

# ■ MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART ■

## EDUCATION KIT

# WILLIAM KENTRIDGE.

2 SEPTEMBER - 28 NOVEMBER



William Kentridge  
Drawing for *Monument* 1990  
(*Soho with megaphones*).  
Charcoal and pastel on paper.  
150 x 120 cm.  
Collection of the artist.  
© William Kentridge.

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## How to use the William Kentridge Education Kit

This kit is designed to assist teachers in preparing for the exhibition visit, and as a tool to help students study and interpret the exhibition *William Kentridge*. The material is designed for use by Years K-6 and 7-12 teachers of Visual Art, and is also relevant for the study of other subject areas including Creative Writing (K-6) and History, Drama, Legal Studies and Philosophy (especially Ethics) at secondary level.

These activities have been primarily designed to enable students to engage with the work itself in conjunction with a visit to the MCA. Included are suggestions for pre-visit activities, gallery-based ideas and post-visit extension exercises which can be extended or adapted to suit your class needs.

Students and teachers can also refer to the *William Kentridge* information on the MCA's website [www.mca.com.au](http://www.mca.com.au) (where this material is located for downloading) to view key images, locate further biographical information, and find out more about education programs and events. The website and the exhibition catalogue are valuable resources which extend the life and the geographical reach of the exhibition. See the end of these notes for references for further study.

To book a class visit to *William Kentridge*, please contact MCA Education on (02) 9250 8484 or email [education@mca.com.au](mailto:education@mca.com.au). Advance bookings are essential.

Please read on for program highlights, workshop charges and exhibition details.

## Exhibition Details

Through his striking animated films, powerful charcoal drawings, etchings and sculptures, internationally renowned South African artist William Kentridge offers a distinctive vision of the complex history of South Africa and the role of the artist today.

**Title:** *William Kentridge*  
**Dates:** 2 September – 28 November 2004  
**Location:** MCA Level 3 Galleries

**Other information:** Free admission  
Exhibition catalogue available from MCA store - \$79.95/\$71.95  
MCA Members and Ambassadors

**Public Programs:** Please see [www.mca.com.au](http://www.mca.com.au) or pick up a special events flyer for full details of events and lectures. A selected highlight is:

### ***Amandla! A Revolution in Four-Part Harmony***

**Monday 15 November, 6.30pm**

The MCA presents a special one-night only screening of this inspirational documentary, charting the role of song in South Africa's anti-apartheid struggle. This will be introduced by internationally recognised trial lawyer and human rights activist, Andrea Durbach, Associate Professor at the Faculty of Law, University of New South Wales and Director of the University's Australian Human Rights Centre.

Durbach practiced as a political trial lawyer in South Africa before migrating to Australia, and was part of the legal team in the notorious Upington trial defending 25 people for the murder of a black policeman. In 1991, she returned to South Africa to successfully appeal against the Upington Fourteen's death sentence, and published a book on her experiences in 1999.

DENDY OPERA QUAYS CINEMA

Rated PG.

Admission: \$25/\$20 MCA Members and Ambassadors/Dendy Club Members

Bookings: 02 9274 3800 (\$2.20 booking fee applies on all telephone sales)

### **Education Programs:**

MCA Education has devised a range of practical and theoretical curriculum-linked gallery programs for class visits to *William Kentridge*, suitable for all levels. Bookings in advance are essential for Educator-led programs and self-guided visits. See the Term 3/4 2004 Education Update for further details.

For Education and Public Programs details, costs and program bookings, please contact MCA Education on (02) 9250 8484 or email [education@mca.com.au](mailto:education@mca.com.au)

## Exhibition summary

William Kentridge is one of the most significant and internationally renowned artists of our time. Part of an international tour organised by the Castello di Rivoli in Turin, Italy, this exhibition brings together over 70 works from the 1970s to the present day, including rare early drawings, etchings, animated films, recent sculpture, and new film works *Tide Table* (2003-04), *7 Fragments for Georges* (2003) and *Journey to the Moon* (2003). With a particular focus on recent works, the exhibition also includes a number of works in bronze and projections onto objects, as well as a selection of works based on the artist's interest in shadows as a metaphor for indirect vision and knowledge. The MCA exhibition has been augmented by a number of drawings and etchings from Australian collections, an additional film and a series of eight etchings, *Ubu Tells the Truth* (1996-97).

### Curatorial Statement:

Exhibition curator Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev, recently described Kentridge's practice as 'an elegiac art that explores the possibilities of poetry in contemporary society, and provides a powerful satirical commentary on that society, while proposing a way of seeing life as a continuous process of change rather than as a controlled world of facts'.

## William Kentridge



*"I am interested in a political art, that is to say an art of ambiguity, contradiction, uncompleted gestures and uncertain endings. An art (and a politics) in which optimism is kept in check and nihilism at bay."*

William Kentridge

William Kentridge was born in Johannesburg in 1955, and continues to live and work in South Africa. His unique artistic practice offers a distinctive vision of the complex history of South Africa, the legacy of apartheid and more broadly, the nature of human emotions and memory.

Through his drawings, films, installations and sculpture, the artist reflects on the psychological landscape of a country which has experienced great upheaval, violence, racial and social injustice, the horrific effects of colonialism and the politics of apartheid, and more recently, the confronting acceptance of responsibility and the telling of truth. Though grounded in South Africa, his work resonates in more universal ways, exploring the relationship between desire, ethics, and responsibility, our changing notion of history and place, and how we construct and interpret these histories.

Gaining international recognition for his distinctive animated short films in the 1990s, Kentridge has also worked in theatre for many years, initially as a set designer and actor, and later as a director. Since 1992 he has worked in collaboration with Handspring Puppet Company - creating multi-media pieces using puppets, live actors and animation.

Since his work first came to international prominence in 1997, his reputation as a unique talent has soared. He had exhibited extensively in international exhibitions and major museums including the Centre Pompidou in Paris and Museum of Modern Art in New York. He has been the recipient of one of the artworld's major prizes, the Carnegie Medal (1999) and was a finalist in the prestigious Hugo Boss Art Prize in 1998. His work has been the subject of two major publications, one in the authoritative series of monographs, published by Phaidon, devoted to important artists of the late 20th/early 21st centuries.

**William Kentridge's art in Australia:**

While the MCA exhibition represents the first comprehensive showing of his work in Australia, it is not the first exposure the artist has had to Australian audiences. He was included in the 1996 Biennale of Sydney *Jurassic Technologies Revenant* curated by Lynne Cooke. In the same year he held his first exhibition at Annandale Galleries in Sydney. Other solo exhibitions have since been held at Annandale Galleries in 2000, 2002 and again in 2004. An exhibition in 2002 curated by Trevor Smith at the Art Gallery of Western Australia titled *The Divine Comedy: Francisco Goya, Buster Keaton, William Kentridge* showed Kentridge's films, drawings and etchings alongside works by one of his greatest influences, Francisco Goya, and for the first time, in the context of the silent movies of Buster Keaton.

His work is included in major Australian collections including the Art Gallery of Western Australia, the National Gallery of Australia and the National Gallery of Victoria. A selection of films was recently presented at the Australian Centre for the Moving Image (ACMI) in Melbourne and SBS Television has twice screened the major documentary *William Kentridge: Drawing the Passing*. This video can be seen in the resource area of the MCA's exhibition.

## Study notes: summary of key exhibition themes

These notes can be used to help analyse the work of William Kentridge, to assist with preparing an essay topic or assignment, or to cut and paste as self-guiding notes for the gallery visit. Please see the Timeline later in this kit for more information on political developments in South Africa, and the References page for further reading.

The words that appear under the Details section in **bold type** are key thematic or conceptual words recommended for further study or discussion.

Theme	Details
<b>Overall theme</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Kentridge's concerns could be summarised as: how political realities impact on individual lives.</li> </ul>
<b>Range of media in Kentridge's art practice</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>While drawing is at the heart of his practice he works across a range of media and disciplines including writing, poetry, directing, opera, engraving, painting, printmaking, theatre design and acting.</li> </ul>
<b>Other artists in the exhibition</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Included in this exhibition are five works by artists that have influenced William Kentridge. These works are part of Kentridge's own collection.</li> <li>These works are located in the room painted blue near the top of the stairs on level 3. This is a good place to <b>start a tour</b> of the show.</li> <li>The works include one engraving by <b>William Hogarth</b> and two etchings by <b>Francisco Goya</b> which reflect Kentridge's interest in satirical illustration and artists who provide a critical commentary on their times.</li> <li>Two fellow South African artists <b>Dumile Feni</b> and <b>David Goldblatt</b> are also included.</li> </ul>
<b>Animation and drawing techniques</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Kentridge's filmmaking began as an experiment in documenting the evolution of a single drawing.</li> <li>Kentridge does not use traditional single cell animation (in which hundreds of individual pictures are drawn) to create his films. Instead he uses between 20-60 separate charcoal drawings for each film that are continually erased and modified. Each modification is photographed with a 35mm camera to create a sense of movement. The film is then transferred to DVD for display in the gallery.</li> <li>Unlike most filmmaking Kentridge does not use storyboards or premeditate his narrative outcomes. Instead the story of each film emerges organically through the process of drawing.</li> <li>The final drawings are often exhibited in addition to the film. As well as being individual works in themselves they are records of the many stages in a film's making.</li> </ul> <p><b>Animation:</b> Refers to the making of moving images by filming a sequence of slightly varying drawings or models so that they appear to move and change when the sequence is shown.</p>

<p><b>Sound</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sound is used in Kentridge's films to bring the animation to life, for dramatic effect and to create contemplative spaces for the viewer.</li> <li>• Kentridge often commissions original music scores for his films. This can be seen as an extension of his work as a director of opera and musical plays.</li> <li>• <i>Shadow Procession</i> (1999) uses sound Kentridge recorded from political rallies in South Africa during the 1990s.</li> </ul>
<p><b>The political and social climate of South Africa</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kentridge's art focuses on the complex and violent history of South Africa. Kentridge is happy to be called a political artist, so long that it's understood that political art, in his words, "can also be an art of ambiguity and contradiction and not obsessed with a position or a program."</li> <li>• His work looks at the effects of apartheid, especially on those who had the most to gain by pretending the system was just and not substantially different from any other.</li> </ul> <p><b>Apartheid: A policy that governed relations between South Africa's white minority and non-white majority. From 1948, apartheid sanctioned racial segregation and political and economic discrimination against non-whites. Apartheid was abandoned in 1990. Please see the Timeline and References sections of this Kit for further details.</b></p>
<p><b>Memory and erasure / remembering and forgetting</b></p>	<p><i>"Forgetting is natural, remembering is the effort one makes."</i> (William Kentridge)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kentridge's work focuses on the way <b>forgetting</b> and <b>remembering</b> are closely intertwined. He believes that past events fade into the distant background of our minds, yet our identity is shaped by this forgetting.</li> <li>• Kentridge's technique of rubbing out parts of one drawing and making the next drawing over the top is a <b>metaphor</b> for this process of 'disremembering'. This process has been coined by art critics as '<b>partial erasure</b>' because not everything in the drawing is erased. The resulting layers of partially erased marks could be interpreted as layers of memory as well as the traces of the past in the form of abandoned mining and civil engineering structures around Johannesburg.</li> <li>• Kentridge's theme of remembering and forgetting is closely tied to events in South Africa, in particular the <b>Truth and Reconciliation Commission</b>. This tribunal was set up in 1996 to investigate the crimes committed under Apartheid. It had the dual role of ensuring that past injustices are not forgotten and to enable the South African people to move on.</li> <li>• While the themes of remembering and forgetting are played out through <b>individual</b> characters in his films Kentridge presents this as <b>collective</b> condition.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Relationship between personal and public</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kentridge's art explores the way personal issues mix with broader social and political questions. For example, <i>Zeno Writing</i> (2002) brings together drawings, documentary footage from World War I, and filmed cigarette smoke to ask two questions: How does one bring this external world into everyday life? And: How do the larger questions of the world become part of one's psyche?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Shadows</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shadows began in William Kentridge's practice as shapes cast by animated figures in his films. Later shadows become a subject matter in themselves.</li> <li>• Shadows are created using devices such as torn pieces of paper and everyday objects like a coffee pot or scissors which feature in his films and drawings. In <i>Journey to the Moon</i> (2003) for example, the shadow of a coffee pot becomes a space ship. The sculptural work <i>Procession</i> (2000) features 26 figures cast in bronze modelled on the shapes formed by shadows.</li> <li>• Shadow functions as an indirect or oblique view of something. It is used as a metaphor in Kentridge's practice for the relationship between the <b>past</b> and the <b>present</b>, the often confusing space between what is 'right' and what is 'wrong' and the fact that we all carry the potential seed of our own demise.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Landscape</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kentridge draws a parallel between the exploitation of the natural landscape and that of South Africa's people under Apartheid.</li> <li>• The film <i>Felix in Exile</i> (1994) was made just before the first general election in South Africa, and questioned the way in which the people who had died on the journey towards South Africa becoming a democratic state would be remembered. It uses the landscape as a metaphor for the process of remembering and forgetting.</li> <li>• Kentridge makes the connection between how landscape forms and erodes and how our sense of history (i.e. what is remembered and what is forgotten) is malleable.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Metaphor and symbolism</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Metaphor and symbolism are used by Kentridge in his work. The previous sections have discussed his use of <b>erasure, landscape</b> and <b>shadow</b> as metaphor.</li> <li>• Many of the characters in Kentridge's films become symbolic representations. The characters of Ubu and Soho Eckstein <b>symbolise</b> an Apartheid vision of South Africa and the darker side in us all.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Characters in Kentridge's films</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kentridge's films generally focus on individual characters. Thus thematics in Kentridge's art evolve through the device of characterisation. There are two main characters who appear in most of the films: <b>Soho Eckstein</b> is a Johannesburg industrialist and <b>Felix Teitelbaum</b> is the sensitive poetic type and an artist.</li> <li>• Often when Kentridge is creating these films he will look at himself in the mirror as reference for how these characters are to be drawn.</li> <li>• While Soho and Felix are drawn as separate characters it is possible that they represent different sides of the same person and more universally our own alter egos.</li> <li>• Soho and Felix compete for the affections of <b>Mrs Eckstein</b>. She is often left alone by Soho who is preoccupied with business matters. Felix and Mrs Eckstein have an affair.</li> <li>• Other characters include <b>Faustus</b> and <b>Zeno</b>, both tragicomic figures who struggle with their own idea of themselves as opposed to how they appear to others.</li> <li>• Another two important characters in Kentridge's films include an African woman called <b>Nandi</b> and <b>Harry</b> who is the leader of the poor and oppressed.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Kentridge's use of Comedy and Satire</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In Kentridge's film some of his imaginative graphic transformations are comic or tragicomic. In <i>Sobriety, Obesity and Growing Old</i> (1991) Soho Eckstein, the archetypal businessman, is lying in bed with his cat. The cat suddenly jumps on his face and becomes a gas mask.</li> <li>• His comedy plays on the contrast between rational outcomes and illogical expectations, or the reverse, confounding our expectations. What happens is unexpected or what is expected never happens.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Use of sculpture and video</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Sleeping on Glass</i> (1999) and <i>Medicine Chest</i> (2000) are both animations that have been rear-projected onto objects. In <i>Medicine Chest</i> self-portrait drawings, daily objects and texts we receive through the newspaper appear on the mirror of the medicine chest where we would usually see ourselves. The use of this medicine chest could symbolise the need for healing.</li> </ul> <p><b>Rear-Projection:</b> a technique where video or film is projected from behind the viewing screen, rather than onto the screen from the front. The advantage of this technique is that it allows the viewer to stand close to the screen without disrupting the image. Often it allows the projection device to be hidden in a wall cavity and images to be projected onto unconventional surfaces.</p>
<p><b>Influences</b></p>	<p><b>Other Artists, Writers and Filmmakers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kentridge's drawing style is influenced by German Expressionists <b>Max Beckmann</b> (1884-1950) and <b>George Grosz</b> (1893-1959). The French genre painter <b>Chardin</b> (1699-1779) has also influenced Kentridge, in particular the still life images in <i>Medicine Chest</i> (2000).</li> <li>• Kentridge also looks to Spaniard <b>Francisco Goya</b> (1746-</li> </ul>

1828) as an artist whose work was politically charged and chronicled a particular moment in history, also as an artist who worked in graphic media such as etching.

- French filmmaker, actor and producer **George Méliès** (1861-1938) has influenced Kentridge in his playful experiments with film. Méliès is famous for pioneering many technical and narrative developments in early cinema. He was one of the first filmmakers to use multiple exposures, dissolves and hand-painted colour in his films. Kentridge's film *Day for Night* (2003) was inspired by the work of Méliès and was made by filming ants crawling over paper onto which Kentridge had 'drawn' by pouring sugar, then inverting the positive and negative tones of the digital video.
- In 1888 the French dramatist **Alfred Jarry** wrote the play *Ubu Roi* as a satirical and grotesque expression of the way arbitrary power engenders madness. For Kentridge, Ubu is a powerful metaphor for the insane policy of Apartheid, presented by the state as a rational system. The title of Jarry's play reappears in Kentridge's 1997 film, *Ubu Tells the Truth*.
- **Italo Svevo's** novel *Confessions of Zeno* (1923) has inspired a large body of new work by Kentridge ranging from theatre and animation to drawings, prints and sculpture, which include *Zeno at 4am Part 1* (2001) and the complex theatre presentation, *Confessions of Zeno* (2002).

#### Theatre

- Kentridge's involvement in theatre has influenced his approach to filmmaking. He was a founding member of the **Junction Avenue Theatre Company** which began in 1975. This company has been involved in revealing many of South Africa's 'hidden histories' from an anti-apartheid perspective.
- Since 1992, Kentridge has collaborated with the **Handspring Puppet Company** creating multi media pieces using puppets, live actors and animation.

#### Other Influences

- Activities that have influenced Kentridge outside a visual arts context include completing a BA in Politics and African Studies (1976), working as an art director on television and feature film and studying mime and theatre at the École Jacques Lecoq in Paris.

#### Modernism

Many of the visual artists and writers mentioned above could be classified as Modernist. Kentridge is attracted to the **utopian ideals** of early Modernism. It could be said that Kentridge is testing the idealism of Modernism against the reality of South Africa's political and social climate.



William Kentridge  
Drawing for *Stereoscope* 1998-1999.  
© William Kentridge.

## Suggested study and activities

This selection of art making and art studying activities link the gallery visit to the school curriculum for primary and secondary students. These ideas are designed to provide for students' and teachers' use of the *William Kentridge* exhibition as a basis for units of work. We encourage teachers to adapt these activities to suit their students' particular needs or study areas, or to develop new ideas based around the information in these notes.

This material is designed with Visual Arts students in mind, however, due to the specific political content and the use of characterisation/drama to tell stories *William Kentridge* will be of interest to students of History, Drama and Creative Writing.

Please contact MCA Education if you would like further assistance planning units of work or preparing your class for the gallery visit.

Please note: Kentridge's preferred material, charcoal, is not to be used in the Museum spaces for conservation reasons (charcoal dust can damage artworks). All the activities suggested below can be safely undertaken in the gallery spaces. If your group is self-guiding please check with MCA Education when you book beforehand to ensure that any planned artmaking activity keeps to the guidelines for artwork safety.

## Activities and Ideas for Year K-6 students

### K-6 Pre-Visit Activities

#### Geography

Ask students to locate South Africa on a globe or map, then to locate Johannesburg within South Africa. Compare it to where Australia is located, and discuss similarities and differences in terms of hemisphere, climate, size and population.

### History of South Africa

An understanding of South Africa's history, especially since the mid-20th Century, will help students understand the exhibition. Ask students to do some research on the history on South Africa and Apartheid. As a class, students can produce an illustrated timeline of the Apartheid policy, and current South African events.

Teachers can lead a discussion of how the political climate of South Africa might influence William Kentridge's artmaking. Make a list of possibilities, and add to the list during the excursion.

### Investigating Animation

William Kentridge uses animation to create his films. Ask students to list other uses of animation, including cartoons, films, computer games, TV ads, websites. How does William Kentridge's animation differ from this? Include the use of materials, lack of bright colour, use of mark making instead of flat colour, content, hand-drawn images instead of computer-generated, and different kinds of humour. Then make a list suggesting what the animation process allows that is not possible in films where real actors and sets are used.

## **Year K-6 Gallery-Based Activities**

We recommend booking MCA Educators to make the most of the exhibition experience for primary classes during your MCA visit.

### Observational Drawing

After looking at some of William Kentridge's films, move students into a room where his drawings are displayed. If you look at the drawings closely you will be able to see areas that have been erased, recording the movement of a particular object or person that was animated in the film. Ask students to choose one drawing and copy its basic structure, then choose a section of that drawing which they wish to animate. Students will need paper, soft pencil and an eraser to make a similar drawing through a repeated process of drawing and erasing.

### Creative Writing

After watching William Kentridge's films, ask students to choose their favorite film and write a short story describing what happens in the film. Students should first discuss the characters in the story, what are they doing and why are they doing it, then make notes to develop into a story extending the story of the film, or adapting the setting to Australia. You could also discuss symbols in his films as a way of assisting students to interpret what they think Kentridge is trying to communicate through his films. This writing piece could be developed into a role play featuring class members back in school, or a short story for the school newspaper or website.

### Collage Shadow Figures

A simple gallery-based practical activity for K-3 students involves ripping simple figures from black paper (much easier than cutting out a shape) while in front of the artworks, then holding the figures in front of the white gallery walls, using the lighting to make a "shadow puppet show". After this, students can glue their black figures onto white paper and draw a landscape around them.

## **Year K-6 Post-Visit Activities**

### Projection Artwork

In *Medicine Chest* (2000) and *Sleeping on Glass* (1999) Kentridge uses the technique of rear-projecting onto objects (see the Teacher Notes section of this kit for a description of this method). Ask students why they think Kentridge has chosen these objects to display his films on, and what is the relationship between the object and the content of the film? Then ask students to design the plan for a new artwork using the same technique by selecting any object and film of their choice.

### Flip Book Animations

A flip book is an easy way to make a drawing appear to move. Small notepads are good to use as it saves making them up yourself. Ask students to make their own flip book, using pencil first to draw the figures and landscape, so mistakes can be corrected. A good tip for them is to think about how the motion will start, and how it will end.

### Storyboards for a Film

A storyboard is a series of drawings showing the order of images planned for a film. Ask students to write an outline of a story they think would make a good short film, based on an historical event (maybe to do with your school or your suburb). Give each student a piece of paper with a number of cells printed on it. The students should then rewrite the story into a corresponding number of events or actions matching the number of cells, and come up with a character to feature in the storyboards. Remember to talk to students about ways of drawing a background and the character in simple ways which can be easily repeated.

### Transformation

Transformation of an image or object into something else is central to Kentridge's film works. Students can explore this theme collaboratively by passing a pencil or charcoal drawing to another student who re-draws a section of the artwork and passes it onto the next student who continues the process. You could capture each stage of the image in order to track the changes.

### Exhibition Review

Write a review of the exhibition for your school newspaper or website. Look at some examples of art reviews from newspapers and magazines. Select four artworks to discuss in detail.

## **Activities and Ideas for Year 7-12 students**

### **Year 7-12 Pre-Visit Activities**

#### **Art Studying**

##### Cultural Frame

Students should research the turbulent political and social history of South Africa before visiting the exhibition. Begin with the Teacher Notes and the Timeline in this Kit, then use reference books in the library or complete an internet search. Focus questions for this research could include: In what ways do you think the political/social climate of

South Africa has influenced the work of William Kentridge? What is the relationship between Kentridge's art and the events in South Africa, from an Australian perspective?

### Critical Study/Artists's Practice

The work of other artists is important to Kentridge. Students can research some of his influences, as listed in the Teacher Notes in this Kit, in art history books or on the internet, and make notes in their VAPD. These notes can be expanded on after viewing the exhibition at the Museum.

### Film Making Techniques

Discuss with the class what the students' understanding is of narrative structure in film making. What are the usual essential ingredients in a film? What is the impact of drama and characterisation? How does William Kentridge conform to or challenge these assumptions? Watch videos or DVDs of films with a range of narrative structures – how does this influence the audience's reading of the movie? William Kentridge's role as a filmmaker can then be critiqued following the Museum visit.

## **Year 7-12 Gallery-based Activities**

### **Art Studying**

#### Conceptual Framework – Artist/Artwork/Audience/World

Discuss and observe the relationship between Kentridge's work and the audience at the MCA. Remember that the MCA audience is very broad, and includes curators, artists, patrons and sponsors, educators, students (you) and international and interstate tourists.

Do you think that an exhibition by an internationally recognised South African artist may attract different audience sectors than usual? Identify who you think could be the key target audiences for this exhibition.

Examine how the exhibition has been planned and displayed to make an impact on the viewer and to best represent the artist and his work. Make a list of the aspects the MCA must consider in the installation and design of the exhibition, for instance: the colour of the walls, lighting, labeling, the arrangement of works in series, the challenge of displaying films in a gallery space (consider sound "bleed" and how to direct viewers to the film spaces).

#### Postmodern Frame, Conceptual Framework

The first vaulted space in the exhibition contains a range of drawings for Kentridge's animated film series *Drawings for Projection*, etchings and bronze sculptures from the *Procession* series, and some works on paper by other artists from Kentridge's own collection. The MCA has displayed these in a densely hung "salon" style around the room, reminiscent of how works of art are hung in Felix Teitelbaum's hotel room in the film *Felix in Exile*. Discuss how you think this display affects readings of the work, and alternative methods of displaying the works which the Museum could have employed. In your VAPD sketch some other exhibition designs.

#### Postmodern Frame

How does Kentridge's work engage with postmodernism? Analyse two works in the exhibition examining his use of pastiche, irony, humour and referencing of other sources.

### Case Study, Body of Work, Artist's Practice

The *William Kentridge* exhibition, which displays many years of diverse practice by an internationally renowned artist, is ideal for developing into a case study at Year 11 or 12, or for a detailed study of how an artist produces a body of work over a length of time. Students can research Kentridge's practice as a whole and develop an aspect which appeals to them into a series of drawings, paintings or an essay assignment.

## **Year 7-12 Post-Visit Activities**

### **Art Studying**

#### Subjective Frame

What were your sensory and aesthetic responses to the exhibition? Why do you think you are responding to the works in this way? Did the exhibition layout, lighting, sound help form your responses? Write a short story or essay examining your response to the exhibition, or list your responses in your VAPD.

#### Critical Study

Examining the work of William Kentridge, write a short critical study on artists who use political themes as subject matter. Discuss the movements, genres or schools these artists are part of.

#### Cultural Frame

What do you think is William Kentridge's perspective on South African history? How does this work relate to the specific political and social history of South Africa? How does working in that environment influence his art practice? What perspective does Kentridge take on the history of South Africa, its cultural values and social meanings? How could meaning in Kentridge's work be understood in relation to the social perspective of the community from which it grows?

#### Postmodern Frame, Conceptual Framework

Kentridge's practice crosses many media and utilises a range of influences and ideas. How is this part of postmodern practice? Write a short essay or discuss in class.

After studying the display of film, objects, drawings and paintings in the Kentridge exhibition discuss what sort of challenges a curator would face when exhibiting such diverse practice.

Kentridge's films are dense in layers of meaning, and he uses a unique symbolic visual language. While his films follow some basic structures of filmmaking it is recognisably the artist's own style. Discuss the concept of originality in artmaking, and modernist ideas of "the original mark of the artist". What aspects of Kentridge's practice could be defined as postmodern?

#### Postmodern Frame

How could Kentridge's work be considered postmodern? Some aspects to explore include his construction and interpretation of history, attitudes to Post-Colonialism, his non-traditional approach to animation and his use of experimental film techniques such as projecting onto objects.

## Art Studying

### Series of Drawings

Develop a series of drawings around the memory of an important event in your life. Storyboard your ideas first in your VAPD, then develop this into large-scale drawings using the charcoal erasure technique used by William Kentridge.

### Transformation Drawing Series

Develop three linked works based on the idea of developing a character through transformation, for example a coffee pot that morphs into a figure. Do thumbnail sketches in your VAPD to plan the series first, then develop into finished works. Inspiration could come from surrealist art or “magic realist” writing, or the students’ own writings inspired by Kentridge’s work.

### Monotypes

After studying works from Kentridge’s series of 30 monotypes *The Deportees* (1979) during the Museum visit, make your own series using this technique. Monoprints are unique prints made by drawing or painting directly into ink or paint onto a surface such as glass, then printing onto paper using a printing press or a roller. Marks, rubbings and erasings are captured easily in this process.

## Apartheid in South Africa – A Brief Timeline

- 1910:** South Africa becomes an independent nation.
- 1912:** The black civil rights group African National Congress (ANC) is founded.
- 1918:** Rolihlahla Dalibhunga (Nelson) Mandela is born on July 18.
- 1913:** The Natives Land Act makes it illegal for blacks to purchase or lease land from whites except in reserves.
- 1923:** The Natives (Urban Areas) Act results in residential segregation in urban areas.
- 1948:** The National Party takes complete power and introduces Apartheid (Afrikaans for “apartness”) in South Africa. This is a policy of segregation and political and economic discrimination against non-whites.
- 1949:** Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act prohibits marriages between white people and people of other races.
- 1950:** The Group Areas Act forces physical separation between races by creating different residential areas for different races.
- 1952:** The ANC, with Mandela as one of its leaders, begins a Campaign for Defiance of Unjust Laws as a protest against apartheid.
- 1960:** 67 are killed by police while protesting in the town of Sharpeville.

- 1962:** Mandela is arrested for sabotage and attempting to overthrow the government and sentenced to life imprisonment at Robben Island.
- 1974:** The United Nations expels South Africa because of apartheid.
- 1976:** Hundreds of black protesters are killed in an uprising in Soweto.
- 1984:** Anglican Archbishop Desmond Tutu is awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his non-violent campaign to end apartheid.
- 1990:** President F.W. de Klerk announces the end of apartheid. Mandela is released from prison after 27 years.
- 1993:** De Klerk and Mandela are jointly awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.
- 1994:** South Africa holds its first elections open to all races. Nelson Mandela is elected President.
- 1996:** The Truth and Reconciliation Commission is set up to investigate crimes committed during apartheid.
- 1999:** Mandela steps down as President of South Africa.

## References

During your MCA class visit check out the *William Kentridge* Resource Room on Level 3.

### Selected Further Reading

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S. Williamson, A. Jamal, *Art in South Africa: The Future Present*, David Phillip, Cape Town/Johannesburg, 1996

*The Short Century: Independence and Liberation Movements in Africa 1945-1994*, Prestel, Munich-London-New York, 2001

## **Websites**

[www.mca.com.au](http://www.mca.com.au)

William Kentridge and his work:

[www.artbabyart.com/newmuseum/apartheid\\_kentridge.htm](http://www.artbabyart.com/newmuseum/apartheid_kentridge.htm)

[www.artcyclopedia.com/artists/kentridge\\_william.html](http://www.artcyclopedia.com/artists/kentridge_william.html)

[www.awn.com/mag/issue3.7/3.7pages/3.7moinskentridge.html](http://www.awn.com/mag/issue3.7/3.7pages/3.7moinskentridge.html)

[www.mag.awn.com/index.php3?ltype=search&sval=kentridge&article\\_no=393](http://www.mag.awn.com/index.php3?ltype=search&sval=kentridge&article_no=393)

<http://www.onepeople.com/kentemp.html> *(features video interviews with the artist)*

[www.smh.com.au/articles/2004/09/01/1093938987059.html](http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2004/09/01/1093938987059.html)

Recent South African History:

[www.africanhistory.about.com/library/bl/blsalaws.htm](http://www.africanhistory.about.com/library/bl/blsalaws.htm)

[www.globalthinker.com/apartheid.html](http://www.globalthinker.com/apartheid.html)

[www.northstar.k12.ak.us/schools/nph/twt/apart/timeline.htm](http://www.northstar.k12.ak.us/schools/nph/twt/apart/timeline.htm)

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**We hope you enjoy this Education Kit and the exhibition *William Kentridge*.**

**For further information see [www.mca.com.au](http://www.mca.com.au)**

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