



Erasmus Prize 2026 awarded to Steve McQueen

Descrizione

COMUNICATO STAMPA - CONTENUTO PROMOZIONALE

AMSTERDAM, March 30, 2026 /PRNewswire/ - The Praemium Erasmianum Foundation has awarded the 2026 Erasmus Prize to artist and filmmaker Steve McQueen (1969). The theme of this year's Prize is Ecce Homo, Behold the Human Being.

McQueen is known for exploring who we are in moments of vulnerability, how we treat each other, and how history shapes our present, without judgment nor fear of moral complexity.

This humanist approach resonates deeply with the spirit of Desiderius Erasmus. In his writings, Erasmus encouraged people to question injustice while never letting go of empathy and humanity. Steve McQueen continues that tradition in visual form.

Steve McQueen was born and raised in London to a father from Grenada and a mother born in Trinidad. McQueen has made a career of blending art and film. He first gained recognition in the 1990s as a visual artist with experimental video works such as Bear (1993), demonstrating without words, the intense attraction and aggression between two main characters. From the outset, his installations and films were marked by a strong visual language and a deep engagement with social and political realities. His status as a pioneering artist was confirmed through his exhibitions at leading institutions and with the prestigious Turner Prize award in 1999.

In 2008, McQueen made his debut as a feature film director with Hunger, followed by Shame (2011), 12 Years a Slave (2013), Widows (2018), and Blitz (2024). Deftly painting the medium with an even-hand, he asks the audience not to look away but to sit in the discomfort, inviting reflection. With 12 Years a Slave, the true story of a free man sold into slavery, he became the first black filmmaker to win the Academy Award for Best Picture.

McQueen's work has since expanded into larger projects that combine personal narrative, collective history, and immersive form. His 2023 documentary Occupied City re-frames Amsterdam's streets as living memory, juxtaposing wartime occupation with daily life during a pandemic, and the 34-hour version was recently shown on the facade of the Rijksmuseum Amsterdam. In his new work Atlas

(2026) he explores the boundaries of space, perspective, memory and time.

In a world marked by polarization and inequality, McQueen's work asks us to look carefully and without prejudice—ecce homo—and to recognize ourselves in others. For his unwavering commitment to the human spirit, the Praemium Erasmianum Foundation awards the 2026 Erasmus Prize to Steve McQueen.

The Erasmus Prize is awarded annually to a person or institution that has made an exceptionally important contribution in the fields of the humanities and the arts. His Majesty the King serves as Regent of the Foundation. The Erasmus Prize consists of a monetary award of ~150,000. The prize will be presented in the autumn of 2026.

www.erasmusprijs.org/en

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