

Rain Room - pour show at the Barbican

New exhibit perfects the art of staying dry in a shower



Rain Room by Random International at the Curve Gallery, Barbican. Photograph: Felix Clay

After the year we've had, more rain is probably the last thing you want. This summer was the wettest in the UK for over a century. But what if you could get caught in the shimmer and sound of a shower without getting drenched? Between now and 3 March 2013, you can do exactly that by standing up to Mother Nature at The Curve in the Barbican.

[Rain Room](#), like Céleste Boursier-Mougenot's guitar-playing finches in this space before it, is an exhibition that you hear before you see. Unseen water hammers against a floor ahead of you as you make your way around The Curve.

You then encounter bright light, casting the tall shadows of the visitors in front up against the black

walls. At the centre of the beautiful and striking scene is a 100 square metre cage of falling water, miraculously responding to the movement of people wandering through it. Looking up you will see the perfect breaks in the ceiling as a dry form passes underneath.

Only a handful of visitors are allowed within the water at any one time and the anticipation builds as you stand and admire the awe of others and the almost alien event before you.

The digital deities and contemporary artists behind *Rain Room* are Random International. Founded in 2005 by Hannes Koch, Florian Ortkrass and Stuart Wood, who met as students at the Royal College of Art, Random International is "pushing people outside their comfort zones" with this new installation. It encourages visitors to perform within the artwork while also considering the potential for mankind to manipulate this world far beyond present abilities or perceptions.

Random International aims to explore human behaviour and interaction through pioneering technology and unique concepts seeking to thrill and surprise. In 2010, the ensemble created *Swarm*, a light show resembling a flock of birds, which would react to the sounds around it.

Two years earlier, *Audience* was Random International's first foray into participation from the crowd. The artwork involved motorised mirrors unneringly tracking the movements of the audience, as if curious and slightly sinister. The observer was observed and observing itself, willing or otherwise.

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Considered to be Random International's first fully immersive installation, *Rain Room* is an exciting and satisfying experience, the water slowly responding to you obediently. A welcome contrast to many of the small, empty battles we all fight on a daily basis.

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Sensors around the room detect your body's motion and, as you approach the continuous flow, the water parts to permit you a path through. In trusting the exhibit, you are rewarded with control and can slowly force the water away from you, with each step you take, in whichever direction you choose. Each journey may be unique, depending on the participant's creativity and confidence in personalising their progress from one end of the storm to the other.

Just as in reality, a lack of patience or respect for the rain will see you receive a soaking. If you can deter yourself from a self-destructive dash through the downpour, you'll get from one side of the *Rain Room* to the other without making contact with a single drop.

Surrounded by the streaming water, looking up you'll notice a strobe effect as the one bright spotlight makes contact with fast falling droplets, inspiring some to an impromptu rave.

Now I don't want to rain on your parade but try to arrive early, or visit during the week, as you might have quite a wait ahead of you. On the weekend it can take over two hours to enter the exhibit. Fortunately, the queue is indoors. Lining up in a torrent might be an irony too far, for even the hardest Londoner.

[Rain Room](#)
Till 3 March 2013
The Curve
[Barbican Centre](#)
Silk Street
London