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EN POINTE

The place where dance imitates art

By: [Katie Columbus](#)

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The gap between dance and visual art began to close in earnest when Trisha Brown walked down a wall in 1971. Ever since dancers were freed from the restraints of classical subjugation and what dance ought to be, shedding shoes, specific steps and ethereal femininity, the tie between visual art and dance has become increasingly blurred.

Indeed a whole genre of performance/visual art has arisen, cross-pollinating art forms in our current melting pot of cultural references in a mixed media landscape.

Being au fait with watching live bodies orchestrated in space, I do appreciate and enjoy some live art. I may have said before that I'm into the weird stuff.

But while I am OK with traversing a studio full of naked individuals rolling around the floor covered in paint, I do not wish to fight the battle of some of the more controversial live artists out there, who push the label with regards to explorations of race, politics, sexuality and physicality into the extreme. No funny business, if you please. You can keep your weeing in jars, sticking objects in strange places and self harm

(yes, I'm talking to you Marina Abramović, Ron Athey and Franko B).

But as I say, I'm all about the celebration of kinesthetic awareness and rich collaborations between art and movement. As such I have been desperate to get to Random International's Rain Rooms in The Barbican Centre's Curve Gallery, since they

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37th Monte Carlo International Circus

opened in October last year.

Then the news of four hour queues arose and I was put off. But when Wayne McGregor got on board with Random Dance Company, I knew that I had to brave the constructed storm. So, as London was shutting down due to adverse weather conditions, I ventured out from the snow and went in to the rain.

Many visual artists have collaborated with dancers and choreographers to produce something beautiful. Anthony Gormley's scaffolding-like set design for Babel in collaboration with Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui and Damien Jalet, for example, or Pina Bausch's vivid living landscapes, flooding stages with water or filling them with earth; Saburo Teshigawara is a sculptor as well as a choreographer – all artistic elements in which, or on which to dance.

“
*It's about as close as
I've come to the
perfect collaboration
yet*
”

But I have never seen living art work so consummately with dance. Rain Room is the perfect space in which to demonstrate the desired goal – how bodies in space can affect the art's terrain. Wayne McGregor has crept inside of this new media conceptual work to unleash his beautiful dancers a futuristic world where it rains underground.

They enter the 100 square metre rectangular space in a dark studio, as water droplets fall and a bright light shines into the darkness, alongside viewers. Everyone is moving slowly, as the sensors pick up movement and the droplets change to form a dry space around you, allowing you to walk through the monsoon without getting rained on. Wearing small costumes in neutral, skin tones, the dancers improvise, solo, or with each other, lifting, copying, reacting.

They pick up on the vibes of the audience – playful (children try to outwit the sensors, jumping into spaces and snatching at raindrops); musing (I realize that from my perch, where I've crouched in the rain at the back of the space, that a dancer is crouching behind me, copying my gestures, that repeat when he has moved further into the rain) or rapt and overwhelmed (stillness, and a sense of awe as people gaze at the ceiling, wondering how it works, why, and what it all means).

It is a reactive process, to the space, to the elements, to people's gestures and to each other. The movement and meaning is as intense as the downpour, allowing the audience to formulate an opinion about the nature of expectation and unpredictable outcomes, as per the intention of the piece. It's about as close as I've come to the perfect collaboration yet.

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Carolina, 2 days ago



Choreography is the best i like. I belive dance is something differnt than art, you might say they appear to be same but it has live emothions in it where traditional art like drawings and paintings are still and does not convey such feelings.