
**Hollywood’s artist returns**

*Steve McQueen’s new film Ashes, set in Grenada, is his first since his Oscar triumph*

**VIDEO**

London. A young Afro-Caribbean man straddling the prow of an orange boat gazes out to sea, his back to the viewer. The Grenadian sun beats down on his back, which is muscular and long, and framed by an azure sky. The scene could be paradise, but it’s not clear who this faceless man is. In fact, his name is Ashes, which is also the title of the video by Steve McQueen in which he appears. The film, which has its European premiere at Thomas Dane this month, is McQueen’s first work since winning an Oscar for “Twelve Years a Slave”.

The footage for Ashes, 2014, was shot in 2002, in Grenada (McQueen’s parents’ original home) by the cinematographer Robby Müller, who was working on a feature film with McQueen at the time. “They were both struck by the beauty and charisma of this man,” says Martine d’Anglejan-Chatillon, a partner at Thomas Dane. “[Ashes] had power, he was a leader; someone who was going to make a change.” In 2006, McQueen returned to Grenada and enquired about the young man. “It was then he found out Ashes had been killed,” d’Anglejan-Chatillon says. In the film, the circumstances of Ashes’ death are hazy. The looped image is overlaid with the voices of Ashes’s friends telling, in thick Grenadian accents, the story of what had happened to him. “The sound is deliberately unintelligible at times,” d’Anglejan-Chatillon says. “Rather than using subtitles, Steve really wanted this ambiguity.”

As part of this exhibition at the gallery’s site on 3 Duke Street, which comes a decade after McQueen’s first at Thomas Dane in 2004, a second new work by the British artist is on show at 11 Duke Street. D’Anglejan-Chatillon says she cannot reveal what this work is, except that it is a “pendant” to Ashes and is not a film or photographic work. This could be an exciting departure from his lens-based work, but, true to style, McQueen keeps us guessing to the very end.

**Steve McQueen, Ashes, (still), 2014**

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Anny Shaw

* Steve McQueen, Thomas Dane Gallery,
  London, 14 October-15 November