

Artlyst Photo Special: Random Dance In The Rain Room, Yuz Museum Shanghai



Artlyst travelled all the way to Shanghai to visit the latest iteration of Random International's Rain Room, recently installed at The Yuz Museum in the city. Sponsored by Volkswagen, the exhibition marks the first display of Rain Room in China. The installation was created by the British-German artist collective, which began with displays in London and New York, and for the first time occupies an area of 150m² in Shanghai so that it surpasses all previously exhibited versions of this immersive installation.



Random Dance at the Rain Room, Yuz Museum, Shanghai, China, Photo P A Black © Artlyst 2015.

The guests at the opening gala event were treated to a special performance by Wayne McGregor's Random Dance, where the dancers interacted with both the kinetic movement of the Rain Room, and the viewers who were tentatively walking through Random International's magical installation.



Random Dance at the Rain Room, Yuz Museum, Shanghai, China, Photo P A Black © Artlyst 2015.

Speaking to 300 invited guests, Budi Tek, founder of the YUZ foundation which operates the YUZ museum, highlighted the installation's importance as a signifier of environmental issues both globally and in the city; citing

the importance of water to the people of Shanghai, which is one of the most polluted cities in the world with a perpetual smog hanging in its atmosphere.



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"Rain Room is not a funhouse,' explains MoMA PS1 and chief curator Klaus Biesenbach. "It is a paradigm for our technology and how fragile we are in this moment of progress. We think we can control it but we cannot." In addition Volkswagen Group China will additionally invite Chinese users to reflect individually on the topic of water using various online channels in order to connect awareness of art and the environment.



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Rain Room responds to the presence and behaviour of its participants - including the dancers - creating a surreal environment where participants are 'rained around' - able to walk through the work without getting wet (unless you are a photographer moving too fast for the sensors to respond) moving through a large-scale environment of perpetually falling water that ceases to pour wherever a person walks through any particular area of the work.



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"You experience how it feels to be controlled by the weather,' explains Hannes Koch, one of the founders of Random International, "because if you walk a little too fast you get soaked. You can't outpace gravity, you can't out perform it. You experience a loss of control; you experience a deliverance on technology. If there is a power cut you get soaked; if the sensor doesn't detect you, you get wet."



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The work requires highly-developed digital control, which provides an unexpected refuge for the visitor in the middle of torrential rain. Rain Room was first displayed in London and subsequently in the New York Museum of Modern Art (MoMA). At the arrangement of Volkswagen, the idea matured to give the Chinese public the opportunity to experience the installation for themselves - perhaps a potential relief from the humidity of the city outside.



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Guests at the opening had their own experiences of the interaction, being the first to enjoy the juxtaposition between the seemingly natural elements and the technology to control them; but more so, to experience the seemingly God-like ability to stand in the rain and have it bend around you. The Rain Room offers a highly visceral experience for the viewer with an immersive quality offering global appeal.



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After the presentation in Shanghai Yuz Museum, Rain Room will tour China and Asia, starting with Beijing during spring 2016. Rain Room is on view at Yuz Museum, courtesy of Yuz Collection and made possible by a partnership with Volkswagen Group China.



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Rain Room by Random International - Shanghai Yuz Museum, Shanghai, West Bund / Xuhui District, China - 1 September to 31 December 2015