

Press Release

Exhibition

*Steven Evans: If I can't dance, it's not my
revolution!*

June 29–October 13, 2019



Steven Evans, *Situation*, 2016. Glass, neon, electrical components, and hardware, 2 1/4 x 9 x 1 1/2 inches.
Image and work courtesy the artist and Jonathan Hopson Gallery, Houston, Texas

#StevenEvans
#atCAMH
@camhouston

Media Contact

For high-resolution images or media inquiries please contact:
Kent Michael Smith, Director of Communications and Marketing
ksmith@camh.org | 713.284.8255

HOUSTON, TEXAS (May 29, 2019)—In a career that has spanned more than three decades, artist Steven Evans has explored connections between music, language, memory, identity, and collectivity. Contemporary Arts Museum Houston (CAMH) is pleased to present *Steven Evans: If I can't dance, it's not my revolution!*, an exhibition featuring two distinct bodies of work Evans has created—in colored neon, and in paint and adhesive vinyl—that highlight the ways in which popular song titles can be linked to moments of social and political change. Both of these series highlight Evans's ongoing commitment to language and cultural activism. A public opening reception will take place on the

Contemporary Arts Museum Houston

5216 Montrose Boulevard
Houston, Texas 77006
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Steven Evans
More, More, More, 2013
Glass, neon, electrical components, and hardware
3 x 28 1/2 x 1 1/2 inches
Image and work courtesy the artist and Jonathan
Hopson Gallery, Houston, Texas



Steven Evans
Selections from the Disco, Various BPM, 1979-1991
(detail), 1989-1991
Installation view at Culturgest, Lisbon, Portugal, 2013
Image and work courtesy the artist and Jonathan
Hopson Gallery, Houston, Texas

evening of Friday, June 28, 2019 from 6:30–9PM, with the exhibition remaining on view through Sunday, October 13, 2019. As always, admission to CAMH is free.

When Evans arrived in New York, New York in the late 1980s, he became involved in two scenes that fundamentally shaped his artistic practice: activism and dance music. As a member of agit-prop and activist groups like ACT UP (the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power), Queer Nation, and Visual AIDS, Evans sought to share information to educate and protect the public from the ravages of the AIDS epidemic through various forms of public demonstration. At the same time, Evans was excited by the burgeoning dance music scene, which brought together individuals from diverse backgrounds to commune and celebrate on dance floors.

Evans's newest work—*If I Can't Dance, It's Not My Revolution (Stonewall Timeline, 1969–2019)* (2019), created for this exhibition—renders 50 song titles in white latex paint and black adhesive vinyl on the lavender-colored walls of CAMH's Nina and Michael Zilkha Gallery. Taking the 1969 Stonewall Riots as his point of departure, Evans traces a 50-year history, choosing a song title for each year since that draws on the rich connections between popular music and broader demands for progressive socio-politics. Influenced by the Civil Rights Movement, 1969's "Stand!" by Sly and the Family Stone advocates that listeners become agents of social change by recognizing and rejecting class-based and race-based prejudice. The artist and curator Julie Ault notes that "Evans's works translate personal experience from communal circumstances into a quotidian realm, demonstrating the potency of language." Later songs—like "I'm Coming Out" (1980) by Diana Ross, "Constant Craving" (1992) by k.d. lang, and "Born This Way" (2011) by Lady Gaga—offer further evidence of the ways that recording artists support progressive sexual politics that directly impact queer people, women, and other marginalized groups. Whether they are encountered on the radio or a dance floor, these songs encourage hope, energy, and perseverance in turbulent times.

A second series of works included in the exhibition are song titles that Evans designs in colored neon to conjure the illumination of bars and dance clubs, as well as the energy that animates them. Evans's neon work *It's Raining Men* (1993–2019) refers to an iconic song that is tied inextricably to the onset of the AIDS epidemic. Evans reflects that, "it's about easily accessible sex, and the fact that people were dying [of AIDS]. I was looking at neon signs in discotheques and they felt so powerful." Referencing this notion, Ault shares that "the words transport me to a vast and indeterminate psychic arena where arcs of personal history and collective memory intertwine, embodying bittersweet emotional content."

Taken together, these two bodies of work communicate a sense of collective celebration and spirited resistance. Whether taking place on the dance floor or in the streets, the notion of "movement" is multivalent in Evans's hands; it is simultaneously individual and collective, physical and political.

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Steven Evans
Starboy, 2017
Glass, neon, electrical components, and hardware
2 1/4 x 13 x 1 1/2 inches
Image and work courtesy the artist and Jonathan
Hopson Gallery, Houston, Texas

Steven Evans: If I can't dance, it's not my revolution! is curated by Dean Daderko based on an exhibition conceived by Bill Arning.

Publication

CAMH will mark the exhibition with the publication of a catalogue featuring a conversation between Daderko and Evans as well as a commissioned essay by 2018 MacArthur Fellow Julie Ault. Highlighting full-color reproductions of artworks, installation views, an exhibition checklist, and more, the catalogue is being produced by Houston-based design team NUU.

This publication is made possible by a grant from The Brown Foundation, Inc. of Houston.

About Steven Evans

Born in Key West, Florida, Steven Evans earned a BFA in photography at the Atlanta College of Art, Georgia, and an MFA from the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, Halifax, Canada in 1989. Evans is an artist, writer, curator, and Executive Director of the award-winning arts organization FotoFest International, which founded and sponsors the first and longest-running international Biennial of Photography and New Media Art in the United States.

Evans has served as a panelist for the National Endowment of Arts, New York State Council on the Arts, and the Texas Commission on the Arts. Prior to FotoFest, Evans worked with a wide range of artists and collaborators as Managing Director of the Dia:Beacon Museum in New York and as Director of the Linda Pace Foundation in San Antonio, Texas. He has participated in solo and group exhibitions in New York City, New York; Los Angeles, California; Paris, France; Berlin, Germany; and elsewhere, including most recently his inclusion in group exhibitions *Macho Man*, *Tell It To My Heart* at Artists Space, New York, New York, and *Powerful Babies*, *Keith Haring's Impact on Artists Today* at Spritmuseum, Stockholm, Sweden.

Public Programs

These events are free, open to the public, and take place at Contemporary Arts Museum Houston. Seating is limited. Please check camh.org for a complete list of Museum programs relating to this exhibition.

Opening Reception | *Steven Evans: If I can't dance it's not my revolution!*
Friday, June 28, 2019 | 6:30–9PM

In Conversation | Artist Steven Evans and CAMH Curator Dean Daderko
Saturday, June 29, 2019 | 2–3PM

Writing Workshop | Words & Art
Saturday, July 20, 2019 | 12:30–1:30PM

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Open Studio | Text Mobiles
Saturday, August 3, 2019 | 2-4PM

Reading | Words & Art
Thursday, September 12, 2019 | 6:30-7:30PM

Art at Noon | Stephanie St. Sanchez
Friday, September 20, 2019 | 12-1PM

Talk | A Conversation on Music with Vince Aletti and Steven Evans, Moderated
by Curator Dean Daderko
Thursday, October 3, 2019 | 6:30-7:30PM

CAMH Mission

Contemporary Arts Museum Houston presents extraordinary, thought-provoking arts programming and exhibitions to educate and inspire audiences nationally and internationally.

General Information

Contemporary Arts Museum Houston is located at 5216 Montrose Boulevard, at the corner of Montrose and Bissonnet, in the heart of Houston's Museum District. Hours are Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday 10AM-7PM, Thursday 10AM-9PM, Saturday 10AM-6PM, and Sunday Noon-6PM. Admission is always free. For more information, visit camh.org or call 713.284.8250.