

NICK CAVE • CERITH WYN EVANS • MARIANNE BJØRNMYR • MARGARITA AZURDIA
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AN EXPLORATION OF SALENTO GREECE • ANDY WARHOL • PICASSO AND GUERNICA

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Cerith Wyn Evans

In conversation with Dr. Kostas Prapoglou

Marian Goodman Gallery presents two parallel solo exhibitions by Welsh artist Cerith Wyn Evans. 'no realm of thought...' at the Paris gallery and "...no field of vision" at the New York venue feature new and recent abstract neon sculptures and installations embracing the philosophical quests of the artist through the use of light. At the New York Gallery, in conjunction with the Neon after Stella sculptures, Wyn Evans also presents Katagami Screens, a series of works on paper from 2015, which are inspired by Japanese paper stencils used for dyeing and printing patterns on textiles.

Over the last few decades numerous international museums have featured the work of Evans, such as Mostyn Gallery, Llandudno, Wales (2023); Aspen Museum of Art, Colorado, USA (2021); Pirelli HangarBicocca, Milan, Italy (2019); National Museum Wales, Cardiff (2018); Museo Tamayo, Mexico City, Mexico (2018); Tate Britain, London, UK (2017); Haus Konstruktiv in Zurich, Switzerland (2017); Serpentine Gallery, London (2014); MUSAC, Léon, Spain (2008); Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, France (2006); The Institute of Contemporary Art, London (2006) and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (2004). Evans represented Wales in the 50th Venice Biennale (2003) and he also participated in the 57th Venice Biennale (2017); Skulptur Projekte in Münster, Germany (2017); the 4th Moscow Biennale (2011); Yokohama Triennial, Japan (2008) and Documenta 11, Kassel (2002).

KOSTAS PRAPOGLOU:

What is your relationship with light and why is it so important for you to express what you see and what you feel through its properties?

CERITH WYN EVANS:

It's of no importance to me to express what I see or feel, let alone regard Light as a 'medium'.

KP:

Tell us how Frank Stella's Black Paintings (1958-1960) –amongst others– inspired you for the new body of work you are currently exhibiting in New York and Paris. How can an artwork be reinterpreted, re-envisioned and adapted into your esoteric universe through the expression of a new medium?

CWE:

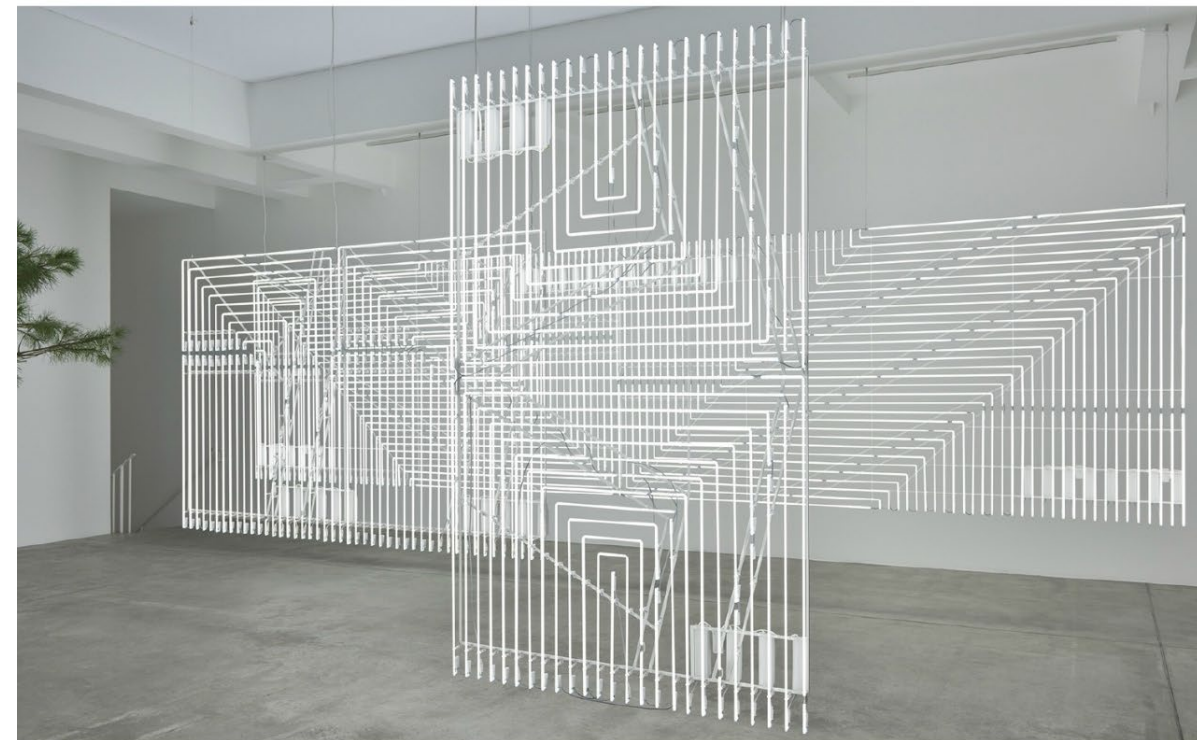
I've elected to pay attention to this fabled group of paintings as catalysts for a meditation on scenography... on illumination and shade, transparency and occlusion, on intervals and optics. On the folds and flows of energy, also the expenditure of charges manifest under types of form under control. The citation of an image which hinges on the 'fort/Da' of representation is made present. The site is made an event and 'occasion' is made a verb ... such as: "that which is occasioned in us". Thirdly, the homonym 'sight' is invoked in the role of interrogating the degrading and familiar Phenomenological stance which reifies the visual 'field'.

In an attempt to tempt the signifier out of control, a circuit is declared and conduits are exposed... electrodes are engaged and the tabula rasa is assembled in the room. Not long ago, I saw the Louise Lawler exhibition at Marian Goodman in Paris and it put me in mind of a phrase from James Merrill... which goes something like "...and so we came to understand what the puppets in Japan taught us, namely what it means to be moved".

Exhibition View Cerith Wyn Evans, MGG Paris, 2023.
Photo: Rebecca Fanuele
Courtesy Marian Goodman

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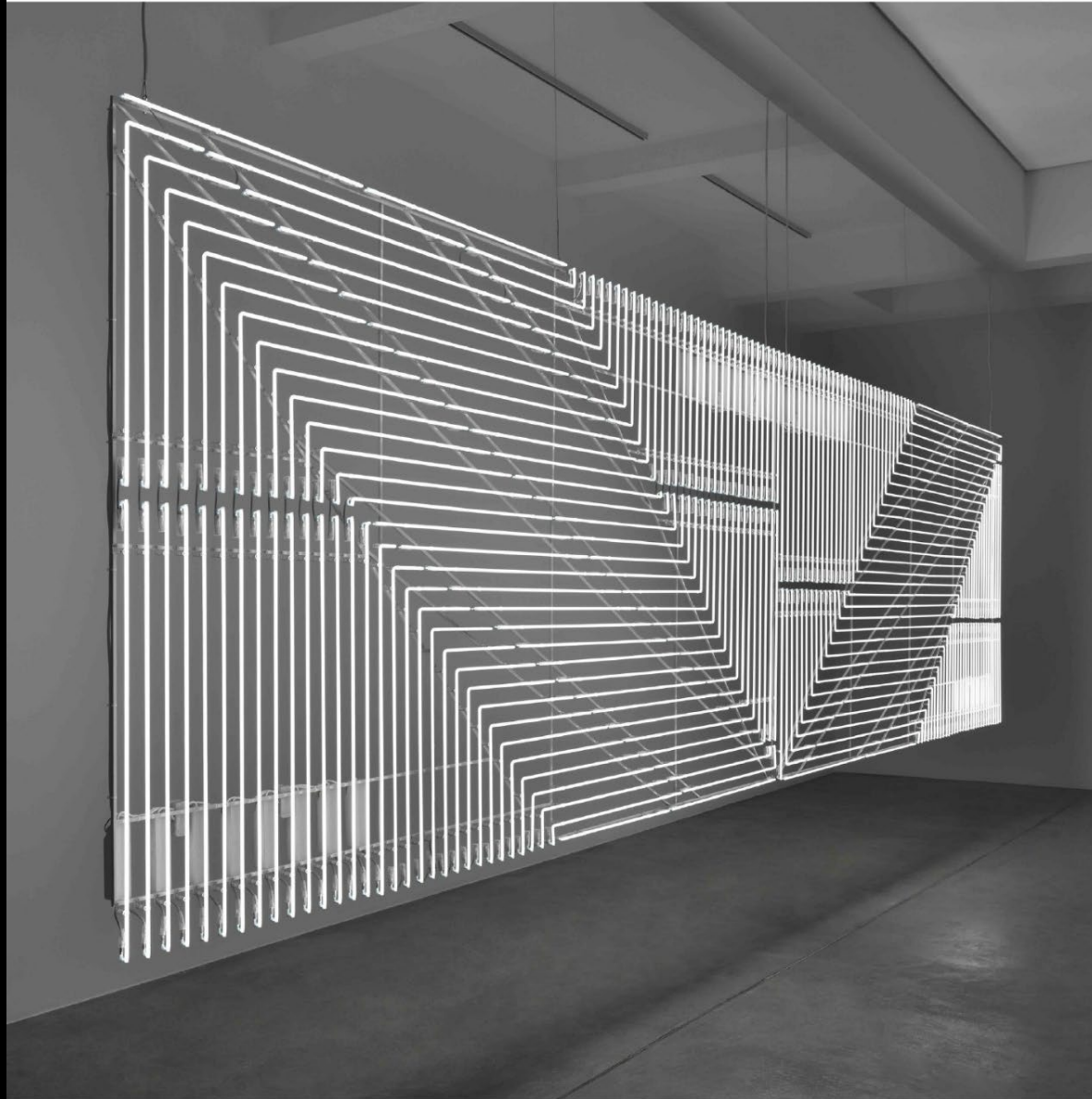
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CERITH WYN EVANS
Neon after Stella (Study for Valle de los Caidos), 2022
White neon
318 1/8 x 80 7/8 in. (808 x 205,5 cm)
Edition of 1 plus 1 artist's proof
Courtesy the artist and Marian Goodman Gallery
Photo Credit: Rebecca Fanuele

Exhibition View Cerith Wyn
Evans, MGG Paris, 2023.
Photo: Rebecca Fanuele
Courtesy Marian Goodman

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Exhibition View Cerith Wyn Evans, MGG Paris, 2023.
Photo: Rebecca Fanuele
Courtesy Marian Goodman

KP:

You have been using neon since the early 90s. How challenging was it to deal with such a medium and to what degree has technology helped you, especially, with more complicated installations?

CWE:

I was first prompted to use neon to fabricate an 'EXIT' sign, but in reverse or back-to-front (as if in a mirror)... I once caught site of this leaving a cinema and wanted the means to commemorate it somehow. As I stated in an interview for *Trebuchet* magazine in 2019: ".Yet, there's something about neon that needs to be addressed, the history of my use of Neon is an exploration of medium and the appreciation of many artists who have worked with it in the past. 'Neon' is a generic term applied to a group of gasses which -put simply- emit light when charged with electricity... Neon glows red, Argon, blue etc..."

Rosalind Krauss talks about the obsolescence of technologies that are thrown on the scrap heap of history. There's something about the revival of these things that are falling off the edge of a system or falling into an archaic technique or being supplanted by something else that I might employ. How things are associated with a certain nostalgia; the effect of neons, the atmosphere it produces and so on. Neon is often associated with "Chinatown" and I am always a little bit disappointed that the future's populist incarnation hasn't moved on from Ridley Scott's idea of the future. We're immersed in this technological tyranny and enslaved to algorithms promoting the hysterical scenography of Late Capitalist Phantasy.. Yet, there is something attractive about the volatility of neon as a medium, there's an alchemical property to it. There's a very mysterious, intractable, strange force, at work, energies that are very palpable and physical...I think by viewing everything through the lens of digital technology, computing, and artificial intelligence we're seeing a paradigm shift in which raw materials are reconsidered by their ability to be transmuted and transmogrified into other forms. The life of forms is itself undergoing a paradigm shift so we're in this mediamatic limbo between life and death and the folds of obsolescence."

KP:

Architecture, space and light have always been interconnected since antiquity. Their constant dialogue was paramount as they continuously enhance and feed each other. How important for you is site-specificity and how easy or difficult is it to place works in a neutral gallery environment?

CWE:

I'll need to chart a course - a little wide - to approach these questions and I'm drawn to reply with further questions. What could they be? I'm frustrated by your terms and how you employ them to perpetuate - what reeks of a myth to me. 'Paramount' to what, or whom? This 'dialogue' is not self-evident to me, and the dialectical routine of 'continuously enhance and feed each other' seems unthinkingly banal and mildly grotesque. I spend my time dwelling on these relations (if that's what they are)... and, whilst we're at it why not summon Time to the table. It's usually present. I occupy, I conjure my space by casting light on matters or making light of matters... expending resources to bathe in refraction.... or, imagine I have no head.

We could pause for a while to consider the impact that the invention of photography had on our rendezvous of spatio-temporal vectors. Take a moment to reflect on defining principles and governing principals... cast an eye over Susan Sontag or Roland Barthes by way of the Fourth Dimension most eloquently explored by Linda Dalrymple Henderson.

Or, set out on a fine night to improvise with the world.

KP:

Illumination and reality are sometimes synonymous, but these notions can also be opposing and contradicting. How does visual language bring us closer to the perception of reality and what is the reality that your own visual vocabulary succeeds in engaging us with?

CWE:

Precisely. This is what you'd have to ask the work.