

The banks of the Tiber to become an outdoor art gallery

William Kentridge previews his multimedia mural at Rome's Maxxi museum
Hannah McGivern 03 July 2014



A site test for Kentridge's work in 2012

William Kentridge is creating an epic, 550-metre site-specific work for the banks of the river Tiber in 2015. The South African artist gave an exclusive preview of his drawings for the mural, entitled *Triumphs and Laments*, to invited guests at Rome's Maxxi museum earlier this week. Video projections against the museum façade were accompanied by live performances by the composer Philip Miller and a band of local musicians in a prelude of the audiovisual extravaganza planned for next spring.

Related

When complete, the large-scale work will depict a procession of more than 90 figures representing both the glories of the Eternal City's 2,000-year history and its darkest episodes. These will take shape on the river's embankment walls through a form of "reverse graffiti" that involves washing away the surface dirt to reveal a clean silhouette. The scene will then disappear under layers of accumulated smog.

Triumphs and Laments is the latest in a series of projects developed by the non-profit association Tevereterno to convert the straight section of the Tiber between Ponte Sisto and Ponte Mazzini—an area roughly the size of the Circus Maximus—into an open-air art gallery. Speaking at a TEDx event in February, the founder and artistic director Kristin Jones explained her ambition to invite "artists from around the world [to] create work in Rome, for Rome, on an urban scale".

Kentridge's project, which is financed by the artist's galleries Marian Goodman and Lia Rumma and other private sponsors, has not all been plain sailing. In January, there were fears that it would be stalled by the regional office of the culture ministry, but the schedule is now back on track. An official presentation will take place on 12 September at the Ara Pacis museum and the public will get a taste of the work that evening in the musical riverside event "Kentridge Live on the Tiber".