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Rain Room by Random International

Random International's newest installation delights its audience with one of Britain's most commonplace weather types. *Rain Room* allows visitors to control their environment and walk through a constant downpour without ever getting wet, resulting in a new appreciation of the one of the world's most vital natural resources.

Holly Black 5th October 2012



The imminent promise of a torrential storm is all that can be ascertained when entering The Curve's latest installation. Confronted with darkness and with no immediately perceivable artworks, the roar of rainfall fills the space, whilst a dim light invites you to follow the gallery's bending path.

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On turning the final corner the result is truly stunning, an enormous downpour has erupted from the ceiling, evoking a sense of awe and tranquility that can only be found in the strongest extremities of weather.

However *Rain Room* is not simply an artwork to be looked at. Random International have utilised cutting-edge kinetic technologies to create a fascinating interactive installation. As you step tentatively onto the drenched platform the rain separates and responds to your movements, allowing you to walk through the entirety of the storm whilst remaining as dry as a bone.

The effect of walking within such a space is part-playful childhood fantasy, part-biting social commentary. Immediate reactions are reminiscent of youthful exploits such as jumping through sprinklers or running through the local paddling pool, delighting in the possibility of getting drenched. Here the artists have played on these memories to offer viewers a chance to reconsider their surroundings and offer new forms of stimulation, a factor that they state remains integral to their work.

Whilst walking through this bizarre environment it is true that a new level of appreciation is felt for the most traditional and dreaded of British weather. Whilst remaining immersed in the purest state of rainfall, carefully-executed technical considerations prevent puddles from forming or overly slippery surfaces, resulting in a phenomenon devoid of the expected distractions. This allows the rainfall itself to take on a form of artistry, as a powerful light source works with the droplets to produce intriguing refraction and at times subtle rainbows.

Due to the nature of technology, it is also necessary to walk slowly and tentatively through the installation, which in turn allows for a deeper consideration of the work. Here such a simple element which we avidly take for granted in the developed world is elevated to a state of grandeur. The chance to contemplate the vital nature of something as simple as water is not one that is often the subject of a contemporary art work, rather suited to the more detached and didactic approaches of charity campaigns. Here Random International have succeeded in introducing an audience to a greater appreciation of their surroundings with an inspiring subtlety.

After remaining amongst the rainfall for some time, leaving the installation has as much of a profound effect as first entering. Having shared the experience with many others, it is as if you are party to a well-kept secret, as new visitors struggle to comprehend how you have left the space without getting soaked.

As is the case with many interactive artworks, it is this greater sense of unity felt by those that experience it that allow for lasting impact and longevity. In this sense *Rain Room* is truly exceptional. By striking a chord that is at once playful and poignant, the audience is open to experiential interactions that are not confined to the realms of theoretical and complex interpretation. Instead this beautiful installation holds a wonderful level of accessibility, proving that the simplest of concepts can evoke both reactionary and deeply-considered readings. *Rain Room* is highly recommended as one of the most innovative and awe-inspiring installations I have seen in a long time.