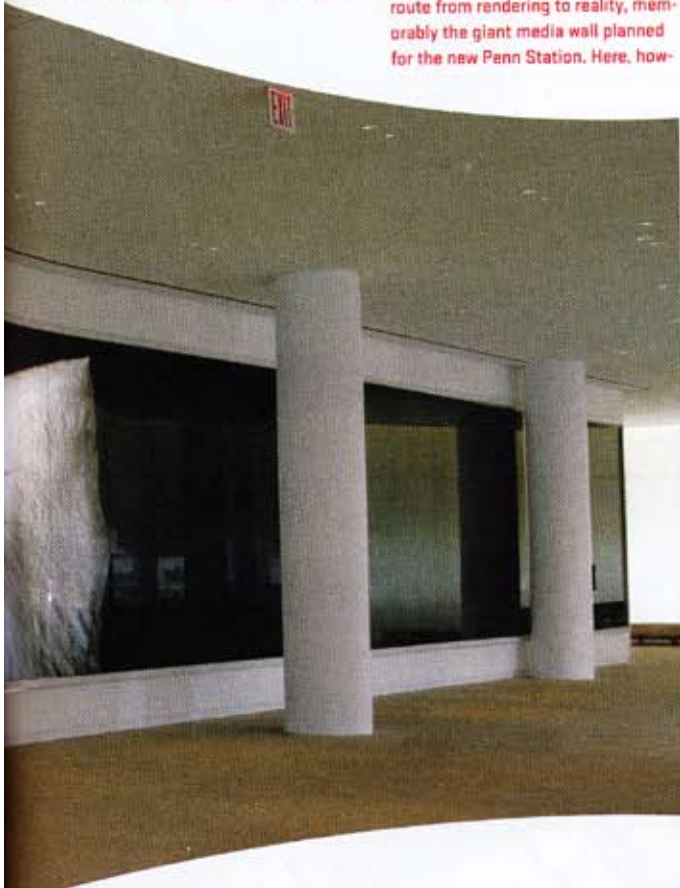
Having built the wall, IAC is faced with the problem of what to put on it. Trollbäck + Company was assigned to come up with promotional "modules" that could be shown during peak pedestrian and car traffic



Above: Gehry's building allowed only a narrow space—between the media wall [A] and the reception desk [B]—to house the projectors.

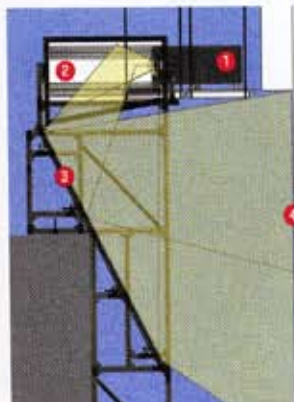
hours. Each module is a two-minute visual riff on an "I" word theme, resolving into an IAC company logo or several: "iConnect" features pixelated imagery of yellow taxis culminating in the Citysearch logo, for example; "iDate"—promoting IAC matchmaking sites—shows time-lapse footage of flowers blooming, shot with a high-resolution still camera. [Producing video footage at four times the resolution of the cinema screen proved prohibitively complex and pricey.]

IAC also approached New York University [NYU], where artist and scientist Jeff Han drew up plans to turn the wall into a kind of media mirror using strategically placed stereoscopic cameras to take live 3-D imagery of the people standing in front of the wall and render their moving silhouettes across the screen as dozens of tiny screens, each showing live TV footage. Meanwhile NYU instructor Daniel Shiffman and his students **continued on page 183**



SECTION VIEW

1. Projector
2. Top mirror [rotates image]
3. Lower mirror [enlarges image]
4. Screen



Left: Each image going through the projectors is rotated 90 degrees, then bounced off two angled mirrors onto the screen. Right: A globe behind the reception desk shows real-time data from IAC's many companies.

