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# WORLD SPORT



## Sculptors put their art on ice

by Sylvia Smith for CNN

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**SESTRIERE, Italy -- The setting is a snowy valley in the Italian Alps, overlooked by the ski slopes specially prepared for the world's fastest downhill racers.**

But while top Olympic sports athletes hurtle down the mountainside showing off their physical prowess on the pistes, below them celebrated artists and architects from different countries have collaborated, however fleetingly, to design a series of ephemeral art structures that appeal to man's more cerebral side.

The unique Snow Show, a contemporary art event in Sestriere, is a million miles away from the usual kitsch replicas of famous buildings painstakingly carved out of ice.

These collaborations between artist and architect bring together well known names to create conceptual pieces that will, with luck, last a few weeks longer than the Olympics themselves.

According to Snow Show curator Lance Fung, some of the pairs worked better than others: "Just like a marriage can be successful or not."

With sponsorship from the Winter Olympic Games, the artists were asked to allude to the notion of sport and without wishing to strain obvious metaphors, two of the six structures do seem fairly closely tied to the XXth Olympiad.

Yoko Ono, for instance, partners Japanese architect Arata Isozaki, who just happens to have designed the Olympic-sized rink for the ice skating competitions, which previously Turin lacked.

The ice maze the pair has designed creates a sense of turning round and round -- much as ice skaters whirl and pirouette -- when one walks, temporarily lost, through the cold, white walls of the circular labyrinth.



Yoko Ono and Arata Isozaki combined to produce a sculpted ice maze.

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Further up the slightly inclined valley, sculptor Carsten Holler has come up with a dynamic snow slide that is reminiscent of the luge.

In partnership with American architects Williams and Tsien, the collaboration has resulted in a huge flat structure that has three tunnels. The more daring members of the public throw themselves down the chutes on what look like plastic dustbin lids.

There is a great deal of fun to be had as well as an appreciation of the skill needed to guide yourself along slippery, icy surfaces when hurtling at high speeds without controls on your sledge.

Globalization and geography are also mirrored in the designs. British architect Norman Foster, together with Barcelona-based artist Jaume Plensa, have played on this idea by designing a large, raised dial that indicates the global positioning co-ordinates of Foster's London office, Plensa's studio in Barcelona and the site of the Snow Show.

"The circle is a very powerful symbol," Foster said. "It also echoes the Olympic rings."

### Night life

The structure really comes to life when the sun goes down and hidden lights create an ethereal glow from the structure's depths, transforming it into something akin to a flying saucer about to take off from the side of the hill.

In fact, all the pieces take on another life at night.

French architect Patrick Bouchain and artist Daniel Buren's series of stepped, shelves, the edges softened with a covering of snow, match the incline of the side of the valley.

When the neon lights underneath illuminate the silhouette, it suddenly harmonizes with the outline of ski chalets in the neighboring valley.

Although most of the visitors to the Olympics will be focusing on the Alpine events in Sestriere, the Snow Show offers an accessible and elegant alternative to the devotion to snow as a sports medium.

It also shows the Olympics becoming a more "cross-over" event, that widens still further the gulf between the classical Greek model and today's commercially sponsored approach to physical excellence and endurance.



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