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'It's not about rain, it's about robots': first permanent Rain Room opens in the UAE

Random International's popular installation has taken five years to develop for display in Sharjah

[ANNA SEAMAN](#)

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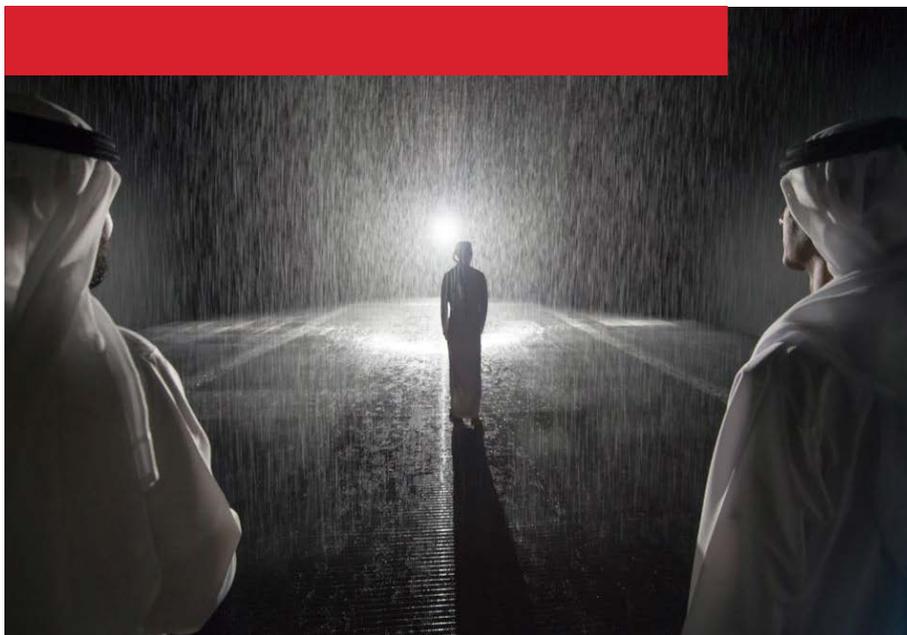
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Random International's Rain Room (2012) on show at Sharjah Art Foundation, 2018
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The world's first permanent edition of Random International's ever-popular Rain Room installation was unveiled at the Sharjah Art Foundation (SAF) yesterday (Monday 30 April). Opened by Sharjah's ruler Sheikh Sultan Bin Mohammad Al Qasimi, the installation is housed in a purpose-built space measuring nearly 16,000 square feet and located in the Al Majarra district of the small emirate in the United Arab Emirates.

The art piece, which debuted at London's Barbican Centre in 2012 and has since been shown in New York, Los Angeles and Shanghai, allows visitors to pass through a torrent of water but remain dry, thanks to sensors detecting their presence and causing the rain to stop.

Whilst the novelty of being able to experience a downpour of rain in the middle of a desert environment is one that is bound to pull in the crowds at first, Random International's co-founders, Hannes Koch and Florian Ortkrass, also hope that it will open up conversations about mechanisation and automation that are increasingly impinging on our lives.

“From our perspective what is more compelling than the rain as a context is

having the artwork in a region where one's life experience as a human being is more and more regulated. Experiencing that in an art installation is interesting because you really encounter the presence of the algorithm first hand and we hope that will change perspective on the mechanised and automated machine world that surrounds us," they say.

The SAF acquired an edition of the artwork in 2013 and the past five years have been spent focusing on the engineering and architectural components to make the permanent installation possible.

The artwork uses around 1,200 litres of self-cleaning, recycled water—which is less water than it takes to make a regular hamburger in a high street fast food restaurant—and the building itself is energy efficient.

"Every edition of Rain Room has to be in a controlled environment in terms of temperature but with this, as it is a permanent install, every single detail has been considered more than twice," says Random International. "Essentially the guts of Rain Room have been redeveloped for this edition and rightfully so because it will run for years and years."

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