

**MoMA PRESENTS *WILLIAM KENTRIDGE: FIVE THEMES*, A MAJOR SURVEY
PREMIERING THE ARTIST'S MOST RECENT WORK**

Numerous Works Drawn from MoMA's Collection, with Many Works on Display for the First Time in the U.S.

William Kentridge: Five Themes
February 24–May 17, 2010
Contemporary Galleries, second floor

NEW YORK, February 23, 2010—The Museum of Modern Art presents *William Kentridge: Five Themes*, a comprehensive survey of the artist's career, featuring more than 120 works in a range of mediums—animated films, drawings, prints, theater models, and books—on view from February 24 to May 17, 2010. Kentridge (South African, b. 1955) has earned international acclaim for his interdisciplinary practice, which mingles the fields of visual art, film, and theater. Known for engaging with the social and political landscape of his homeland, South Africa, he has produced a body of work that explores colonial oppression and social conflict, loss and reconciliation, and the ephemeral nature of both personal and cultural memory. The exhibition underscores the inter-relatedness of his mediums and disciplines through the presentation of five primary themes that cut across Kentridge's artistic output. *William Kentridge: Five Themes*, which follows a chronological progression, comprises works created over the last three decades and features new developments, revealing as never before the full arc of his distinguished career.

The exhibition also traces the evolution of Kentridge's subject matter, from the specific context of apartheid in South Africa to more universal stories and a range of human conditions. In recent years Kentridge's thematic concerns have expanded to include his own studio practice, the Enlightenment and colonialism, and the cultural history of post-revolutionary Russia. This newer work is based on an intensive exploration of themes connected to Kentridge's own life experience, as well as the social issues that most concern him. Compared to his earlier work, the new projects are dramatically larger in scope, such as *The Nose*—a full-scale opera directed and designed by Kentridge, which makes its world premiere at The Metropolitan Opera in March 2010.

William Kentridge: Five Themes was organized by independent curator Mark Rosenthal, in close collaboration with the artist, for the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art and the Norton Museum of Art in Florida, two of the venues which presented the exhibition in 2009. It will travel internationally to museums in Paris, Vienna, Jerusalem, Amsterdam, and Vancouver. At MoMA, the exhibition has been expanded, with nearly half of the New York presentation drawn from MoMA's unparalleled collection of Kentridge's installations, films, drawings, and prints, several of which were included in the travelling exhibition. An additional 38 prints from the Museum's collection

have also been included in MoMA's presentation. The exhibition is organized at MoMA by Klaus Biesenbach, MoMA's Chief Curator-at-Large, and Director of P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center; Judith B. Hecker, Assistant Curator, Department of Prints and Illustrated Books; and Cara Starke, Assistant Curator, Department of Media and Performance Art.

In conjunction with MoMA's exhibition, the Museum is publishing *William Kentridge: Trace. Prints from The Museum of Modern Art*, which includes an original essay on the artist's printmaking by Ms. Hecker, as well as forty pages of new artwork by Kentridge specifically designed for the publication. This publication is in addition to the existing exhibition catalogue, *William Kentridge: Five Themes*, edited by Mark Rosenthal and produced in close collaboration with the artist.

Among the different creative processes represented in the exhibition are Kentridge's hand-drawn film animations, which he calls "drawings for projection." A distinctive technique he began using in the 1990s, the animations comprise charcoal drawings and collages that Kentridge painstakingly creates, reworks, and moves, filming each step along the way, ultimately projecting them as moving images. Movement is generated within the image, by the artist's hand, with the camera serving merely to record its progression. As such, the animations reveal a tension between material object and time-based performance, uniquely capturing the artist's process while telling poignant stories.

In his newer films, Kentridge has emphasized elements of live-action performance as well as archival film footage to create works broader in scope. Instead of being projected individually, like his earlier animations, these films are grouped together in installations that fill entire rooms with moving images. The exhibition at MoMA presents all phases of Kentridge's involvement with film within large galleries, allowing for long, dynamic views of his moving images as well as complete environmental immersion.

MoMA's exhibition is organized chronologically, focusing on five themes of Kentridge's career.

"Occasional and Residual Hope: Ubu and the Procession"

In 1975 Kentridge acted in *Ubu Rex* (an adaptation of *Ubu Roi*, Alfred Jarry's 1896 satire about a corrupt and cowardly despot), and subsequently devoted a large body of work to the subject. He began the project with a series of eight etchings, collectively entitled *Ubu Tells the Truth* (1996), and in 1997 he made an animated film of the same name, as well as a number of related drawings. That project culminated in another live theater performance. Together, these works deal with the South African experience, specifically addressing the hearings set up by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in 1995 to bring together victims and perpetrators of apartheid. Other highlights in this section include the film *Shadow Procession* (1999), in which Kentridge first utilizes techniques of shadow theater and jointed-paper figures; the multi-panel accordion-folded

book *Portage* (2000); and a large charcoal-and-pastel-on-paper work entitled *Arc Procession (Smoke, Ashes, Fable)* (1990).

MoMA's installation includes the addition of the nine etchings that comprise Kentridge's series *Zeno at 4 A.M.* (2001), which focus attention on the details of figures from a processional march, as well as two monumental linoleum cuts, *Walking Man* and *Telephone Lady* (2000), which isolate the actions of marching figures on a grand scale.

"Thick Time: Soho and Felix"

The second section of the exhibition is dedicated to Kentridge's best-known fictional characters, Soho Eckstein, an industrialist and real estate developer whose troubled conscience reflects certain miens of contemporary South Africa, and his sensitive alter ego, Felix Teitlebaum, who pines for Soho's wife and often functions as a surrogate for Kentridge himself. The centerpiece of this section, a seminal series entitled *9 Drawings for Projection*, comprises nine short animated films: *Johannesburg, 2nd Greatest City after Paris* (1989), *Monument* (1990), *Mine* (1991), *Sobriety, Obesity & Growing Old* (1991), *Felix in Exile* (1994), *History of the Main Complaint* (1996), *WEIGHING . . . and WANTING* (1998), *Stereoscope* (1999), and *Tide Table* (2003). At MoMA, these projections are shown in large format among three distinct galleries. These films, along with a key selection of the drawings from which they are made, follow the lives of Soho and Felix as they struggle to navigate life in Johannesburg during the final decade of apartheid. According to Kentridge, the Soho and Felix films were made without a script or storyboards and are largely about his own process of discovery.

MoMA's installation is supplemented with materials drawn from MoMA's collection: the complete portfolio of prints *Little Morals* (1991) and a large-scale print, *Casspirs Full of Love* (1989), which amplify moments from the film.

"Parcours d'Atelier: Artist in the Studio"

This section of the exhibition presents a turning point in Kentridge's work, one in which his own artistic practice became a subject. According to the artist, many of these projects are meant to reflect the "invisible work that must be done" before beginning a drawing, film, or sculpture. This theme is epitomized by the large-scale multi-screen projection *7 Fragments for Georges Méliès* (2003), an homage to the early French film director, who, like Kentridge, often combined performance with special effects. The suite of seven films—each depicting Kentridge at work in his studio or interacting with his creations—is accompanied by *Journey to the Moon* (2003) and *Day for Night* (2003). A group of drawings on the subject of the artist and model in the studio, and a riveting self-portrait, form an intimate portrayal of the artist's working process.

“Sarastro and the Master’s Voice: The Magic Flute”

The fourth section comprises Kentridge’s model theaters, a film projection, and a selection of drawings and prints inspired by his 2005 production of the Mozart opera *The Magic Flute* for La Monnaie, the leading opera house in Belgium. The artist’s film projection on a blackboard structure, *Learning the Flute* (2003), which started the *Flute* project, shifts between images of black charcoal drawings on white paper and white chalk drawings projected onto a blackboard, forming a meditation on darkness and light that relates to the opera’s main theme of the Enlightenment. Similarly, the grand print—presented exclusively at MoMA and also entitled *Learning the Flute* (2003)—explores concepts from the opera within a composition that mimics the space of a theater. The model theater *Preparing the Flute* (2005) was created as a large-scale maquette for testing the projections central to the final set design of the opera. A second model theater, *Black Box/Chambre Noire* (2006), addresses the opera’s theme of Enlightenment and the dangers of achieving rationalism, as embodied by colonialism in Africa. Each of the three projections is shown sequentially in the gallery space, with the overhead lights dimming during each performance. Once the full cycle concludes, the gallery lights return for a period of time, allowing visitors to view the related drawings installed on the surrounding walls.

“Learning from the Absurd: The Nose”

The final section features a series of projected films and prints made in preparation for Kentridge’s staging and production of *The Nose*, which will make its debut at The Metropolitan Opera in New York City on March 5, 2010. *The Nose*—a 1930 Dmitri Shostakovich opera based on Nikolai Gogol’s absurdist short story of 1836—concerns a Russian official whose nose disappears from his face, only to turn up, in uniform, as a higher-ranking official moving in more respected circles. Kentridge’s room-size installation of projected films, *I am not me, the horse is not mine* (2008), uses Gogol’s story as the basis for examining the Russian avant-garde in the 1920s and 1930s, and its tragic suppression. This section also presents prints from the Museum’s collection—on view for the first time at MoMA—that relate to Kentridge’s development of *The Nose*.

SPONSORSHIP:

William Kentridge: Five Themes is organized by the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art and the Norton Museum of Art.

The MoMA presentation is sponsored by BNY Mellon.

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Generous support for the development of the exhibition was provided by the Koret Foundation with additional support from the National Endowment for the Arts.

PUBLICATIONS:

The exhibition catalogue, *William Kentridge: Five Themes*, was produced in close collaboration with the artist and investigates the five primary themes that have engaged Kentridge over the course of his career: Artist in the Studio; Soho and Felix; Ubu and the Procession; *The Magic Flute*; and *The Nose*. The volume includes a DVD created by the artist especially for the publication, which includes fragments from significant film projects as well as commentary that sheds further light on the artist's work. Edited by Mark Rosenthal. Contributions by Michael Auping; Cornelia H. Butler, Judith B. Hecker, and Klaus Biesenbach; Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev; Rudolf Frieling; and William Kentridge. Hardcover with DVD, 9.5 x 10 in. 240 pages; 297 ills. ISBN: 9780300150483. Price: \$50.00

Published to accompany MoMA's presentation of the exhibition, *William Kentridge: Trace. Prints from The Museum of Modern Art*, is at once a collection catalogue and an artist's book. It highlights the Museum's unparalleled collection of prints and books by Kentridge—over 50 works made over the past three decades—and features a succession of interventions created by the artist on translucent pages interspersed throughout the book. An essay by Judith B. Hecker, an illustrated plate section, an annotated checklist of prints and books in MoMA's collection, a chronology, and a text by the artist on printmaking illuminate the medium's relevance to his broader practice. Hardcover, 8 x 10 in. 112 pages; 110 ills. ISBN 978-0-87070-779-7. \$29.95

Related Performance:***Performance 8: William Kentridge: I am not me, the horse is not mine [Sold Out]***

Thursday, March 4, 2010

7:00 p.m.

The Roy and Niuta Titus Theater 1, MoMA

On March 4, MoMA presents *Performance 8: William Kentridge: I am not me, the horse is not mine*, a solo performance by the artist that combines narration, video projection, and a soundtrack, a version of which premiered at the 16th Biennale of Sydney in June 2008. Related to the film installation of the same title featured in MoMA's exhibition, this live performance focuses on the development process of Kentridge's upcoming opera production, *The Nose*.

This event is sold out, but prior to the performance there will be a stand-by line in the Museum's lobby for any available remaining tickets.

The performance is organized by Laura Beiles, Associate Educator, and Pablo Helguera, Director, Adult and Academic Programs, Department of Education, MoMA.

The Performance Exhibition Series is made possible by MoMA's Wallis Annenberg Fund for Innovation in Contemporary Art through the Annenberg Foundation.

PUBLIC PROGRAMS:**Brown Bag Lectures**

March 22 and 25, 2010, 12:30 p.m.

William Kentridge: Five Themes

This lecture examines William Kentridge, a versatile artist whose work combines the political with the poetic. Cara Starke and Judy Hecker will conduct the lecture. Participants may bring their own lunch. An induction loop sound-amplification system is available for all sessions. Tickets (\$5; members, students, seniors, and staff of other museums \$3) can be purchased at the lobby information desk, at the film desk, or in the Education and Research Building lobby.

WEBSITE:

The exhibition will be accompanied by an original interactive website where visitors can explore the five major themes in Kentridge's work through key examples selected by the curators. Each thematic grouping will include the broad range of mediums in which the artist works—prints,

drawings, film, and theater—and interpretive text underscoring their interrelatedness. Exclusive to MoMA's site will be fourteen clips from all of Kentridge's films on view in the exhibition—ranging from *Shadow Procession* (1999) and his seminal series *9 Drawings for Projection* (1989-2003) to his most recent film *I am not me, the horse is not mine* (2008). Six new videos, produced by MoMA for the website, feature the artist's commentary on his work. Special sections on the artist's creative process, printmaking, and biography provide further background on this remarkably versatile artist's career. The site will launch on February 24, 2010. MoMA.org/williamkentridge.

Special thanks to Marnie S. Pillsbury for her additional support to this website.

TRAVEL:

William Kentridge: Five Themes was on view at:

San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (March 14–May 31, 2009)

Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth (July 11–September 27, 2009)

Norton Museum of Art, West Palm Beach (November 7, 2009–January 17, 2010)

And the exhibition will further travel to:

Galerie nationale du Jeu de Paume, Paris (June 28–September 12, 2010)

Albertina Museum, Vienna (October 29, 2010–January 30, 2011)

Israel Museum, Jerusalem (March 5–June 5, 2011)

Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam (July 7–October 2, 2011)

Vancouver Art Gallery (November 5, 2011–January 29, 2012)

Australian Centre for the Moving Image (March 3–May 27, 2012)

No. 13

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For downloadable high-resolution images, register at www.moma.org/press.

Public Information:

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Website: www.moma.org

Blog: www.moma.org/insideout

Facebook: www.facebook.com/MuseumofModernArt

Twitter: www.twitter.com/MuseumModernArt

Videos: www.youtube.com/momavideos

Flickr: www.flickr.com/groups/themuseumofmodernart/

Hours: Wednesday through Monday: 10:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m. Friday: 10:30 a.m.-8:00 p.m.
Open until 8:45 p.m. on the first Thursday of each month
Closed Tuesday

Museum Admission: \$20 adults; \$16 seniors, 65 years and over with I.D.; \$12 full-time students with current I.D. Free, members and children 16 and under. (Includes admittance to Museum galleries and film programs). Target Free Friday Nights 4:00-8:00 p.m.

Film Admission: \$10 adults; \$8 seniors, 65 years and over with I.D. \$6 full-time students with current I.D. (For admittance to film programs only)