

LOOK OUT BELOW

Sciencenter hosts 21st annual egg drop Sunday

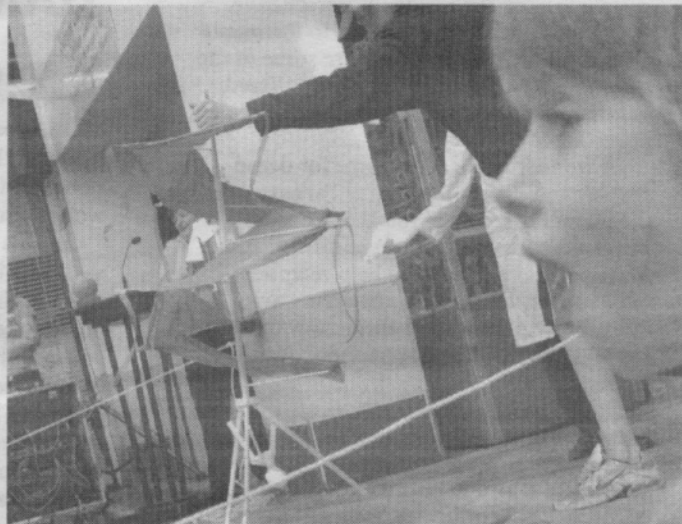
TURNS out there might be as many ways to cushion an egg as to skin a cat, and it's probably easier to draw a respectable crowd of all ages for the former. The Sciencenter's 21st annual egg drop competition, held Sunday in Center Ithaca, featured several colorful and oddly-shaped contraptions, each designed to protect an egg from its otherwise inevitable doom after being dropped from a balcony 26 feet high.

Containers had to meet some specifications in order to be eligible; lighter-than-air gases such as helium were not permitted, nor were materials that might shatter, such as glass. As it was, entrants came up with several innovative designs; parachutes, propellers, fins, balloons and even hula-hoops were all used, to varying degrees of success. Each entry had a name, sometimes

as entertaining as the drop itself. "Unbreakable" proved to be just that, while "Mary Poppins' Secret Weapon" bombed. Other contraptions included "The Newspaper Ball of Terror," "Eggy the Rainbow Fish," and the aptly-named "The Egg is Falling on the Floor."

The Sciencenter's Executive Director Charles Trautmann introduced the event and then turned over the mike to Melissa Hines, a chemistry professor at Cornell University and the director of the Cornell Center for Materials Research. She tossed out such tried and true emcee-isms as "Are we ready to drop some eggs? I can't hear you!" and assiduously avoided many of the egg puns that have been perpetrated upon the audience in past years.

At times it was difficult to tell right away if an egg



A child looks on at contestant The Blue Screw at the Sciencenter's annual egg drop.

had shattered, but obvious successes and spectacular failures routinely met with raucous applause.

Contestants entered in one of six categories, one for families and the other five separated by age. Most categories had 20 entries, give or take; considerably more than half of the entries successfully kept their respective eggs intact, and six awards were given out in each category.

Even during lulls in the competition, the shelled white rain didn't stop. Helmeted volunteers in white coats stood good-naturedly in the line of fire as eggs were dropped on them from above.

Trautmann said planning for next year's egg drop will begin in just a few weeks. Anyone interested in volunteering to help can contact the Sciencenter at 272-0600 or info@sciencenter.org.

—ZAC DESAUTELES