

## William Kentridge

(Johannesburg, South Africa, 1955)

Born in 1955 in Johannesburg to lawyer parents close to the group of anti-apartheid activists, on the paternal side, Kentridge descends from Lithuanian Jews who escaped from the Russian pogroms of the end of the nineteenth century. Despite having belonged to a white and privileged family, he grew up with a profound sensitivity towards human suffering, in particular that inflicted by the segregationist regime. An extraordinary and eclectic artist, he has adopted multiple expressive languages – from drawing to film, from sculpture to theatrical set design – in order to address the themes of social injustice, racism, bourgeois hypocrisy and the long and winding path of reconciliation in South Africa. In the films produced with his 'drawings for projection' which made him famous, the repeated cancelling and rewriting on the same page goes beyond mere technical virtuosity: it's a way to represent the trauma of history, memory and removal, guilt and forgiving.

It was around the end of the 1990s that he began to experiment with shadows. Initially he worked with silhouettes made from paper cut-outs, projected onto walls in a dark room: these silhouettes, always seen side-on, are anthropomorphic transpositions of assemblages of recoupled objects, tools and toys. When he started to pose the problem of how to make these works more concrete, he went on to produce three-dimensional shapes, crossing over two separate silhouettes along the same axis so that when rotated, they would project ever-changing images onto the opposite wall according to the point of view. Straight after this, he began to incorporate bronze-working in his practice, with which he gave life to figures of various sizes, often presented in a procession.

Echoes of these studies on shadows may be found in two works in the collection. *City of Moscow (Map: Geodetic Bureau for the planning of the City of Moscow, 1940)* (2009) is part of a family of works that amplify Kentridge's research into maps and historical documents. In the background of pages from old atlases, antiheroic and equally anachronistic equestrian figures stand out, crumpling up the time of history and making any cartographical effort redundant. The item in the collection is a tapestry in mohair wool, produced following the artist's sketches from the famous atelier of Marguerite Stephens, present in Johannesburg since the 1960s and specialised in large-scale weaves.

In 2017, in order to celebrate the opening of the renovated Officine Grandi Riparazioni in Turin, Kentridge presented the public intervention and site-specific *Procession of Reparationists*, occupying the space within the Eastern Courtyard of the former industrial complex. Conceived as a long procession of fifteen figures in black steel, the work symbolises the process of reparation and rebirth, thus chiming in with the history of the OGR which, from 1895 up until the early 1990s, represented a point of excellence in the production and maintenance of railway rolling stock.

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