

WILLIAM KENTRIDGE



SELF-PORTRAIT AS A COFFEE-POT

17.04-24.11.2024

Arsenale Institute for Politics of Representation



WILLIAM KENTRIDGE



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**WILLIAM KENTRIDGE
SELF-PORTRAIT AS A COFFEE-POT**

PROGRAMME

Wednesday through Sunday from 10:00 a.m. to 7:30 p.m.

10:05 a.m. Episode 1 A Natural History of the Studio		3:00 p.m. Episode 1 A Natural History of the Studio
10:30 a.m. Episode 2 Self-Portrait as a Coffee Pot		3:24 p.m. Episode 2 Self-Portrait as a Coffee Pot
11:06 a.m. Episode 3 Vanishing Points		3:59 p.m. Episode 3 Vanishing Points
11:43 a.m. Episode 4 Finding One's Fate		4:37 p.m. Episode 4 Finding One's Fate
12:18 p.m. Episode 5 AS IF		5:12 p.m. Episode 5 AS IF
12:48 p.m. Episode 6 Harvest of Devotion		5:42 p.m. Episode 6 Harvest of Devotion
1:23 p.m. Episode 7 Metamorphosis		6:14 p.m. Episode 7 Metamorphosis
1:52 p.m. Episode 8 Oh to Believe in Another World		6:42 p.m. Episode 8 Oh to Believe in Another World
2:28 p.m. Episode 9 In Defence of Optimism		7:16 p.m. Episode 9 In Defence of Optimism

SELF-PORTRAIT AS A COFFEE-POT

how to compose a choreography of fragments in nine episodes

Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev

*The studio is also an enlarged head, a chamber for thoughts
and reflections where all the drawings,
photos and detritus on the walls become these thoughts.*

— W. Kentridge

South African artist William Kentridge is renowned for his animated drawings for projection, as well as his sculpture, art installations, theatre and opera productions over the last forty years. For this exhibition, he premieres his intriguing new video series, SELF-PORTRAIT AS A COFFEE POT.

Kentridge's art is rooted in South Africa, where he continues to live and create most of his work. It stems from an attempt to address the nature of human emotions and memory, as well as the relationship between knowledge, desire, ethics, practice and responsibility. He investigates how our identities are shaped through our shifting ideas of history, time and place, looking at how we construct our histories as forms of collage and what we do with them, both singularly and collaboratively. His is an elegiac yet humorous art that explores the possibilities of poetry in contemporary society, even in the absence of utopian visions for the future. He provides an acerbic commentary on our society, while proposing a way of seeing life as a continuous process of change and uncertainty rather than as a controlled world of facts.

This series of nine, thirty-minute episodes, is an experiment in embodiment and phenomenological experience in the digital age, and a reflection on what might happen in the brain and in the studio of an artist today. Filming of the series began during the first lockdown of the 2020–22 COVID-19 pandemic in Kentridge's Johannesburg studio and continued in its aftermath, completed in 2023. The studio mimicked the closed spaces of COVID, and in the Venice exhibition, the works are viewed in a unique concentrated environment that partially recreates it, screened on devices ranging from a small phone to a large flat screen. This environment becomes a place between a private and a public space, the studio of a solitary artist deeply immersed in self-reflection, but also the joyous space of childhood play and of collaboration with others.

These works, originally intended for online, mobile or television viewing, are a hymn to artistic freedom, while ominously revealing the lack of freedom typical of our enclosed spaces in the digital era. They also foreground how the activity of mark-making with materials constructs the self in the process of making. Furthermore, the exploration of the relationship between painting and musical scores, as well as between dance and drawing, becomes a form of mental gymnastics or yoga for the brain. They are exercises to expand and improve human intelligence in our era where the prosthetics of AI and the increasing use of social media ultimately and dangerously atrophy our cognitive and emotional abilities.

Subjectivity today is characterised by forms of narcissistic melancholy, due to the 'selfie' nature of digital media and its distracted character (from *dis-trahere*, to pull in another direction) as we move away from one message and fragment of data to another, endlessly forgetting while 'remembering' easily thanks to a slew of satellites above our heads. This hybrid aspect – fractured while seamlessly omnipotent – is echoed by the double nature of Kentridge's collages in this series. His alter egos and dopelgänger debate a series of issues: how does memory work? What makes the self? One might interpret this as a reversal of the obsessive narcissistic split personalities of our era of avatars on social media into forms of quiet psychoanalysis.

Arsenale Institute for Politics of Representation in Venice¹, directed by philosopher Wolfgang Scheppe, is a space devoted to research and exhibitions that critique spectacle and investigate the politics of representation in the spirit of Situationism, of which Scheppe is an expert and the Institute the holder of one of the most comprehensive collections.

Although he is interested in the trajectories of Situationism, Kentridge's visual vocabulary, his costumes and designs, have often been inspired by an earlier period, in particular by Dada, Bauhaus and Constructivist precursors, including Oskar Schlemmer's *Ballet Triadique* (1916–1922). Some of these costumes appear in Episode 8 of this series – *Oh to Believe in Another World*, which references the falling out of favour of utopian intellectuals through the story of Dmitri Shostakovic. It is also the title of a live orchestra performance and an installation by Kentridge of 2022–23.

While the doubling of two or more images of the artist is seamless, sophisticated and perfectly rendered digitally (a homage to early twentieth-century film experiments with double exposures), Kentridge opts for an overall choppy editing of different scenes in the studio, during the day or at night. These disjunctures and cuts switch our attention from one thought or scene to another, echoing our fractured, rushing selves, unable to stop the rubble and detritus of data from piling up. We smile, however, each time a little group of benevolent paper rats comes onto the scene.

Velletri, 8 March 2024



1. During the opening week of the Venice Biennale, from Monday 15 to Friday 19 April, Kentridge and I will converse over a late-night whisky from 11:00 p.m. to 12:00 a.m., joined by special guests. This series of Midnight Whisky Talks presents improvisational philosophical dialogues that take place physically on the second floor of Arsenale Institute, in an environment reminiscent of a temporary domestic space adorned with anti-high-art works ranging from an early twentieth-century sculpture by Kurt Schwitters to COBRA paintings and Situationist documents of the 1950s and 60s, all from the Institute's research collection.



EPISODE 1 - A NATURAL HISTORY OF THE STUDIO

The first episode is an introduction to the overall argument of the series that focuses on how procedures inside the studio may provide insights into processes in the world outside the studio. Kentridge is shown making art in a studio that is like an enlarged head, where multiple conversations go on between the artist and his double.

The title references Pliny the Elder's encyclopaedic work *Historia Naturalis*. Grounded in a teleological vision according to which the world is described from the perspective of how it serves humans, Philosophy and all forms of human knowledge and life are included in *Natural History*, with topics ranging from Astronomy to Geography, Mathematics to Ethnography, Zoology and Botany to Horticulture, Mining and Minerology. The ambitious madness of this endeavour is mimicked and reversed by Kentridge, who paces back and forth in front of a blank wall and sets off on an ambitious search into Life in the studio.

While he lies sleepless in bed at night, objects take over the studio, such as a Sousaphone on an armchair (representing voice, the spoken word) and the artist's camera on a tripod (sight, vision). Many scenes follow each other, including Kentridge drawing a large coffee pot (the quotidian) near Morandi-style drawings pinned to the wall. Sometimes the drawings seem to draw themselves. The process of making is fully laid bare, with improvisation leading to projection and finally to figuration. The coffee pot drawn on the wall becomes a large jug drawn by Morandi, alone in his small studio in Bologna while the

Second World War rages outside. The words *Torschlusspanik* (panic caused by opportunities being lost once decisions are made, as if doors are being closed) appear, followed by a nurse wearing a mask, reminding us of COVID – where the doors were literally closed during the lockdown. The studio walls are covered in words – 'wait', 'breathe', 'hold' – amongst the tools of the studio. The video progresses through what is said and what is seen, the voice and the eye, the sousaphone and the camera, and regresses magically when footage is reversed so that images appear revealed rather than drawn. The artist describes the inevitability of the coffee pot emerging in the drawing, as if it were impossible to escape drawing the ordinary. The dialectic is thus between infinite possibility and the inevitability of the result. Sitting at his table, Kentridge states that an 'interview is conducted at 11.25 a.m.', while another image of himself appears on the left of the screen and sits at the same table, contradicting the Kentridge in front of him, accusing him of having engaged in 'procrastination', while the Kentridge on the right of the screen tells him that it was 'productive procrastination'. A third Kentridge comes onto the scene, and then a fourth, so the studio is like the inside of a brain populated by many selves. A collage of memories, including excerpts from early works, appear, as well as images ranging from scenes of violence in Apartheid South Africa, bodies, dead animals, making love, soldiers with guns, an industrial mining landscape, all jumbled together.

This cuts to a scene of Kentridge in the studio again, dipping his brush into ink in a coffee pot, painting abstract marks on pages of found printed material as if the world were coming into the studio in the form of print and being sent back out in the form of drawings and marks, undoing certainties. The artist's alter ego on the left makes a note, 'unable to commit', almost as if he were a psychiatrist or an investigator finding proof of his other self's inadequacy. The two parts of this split personality, the rational self on the left and the imaginative self on the right (as in our brains), confront each other. Towards the end, the imaginative 'Kentridge' speaks about the non-structure of what we see and lists all the things that come to his mind – 'Will my granddaughter be born today?' 'Remember to take 97-year old father walking in his garden today', Mayakovsky's line, 'A giant grief lay over the city, and a thousand tiny griefs', himself as a seven-year-old boy on the beach, the Sharpeville massacre in 1960.

The contemporaneous presence of different levels of thoughts that are in contradiction with each other turn Pliny's *Natural History* upside down, since the natural is the unordered, while history implies knowledge organised into categories. Ultimately, the simultaneous presence of historical, biographical, logical-linguistic, material and personal elements holds together the divided self through self-mockery and a light absurdity.



EPISODE 2 - SELF-PORTRAIT OF A COFFE-POT

The main topic here is the making of a self-portrait as a way of coming to know oneself. What becomes known is that the self is nothing other than the process of that search, which is the dance of life, with no finished result.

The episode opens with two Kentridges in the frame. His personality is split between a solitary artist, painting a snail trail of works to keep his incumbent depression at bay, and the artist who loves to engage in collaboration with others. Kentridge's love of acting, theatre and dance are manifest. The dancer Dada Masilo enters the studio. Her dancing body, without gravity, becomes an ideal of what drawing could be. In a nocturnal interlude, the sousaphone tells the listening camera to 'wait once again for better gods, for better people' and to 'starve the algorithm'. Are the gods of today our smart-phone technologies? Are Google and ChatGPT our prophets? While these ever-more precise technologies are able to simulate the real seamlessly, Kentridge's rough montage of fragments resists the illusion, becoming a celebration of 'poor' digital film-making.

As the artist attempts to draw his own figure with charcoal or brush attached to the tip of a long stick, his double watches the imperfect outcome from afar. Coming close to and retreating from the drawing is a dance in the studio, suggesting that what makes the portrait is nothing other than the activity of one's own mark-making, and not the final drawing, which is just a trace of that dance.



EPISODE 3 - VANISHING POINTS

This episode investigates how memory is connected to place. The scene opens onto two large blank sheets of paper on the wall. On the left, the artist draws a fictional colonial landscape with water and mountains, like those he remembers hanging in his childhood dining room, while his double on the right draws what he remembers actually seeing on the outskirts of Johannesburg – a harsh mining landscape full of dangerous empty shafts, where informal economy workers of today descend to dig out leftovers of gold in the abandoned mines.

In a nocturnal dreamlike interlude, paper rats move around on the table, while small balls pierced by pins that look like models of the COVID-19 virus, ominously move around. The artist's narration describes the workings of memory as being like the proliferating branches of a tree. He wonders how the passing of time might be materially preserved in the present, reminding the viewer of his signature technique of erasure and drawing on a sheet of paper.

The typically intertwined worlds of capitalist extraction and mining, on the one hand, and building an art museum as a form of bourgeois 'false consciousness' and a structure normalising colonial power systems, on the other, are made clear in this episode, as we see images of the Johannesburg Art Gallery museum collapsing. The cut-and-paste montage of short scenes and recursive snippets suggests the fractures and breakages of the self and our shifting memories related to place.



EPISODE 4 - FINDING ONE'S FATE

No matter how hard we try to postpone it, we are going to die, yet no oracle or technology can reply to the question, 'How long will I live?' Apoptosis, the natural death of cells in a body or plant, is inevitable. Through remembering the story his father told him when he was a child, of Perseus killing his grandfather Acretius by accident, Kentridge formulates a theory of the accident, the inescapability of one's destiny and its unpredictability.

These are set into relation to the story of the Cumana Sibyl who lives in a wind-filled cave and reveals people's fate inscribed on leaves that fall from a tree, but are blown by the wind so that all fates are mixed up. We watch a rehearsal in a theatre that becomes the Sibyl's cave, where pieces of paper are held up to the actors' ears in a preposterous attempt to hear the Sibyl's predictions through listening to the drawings. The large tree the artist has been painting throughout the series is both the tree of life, and the tree of our own death growing inside us.

Our technological era of satellites hovering above us and innumerable messages being sent and received, while a myriad AI Sibyls predict our future, is one of hubris, since each prediction by AI could reverse into an accident, a fall, a pandemic, a catastrophe. This artwork becomes both a desperate and an optimistic attempt to exercise the mind and the body by making art, training our abilities to live with no clear predictions of our fate.



EPISODE 5 - AS IF

Why do we suspend judgement when interpreting an image as truthful, at face value?

In the preamble to this episode, Kentridge walks across the paper screen of an open notebook as if he were a horse. On the title page, we see a photograph of the ancient Laocoon sculpture, and another image of a horse. The artist paints black curved brushstrokes that cohere, but only from one point of view, into the shape of a horse, while Kentridge saddles and sits on a wooden horse placed high on a table. He discusses with his alter ego down below how 'a man by himself is so small, puny', but 'put on a horse, he becomes somebody, a hero'.

With the sound of cranes and civil engineering in the background, the artist and a team of collaborators in the studio build a large abstract sculpture. This parody of productive labour is combined with fragments and memories from one of Kentridge's earliest animated films, *Mine*, 1990, where exploited miners descend into a mine. The studio becomes a place for making up worlds and images. Kentridge paints abstract marks over objects in the studio, furniture and the walls, until from one point of view they coalesce into the words SMOKE, ASHES, FABLE. The lesson suddenly makes sense: if we understand that points of view are always provisional, we might avoid the fate of the Trojans, who ignored the warning of the priest Laocoon that the Greeks' gift of a large wooden horse was not sincere.



EPISODE 6 - HARVEST OF DEVOTION

This episode proposes that we understand history as a collage of fragments rather than as a sequence of objective facts. Adopted outside art, collage might allow for repressed and nuanced histories to emerge. The title refers to the hopes of African soldiers serving in European armies in Africa during the First World War, to receive a harvest for their devotion to the colonial powers and their war, in which a tremendously high number of African lives were lost.

In the studio, Kentridge recreates rehearsals for his performance *The Head & the Load* (2018), in which the collapse of language at a time in which the world seemed to have gone mad is foregrounded. Kentridge, with actors and singers Hamilton Dlamini, Mncedisi Shabangu, Nhlanhla Mahlangu and Micca Manganye together read out loud Kurt Schwitters' *Ursonata*, 1922–32, a phonetic poem whose cacophony represents and artistically reverses the breakdown of all logic in Europe. In parallel is the reading of John Chilembwe's 1915 letter to the *Nyasaland Times*, arguing for equal standing in Malawi. (The British opposed Chilembwe, and brutally quelled the rebellion.) There is an implied contrast between, on the one hand, the freedom in the language of art (*Ursonata*) and of Chilembwe's letter (translated for this episode into the South African Xhosa language), and the English language, on the other, as if injustice and lack of shame were embedded in it. In this collapse, the landscape turns into a dead land scattered with bodies, trembling, falling from exhaustion under their loads.



EPISODE 7 - METAMORPHOSIS

This episode focuses not on collage but on transformation. Sounds are visualised through the attempt to paint them; a shadow turns into a sculpture, time morphs into a film strip, an abstract blotch becomes an image. In Greek mythology, such transformations carry a sense of release from crisis. In one of Ovid's stories, for example, Tereus rapes Philomena, the sister of his wife Prochne, then cuts out her tongue to silence her. Prochne finds out and feeds their son Itys to his unwitting father. Before he can take revenge on the sisters, the gods transform all three into birds. From violence and tragedy, metamorphosis (perhaps artistic process?) is a release into a space of freedom and flight. But the flapping wings of the birds, hitting the edges of a box, suggest that it is an enclosed space of limited liberty.

If the Latin root of transformation (*trans*, through, *forma*, shape) suggests the changing of form, the Greek origin of the word metamorphosis (*meta*, beyond, *morphé*, form) implies an evolution to a freer state. The actress Joanna Dudley gives voice to Philomena, transformed into a nightingale, while Ann Masina performs Prochne. Dudley's mimetic bird vocalisations echo and reverse the collapse of human language and logic into war shown in the preceding episode. This magical viewing experience offers the opposite of today's algorithmic word-to-image translation programmes, based on precise procedures that are repeated to reach predictable results from data mined from the Internet.



EPISODE 8 - OH TO BELIEVE IN ANOTHER WORLD

This episode speaks about how one can continue to live and practice art in the gaps between visionary historical periods characterised by shared utopian ideals, and how we might recover that utopian impulse, even though we need ways to avoid its catastrophic authoritarian enforcement. We need utopia and yet we live in a gap where it has not yet re-emerged.

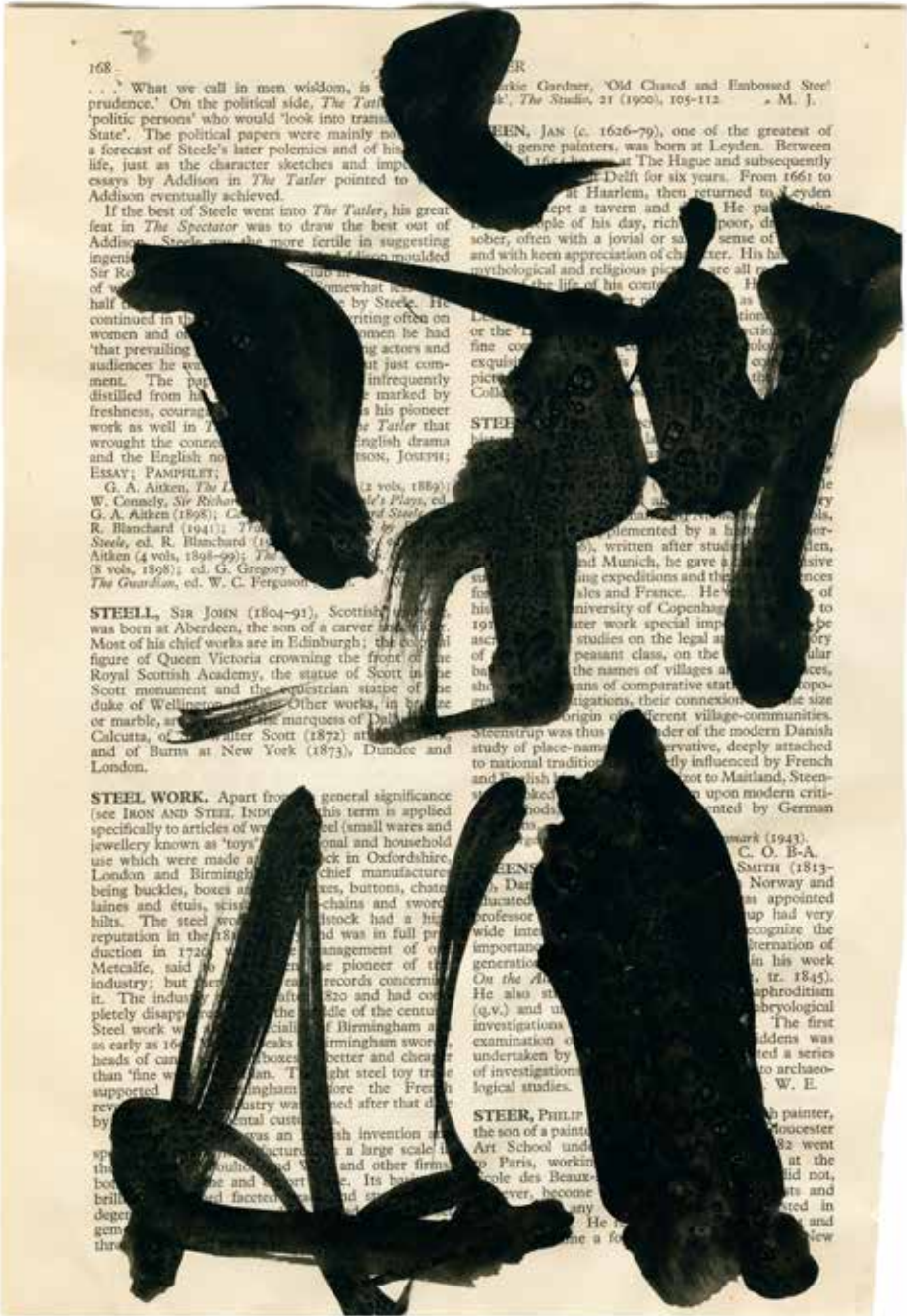
Kentridge raises these issues by documenting the making of his installation *Oh to Believe in Another World* (2022), which references the Soviet Union after the revolution during Stalin's dictatorship through the balancing act performed by composer Dmitri Shostakovich to stay alive through the purges. Shostakovich's *Symphony no. 10* (1951) was first performed in late 1953, after the death of Stalin. This absurd and choppy documentary illustrates how utopia often collapses into repressive regimes due to the fallibility of human nature. Small paper puppets of Mayakovsky, Lily Brik, Trotsky, Lenin and Stalin, amongst others, alternate with actors Teresa Phuti Mojela and Thulani Chauke wearing masks of those characters, endlessly dancing in a fictional Soviet Museum which is revealed to be a miniature model in the studio. The suggestion is that when living in a world of puppets and puppeteers, we must negotiate forms of limited freedom. In this film, our own times come back through the reference to digital editing technology: the green screen is perhaps the most poignant visual image and metaphor for the invisible regime that haunts our times, piling fictions upon fictions in a world turned into a video-game metaverse.



EPISODE 9 - IN DEFENCE OF OPTIMISM

The series ends on a joyous note of celebration, with a procession out of the studio and down the streets of Johannesburg headed by the St John's in Jerusalem Musical Brass Band of Sharpeville. This last episode is about the optimism of making things, about how, even in extreme circumstances, there will be people who play, make art, sing. What we call stupidity is a resource conducive to art-making, Kentridge argues. It is at the core of the primal act of making art, and is praised in the studio. He is not 'thinking', he says, and the answers to the questions of the previous episodes are absorbed into the medium of art-making itself.

The episode begins with a playful film in reverse. There are sounds of crickets in the garden, rays of sunlight coming into the studio, rats painting over a drawing of a peonies. Tears become repairs. This reversal is an affirmation that although there may be no understanding in the present, that which happens later clarifies that which happened before. It is only in this final episode that Kentridge's two split parts come to an agreement, with one announcing, 'We are working.' One Kentridge affirms on behalf of his other self that play and work can be unified, art a space of unalienated labour, made alone or with others. There is art and poetry in dark times not because of ignorance of the world, nor out of blindness and insensibility, but because they resist those circumstances and give meaning to life.



RE: KENTRIDGE

Wolfgang Scheppe

There is an aspect of contemporary art that must sometimes seem an imposition, even an impertinence, to thinking people. It is the crude claim, elevated to a structural requirement, that its productions should have a higher meaning – a meaning that must, however, never be explicated. That it must exist and must be celebrated is a given, despite the fact that it is merely a social construct that does not require a reason.

The German language has a distinctive word for such implicit and inexplicable meaning – *Sinn* – the empty, irredeemable pretension that, instead of being understood and explained, must merely be acknowledged, asserted, affirmed through social consensus. It emerges from the compulsory generalised convention that insists that art is unconditionally important

This unfulfilled and unfulfillable assertion is powerful, because it opens up an infinite continuum of reflection. Its reasoning is arbitrary and can therefore be continued at will. The empty ambition for greater significance persistently refuses to be elucidated and thus becomes all the more inexhaustible. In the rhetoric of meaning supposed depth and its groundlessness are literally connected.

William Kentridge's complex work takes on this paradox in a very simple way: he considers, discusses and elaborates on what he does. He even exhibits the way in which ideas come about *heuristically*, as the Ancient Greek term for the discontinuous emergence of new insights indicates, and hints at how the inspiration may be elicited. He grants participation in the very creation of the idea and bases his form on this, so that the opus emerges as a continued process unfolding in time. It avoids resulting in a solidified material product, a commodity that could be traded in the marketplace. When he uses a filmic stop-motion animation technique to draw a bird in flight, fixing a phase state and erasing it again, drawing it anew and

then erasing it again and again, its overlapping wing beats leave behind a shadowy, fleeting trail, traces both of its flight and of the work's temporality.

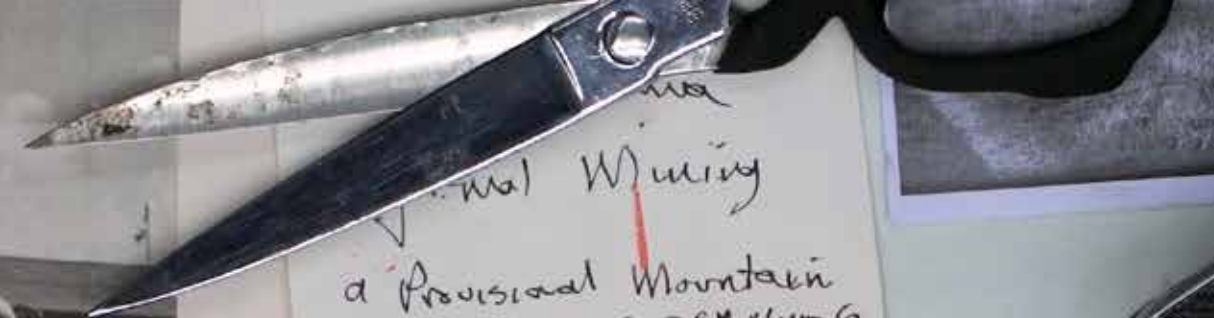
In his *decameron* of self-reflection from the days of forced isolation that the pandemic imposed on everyone, Kentridge retreated into his Johannesburg studio as if it were his own skull, a kind of resonance chamber of his thinking populated by all sorts of found objects. This *studiolo* as the interior of his head, as he imagines the atelier to be, is populated by his own internal contradictions, circling the day's thoughts that split him into his *doppelgänger*, entangled in theoretical disputes, and the spectres of the night, when the sleep of reason gives birth to monsters, rats stir from crumpled paper, knock over inkwells, begin to smear and paint by themselves and, as in a *theatrum machinarium*, Kentridge's favourite objects, the old film camera on its wooden tripod and the sousaphone in the Biedermeier armchair moving on casters, begin to dance with each other.

Only gradually did the state's health regime allow him to reunite with his collaborators, dancers and musicians to collectively carry out what artists usually tend to conceal in the name of cultural competition: the *heuristic* moment, when the idea comes into existence. The authors of 'higher meaning' have become accustomed to defensively hiding the inventive techniques of their profession and with it the sources of their intuition. Here, however, you can watch the idea at work.

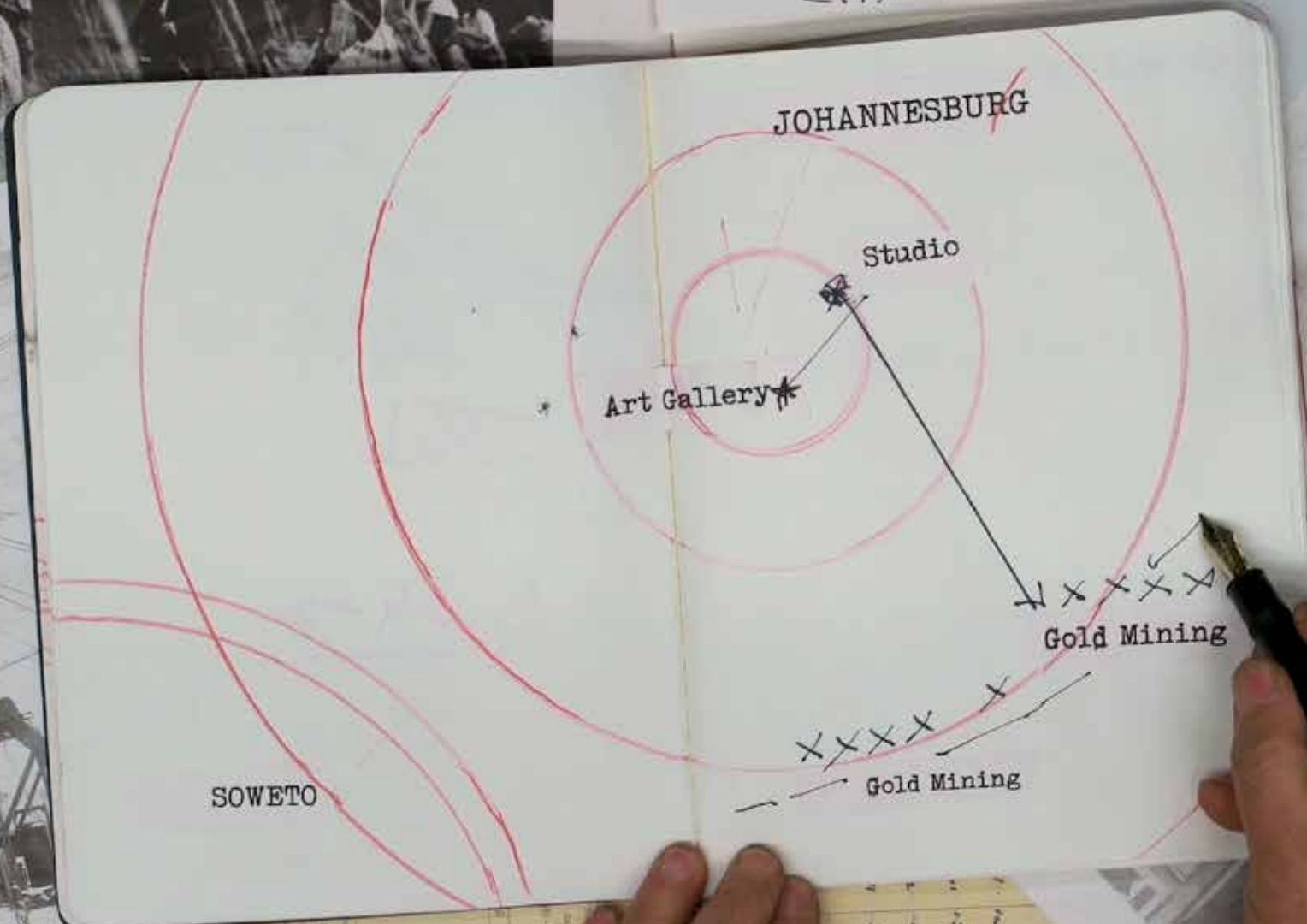
Instead of masking the whole messy tale of creation that is usually covered over by the resulting reification, the work, Kentridge makes himself observable and observes himself in the intimacy of ideation. This is what makes him stand out as an almost anachronistic *unicum* in this moment of contemporary art. He lays bare the roots, nutrients and ingredients of his flashes of wit, as well as the thoughts that accompany and guide the execution of his creations. In Kentridge's *modus operandi*, this process is not merely made visible, but becomes the work itself, regardless of whether it leads to a tangible result or remains ephemeral.

His cycle of nine films made during the global health emergency, succinctly entitled *Self-Portrait as a Coffee Pot*, constitutes a fantastically delirious plague journal. In view of the *gravitas* of this *magnum opus*, the time has come for truth in the face of the trite talk of art. And beauty cannot be achieved without truth.

Venice, 21 February 2024



Journal Writing
 a Provisional Mountain
 CITY DEPT MINING Co.



1917	1918	1919	1920	1921	1922	1923	1924	1925	1926	1927	1928	1929	1930	1931	1932	1933	1934	1935	1936	1937	1938	1939	1940	1941	1942	1943	1944	1945	1946	1947	1948	1949	1950	1951	1952	1953	1954	1955	1956	1957	1958	1959	1960	1961	1962	1963	1964	1965	1966	1967	1968	1969	1970	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
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WILLIAM KENTRIDGE

William Kentridge (born Johannesburg, South Africa, 1955) is internationally acclaimed for his drawings, films, theatre and opera productions.

Kentridge's work has been seen in museums around the world since his first survey exhibition in 1998 at Palais des Beaux Arts, Brussels, including the Albertina Museum (Vienna), Castello di Rivoli Museo d'Arte Contemporanea (Turin), Johannesburg Art Gallery, Kunstmuseum Basel, Louisiana Museum (Humlebaek), Musée du Louvre (Paris), Museum of Modern Art (New York), Museum of Contemporary Art Sydney, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia (Madrid), Norval Foundation (Cape Town), Royal Academy of Arts (London), Whitechapel Gallery (London) and Zeitz Museum of Contemporary Art Africa (Cape Town). He has participated a number of times in documenta (Kassel) (2012, 2002, 1997) and the Venice Biennale (2015, 2013, 2005, 1999), as well as the Sydney Biennale (2008) and the Istanbul Biennale (1995, 2015).

Kentridge's opera productions began in 2005 with Mozart's *The Magic Flute*, which embarked on an international tour of opera houses after opening at La Monnaie in Brussels, Belgium. Subsequent productions include Shostakovich's *The Nose* and Alban Berg's operas *Lulu* and *Wozzeck*, and have been staged in opera houses including the Metropolitan Opera House (New York), La Scala (Milan), English National Opera (London), Opera de Lyon, Amsterdam

Opera, the Sydney Opera House, as well as the KUNSTENFESTIVALDESARTS (Brussels) and the Salzburger Festspiele. Kentridge's film, *Oh To Believe in Another World*, made to accompany the performance of Shostakovich's 10th Symphony, premiered at KKL Luzern in 2022 and has since been performed in venues worldwide.

Kentridge's theatrical productions, performed in theatres and at festivals across the globe, include *Waiting for the Sibyl* (2019), *The Head & the Load* (2018), *Ursonate* (2017), *Winterreise* (2014), *Paper Music* (2014), *Refuse the Hour* (2011) and, in collaboration with the Handspring Puppet Company, *Il Ritorno d'Ulisse* (1998), *Ubu & the Truth Commission* (1997), *Faustus in Africa!* (1995) and *Woyzeck on the Highveld* (1992).

In 2016, Kentridge founded the Centre for the Less Good Idea in Johannesburg: a space for responsive thinking and making through experi-

mental, collaborative and cross-disciplinary arts practices. The center hosts an ongoing programme of workshops, public performances and mentorship activities.

Kentridge is the recipient of honorary doctorates from several universities including Yale, University of London and Columbia University. In 2012, he presented the Charles Eliot Norton Lectures at Harvard University. As the Slade Professor of Fine Art for 2023/24, Kentridge delivered a series of six lectures at the University of Oxford in January and February, 2024.



CAROLYN CHRISTOV-BAKARGIEV

Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev (Ridgewood, N. J., 1957) is a curator, art historian and writer. She is Honorary Guest Professor at the FHNW University of Applied Sciences and Arts Northwestern Switzerland, and is a scholar of the art of William Kentridge with whom she has collaborated since 1997, when she included his animated film *Mine* (1991) in her exhibition 'Città Natura'. In 1998 she published the first monograph about his work for his first solo museum exhibition (Palais des Beaux Arts, Brussels, and Munich, Graz, Barcelona, London). She organised the second survey exhibition of his work at Castello di Rivoli in 2004 (touring to Düsseldorf, Sydney, Montreal and Johannesburg) and commissioned works such as *Sleeping on Glass* (1999), *Stair Procession* (2000), *Tide Table* (2004), *I am not me, the horse is not mine* (2008), *The Refusal of Time* (2012), and *O sentimental machine* (2015).

She was Curator at Villa Medici, Rome (1998–2000), Chief Curator at MoMA /P.S.1, New York (1999–2001) and Chief Curator at Castello di Rivoli Museo d'Arte Contemporanea, Turin (2002–2008). In 2008 she curated the 16th Biennale of Sydney, Australia, and was Director of Castello di Rivoli in 2009. She was the Artistic Director of dOCUMENTA(13), in 2012, with works by Kentridge both in Kassel and Kabul. She was Getty Research Scholar, Los Angeles (2013), Leverhulme Professor, University of Leeds (2014) and Edith Kreeger Wolf Distinguished Visiting Professor

in Art Theory and Practice at Northwestern University, Evanston (2013–19). In 2015, she directed the 14th Istanbul Biennial. She was Director of Castello di Rivoli (2016–23) and founding Artistic Director of the Fondazione Cerruti in Rivoli (2018–23). From 2016 to 2018, she was also Director of the GAM, Turin.

In 2012 she received the Hessian Award and in 2019 the Audrey Irmis Award for Curatorial Excellence.

Christov-Bakargiev was formed through her encounters with Arte Povera, and introduced the topic of multi-species co-evolution into the field of contemporary art through her dOCUMENTA(13) exhibition and research in 2009–12. She is currently studying the topic of artistic freedom, as well as corporeality and transcendence in aesthetics in the digital era. Additionally, she is curating a major exhibition of Arte Povera, its precedents and its aftermath, for La Bourse de Commerce – Collec-

tion Pinault, which will open in Paris in Autumn 2024.



**WILLIAM KENTRIDGE
SELF-PORTRAIT AS A COFFEE-POT**

An exhibition curated by Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev
at Arsenale Institute for Politics of Representation, Venice

Professional preview days: 15.04 – 16.04 2024
Open to the General Public: 17.04 – 24.11.2024

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