

Press release

Museum Folkwang

William Kentridge. *Listen to the Echo*

Essen, 13 June 2025 – To mark William Kentridge's 70th birthday, Museum Folkwang and Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden are showcasing the work of the South African artist in the form of an extensive joint project. Extensive exhibitions will take place simultaneously in Essen and Dresden under the title *Listen to the Echo*, each focusing on a different aspect of his artistic undertaking and offering a unique overview of William Kentridge's multifaceted work and methods.

William Kentridge (born in Johannesburg in 1955) is one of the world's most important contemporary artists. His works can be seen in museums all over the world, including the MoMA in New York, the Albertina in Vienna and the Royal Academy of Arts in London. He has taken part in the documenta three times and the Venice Biennale five times.

For many years, William Kentridge has poetically explored social and political themes that are not only highly relevant in his native South Africa. He became internationally known at the end of the 1980s for his charcoal-drawn animated short films, which thematise the South African apartheid regime and interweave both political and personal stories. Based on large charcoal drawings, these films form the starting point for an artistic oeuvre that is as extensive as it is diverse, encompassing works of visual art as well as productions for the opera stage and the conception of his own plays for the theatre. The exhibition at Museum Folkwang presents major works by Kentridge from the late 1970s to the present day, including films and multimedia works, drawings and prints as well as sculptures and tapestries. Short films such as *Mine* or *City Deep* from the famous *Drawings for Projection* series allegorically address the rise and fall of the coal and steel industry in Johannesburg and invite viewers to reflect on comparable developments in Germany.



Kentridge's works that focus on colonialism in Africa also play an important role in the exhibition, including the installation *Black Box/Chambre noire* from 2005: the mechanical peep-box stage recalls the genocide committed by German troops against the Herero in 1904, in what was then German South West Africa. Colonial ideas were also propagated from Essen until 1914 – for

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example, through publications by the G. D. Baedeker publishing house based in Essen. Another theme of the exhibition at Museum Folkwang is the artist's studio as a creative cooperative laboratory.

Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden are showing Kentridge's work in three locations. At the centre of the exhibition is the artist's recurring preoccupation with the theme of procession as a metaphor for the pursuit of human change.

In the Albertinum, the monumental video installation *More Sweetly Play The Dance* (2015) enters into a dialogue with the Dresden Procession of Princes. The Kupferstich-Kabinett is dedicated to Kentridge's prints, including the large-format woodcut series *Triumphs and Laments*, which deals with the dubiousness of an understanding of history characterised by heroic stories. The Centre for the Less Good Idea – a forum for young artists from South Africa founded by William Kentridge and Bronwyn Lace in Johannesburg – has conceived the annual exhibition 2025/26 in the Puppet Theatre Collection and combines the art of puppetry with Kentridge's artistic universe. Digital technology meets historical hand puppetry.

The exhibitions in Dresden and Essen are being organised in close collaboration with William Kentridge. The joint exhibition catalogue will be published by Steidl Verlag, Göttingen.

Press images

William Kentridge

I look in the Mirror, I Know What I Need, 2023
Ink and pencil on handmade phumani paper
139.5 × 166.5 cm
Photo: Courtesy Kentridge Studio
© William Kentridge, 2025

William Kentridge

Self-Portrait as a Coffee Pot, 2024
Still from *Episode 4, Finding One's Fate*
Photo: Courtesy Kentridge Studio
© William Kentridge, 2025

Information

William Kentridge in Dresden and Essen

Listen to the Echo

Museum Folkwang: 4 September 2025 to 18 January 2026

Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden: from 6 September 2025

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Admission

Museum Folkwang:
€14 (regular) / €8 (reduced)

Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden:
Combination ticket, 6 September 2025 to 4 January 2026: €20 / €15 (reduced)
Ticket Albertinum: €14 / €10.50 (reduced)
Ticket Kupferstich-Kabinett: €6 / €4.50 (reduced)
Ticket Puppentheatersammlung: €7 / €5 (reduced)
Free admission for children and young people under the age of 17

Tickets are available online at: www.museum-folkwang.de or www.shop.skd.museum

The exhibition in Dresden is supported by:



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