

Vice Chancellor, I have the honour to present, for the award of the degree of Doctor of Literature, honoris causa, William Kentridge.

Carl Jung's concept of "the shadow" is based on the idea that, when we are young, we express all aspects in the spectrum of our personalities. However, as we get older, we suppress our so called "unacceptable" parts and hide them in an invisible bag of shadows that we drag behind us. As a society, as a nation, we can also have a collective shadow: the parts we hide, deny or repress; the parts we cannot love: poverty, abuse, violence, injustice and inequality.

Jung's route to wholeness is to face the darkness.. But how on earth would a society, a nation do this? With his haunting shadow figures, his processions of the dispossessed and the lame, the corporate bully gobbling food from his banquet table and tossing scraps to the poor^[1] and the decimated landscape of Johannesburg littered with bodies, William Kentridge might just be offering us a view of the shadows in our society.

He is one of South Africa's most visible artists, an artist of international "cultural authority"^[2]. For the last 17 years, his work has been exhibited in major museums around the world, including Documenta in Germany, the Albertina in Vienna, the Louvre in Paris and the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Kentridge currently has three exhibitions on in Johannesburg, The Refusal of Time is coming to Cape Town in February, Ubu and the Truth Commission is on its way to Florence and his production of Schubert's Winterreise continues to be performed in various European cities. Kentridge will direct the opera "Lulu" in Amsterdam, New York and London and is working on new projection installations for the EYE film institute in Amsterdam, as well as for exhibitions in Beijing, London and the Istanbul Biennale.

He had an early phase of: "I have no right to be an artist", and it was only when he turned 30 that he wrote "Artist" for the first time on his visa application. Before that, he had written "Technician"^[3].

He began working in printmaking techniques and charcoal drawings. He started photographing his drawings and his first handcrafted animations were born.

From animations, Kentridge expanded his repertoire to video, projections and full-scale opera productions. He tells stories, collaborates with puppeteers and crosses genres^[2]. He was recently honoured by being invited to give the distinguished series of Norton Lectures at Harvard University. Despite his international stature, the breadth of his artistic reach and the seriousness of his subjects, he began the first of his six his Norton lectures with: "I listed every thought I had ever had, or remembered someone else's having [and] I divided them by six"^[4].

Given the choice: "If you didn't have to work, what would you do?" Kentridge answers without hesitation: "I would go to my studio."^[3]

So let's honour him there, in what he calls his "compression chamber"^[4], experimenting with his coffee pot, the stiff-legged dividers, egg whisks, cameras and megaphones, walls plastered with fragments, papers pinned on top of each other, lenses, paint pots, good and bad paintbrushes, miniature theatres, a ladder to nowhere, circumnavigating his beloved studio. There, in what he calls the "cacophony of excess and uncertainty"^[4], is William Kentridge, layering, stripping, concealing, revealing; piecing together his handcrafted animations, and possibly, constructing the images of our disowned shadows.

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Strictly embargoed until 15h00 on Thursday 18 December 2014

1. McCrickard, K., 2012. *Tate Modern Artists: William Kentridge*: Harry N. Abrams.
2. Stephens, M. "Moral Minority: Why is the art world so drawn to William Kentridge?" *New York Magazine*. Retrieved 29 November 2014, from <http://nymag.com/arts/art/profiles/15946/>.
3. Kentridge, W., *Personal Communication*, 29 November 2014
4. Kentridge, W., 2014. *Six Drawing Lessons*: Harvard University Press.