

# Florian Ortkrass

By KATE MURPHY

Random International

Florian Ortkrass is a founder and director of [Random International](#), a group of London-based artists who combine technology and natural elements to create temporary, interactive installations, including the recent “[Rain Room](#)” at the Museum of Modern Art. Another work, “Tower,” an appearing and disappearing water structure, opened on Friday at the [Ruhrtriennale](#) international arts festival in Germany.

**READING** “[Days of Destruction, Days of Revolt](#),” by Chris Hedges and Joe Sacco; “[Risk: The Science and Politics of Fear](#),” by Dan Gardner; and “[The Ethics of Climate Change: Right and Wrong in a Warming World](#),” by James Garvey. Yes, they are all really depressing. I’m amazed how on this planet we can’t seem to get along. It seems impossible to get out of this loop of retaliation. It’s a bit the same way when we’re dealing with all the lawyers on our installations. It’s interesting that for everyone to behave and respect other people’s intentions, we need a 60-page document. And it’s important to cover every point, otherwise someone will definitely try to get an advantage. All of our stuff comes with a warranty, which is probably very unusual for art pieces.

**LISTENING** I went to a concert at the [Barbican](#) in London and heard [El Gusto](#). They are from Algeria and play a sort of classic folk and are very lively. A lot of the music has to do with Algerian identity after the French left after the liberation. I also heard Wael Abo Bakr play at the [Serpentine Gallery](#). Next to playing exceptionally, he’s pretty funny.

**WATCHING** I’ve been watching “[Les Revenants](#).” It’s a French TV series, but I’ve been cheating with English subtitles. It takes place in recent times in this town in the Alps where people who die start to come back and don’t really remember what happened. They just wake up in the middle of the town and think it’s still the day they died. One of them is a twin who dies and comes back, and another one tries to reunite with the woman he was going to marry. They try to live this normal life, but it’s obviously difficult.

**FOLLOWING** There was a lot of stuff that got tweeted on [#RainRoom](#). I learned that people like to take pictures of themselves. You know, “selfies.” It’s gotten so people think if it’s not on Twitter or Facebook it didn’t happen. It’s no longer about telling a story or experiencing, it’s about having proof you were there.

**RAISING** I’ve been raising tadpoles that I got out of an old well in my garden. They live in a glass [Ikea](#) vase and are very happy with fish food. I guess you don’t really raise them. You just feed them and wait for them to turn into frogs.

Kate Murphy is a journalist in Houston who writes frequently for The New York Times.

