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TIMES TOPICS > PEOPLE > K > KENTRIDGE, WILLIAM

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William Kentridge

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Updated: Feb. 22, 2010

William Kentridge is a South African artist who has always tackled an immense and urgent subject: his country's anguish and inequity in the wake of apartheid.

His success rests on his frank, often disquieting dramatization of recent life in South Africa. His drawings, films and prints touch on not only the racial problems of the apartheid era, but also the guilty, privileged existence made possible for white South Africans under apartheid.

A gargantuan traveling retrospective of the artist's work opened at the Museum of Modern Art in late February 2010, filling one of the museum's largest temporary exhibition spaces. As envisioned by Mr. Kentridge and the show's curators, the exhibit is joining the two deeply intertwined elements of the artist's work, his charcoal drawings and the animated projections he makes using them, so that the audiovisual is not cordoned off and relegated to theater rooms with small doors and dense crowding as it often is in museums.

The size of crowds has been estimated at as many as 10,000 people a day, which is comparable to a rock concert.

Mr. Kentridge's work is almost always best when presented at a remove, in translation or in motion. His charcoal drawings are never as effective on the wall as they are when mutating in his powerful animated films and videos.

His work was previously on view in Venice where he, along with the Handspring Puppet Company and the Ricercar Consort, a small period-instrument ensemble from Belgium, devised a taut 90-minute reduction of Monteverdi's "Return of Ulysses," at the Malibran Theater. The show has been touring since 1998. (It stopped a few years ago in New York.) The Venetian debut was a homecoming in the city where Monteverdi staged the opera's premiere almost four centuries ago.

Mr. Kentridge, a third-generation South African of Lithuanian-Jewish heritage, comes from a family of lawyers, some of whom have been prominent in civil rights cases. Mr. Kentridge, born in Johannesburg in 1955, initially studied politics, but a spirit of soulful liberation nudged him into art.

ARTICLES ABOUT WILLIAM KENTRIDGE

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Page: 1 | 2 | Next >>

Invisible Hand in MoMA Shows

By RANDY KENNEDY

Jerome Neuner, the director of the Museum of Modern Art's department of exhibition design, has been behind nearly all of the museum's shows over the last 30 years.

February 18, 2010

MORE ON WILLIAM KENTRIDGE AND: MUSEUMS, ART, MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

To a Tapestry's Warp and Weft, Add Vision and Craft

By ROBERTA SMITH

Tapestries commissioned from contemporary artists are now on view at the James Cohan Gallery in an exhibition titled "Demons, Yarns & Tales."

January 26, 2010

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Cutbacks in Plans but Not in Energy

By ROBERTA SMITH

This was the year that the art world repeatedly checked its pulse to see if it was still alive. And guess what? It persisted, albeit in a slightly altered, chastened form.

December 20, 2009

MORE ON WILLIAM KENTRIDGE AND: ART, PERFORMA, MANZONI, PIERO,



William Kentridge Navigator

A list of resources from around the Web about William Kentridge as selected by researchers and editors of The New York Times.

[Kentridge in Bronze, Collage and Charcoal](#)

Marian Goodman Gallery

[Kentridge on Video](#)

AOL Television

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William Kentridge Prints

THE NOSE etchings for the MET Opera David Krut Projects, Chelsea NY
www.davidkrutpublishing.com



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