

Pickford, James. 'Steve McQueen to exhibit photos of 100,000 schoolchildren at Tate'. *Financial Times Online*. 18 September 2018

## FINANCIAL TIMES

Steve McQueen to exhibit photos of 100,000 schoolchildren at Tate  
Oscar-winning film director to create 'collective portrait of London's future'



Steve McQueen won an Oscar for '12 Years A Slave' in 2014 © Neil Hall/EPA/Rex/Shutterstock

Steve McQueen, the artist and Oscar-winning film director, is to invite more than 100,000 primary school children to be photographed for a "collective portrait of London's future" that will go on display at Tate Britain next year.

Described by Tate as "one of the world's most ambitious contemporary art projects", the plan seeks the help of more than 2,000 schools to capture each and every Year 3 pupil — those aged seven to eight — in London in specially coordinated class photos.

Tate will recruit a team of photographers to take images according to Mr McQueen's specifications during the next nine months, with the results to be unveiled in the gallery's vast Duveen galleries in autumn 2019.

Alex Farquharson, director of Tate Britain, said the project would create "an ocean of young faces" across the gallery walls. "It's a celebration of the tens of thousands of young people who will make London their own in years to come. It's about being part of something historical — a moment in time," he said.

Speaking at an event at Tate Britain to announce the project, Mr McQueen said Year 3 was an important time in a child's life. "It's at that point when you're just getting to understand, to some extent, your surroundings."



Steve McQueen's Year 3 class at Little Ealing Primary School, 1977.  
He is fifth from the left in the middle row © Todd White Art  
Photography

## THOMAS DANE GALLERY

He said he had good memories of his own Year 3 experience, spent at a primary school in Ealing with classmates from diverse countries such as Iran and Pakistan — a fact that meant little to him and his friends at the time. “I had no idea who was who or what was what — it was just fun.”

Tightened controls on data and consent will complicate the logistics of the project, as schools have hardened up their rules on safeguarding pupils and consent is required from each child’s parent.



The Year 3 class today at Steve McQueen's old school, Little Ealing Primary © Tate

“It’s much harder and more complex to do a project like this than it would have been 10 years ago,” said Mr Farquharson, noting that the number of schools organising their own class photos was in decline for the same reasons.

The project will be produced in partnership with arts organisations Artangel and A New Direction, with funding help from private donors and foundations. Tate declined to say how much it would cost.

With its focus squarely on London, the plan risks reigniting the debate about whether arts and culture activity and spending is fairly spread across the country. Mr Farquharson said it was partly about setting reasonable parameters on an endeavour of huge scale and complexity.

But he added: “We’re a national museum and our audience is national. At the same time we’re in the middle of this great global city. There is a dimension of what we do that is particular to London and the project makes particular sense given Steve’s own biography.”

Tate said the learning resources from the project, which look at belonging, identity and citizenship, would be shared across the country.

The Year 3 show will be accompanied by a major retrospective of Mr McQueen’s work at Tate Modern. He won the Turner Prize for contemporary art in 1999, represented Britain at the Venice Biennale in 2009 and collected the Academy Award for Best Picture in 2014 for *12 Years a Slave*, which he directed.

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