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Press release

Dan Flavin

Some Light



November 11, 2026 – April 4, 2027

Few artists have explored the transformative power of light as deeply as Dan Flavin. Drawing inspiration from his native New York, Flavin used electric light—one of the cornerstones of modernity—to expand our perception of space and open up new possibilities for interaction between art, architecture, and people.

At Iberdrola, we are delighted to sponsor this exhibition as we celebrate our 125th anniversary under the motto “125 years of light.” Throughout our history, we have championed innovation, driven progress, and improved people’s lives through electrification.

Dan Flavin, whose work is also represented in the Iberdrola Collection, found in the familiar fluorescent tube the perfect means of transforming spaces and how we experience them. Using industrial materials and simple combinations of colors, he created striking installations that invite visitors to respond in their own way. By making light his central medium, Flavin established himself as a leading figure in contemporary art.

Iberdrola’s longstanding partnership with the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao stems from a shared belief that art and culture are essential to enrich people’s lives and help society flourish. This internationally renowned museum has been decisive in Bilbao’s cultural and social transformation and in bringing the city to global prominence. Both Iberdrola and the Museum believe that culture, like innovation, opens our minds, inspires new ideas, and helps create a more dynamic, creative, forward-looking society.

We hope visitors enjoy the exhibition and find in Flavin’s work a new way to experience one of the most fascinating and transformative elements of the world around us: light.

Ignacio S. Galán
Executive Chairman of Iberdrola

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Dan Flavin: Some Light

- Dates: November 11th, 2026, to April 4th, 2027
- Curator: Lauren Hinkson, Curator for Collections, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York
- Sponsored by: Iberdrola

- *Dan Flavin: Some Light* explores the surprising breadth of the artist's production from the 1960s through the 1980s, bringing together over twenty major works drawn from the Guggenheim Museum, New York Panza Collection holdings with key loans from Dia Art Foundation, New York.

- Flavin's unadorned use of a widely available industrial material, his emphasis on elementary forms, and his attention to the viewer's experience of space made him a pivotal figure within Minimalism.

- Highlights in the exhibition include Flavin's first barrier piece, *greens crossing greens (to Piet Mondrian who lacked green)* (1966) and *an artificial barrier of blue, red and blue fluorescent light (to Flavin Starbuck Judd)* (1968), which spans the gallery from wall to wall and saturates it with color.

The Guggenheim Museum Bilbao presents *Dan Flavin: Some Light*, an exhibition devoted to the American artist Dan Flavin (b. 1933, Jamaica, New York; d. 1996, Riverhead, New York) and his production from the 1960s through the 1980s. The exhibition takes its title from Flavin's first solo show of fluorescent light works, held in 1964 at Kaymar gallery in New York. Drawing on the Guggenheim's holdings of Flavin's work from the Panza Collection, with key loans from Dia Art Foundation in New York, the presentation follows Flavin from his early fluorescent constructions in white light to the room-scale chromatic installations of his later career. The show is sponsored by Iberdrola.

Flavin began to consider electric light as an artistic medium in the summer of 1961, while working as a guard at the American Museum of Natural History in New York. Two years later, he affixed an unmodified fluorescent tube to his studio wall and that break with convention defined the rest of his practice. Working within deliberate limits, Flavin used commercially available fixtures in ten colors and four standard lengths, whose basic form he never altered. He first arranged the lights on walls or floors in simple modular repetitions and predetermined systems. By the mid-1960s, he had developed a vocabulary that engaged the surrounding space more directly including "corners," "monuments," "barriers," and "corridors." He called these arrangements "situations," conceiving them in response to particular settings. Later works grew in scale and ambition, filling entire rooms with complex chromatic groupings.

Thoroughly modern and radical in his use of prefabricated materials, Flavin introduced a new visual vocabulary to art in the 1960s. His ethereal and arresting constructions left an indelible impression on his own contemporaries and generations to come. In Flavin's words, "my icons do not raise up the blessed savior in elaborate cathedrals. They are constructed concentrations celebrating barren rooms. They bring a limited light."

THE EXHIBITION

Beginning with white light. Gallery 205

The exhibition opens with a selection of Flavin's early experiments in fluorescent light. In 1963, he set aside paint and canvas for a material anyone could buy: the commercially manufactured fluorescent tube, sold in lengths of two, four, six, and eight feet. He made this ordinary fixture his basic unit of composition, treating electric light, in his words, as "just another instrument." The first gallery presents works in daylight, cool white, and warm white, arranged across walls, floors, and corners.

In *the nominal three (to William of Ockham)* (1963), vertical daylight lamps stand against the wall in an additive sequence of one, two, and three. Flavin dedicated the work to the fourteenth-century philosopher, who held that reality resides in concrete things rather than universal abstractions. Flavin's construction shares that conviction—the viewer sees the light and its source, not a representation of something else. Two untitled works carry this approach into space. In *untitled* (1963–66), cool and warm white light meet at the junction of two walls until the corner itself appears to dissolve. In *untitled* (1964), a semi-elliptical arc of cool white deluxe lamps leaves the wall and traverses the floor, turning the room into a container for its light.

Corners, barriers, and corridors. Galleries 206, 202, 207

By the mid-1960s, Flavin was composing with the room itself. "I knew that the actual space of a room could be disrupted and played with by careful, thorough composition of the illuminating equipment," he recalled. His first barrier, *greens crossing greens (to Piet Mondrian who lacked green)* (1966), assembles green fluorescent tubes into a post-and-lintel structure that physically blocked access to the gallery, inverting the conventional museum experience.

A highlight of the exhibition, *an artificial barrier of blue, red and blue fluorescent light (to Flavin Starbuck Judd)* (1968), is the first barrier Flavin built to stand on its own. Overlapping rectangular modules of red and blue tubes step across the gallery from wall to wall like a fence. The structure controls and impedes the visitor's movement while it saturates the room with color. Where the blue and red light strike a surface, whether the wall or the visitors standing nearby, they mingle into a subtle violet. The work demonstrates, at the scale of an entire room, Flavin's proposition that light alone can produce a volume of color.

In the early 1970s, Flavin began to design spaces for his light rather than respond only to existing architecture. He conceived the first of these, *untitled (to Jan and Ron Greenberg)* (1972–73), for his 1973 solo exhibition at the Saint Louis Art Museum in Missouri. Two back-to-back rows of fixtures divide a corridor lengthwise, green on one side and yellow on the other. At the end of the row, a gap the width of a single fixture lets the hidden color glow through. The source of the second color remains concealed unless the viewer walks around the structure and enters from the other side, creating a play of concealment and revelation.

Monuments and Dedications. Galleries 209, 203

Flavin dedicated many of his works to specific individuals, some of whom inspired entire series. The exhibition also brings together a significant loan from Dia Art Foundation of seven of the thirty-nine "monuments" Flavin dedicated to the Russian avant-garde artist and architect Vladimir Tatlin between 1964 and 1990. Built from eight-foot cool white fluorescent lamps, fixed to the wall and reaching down to

the floor, where their light pools. The works rise in tiers toward a single apex, recalling both Tatlin's tower and the skyscrapers of Flavin's hometown of New York.

The exhibition closes with works from the 1980s, when Flavin expanded his system of variations as new types of fluorescent lamps and fixtures reached the market. Flavin first installed *untitled (fondly to Margo)* (1986) at Margo Leavin Gallery in West Hollywood, California, as a group of seven corner works. Across the group, he developed a "light system" that varies a fixed set of colors through a progression of arrangements. For these works he chose pink and yellow, colors he associated with the gaudiness of Los Angeles, and combined them with an intensity rare in his earlier work.

Flavin created *untitled (in honor of Leo at the 30th anniversary of his gallery)* (1987) for his exhibition at Castelli Gallery in New York, as a tribute to his longtime dealer, Leo Castelli. The work builds on the grid structures Flavin began exploring in 1976, which grew out of his square corner works of the late 1960s. Equal numbers of eight-foot tubes face forward and backward, sending one band of color out toward the viewer and another into the corner behind. Like all of his works, rather than flattening space into a field of color on a wall, the fluorescent light saturates the surrounding air, while the architecture that contains it a appears to dissolve, inviting a sublime encounter.

DIDAKTIKA

The Museum's Didaktika program offers educational spaces and digital content that complement the exhibitions, providing visitors with tools and resources to deepen their understanding and appreciation of the works on view.

On this occasion, the Didaktika can be enjoyed both online and in the 2nd-floor hallway. It will have as its main focus the minimalist artist Dan Flavin (1933–1996) and his innovative use of fluorescent light as his artistic medium. The Didaktika will explain, on the one hand, the self-taught inspirational foundations of his work, alongside the lighting process used to create color, through a practical activity. In addition, texts, images, the exhibition catalog, and a period audio recording featuring the artist's voice will be used as complementary educational materials designed to support the audience during their visit and add to the exhibition.

<u>Activities</u>

<u>Opening Talk (November 10)</u>

Lauren Hinkson, curator of the exhibition and Curator for Collections of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum New York, will conduct the opening talk.

<u>Shared Reflections (December)</u>

Exclusive guided tours of the exhibition led by Museum professionals.

- Curatorial view: Lauren Hinkson, the curator of the exhibition (Date to be announced)
- Key concepts: with Luz Maguregui, Education Coordinator (December 16)

<u>Musical Guides tours (November 24, December 15, January 19, February 23 and March 16)</u>

A guided tour from a minimalist musical perspective, led by musicologist Patricia Sojo, with a selection of excerpts from compositions by John Adams, John Cage, Philip Glass, and Terry Riley, set against the backdrop of Flavin's works.

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Activities for Museum Members
Members of the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao also have the opportunity to take part in additional tours and activities related to each exhibition.

Soirée, Matinée (November 9 and 10)
Exclusive guided tours for Museum Members with the exhibition curators prior to its opening to the public. For International and Honor Members.

Exclusive Tours (November 24)
Group guided tours of the exhibition.

Lagunartean (November 26)
Guided tour of the exhibition followed by lunch at Bistro Guggenheim Bilbao.

In-depth Tours (December 1, 4 and 6; January 15 and 17 and April 4)
Small-group talks that provide context for the exhibition, followed by a guided tour.

360° Immersions (December 10)
Free, live, online guided tours of the exhibitions led by Marta Arzak, Associate Director of Digital Education.

https://www.guggenheim-bilbao.eus/en/museum-members

COVER IMAGE
Dan Flavin
greens crossing greens (to Piet Mondrian who lacked green), 1966
Green fluorescent light
Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York
Panza Collection 91.3705
© Dan Flavin, VEGAP, Bilbao 2026

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Online press image service
High-resolution images and videos of both the exhibitions and building are available for download in the Museum's press room (prensa.guggenheim-bilbao.eus).

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For further information, please contact the Marketing and Communications Department of the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao by telephone at +34 944 359 008 or by email at media@guggenheim-bilbao.eus



Dan Flavin
the nominal three (to William of Ockham), 1963
Daylight fluorescent light
Edition 2/3
Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York
Panza Collection, Gift 91.3698
© Dan Flavin, VEGAP, Bilbao 2026



Dan Flavin
untitled, 1963–66
Cool white and warm white fluorescent light
Edition 1/3
Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York
Panza Collection 91.3699
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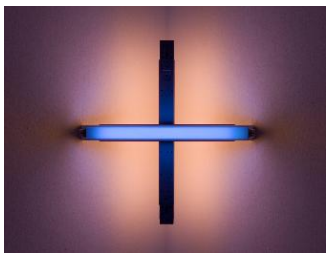
Dan Flavin
untitled, 1964
Cool white deluxe fluorescent light
Edition 1/3
Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York
Panza Collection 91.3700
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Dan Flavin
greens crossing greens (to Piet Mondrian who lacked green), 1966
Green fluorescent light
Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York
Panza Collection 91.3705
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Dan Flavin
untitled (to Henri Matisse), 1964
Pink, yellow, blue, and green fluorescent light
Edition 2/3
Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York
Panza Collection, Gift 92.4113
© Dan Flavin, VEGAP, Bilbao 2026



Dan Flavin
untitled (to Barbara Nüsse), 1971
Blue and pink fluorescent light
Edition 8/50
Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York
Panza Collection, Gift 92.4118
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