

WILLIAM KENTRIDGE WEEKEND

PROGRAMME INFORMATION

FRIDAY – SATURDAY – SUNDAY
28 FEBRUARY – 1 MARCH 2020

DOCUMENTARIES - SCREENINGS OF INSTALLATIONS AND PERFORMANCES
FILMS & PROJECTIONS - ILLUSTRATED TALKS / Q&A

STAR AND SHADOW CINEMA NEWCASTLE-UPON-TYNE



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DOCUMENTARIES

Melancholic Constellation, the Art of William Kentridge

2010, documentary (50 mins), Interventions / Ian McDonald produced in cooperation with Tom Hickey

Melancholic Constellations explores the art of William Kentridge, the internationally acclaimed artist from South Africa. In this reflective documentary, Kentridge talks about art-making during Apartheid and in “post Anti-Apartheid” South Africa while preparing for his next major work, *The Nose*. A range of artists and academics from Johannesburg comment on his art and his position as a global artist. The film moves between Johannesburg where Kentridge lives and works and Brighton where a major exhibition of his work was hosted by the University of Brighton.



The views from Johannesburg are interspersed with visuals from the exhibition in Brighton.

Carried forward by the evocative music of Philip Miller, *Melancholic Constellations* provides a unique insight into the personal and political forces that shape Kentridge’s art.

See also under TALKS; Ian McDonald and Tom Hickey

William Kentridge: Anything is Possible

2010, documentary (53 mins), ART 21

Rich in visual imagery and music, this documentary programme gives viewers an

intimate look into the mind and process of William Kentridge.



This documentary features exclusive interviews with him as he works in his studio and discusses his artistic philosophy and techniques. In the film, Kentridge talks about how his personal history as a white South African of Jewish heritage has informed recurring themes in his work—including violent oppression, class struggle, and social and political hierarchies. We see Kentridge in his studio as he creates animations, music, video, and projection pieces for his various projects, including *Breathe* (2008); *I am not me, the horse is not mine* (2008); and the opera *The Nose* (2010).

With its playful bending of reality and observations on hierarchical systems, the world of *The Nose* provides an ideal vehicle for Kentridge. The absurdism, he explains in the documentary’s closing, “...is in fact an accurate and a productive way of understanding the world. Why should we be interested in a clearly impossible story? Because, as Gogol says, in fact the impossible is what happens all the time.”

How to make sense of the world

2014, documentary (30 mins), Louisiana Channel, Museum of Modern Art Humlebaek, Denmark

An introduction to William Kentridge’s work in his own words. He talks about the origin of his animated films with drawing in front of the camera. “I was interested in seeing how

a drawing would come into being". "It was from the charcoal drawing that the process of animation expanded". With charcoal "you can change a drawing as quickly as you can think". "I am interested in showing the process of thinking. The way that one constructs a film out of these fragments that one reinterprets retrospectively – and changes the time of – is my sense of how we make sense of the world. And so the animated films can be a demonstration of how we make sense of the world rather than an instruction about what the world means."



"I learned much more from the theatre school in Paris, Jacques Lecoq, a school of movement and mime, than I ever did from the art lessons. It is about understanding the way of thinking through the body. Making art is a practical activity. It is not sitting at a computer. It is embodying an idea in a physical material, paper, charcoal, steel, wood."

Imagine... The Triumph And Laments of William Kentridge

2016, BBC documentary (50 mins), Lone-star Production Company

Alan Yentob joins South African artist William Kentridge as he prepares an epic frieze along the banks of the river Tiber in Rome. Kentridge worked with Kristin Jones to cover a 560 metre long concrete embankment with a frieze depicting a silhouetted procession on Piazza Tevere. Years of accumulated bacteria and pollution on the embankment walls were str-

ategically power-washed to reveal more than 50 figures, some up to 10 meters high, a technique originally developed by Jones in 2005.



The frieze explores dominant tensions in the history of the Eternal City from past to present, more than eighty figures, up to 10 metres high, represent Rome's greatest victories and defeats from mythological time to present.

The premiere consisted of a theatrical event created in collaboration with composer Philip Miller, and musical director Thuthaka Sibisi featuring live shadow play and two groups composed of more than forty musicians and vocalists performing against the backdrop of the frieze. During the evening, two processions began from opposite sides of the river-side to meet in the centre. The characters marched, raising symbols and effigies and casting shadows which, like in Plato's Allegory of the Cave, are cognitive instruments of reality for Kentridge. In the procession a Mandinka song of African slaves, an age-old popular song from Southern Italy, and a Zulu warrior battle cry blended together to become one with the words of the poet Rilke: "That is the longing: to dwell amidst the waves / and have no homeland in time."

TedX talk

2016, (17mins), TEDxJohannesburgSalon

William Kentridge treats the TEDxJohannesburg audience to a masterclass on his creative process.



In this TED talk, Kentridge examines in a historical, creative and visual way the 'boundaries of South Africa during apartheid and 'the invention' of Africa over the centuries. He reflexes on Africa's position in the world and his own position as a white person in Africa after apartheid and the place of his studio and art including his thoughts about 'the less good idea'.

William Kentridge on 'The Refusal of Time' (2012)

2017, documentary (25 mins), Louisiana Chanel, Museum of Modern Art Humlebaek, Denmark

How can we get a hold of time with our body and mind? This question is the crux of South African artist William Kentridge's immersive installation 'The Refusal of Time.' This documentary joins the artist for a detailed tour of his pulsing, breathtaking work.



'The Refusal of Time,' 2012, is a meditation on time, space and the complex legacies of colonialism and industry. A multi layered

work packed to the brim with references - to early cinematic history, and the science and philosophy of time and images - the work combines visually seductive imagery, sculptural objects, megaphones and sound. "It's not a scientific lesson in time," explains the artist. "But it uses the metaphors scientists use when they're doing their deepest thinking about time." Therefore references to Einstein's theory of relativity and figures like black holes - "a space in which everything disappears, a way of talking about death" - feature throughout the work.

Kentridge uses cinema as "an artistic, mechanical and optical means of playing with time," to show time materialized. Cinema can slow time down, replay it, hold it, run it backwards, and by employing these techniques of making time visible, the work shows time, and essentially the trudge of a human life, as "a series of predictable, unremarkable actions that continue until we are worn out." But within that frame there are also refusals says Kentridge. "Those moments of coherence, of understanding and changing the world, which is the most we can hope for." Fragmented in its story telling, 'The Refusal of Time' also references the painful histories of colonial wars and anti-colonial revolts in the context of time. In the colonial era the imposition of European time in the colonies was a means of control, Kentridge explains. "The resistance towards time became a metaphor for other kinds of resistance towards other forms of political control."

A Defence of the Less Good Idea

2017, screening of lecture-performance by William Kentridge (55 mins), XLIV - Sigmund Freud Lecture in Vienna

Inspired by the Tswana proverb 'if the good doctor can't cure you, find the less good doctor', South African artist William Kentridge, has created the lecture performance Defence

Of The Less Good Idea: an ode to daring to deviate from an initial idea and embracing the moment.



Kentridge illuminates the concept of the less good idea. Ideas that emerge in the process of making are what William Kentridge terms secondary ideas, or the less good ideas. He uses text, projections and music to get his message across. The title refers also to the Centre for the Less Good Idea, founded in 2017 by William Kentridge, an interdisciplinary incubator space for the arts in Johannesburg that aims to find the less good idea by creating and supporting experimental, collaborative and cross-disciplinary arts projects.

The Head and The Load, Documentary

2018, documentary about the creation (30 mins), Lonestar Production Company



Documentary made during the creation of this spectacle. It gives you an inside view how it has been made and produced by Kentridge and his team. It also shows you how all those disciplines work and are brought together in the Centre for the Less Good Idea. See under screenings for more info about 'The Head and The Load'

SCREENINGS OF INSTALLATIONS AND PERFORMANCES

The Black Box/Chambre Noir, William Kentridge

2005, screening of an installation (25 mins)

Black Box/Chambre Noire was initially conceived while the artist was preparing a major theatrical production of Mozart's Magic Flute, an opera often understood as epitomizing the lofty ideals of the Enlightenment. But rather than celebrating the Enlightenment as the culmination of European civilisation, the racist images the opera deployed to caricature Muslim protagonists revealed the Enlightenment's dark underside.



This work on The Magic Flute led to the miniature opera Black Box/Chambre Noire, commissioned by Deutsche Bank, in which Kentridge examines the intersection of visual technologies and the making of knowledge in the context of German imperialism. The opera reflects in particular on the German massacre of the Hereros in South West Africa (now Namibia) in 1904, the first genocide of the 20th century, which some historians deem to have been a laboratory for the Holocaust.

Black Box/Chambre Noire is a theatre in miniature which brings together Kentridge's signature technique of drawings for projection, puppets, music, and archival footage. Combining cinema, opera and documents, Black Box/Chambre Noire addresses ques-

tions of moral guilt and political debt in a multi-media installation. Set within the context of demands for reparations, Black Box/Chambre Noire provides an archive for the calibration of conflicting demands for justice, reparation, and reconciliation. *See also under illustrated talks; Ferdinand de Jong.*

Woyzeck on the Highveld, Handspring Puppet Company/ William Kentridge

2012, screening of puppet play (74 mins)

An adaptation of German writer Georg Buchner's famous play of jealousy, murder and the struggle of an ordinary man against an uncaring society which eventually destroys him. Büchner's Woyzeck is a German soldier in 1800s, but in this version, Woyzeck is a migrant worker in 1950s Johannesburg, a landscape of barren industrialisation. The production brings together rod-manipulated puppets and animated film to graphically illustrate Woyzeck's tortured mind as he tries



Handspring Puppet Company was founded in 1981 and has grown under the leadership of Artistic Director Adrian Kohler (puppet maker and designer Woyzeck) and Executive Producer Basil Jones for 30 years. Based in Cape Town, South Africa, the company provides an artistic home and professional base for a core group of performers, designers, theatre artists and technicians. Famous also for their contribution to 'War Horse' by the National Theatre, London

More sweetly play the Dance, William Kentridge

**2015, Youtube video of originally 8 screens
projection/installation (16 mins)**

This is a video impression of the powerful film installation which originally encircled the viewer with eight screens, on which a procession of travellers passes across a charcoal-drawn animated landscape. The immersive panorama hints at multiple histories, evoking a danse macabre, a jazz funeral, an exodus, and a journey. Accompanied by a brass band, the film references medieval manuscripts and the storylines of



The work was partly inspired by "photographs of refugees fleeing Rwanda, coming from north to south Sudan and all the movement that still exists across the continent of Africa; images of the processions of people from the Balkans and the huge population of movements of people at the end of the Second World War." For Rwanda, the Balkans and post-war Europe, read Syria today — processions of displaced peoples are a perennial measure of human catastrophe.

Requiem Request, Gregory Maqoma and Nhlanhla Mahlangu

**2017, screening of performance (21mins),
Centre for the Less Good Idea***

Collaboration performance from the Centre for the Less Good Idea where the boundaries between various artforms disappear. It is a piece which combines the South African

isicathamiya choir Phuphuma Love Minus with dancers Thulani Chauke and Xolisile Bongwana in a music and dance performance based on Ravel's Bolero.



Isicathamiya is a harmony based type of singing, developed by migrant Zulu communities, which can be best compared to a cappella. Isicathamiya choirs are traditionally all male. Its roots reach back before the turn of the 20th century, when numerous men left the homelands in order to search for work in the mines close to the cities.

Maqoma: 'I decided to dig in the music of Ravel's Bolero for I felt strongly that the music was very close to the structure and the sense of infinity of the music that is created in the traditional African setting; where there is a sense of sitting around a fire or dancing around a fire. The music gave me also the sense of a requiem, a lament. I now wanted to bring it into the context of African traditional music and to use voices in order to create this requiem.'

* Centre for the Less Good Idea Founded by William Kentridge the Centre aims to find the less good idea by creating and supporting experimental, collaborative and cross-disciplinary arts projects. The Centre is a space to follow impulses, connections and revelations. It's a physical space for artists to come together over two seasons every year and for curators to bring together combinations of text, performance, image and dance, because an ensemble sees the world differently to how one individual does. It is a safe space for failure, for projects to be tried and discarded because they do not work. It's a space for the short form work which doesn't have a natural home in a theatre or gallery.

The Head and the Load, William Kentridge, Philip Miller, Thuthuka Sibisi, Gregory Maqoma

2018 , screening of Tate Modern performance (90 mins)

One of William Kentridge's latest projects, featuring music by long-time collaborator Phillip Miller with Thuthuka Sibisi and choreography by Gregory Maqoma, combines music, dance, film projections, mechanised sculptures and shadow play to create an imaginative landscape on an epic scale. A play on the Ghanaian proverb, "the head and the load are the troubles of the neck," The proverb speaks to the burden of war. But when we're taught about the First World War, we're told that the burden fell squarely on the shoulders of the colonial powers at the forefront. We know now, however, that some 2 million African workers, soldiers, porters and carriers lost their lives on battlegrounds in Africa and abroad, fighting for the interests of foreign powers eager to carve out their riches in the scramble for Africa.



The musical journey, as much an installation as a performance piece, combined performances by orchestra collective The Knights with an international cast of singers, dancers and performers, many of whom are based in South Africa. They were accompanied by a chorus of mechanised gramophones, projections and shadow play to create an extraordinary imaginative landscape on an epic scale. See also the half hour documentary about the creation.

FILMS & PROJECTIONS

Ten Drawings for Projection William Kentridge

1989 – 2011, film (50 mins)

These ten short animated films—made over a period of more than 20 years—are intimate, personal meditations by Kentridge that resonate with the recent turbulent history of South Africa. They allude to events such as the Sharpeville massacre, the release of Nelson Mandela and the abolition of Apartheid. The films marked Kentridge’s breakthrough in the international art world as an engaged artist with a sense of commitment and concern for the developments in his native country.



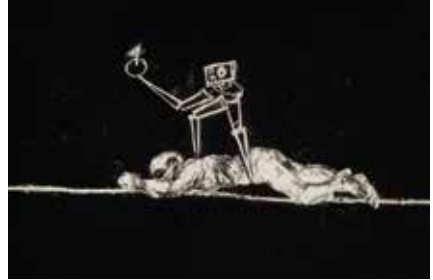
The distinctive animation technique used by Kentridge in these films, in which he draws, erases and redraws parts of his charcoal sketches over and over, allows traces of the past to remain visible in the present. This technique also reveals the importance of remembering—and forgetting—in the work of Kentridge.

Kentridge introduces two characters. Soho Eckstein, a rich industrialist, and property developer in Johannesburg, and Felix Teitlebaum, his opposite, a quiet dreamer of a man who reflects on life, and questions what is happening in the world. Both characters seem to be derived from one and the same individual. In Kentridge’s films, they are not fixed identities but change constantly. Over the course of the series, the two characters increasingly come to resemble each other, and the artist “uses” them to explore his own

humane view of the human condition, one that centres not on any single truth but on doubt, uncertainty, and openness to change.

Ubu tells the Truth, William Kentridge

1997, film (7 mins)



This film is known as his most violent work. Kentridge used his traditional method of charcoal drawings to express human rights violations as well as oppressed voices in society. He also incorporated short pieces of documentary films in this piece of art.

This short film was inspired by a play called “Ubu Roi” created by Alfred Jarry in 1896. Instead of having Ubu as the main protagonist Kentridge created a tripod which stands for “witnesses of human rights violations under apartheid” (Ando). He uses this character to express his political views against the South African apartheid regime, and the violent attacks that citizens encountered from the police force. Kentridge also uses short historical clips of South African police forces and other officials violently charging unarmed apartheid protestors.

Shadow Procession, William Kentridge

1999, film (7 mins)

This film was made for the 1999 Istanbul Biennial. Taking figures he observed on the streets of his native Johannesburg or saw in the newspaper, Kentridge joined torn pieces

of black paper together with bits of wire for mobility then filmed the puppets in stop motion. Influenced by the brutality of his native land's Apartheid, *Shadow Procession* conveys the drudgery of living amidst prolonged violence. Their passage looks like a classical frieze of anonymous shadows in a collective journey.



For the related suite of drawings, Kentridge attached singular puppets to vintage maps, augmenting their reference to migrants, refugees, and other displaced persons. In speaking about *Shadow Procession*, Kentridge has also referred to Plato's Cave allegory in *The Republic*—where prisoners' only visual link to the outside world are the shadows of passers-by projected on the stone wall.

Journey to the Moon, William Kentridge

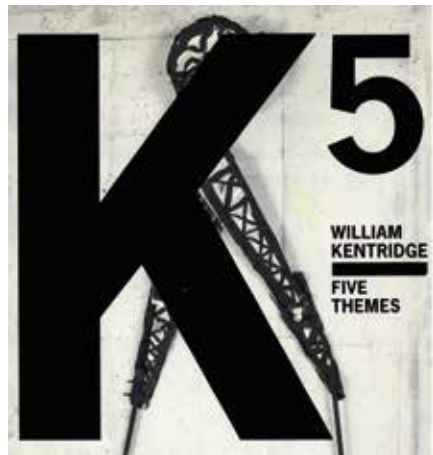
film, 2003 (7 mins)

The short film *Journey to the Moon* (2003) offers an intimate look into Kentridge's production process, both physically and psychically. It explores the studio space as a site of performance. In the role of protagonist, Kentridge himself appears, probing questions of vision and creativity. Familiar objects such as espresso cups, saucers and a percolator appear in this quest, as Kentridge aims to escape the confines of his studio and find windows into another world—one that is both absurd and profound.



This work follows the magical story of *Le Voyage dans la Lune* (*Voyage to the Moon*), a 1902 masterpiece by French film director George Méliès. *Journey to the Moon* is also part of a larger body of work that includes *7 Fragments for Méliès*, in which Kentridge pays tribute to the early days of cinema, as well as modern and contemporary artists Bruce Nauman and Jackson Pollock. The works in this series are among his first to mix live action footage with the stop motion drawing technique for which he is best known.

William Kentridge - 5 Themes 22 short films on DVD, 2009 (50 min)



These short films were produced to accompany Kentridge's book *Five Themes* (San Francisco Museum of Modern Art) investigating the 5 primary themes that have engaged him over the course of his influential career. This publication bears witness to an artist

wrestling with each theme and experimenting with formally innovative ways to convey meaning. The 22 short films combine intimate studio footage of the artist at work and fragments from significant film projects.

Notes Towards a Model Opera, William Kentridge

2015, 3 screen projection/installation (12 mins)



Rooted in extensive research into the intellectual, political, and social history of modern China, from Lu Xun to revolutionary theatre, that Kentridge undertook in preparation for a retrospective exhibition in Beijing, this three channel projection explores dynamics of cultural diffusion and metamorphosis through the formal prism of the eight model operas of the Cultural Revolution.

The work considers these didactic ballets both as a cultural phenomenon unto itself and as part of a history of dance that spans continents and centuries. Starting from its origins in Paris, Kentridge playfully overlays the aesthetic and ideological transformations of ballet as it is transplanted across the globe, an arch of influence juxtaposing contexts as disparate as Moscow, Shanghai, and the artist's native Johannesburg.

ILLUSTRATED TALKS AND Q&A

Tom Hickey

Tom Hickey, Principal Lecturer in Philosophy and Politics at the University of Brighton. Course leader of the MA in Cultural and Critical Theory.

Tom Hickey is an activist and academic based at the University of Brighton. He was curator of the exhibition of William Kentridge at the University of Brighton in 2007 including the book *William Kentridge - Fragile Identities*. He produced together with Ian McDonald the film *Melancholic Constellations*.

Ian McDonald

Dr. Ian McDonald is the Director of the Research Centre for Film at Newcastle University. He is also the founder and Director of Film@CultureLab, the home of film practice at the University. Ian is a documentary filmmaker and sociologist. In 2010 He filmed *Melancholic Constellations* a documentary which explores the art of William Kentridge.

Ferdinand de Jong

Ferdinand de Jong is Senior Lecturer in Anthropology at the University of East Anglia where he researches and teaches African art, anthropology and cultural heritage. In 2018, he published 'Archive of Darkness: William Kentridge's Black Box/Chambre Noire'. His talk will situate this work in the history of colonialism, debates on reparation payments, and the question how Kentridge represents colonial trauma in the medium of a miniature theatre.

Special thanks for support, cooperation and contribution:

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