

# A Curtain of Light and Sound

By **PAUL LEVY**

LONDON—In the main space of the Roundhouse in North London, Israeli designer Ron Arad has created "Curtain Call," an installation celebrating the fifth anniversary of the transformation of this former railway-engine shed into a vibrant arts center. A circle of 5,600 translucent silicon rods, suspended from a ring with an 18-meter diameter, forms a projection screen for films and a venue for live performances, some with audience participation.



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Stephen White

Ron Arad's curtain acts as a screen for other artists' work, including this one by Babis Alexiadiis.

It's a cross between a giant circular shower curtain and the beaded doorway curtains you used to see in Chinese restaurants and French kitchens, except that it makes an apparently smooth surface on which to project images—until someone walks through it, parting the curtain for a second or two. Standing inside the curtain, you see (and hear), for example, Christian Marclay's "Pianorama," a 360-degree floor-to-ceiling vertical keyboard, extended and looped in a Brobdingnagian circle with the keys played by giant hands. Step outside the curtain and you see the same thing—the translucence of

the curtain means this is only puzzling when you stop to think about the complicated projection devices needed to achieve this effect.

Mr. Marclay is one of Mr. Arad's "favorite artists, musicians and friends," as the publicity handout characterizes the contributor to the 20-day installation. I also saw Mat Collishaw's amazing "Sordid Flowers"—what the program booklet describes as "a tropical landscape poisoned by diseased and malicious looking flowers." Part painting, part film, part animation, these seductively colorful blooms are surrounded by clouds of flying insects, which they appear to trap and eat, while tropical storms rage.

Levy, Paul. "A Curtain Call of Light and Sound." *Wall Street Journal*, August 12, 2011.

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David Shrigley's scowling animated hairy giant, naked but for his boots, yomps around the perimeter of the circle, scary and comic at the same time. Greenaway & Greenaway's "Roundhouse" plays on the fact that the building is itself circular, to give the spectator a mirror-image of the Victorian structure, encouraging you to notice the fine architectural detail.

There are a dozen repeated items in the "content loop," plus a daily event featuring Mr. Arad himself, "W.E.T." (every day from noon to 2 p.m.). Special events include cellist Steven Isserlis performing solo suites by Bach and Britten (Aug. 17); the London Contemporary Orchestra playing Ralph Vaughan Williams's "Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis" and other modern pieces based on older themes (Aug. 23).

American novelist Jonathan Safran Foer, whose latest work is his cut-up volume, "Tree of Codes," is using the curtain in a novel way. The website says: "From inside the space, or from your own home via Twitter, put the big questions to the big man in New York. Via satellite, telepathy and celestial wizardry he will beam the Oracle's answers back onto the curtain in full 8 meter tall letters."

It's called the Rude Oracle. "Put your secrets in the Roundhouse main space," the website cautions. "But don't expect polite answers, he's warned us, he's not holding back."

*Until Aug. 29*

[www.roundhouse.org.uk](http://www.roundhouse.org.uk)

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