



H2-OH! In deference to California's drought, no water goes to waste in LACMA's thrilling new *Rain Room* exhibit, debuting this month courtesy of RH and RH Contemporary Art.

LET IT REIGN!

THE NEW *RAIN ROOM* INSTALLATION AT LACMA ENDOWS VISITORS WITH TEMPORARY POWERS. BY ANDREW MYERS

After seasons of superheroes doing their natural-law-defying derring-do on screens big and small, do you ever wonder what it would be like to have superpowers of your own? *Rain Room*, an interactive and immersive installation at LACMA on view via timed entry tickets from November 1 through March 6, 2016, gives the powerless human that chance.

While the work might not offer Marvel-ous omnipotence, it does allow both intrepid and tentative gallery-goers the opportunity to walk, run, even dance through a deluge of water—while not imperiling Brunello Cucinelli suede driving shoes or Joan Brochard-coiffed locks getting the slightest bit wet.

FADE IN: You've stepped from the BCAM lobby and turned into the 2,500-square-foot gallery housing *Rain Room*. Suddenly you're enclosed by black—walls, ceiling, and floor—and you find you're walking up a ramp. Then you see it. Hear it. Smell it.

Atmospherically illuminated by a powerful backlight, 1,000 square feet of water falls in a continuous torrent. Continuous, that is, until you advance into the storm. The water in your immediate physical proximity doesn't simply abate, it stops completely, only to start again once you've passed. And thus, as though enclosed in a water-repellent force field, you progress to the back of the gallery, where you exit as dry as the drought-parched landscape of Southern California.

Debuting at London's Barbican Centre in 2012 and exhibited the following summer at New York's Museum of Modern

Art, *Rain Room* was conceived and created by Random International. A London-based artists collective, the group delights in mentally messing with its audiences.

Controlled by a series of cameras that map the location of visitors within the 1,000-square-foot "wet zone," *Rain Room* subsequently translates this data to a pixelated grid of approximately 10-inch-by-10-inch panels, each panel then controlling nine outlets through which more than 650 gallons of water fall. Or, when a visitor is detected, don't fall. The water is then filtered, treated, recycled, and, to quote The Rolling Stones, "Rain Fall Down."

On display courtesy of RH (formerly Restoration Hardware) and RH Contemporary Art, *Rain Room* is designed as a hybrid of left and right cranial lobes, which in turn places it squarely under the umbrella of LACMA's ongoing Art and Technology initiative supporting artists' experiments with emerging technology. "Andy Warhol was part of LACMA's original late-1960s Art and Technology program and made what he called a 'Rain Machine,' a large installation of 3D lenticular daisies," explains LACMA CEO and Wallis Annenberg Director Michael Govan. "If Andy was thinking about rain in LA for Art and Technology, it seemed that presenting this completely new technologically-infused *Rain Room* would be an appropriate way to rethink it 50 years later." November 1–March 6, 2016. 5905 Wilshire Blvd., LA, 323-857-6000; lacma.org LAC

RAIN MAN

RH Chairman and CEO Gary Friedman talks about *Rain Room* as he unveils it to spectacle-loving Los Angeles.

How did you become involved with *Rain Room*?

The concept [by Random International] was explained to me, and they had a little [computer-aided] drawing of it. It seemed incredible, so we bought it.

How did the piece serve as a launch pad for RH Contemporary Art?

Rain Room was the first piece of art that we bought for our contemporary art platform. I told the team that nobody's going to believe that we should be in the art business, [so] we're going to have to do something that the world's never seen.

What made you bring *Rain Room* to LACMA?

LACMA is having its 50th anniversary and wanted to do the exhibition. This worked out beautifully because the museum is very aligned with our values, and Los Angeles is a city that understands the value of great art!