

**Cerith Wyn Evans**  
**“...the Illuminating Gas”**

Curated by Roberta Tenconi and Vicente Todolí

**Press Conference: October 29, 2019 at 11.30 AM**

**Opening: October 30, 2019 at 7 PM**

**Exhibition dates: October 31, 2019 to February 23, 2020**



Photo courtesy Cerith Wyn Evans

**Pirelli HangarBicocca presents “...the Illuminating Gas”, the largest-ever solo exhibition of Cerith Wyn Evans—conceived as a harmonious composition in which light, energy, and sound offer visitors a unique synesthetic experience. Twenty-five works, ranging from earlier pieces to new creations, are installed in the exhibition spaces of Pirelli HangarBicocca as elements in an elaborate visual score.**

**Cerith Wyn Evans** (Llanelli, Wales, United Kingdom, 1958; lives and works between London and Norwich) began his career on London’s alternative art scene in the late 1970s and early 1980s, and is one of the most acclaimed British artists of recent decades. A pupil of the artists John Stezaker (1949) and Peter Gidal (1946) at Central Saint Martins (London), and later a student at the Royal College of Art (London, graduating in 1984), Wyn Evans soon garnered acclaim for his experimental short films. As of the 1990s, the artist abandoned film altogether, and concentrated on creating sculptures, installations, photographs, and site-specific or performative interventions.

Wyn Evans's research focuses on language and perception, and is characterized by the use of ephemeral elements such as light and sound, the use of montage as a compositional technique, and the imaginative potential of the word, as well as the centrality of the temporal and durational dimension in the experience of a work.

Cerith Wyn Evans's works often generate processes of transformation, conveying an arsenal of quotations and references in entirely new forms through open interpretation. This operation takes place both through the use of textual materials that are decontextualized and translated into a language of light—for example, in the form of Morse code pulses, as in the famous *Chandeliers* series, or as neon signs or fireworks—and in a more concealed, less direct way—for example, by transposing diagrams representing the movements of actors in Japanese Noh theatre into sculpture, or by making formal and conceptual references to the creative imaginations of earlier artists such as Marcel Duchamp (1887–1968) and Marcel Broodthaers (1924–1976).

In their elegance and formal balance, the works draw on a complex body of references and quotations—from literature, music, philosophy, photography, poetry, art history, astronomy and science—that transform the culture of the 20th and 21st centuries into a dynamic system that needs to be deciphered, questioning our very notion of reality. The subjects examined relate to perception, to the potential of language and communication, and to the evocative power of art and its ability to create collisions between different meanings and thoughts—exploring the borders between what is visible and invisible to the naked eye, and between the material and the immaterial.

Pirelli HangarBicocca's new exhibition, "**....the Illuminating Gas**", curated by Roberta Tenconi and Vicente Todolí, presents 25 works—earlier sculptures, complex monumental installations, and new productions—occupying more than 5,000 square meters of the Navate and the Cubo sections of Pirelli HangarBicocca. The exhibition opens with the slow and constant throbs of seven imposing 20-meter-high light columns, **StarStarStar/Steer (totransversephoton)** (2019). Made specifically for the occasion, and consisting of a skeleton of tubular lamps assembled from cylinders of various heights, the work creates a choreography of lights and shadows that intermittently invades the space. This energy release provides a counterpoint to the sound emitted by the adjacent work, **Composition for 37 flutes** (2018), an ethereal glass sculpture also composed of transparent elements. The air from its thin reeds produces a hiss that suggests a state of tension between the harmony of a breath and its dissipation.

All of the elements along the Navate are suspended and form an elaborate visual score conceived by the artist. As if in a concert, the 13 neon sculptures of the series **Neon Forms (after Noh)** (2015-2019) engage in a dialogue with the mile-long tangle of lines and luminous curves of **Forms in Space... by Light (in Time)** (2017), a work originally conceived for the Duveen Galleries of the Tate Britain in London and presented in Milan in a new configuration. For the *Neon Forms (after Noh)* series, the artist draws on the repertoire of steps, head and kimono movements or fan gestures performed by Noh theatre actors, as summarized and represented in the charts describing how a certain role is staged. Cerith Wyn Evans presents them in a new guise through a complex montage that reverses, twists, mirrors, dilates, extends and overlaps. *Forms in Space... by Light (in Time)* also incorporates forms used by Marcel Duchamp in *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even*, also known as *The Large Glass* (1915–1923)—particularly that of *Oculist Witnesses*, a diagram of the optical device used to measure sight—and transforms them into light.

The very title of the exhibition "*...the Illuminating Gas*" refers to Duchamp's final work, *Étant donnés: 1. La chute d'eau, 2. Le gaz d'éclairage* [Given: 1. The Waterfall, 2. The Illuminating Gas], a piece that the French artist worked on for 20 years between 1946 and 1966. It represents an enigmatic diorama visible only through the hole at the center of a door.

A mixed selection of displays is presented in the Cubo, the only space with natural lighting, including ethereal neon signs, suspended mobiles and sound installations arranged in a harmonious balance. Visitors are greeted by two installations conceived as a personal and subjective sensory experience: **E=C=L-I=P=S=E** (2015), a monumental neon sign describing the temporal and geographical progression of a solar eclipse across different continents, and **C=O=N=S=T=E=L=L=A=T=I=O=N** (*I call your image to mind*) (2010), a suspended mobile composed of reflective disks and directional speakers that form a polyphonic collage composed by the artist from various sources, including his own arrangements on the piano and recordings by a radio telescope in an astronomical observatory. Further along in the space, **Sutra** (2017) and **Mantra** (2017) appear as two pairs of Murano blown-glass chandeliers that emit flashing lights according to a composition written and performed by Cerith Wyn Evans himself. Light and movement return in **Still Life (In course of arrangement...)** (2015), an installation that refers to the dawn of cinema. Finally, **T=R=A=N=S=F=E=R=E=N=C=E** (*Frequency shifting paradigms in streaming audio*) (2015), conceived as an immaterial column composed exclusively of audio coming from a directional speaker placed on the floor, serves as a counterpoint to the seven light columns that open the exhibition.

The exhibition design also incorporates the external architecture of Pirelli HangarBicocca by presenting **TIX3** (1992), the artist's first neon work—consisting of the word 'exit' spelled back to front—and the new sculpture **To....fold, an apprentice in the Sun** (2019), made of fireworks, which demonstrates its ephemeral nature through the spectacular act of burning.

### Catalogue

The catalogue opens with a kaleidoscope of images captured by Cerith Wyn Evans around the idea of light. Selected from an archive of more than 3,000 images, the photographs include an important core series taken in Japan during the spring of 2019. Edited by Roberta Tenconi and Vicente Todolí, with a summary of the works on display and documentation of the installation at Pirelli HangarBicocca, the volume includes an introductory text by the curators, along with in-depth essays by art critic Briony Fer and a philosophical text by Éric Alliez. The catalogue will be published by Skira in a bilingual Italian and English edition, with graphic design by the Leftloft studio.

### The Artist

Internationally renowned institutions that have presented solo exhibitions by Cerith Wyn Evans include: Museo Tamayo, Mexico City (2018); Duveen Galleries, Tate Britain, London, Museum Haus Konstruktiv, Zurich (2017); Museion, Bolzano (2015); Serpentine Sackler Gallery, London (2014); Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary, Vienna (2013); Schinkel Pavilion, Berlin (2012); Wiener Staatsoper, Vienna, Kunsthall Bergen (2011); MUSAC, León (2008); Kunsthaus Graz (2007); ICA – Institute of Contemporary Arts, London, ARC/Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris (2006); MIT Visual Arts Centre, Boston (2004); Centre for Contemporary Art, Kitakyushu, Japan (1998). His works have also been included in important collective exhibitions, including: 14th Lyon Biennale, Skulptur Projekte, Münster, 57th Venice Biennale (2017); 4th Moscow Biennial (2011); Aichi Triennale, Nagoya, 12th Venice Architecture Biennale (2010); 9th Istanbul Biennial (2005); Documenta 11, Kassel (2002). In 2003 Cerith

Wyn Evans represented Wales at the Venice Biennale, and participated in "Utopia Station." He was awarded the Hepworth Prize for Sculpture in 2018.

**Exhibition Program**

The exhibition "*....the Illuminating Gas*" is part of the 2019–2020 artistic program conceived by Artistic Director Vicente Todolí together with the curatorial department: Roberta Tenconi, Curator; Lucia Aspesi, Assistant Curator; and Fiammetta Griccioli, Assistant Curator. The program will continue with exhibitions by Trisha Baga (February–July 2020); Chen Zhen (April–September 2020); Neil Beloufa (September 2020–January 2021); and Steve McQueen (October 2020–February 2021).

**Pirelli HangarBicocca**

Pirelli HangarBicocca is a non-profit institution dedicated to the promotion and production of contemporary art that reflects the corporate culture of Pirelli and its commitment to research, innovation and the dissemination of contemporary languages. Pirelli HangarBicocca stages a rich program of solo exhibitions by major international artists who have made their mark through research and experimentation, as well as a program of cultural events and presentations, guaranteeing visitors free access to the space.

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**Info sheet**

Institution	Pirelli HangarBicocca
Artist	Cerith Wyn Evans
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Entrance	Free
Catalogue	Skira
Workshops	During the week for schools On weekends for families
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