

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 the most current information.

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

Screening | *1985*

Thursday, July 18, 2019 | 6:30–8PM

Writing Workshop | Words & Art

Saturday, July 20, 2019 | 12:30–1:30PM

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 Saint 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

“Do you know the song ‘There Is a Light That Never Goes Out’ by The Smiths? What’s so great about it for me is how it identifies pain and hope at the same time. For me, this impulse is irresistible.”
—Steven Evans

Contemporary Arts Museum Houston

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HOURS

Mon.	Closed
Tue.	10AM–7PM
Wed.	10AM–7PM
Thu.	10AM–9PM
Fri.	10AM–7PM
Sat.	10AM–6PM
Sun.	12PM–6PM

Cover: *Situation*, 2016. Glass, neon, electrical components, and hardware. Image and work courtesy the artist and

Jonathan Hopson Gallery, Houston, Texas.

Inside: *Selections from the Disco, Various BPM, 1979–1991* (detail), 1989–1991. Installation view at Artists Space, New York, New York, 2013. Image and work courtesy the artist and Jonathan Hopson Gallery, Houston, Texas

Contemporary Arts Museum Houston is funded in part by the City of Houston.

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

June 29–October 13, 2019

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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 both 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.



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.

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.

Suggested Resources

Reading

- Aletti, Vince
– *The Disco Files 1973–78: New York's Underground Week by Week*, 2009
- Brainard, Joe
– *I Remember*, 1975
- Crimp, Douglas
– "AIDS: Cultural Analysis/Cultural Activism," *October*, Vol. 43, Winter, 1987
– "DISS-CO (A Fragment)" From *Before Pictures, A Memoir of 1970s New York*, 2016
- Dyer, Richard
– *Gays and Film*, 1977
- Furman, Ezra
– *Lou Reed's Transformer (33 1/3)*, 2018
- Holleran, Andrew
– *Dancer from the Dance*, 1978
- Kelly, Karen
– *Stars Don't Stand Still in the Sky: Music and Myth*, 1999
- Larkin, Colin
– *The Virgin Encyclopedia of Popular Music: Concise Edition*, 1998
- Penley, Constance
– *Feminism & Film Theory*, 1988
- Savage, Jon
– *England's Dreaming*, 1991

These resources are recommended for further inquiry into the artwork and themes explored in the exhibition *Steven Evans: If I can't dance, it's not my revolution!*.

Viewing

- 1985
– Yen Tan, 2018
- The Boys in the Band*
– William Friedkin, 1970
- BPM (Beats Per Minute)*
– Robin Campillo, 2017
- Hedwig and the Angry Inch*
– John Cameron Mitchell, 2001
- Parting Glances*
– Bill Sherwood, 1986
- The Times of Harvey Milk*
– Rob Epstein, 1984
- Weekend*
– Andrew Haigh, 2011