

## Surreal experience of walking in the ‘rain’

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Visitors of the Rain Room try walking in the rain and remaining dry.

By Wang Jie | September 11, 2015, Friday | Print Edition



THE Rain Room art installation has been an instant hit in Shanghai. Many residents are waiting in long queues at Yuz Museum in order to experience walking in the rain without getting wet.

While that may seem silly, people who experience Rain Room say it's fun and surreal.

The indoor space has water perpetually pouring from the ceiling. Sensors are used to control the water. As soon as someone walks underneath the water shuts off, enabling visitors to “walk in the rain” and remain dry even without an umbrella.

Rain Room creators Florian Ortkrass and Hannes Koch say they wanted to use science as a means to develop a new vocabulary. Thus their works like Rain Room invite consideration through explorations of behavior and natural phenomena — with the viewer an active participant.

Ortkrass and Koch are the founders of London-based Random International, a group of artists with a collaborative studio for experimental practices within contemporary art.

Rain Room burst onto the art scene at the Barbican in London in 2012 with Londoners waiting up to three hours to experience it. The following year it was shown at the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

Now it makes its Asian debut at Yuz Museum with funding provided by Volkswagen Group China.

Jochem Heizmann, president and CEO of Volkswagen Group China, says: “Volkswagen Group China is actively supporting this exhibition with the aim of making art accessible and using its broad global network to bridge and foster the exchange between Germany and China.”

Q: What's your major in university?

Design engineering.

Q: Why did you choose rain over other natural phenomenon in your work?

This is just a drop of image from the ceiling.

Q: What kind of message are you trying to convey?

Everyone has to take his or her own message. The artists should not tell you how to feel when experiencing their work.

Q: The work has already been exhibited in London and New York. Is there any difference when exhibiting it in other cities?

It is interesting to see the response from the visitors in different cities. For example, London is a city where it rains often. We brought a rain piece there and were curious about the feedback from the local citizens. New York has hurricanes and Shanghai has typhoons, but the responses are obviously not always the same.

Q: Rain Room obviously costs a lot of money. How did you finance it?

Oh, good question and we have never been asked before. We were lucky because we sold our ideas and plans to two private collectors. After a year we were finally commissioned to implement this work.

Q: Where is the Rain Room's water coming from?

The museum's main water supply though it is treated before being used.

Q: How much water is there?

The system for the 150-square-meter Rain Room cycles roughly 1,800 liters per minute with all tiles switched on.

Q: Is the water recycled and how often is it cleaned?

Yes, it is recycled and treated continuously. It is self-cleaning; the water is cleaned continuously while circulating through the system.

Q: What is the capacity?

By principle of the piece, the more people, the less rain, hence capacity depends on the number of people participating inside. There is an extended viewing area where people can observe.

Q: Do you use water in other works?

We use water as a raw material in “Tower Instant Structure,” which pulls falling water into an architectural form instantaneously and then it can thoroughly disappear in the next moment.

Q: What’s the advantage of Random International?

We listen to each other and work together. We have a design engineering background so we understand the feasibility of a piece from the beginning. Of course, we don’t need to solve the technical problems by ourselves as we have a strong technical team.

Q: Can Rain Room be reproduced in other places?

Yes, we are commissioned to do the work. For example, Rain Room displayed here at Yuz Museum will be permanently displayed in Bali, and this is another commissioned piece.