

Press release



 **Occident**

October 9, 2026 – February 21, 2027

Throughout the history of art and across various fields of human creativity, some works have served as a reference and source of inspiration for the creation of new pieces. In 66–76–26, the poignant musical theme Wild is the Wind is the starting point and basic component of the installation that British artist and filmmaker Steve McQueen is now presenting at the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao.

Originally written by Dimitri Tiomkin and Ned Washington for the 1957 eponymous film, the song was performed in the film by Johnny Mathis and nominated for an Oscar. Since then, the song has been covered on numerous occasions, most notably by Nina Simone (in 1966) and David Bowie (in 1976); McQueen himself included the song in a sequence of his 2018 film Widows.

This time, McQueen revisits these two versions that have fascinated him for decades, stripping them of all instrumentation and placing them in a space devoid of other sounds, images, or stimuli that might interfere with the perception of Simone and Bowie's voices, creating a new piece full of emotion and subtlety. In keeping with McQueen's sustained interest in creating conditions for focused looking and listening, the work offers a space in which these voices can be encountered with unusual intimacy and attention.

For Occident, it is a source of immense satisfaction to sponsor this thought-provoking and sophisticated project. I hope you enjoy the exhibition, which demands a level of attention and contemplation to which we have become unaccustomed, where music is the essence of an intense, profound experience.

Hugo Serra Calderón
CEO of Occident

Steve M^cQueen: 66–76–26

- Dates: October 9, 2026–February 21, 2027
 - Curator: Lekha Hileman
 - Sponsor: Occident
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- Created specifically for the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao, *66–76–26* brings together two iconic recordings of *Wild is the Wind* presented a cappella: Nina Simone's 1966 interpretation and David Bowie's 1976 cover.
 - Part love song, part lament, part declaration of longing, *Wild is the Wind* has accompanied Steve M^cQueen for more than three decades, drawing him back to it again and again through its emotional complexity.
 - *66–76–26* is newly created work in which two distinct artistic voices resonate across time and space and engage in a dialogue across the architecture as visitors move through the gallery.

The Guggenheim Museum Bilbao is pleased to present *66–76–26*, a major new installation by Steve M^cQueen. Conceived specifically for the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao, the work brings together two iconic recordings of "*Wild is the Wind*" — Nina Simone's 1966 interpretation of Dimitri Tiomkin and Ned Washington's song and David Bowie's 1976 cover — stripped of their instrumentation and presented a cappella, with each voice spatially separated within a darkened gallery. Two performances, ten years apart, heard anew. This exhibition is sponsored by Occident insurance company.

For more than three decades, "*Wild is the Wind*" has remained present in M^cQueen's work. First encountering Bowie's recording in the mid-1990s and later discovering Simone's version, the artist found himself repeatedly returning to the song, drawn by its emotional complexity and its capacity to reveal new meanings over time. As M^cQueen has observed, the song never settles into a single interpretation. Part love song, part lament, part declaration of longing, it continues to provoke.

In *66–76–26*, M^cQueen strips the recordings back to their most essential element: the human voice. Simone's voice emerges from one side of the space while Bowie's answers from the other, and as visitors move through the gallery the two voices unfold in dialogue across the architecture. What emerges is neither a comparison nor a reconciliation, but a newly created work in which two distinct artistic voices resonate across time and space.

The title refers to the years in which Simone and Bowie respectively recorded the song, as well as to the year of the exhibition itself. By bringing together performances separated by a decade and presenting them fifty and sixty years later, M^cQueen creates an encounter that collapses historical distance. The work invites reflection not only on the song's enduring power but also on the social and political conditions through which

these recordings have travelled. Created during periods marked by upheaval, uncertainty, and transformation — the civil rights movement, Vietnam, Watergate — the performances speak with particular force to the present moment.

Recent works including *Bass* (2024), *Atlas* (2026), and *Untitled* (2025) have seen M^cQueen move increasingly toward sound, light, and perception as primary materials. Rather than constructing narratives through moving images, these works explore how immaterial phenomena can shape bodily experience and collective attention. *66–76–26* continues this trajectory, expanding M^cQueen's investigation of how artworks might operate beyond the frame.

The installation transforms the gallery into a sparse, dimly lit environment calibrated to heighten acoustic awareness. Deprived of visual distraction other than the source of the sound, visitors become acutely conscious of sound, silence, breath, and duration. As M^cQueen has described, the work draws on an understanding of silence as active material — an idea he associates with Miles Davis's interest in the spaces between notes, where meaning emerges not only from what is present, but from what is withheld. That principle informs the structure of *66–76–26*, where pauses, breaths, anticipation, and intervals become as significant as the voices themselves.

This reduction is not an exercise in minimalism but an attempt to arrive at essentials. M^cQueen has spoken of wanting to strip away the noise and focusing on fundamentals — to ask what remains when everything extraneous is cleared away, and whether what is left will hold. At the center of that question, in this work, are two voices intertwining and the intensity they carry. "Love is the only thing worth living for and worth dying for," M^cQueen has said of the longing he hears in both performances. "Within everything that was going on in the world, it just comes down to that. It's the only thing."

The exhibition is accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue designed by acclaimed Dutch graphic designer Irma Boom. Conceived as an extension of the installation rather than its documentation, the publication brings together archival and photographic material related to Nina Simone and David Bowie, alongside newly commissioned texts. These include a conversation between M^cQueen and curator Lekha Hileman ranging across the making of the work, the enduring pull of the song, and the longer arc of a practice that has always tested the boundaries of what art can ask of its viewer, as well as a newly commissioned essay by art historian and artist Cora Gilroy-Ware exploring the cultural and artistic legacies of Simone and Bowie. The catalogue proposes a dialogue between image and sound, presence and absence, intimacy and performance — and considers how two singular artists continue to resonate across generations.

In parallel with the exhibition, the Museum will present a film program dedicated to M^cQueen's cinematic work, offering audiences an opportunity to consider the relationship between his work in cinema and the gallery. While M^cQueen's films have earned international acclaim — among them the Academy Award-winning *12 Years a Slave* — *66–76–26* foregrounds the concerns that have long animated his artistic practice: perception, embodiment, memory, duration, and the capacity of art to create spaces for reflection and encounter.

BIOGRAPHY

Awarded the Turner Prize in 1999 and the 2024 Rolf Schock Prize in Visual Arts, M^cQueen has had his artwork presented at some of the most significant venues and museums around the world. His work has been featured in Documenta (1997 and 2002), he represented Great Britain at the 53rd Venice Biennale in 2009 and was selected several times for the Venice Biennale's central pavilion (2003, 2007, 2013, and 2015). Solo exhibitions of his work have been held at the Art Institute of Chicago (2012); Schaulager, Basel (2013); Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester (2017); Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston (2017). In 2019 he presented YEAR 3 at Tate Britain and had a major one-person exhibition at Tate Modern in 2020 which toured to Pirelli Hangar Bicocca, Milan in 2022. In Spring 2023, he presented *Grenfell* at the Serpentine South Gallery, London. In 2024 M^cQueen unveiled a new installation, *Bass*, co-commissioned by Dia and Schaulager Basel, at Dia Beacon in New York; *Sunshine State*, a project commissioned for the 52nd edition of International Film Festival Rotterdam (IFFR) in 2023, was on view at Dia Chelsea in New York and Hangar Bicocca, among other places. *Atlas* is now on view at De Pont Museum, Tilburg (until 30 Aug 2026).

M^cQueen has directed five feature films: *Hunger* (2008), *Shame* (2011), *12 Years a Slave* (2013), *Widows* (2018) and *Blitz* (2024). *Hunger* was awarded the Caméra d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival, and his third, *12 Years a Slave*, received the Golden Globe, Oscar, and BAFTA awards for best picture in 2014. In 2020, he made *Small Axe*, an anthology of five films about London's West Indian community and, in 2021, *Uprising*, a 3-part documentary with James Rogan, about the New Cross Fire in London in 1981. His documentary film, *Occupied City*, premiered at the Cannes Film Festival in May 2023. *Blitz*, his most recent feature film, about the Second World War, had its world premiere at the 68th BFI London Film Festival in 2024.

M^cQueen was named an Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE) in 2002 and a Commander of the Order of the British Empire (CBE) in 2011. He was knighted in the 2020 New Year Honors list. M^cQueen was born in West London and is based in London and Amsterdam.

EDUCATIONAL CONTENT

As part of the Didaktika program, the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao develops educational resources and public activities that offer visitors additional ways to engage with the ideas and questions explored in each exhibition.

For 66–76–26, these materials will consider the ways artistic works move across disciplines and generations. Taking Steve M^cQueen's installation as a point of departure, the online feature *Did you know that...?* will explore how music, cinema, literature, and visual art can inform one another, and how songs can acquire new meanings over time. Through the intertwined voices of Nina Simone and David Bowie, M^cQueen's work reflects on listening as an emotional and social experience, and on the enduring capacity of music to accompany moments of longing, uncertainty, memory, and connection.

Public programs

Introduction by Steve M^cQueen and public conversation (October 7, 2026)

A conversation between Steve M^cQueen and Lekha Hileman, Curator at the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao, exploring the origins of *66-76-26*, the histories embedded within *Wild is the Wind*, and the role of sound, space, and listening in M^cQueen's recent practice.

Music, Resilience, and Wellbeing (November 13 and 27, 2026)

These sessions for young people and adults will explore music as a means of reflection, emotional expression, and wellbeing. Developed within the Museum's Wellbeing program, they invite participants to consider the ways sound and listening can shape personal and collective experience.

Gallery 105, 7 pm (Museum closed)

Steve M^cQueen Film Series (January 16, 23, and 30, and February 6 and 13, 2027)

Presented in conjunction with the exhibition, this film program will offer an opportunity to revisit a selection of landmark works from M^cQueen's cinematic career. The series has been developed in dialogue with the artist and highlights the breadth of a practice that has continually moved between visual art and film.

Location and time: Auditorium, 6 pm.

Program (over 18):

1. January 16: *Hunger*, 2008. Running time: 87 min * **M^cQueen gives opening talk**
2. January 23: *Shame*, 2011. Running time: 1 h 41 min
3. January 30: *12 Years a Slave*, 2013. Running time: 2 h 14 min
4. February 6: *Small Axe, (Mangroove)*, 2020. Running time: 2 h 7 min
5. February 13: *Small Axe, (Lovers Rock)*, 2020. Running time: 1 h 18 min

For more information:

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IMAGES FOR THE USE OF THE PRESS

Steve McQueen *66-76-26*

Guggenheim Museum Bilbao

Online press image service

In the press section of the Museum's website (prensa.guggenheim-bilbao.eus), journalists can download high-resolution images and videos of both the exhibitions and the building.

For further information, the Press Department of the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao can be contacted by phone (+34 944 359 008) or email (media@guggenheim-bilbao.eus)

Portrait of Steve McQueen

Photo: © James Stopforth

