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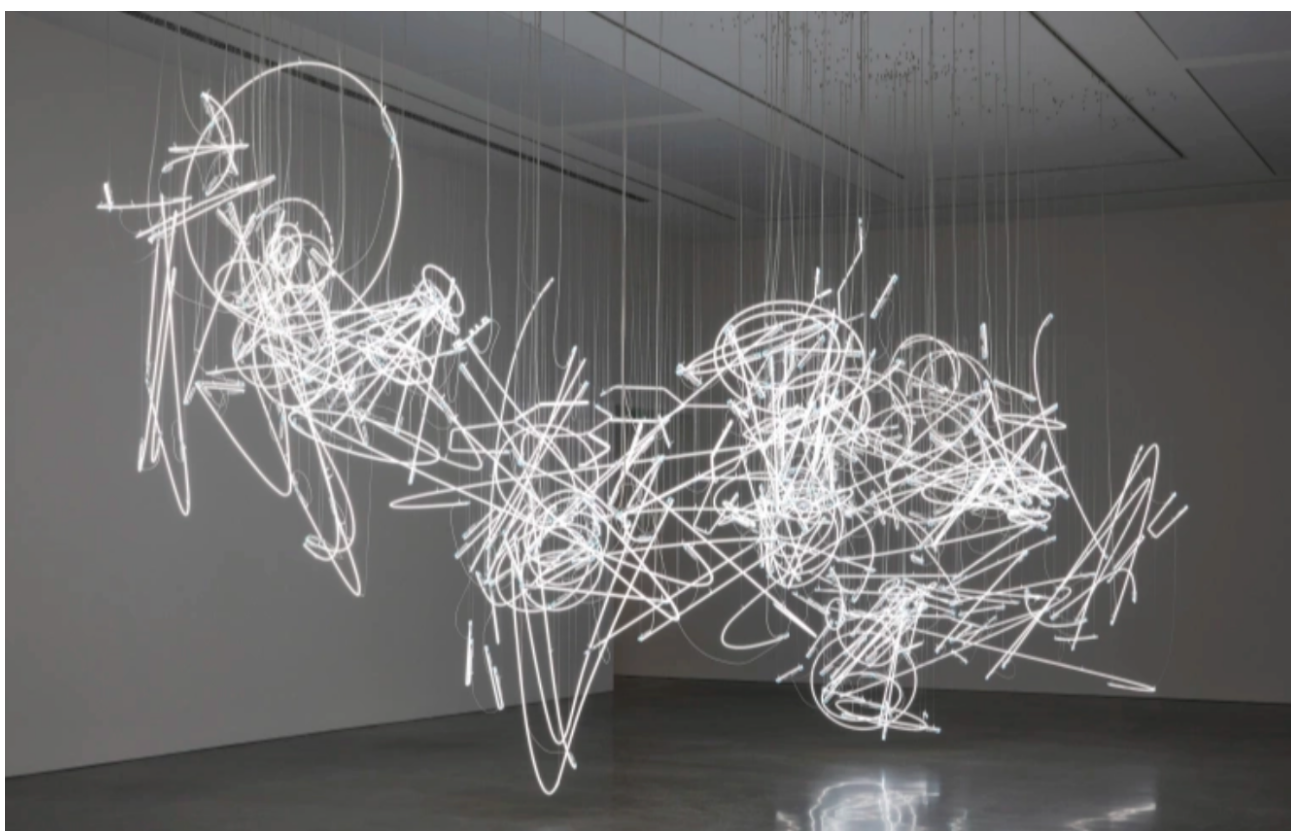
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Tending to a Luminous, Sonic Garden With Cerith Wyn Evans at MCA Australia



Installation view, Cerith Wyn Evans in light of the visible , Museum of Contemporary Art Australia, Sydney, 2025, image courtesy and © Cerith Wyn Evan · Photo: Hamish McIntosh

Explore vivid neon sculptures, abstract soundscapes and silk-screen-printed images in the illustrious Welsh artist's landmark show.

Words by STEPHANIE SEKULOVSKA · Updated on 23 Jul 2025 · Published on 30 Jun 2025

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Welsh artist Cerith Wyn Evans is known for creating bold neon sculptures that invite moments of quiet contemplation. The Museum of Contemporary Art Australia's major winter presentation *Cerith Wyn Evans ... in light of the visible* is no exception.

Enter the exhibition, take the first left and you'll be met with *Elective Affinity*. A provocation – the first of many throughout the exhibition – is suspended in white neon writing on the wall: “Look at that picture, how does it seem to you now... Does it seem to be persisting?”

The “picture” in question is a pair of white canvases hanging on the adjacent wall. The monochrome artworks – aptly titled *Indeterminate Paintings XXI and XXII* – feature lines of clear varnish, which appear only in the reflection of light streaming in from Sydney's Circular Quay.

This theme of reflection is one that persists throughout the exhibition – the visionary artist's most comprehensive solo show in the southern hemisphere. The milestone is marked with large-scale light sculptures and soundscapes from the past 15 years of Wyn Evans's four-decade career.

Curated by the MCA's director of curatorial and digital, Lara Strongman, the exhibition is designed as a “parcours” – a leisurely route taken through the gallery. At the artist's request, the space goes without curatorial plaques so visitors can find meaning within the art directly.

Visitors are encouraged to contemplate space and time by experiencing the exhibition at a slower pace. In conversation with Strongman at a media preview event in early June, Wyn Evans shared his thoughts on this: “There's a little more freedom, you can double back on yourself. I like it when there are forks in the road that you could take one way or another.”

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MCA director Suzanne Cotter described the show as a walk through “a luminous and sonic garden”. A fusion of striking visuals, language and sound is found across the artworks, many of which have never been seen in Australia before.

Take his monumental three-metre neon installation *F=O=U=N=T=A=I=N*. Here, in vertical lines cascading down to the floor, Wyn Evans presents a Japanese translation of an excerpt from Marcel Proust’s *In Search of Lost Time*. Walk through a gap in the veil and you’ll hear the low, dissonant hum of glass pipes in *Composition for 37 Flutes* (2018), the “breathing” sound sculpture installed alongside it.

Japan has played an influential role in Wyn Evans’s art and life; he spends time there every year. The sculptor says his work has been a process of investigating “what Japanese culture [means] to me”.

One piece grappling with this cultural tie is the exhibition’s neon centrepiece, and one of several site-specific works made for the MCA, *Sydney Drift*. The installation is part of the internationally acclaimed *Neon Forms (After Noh)*, a series of three-dimensional “drawings in space” that pay homage to Japan’s oldest surviving theatre tradition. Its lights curve to look as though they are in motion, mimicking the highly stylised movements of Noh theatre.

“Although these lights may look chaotic, they’re also incredibly precise. They map these beautiful gestures through space,” Strongman says.

The MCA has scheduled a series of related programs to highlight the role of sound and movement. Visitors can also explore improvised dance and music performances, walking tours through the city, exhibition tours, plus an early morning meditation and tai chi experience with Grandmaster Gary Khor. .

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Juxtaposing the largely neon-infused space, you'll find Wyn Evans's silk-screen stencils, amethyst geodes, plastic-potted plants and smashed glass from car windshields. These materials highlight the dissolution of boundaries between the natural world and the mechanical.

"Cerith's work shows that everything exists on a continuum – gentleness is at one end and violence is on the other," Strongman says. "These [other mediums of art] signal moments of quiet intimacy among the majesty of the neon."

His series *Katagami Screens* provides a moment of gentleness. Five paper stencils on silk nets connect the passageway between light installations – but they are not merely supplementary. Wyn Evans describes these works as "so intricate" and dear to him because they "evoke memories of photographs my father used to take".

The exhibition embodies a reflective artistic practice that Wyn Evans has cultivated over 40 years of work. Preferring to stay out of the limelight, the artist speaks to the quiet beauty of another passion – gardening – when he says, "To grow something, to really nurture something, is just something else entirely." The same might be said of a career well cared for.

Cerith Wyn Evans... in light of the visible *is now showing at the Museum of Contemporary Art Australia from June 6 to October 19. Tickets are available now.*

Broadsheet is a proud media partner of the Museum of Contemporary Art Australia.