

WILLIAM KENTRIDGE



***Processional Nose* (2015)**

Mohair Tapestry, woven by the Stephens Tapestry Studio, Johannesburg, South Africa

258 x 257 cm, Edition 1/6

Courtesy of Galerie Kewenig, Berlin, & Goodman Gallery, Johannesburg

William Kentridge's tapestry, *Processional Nose*, engages a recurring motif from his three-year-long period of preparations for his staging of Dmitri Shostakovich's opera 'The Nose', commissioned by New York's Metropolitan Opera and performed in 2009. This daring opera, based on Gogol's well known tale "The Nose" – about the misuse of power and a person divided against himself - is rendered strikingly relevant in light of the current Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Initiated by KLEINERVONWIESE.com and MOMENTUMWORLDWIDE.org

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Kentridge's studio states:

“A man wakes up to find that he has lost his nose. In 1837, Gogol writes a short story about the man's attempts to find the missing proboscis and to reattach it to his face. Gogol considers the story that he has just recounted, concluding that it is a strange and improbable tale. Not only is it very odd for a nose to disappear from a man's face, only to reappear baked inside a loaf of bread, but it's even more absurd to imagine that he could persuade the newspaper to let him take out an advertisement looking for his nose. This is not about money. It is about the impropriety of the newspaper and advertisements for lost noses. “Why do authors write stories like this?” Gogol asks. “It's no good for the country, although in truth it does no harm either.... But why write about it? Such things may happen, but they do not happen often.”

For the stage design of the opera, on top of projections of human figures, paper cut-outs were added and interposed, trying to find a link between the constructivist language of El Lissitzky and the earthy language of Gorky and the Russian filmmakers. Languages which were very different at the time and even antithetical, but which in hindsight are joined by a sense of openness, of possibility, of agency. As if the upheavals of the 1917 revolution could provide an energy for new images, new words, a new language.

The conception of the opera, its range, inventiveness and daring of the music, is fuelled by the possibilities that seemed unleashed by the transformations in the society around the composer, Shostakovich. The opera and, I hope, the production celebrate that moment of possibility.

We know the post-history.”

This painful post-history comes back to haunt us today, with Russia's aggressive imperialist ambitions and tragic regression to the punitive measures of Stalinist times. It is becoming a country divided against its own people, as well as a nation seeking to restore long-lost borders.

The motif in Kentridge's tapestry 'Processional Nose' from 2016 refers also to the many states of migration and displacement during the apartheid era in South Africa

and more generally around the increasingly globalized world. It is tragic how little has changed since those darker times. With so many once more fleeing war and repression in Ukraine and Russia we are again faced with mass forced migration and displacement. This major theme in Kentridge's work appears in animated films, drawings, collages, theater productions, tapestries and installations - such as his permanent large scale staircase work at MoMA PS1, New York (2000) or the 2016 inaugurated 'Triumphs and Laments', a 500 meter-long frieze alongside the Tiber River in Rome.

MORE INFO: <https://www.kentridge.studio/projects/the-nose/>

BIO

William Kentridge (born in Johannesburg in 1955) is a South African artist best known for his prints, drawings, and animated films. The latter are constructed by filming a drawing, making erasures and changes, and filming it again. He continues this process meticulously, giving each change to the drawing a quarter of a second to two seconds' screen time. A single drawing will be altered and filmed this way until the end of a scene. These palimpsest-like drawings are later displayed along with the films as finished pieces of art.

His works have been exhibited in solo exhibitions at many museums, including Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona (CCCB), Barcelona (2020), Liebegshaus, Frankfurt (2018), MAXXI, Rome (2013), MACO, Oaxaca (2011), Louvre, Paris, (2010), Chicago Museum of Contemporary Art (2009), Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (2007), Museum of Modern Art, New York (2007), Museum der Moderne, Salzburg (2006).

Since the 1980s, Kentridge has been awarded various prizes, such as the Kaiserring Prize, the Carnegie Prize, the Standard Bank Young Artist Award, and the Red Ribbon Award for Short Fiction. He currently lives and works in Johannesburg, South Africa.



Kentridge's works are included in the following permanent collections: Honolulu Museum of Art, the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts, the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, the Museum of Modern Art (New York), and the Tate Modern (London). An edition of the five-channel video installation *The Refusal of Time* (2012), which debuted at documenta 13, was jointly acquired by the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. In 2015, Kentridge gave the definitive collection of his archive and art – films, videos and digital works – to the George Eastman Museum, one of the world's largest and oldest photography and film collections.