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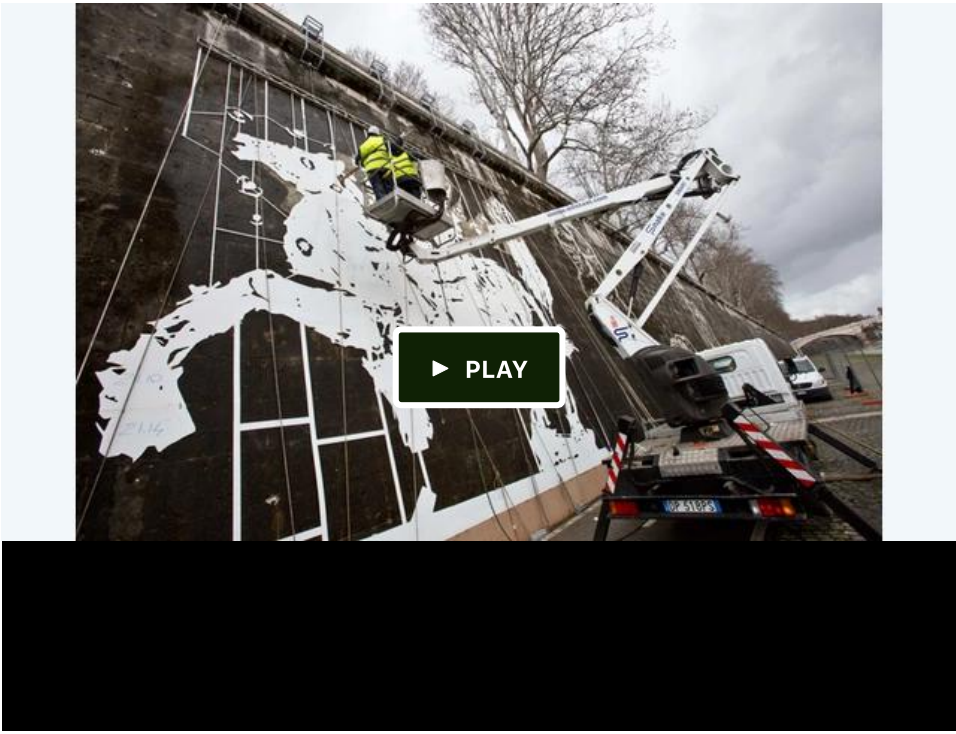
## How 'Reverse Graffiti' Is Being Used To Tell Stories In Dirt

South African artist William Kentridge is creating a history of Rome, from myth to migration, in the very pollution that has plagued the city for years.

🕒 03/21/2016 02:36 pm ET

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 Senior Arts & Culture Editor, The Huffington Post.



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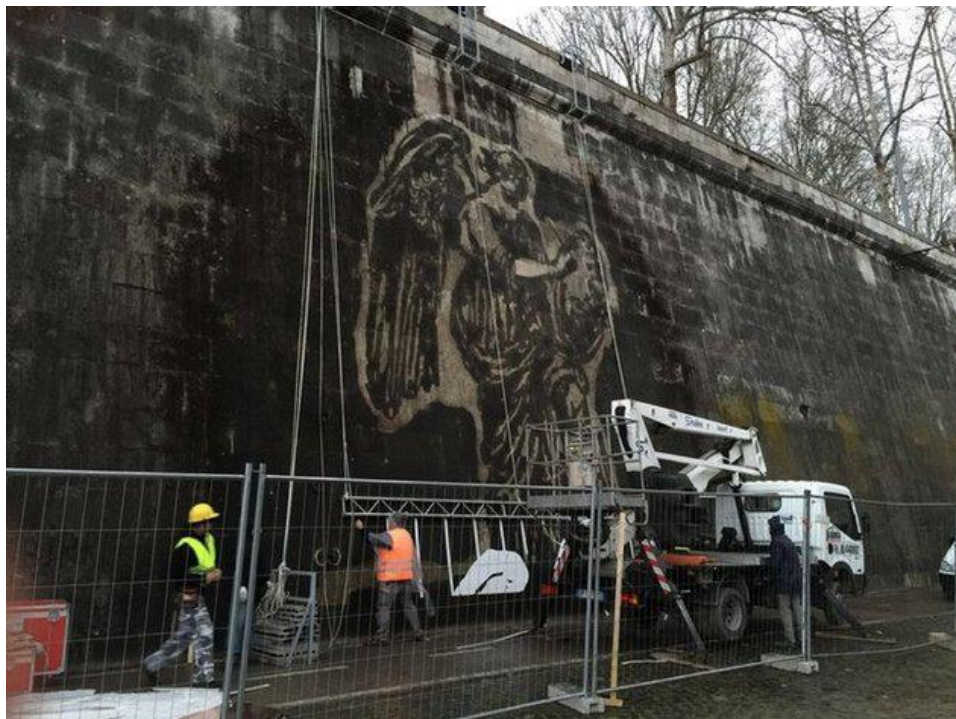
Reverse graffiti — otherwise known as clean tagging, grime writing, or green graffiti — is a type of street art that involves the removal of dirt from a surface to create an often semi-permanent image. There is no paint or wheatpaste involved. All it takes is a little elbow grease (or, more accurately, a little power washing) to create an ephemeral work of art from the very pollution that plagues our cities.

Street artist [Moose](#) has used it, so has [Alexandre Orion](#), and now, South African artist William Kentridge is bringing an 1,800-foot mural to Rome, created entirely from reverse graffiti. This spring, he and his team will be removing the dirt and grime that has overtaken the Eternal City over countless years to reveal an

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installation titled “Triumphs and Laments,” deemed the largest public contemporary art project in Italy’s capital.



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The mural, currently being installed on the banks of the Tiber River, will be based on Kentridge’s charcoal drawings that tell “a non-chronological history” of Rome “in all its glory and all its tragedy.” According to [a Kickstarter campaign launched this month](#), the travertine embankments of Piazza Tevere — between Ponte Sisto and Ponte Mazzini — will be washed around his stencils, “leaving the darkened marks of pollution and organic growth on the high stone walls.”

The power washing will reveal what is meant to be a silhouetted procession of 80 recognizable historic figures, “heroes and villains, drawn from across history.” The completed installation will open on April 21, 2016, the birthday of Rome, and will usher in with it a series of free performances including a theatrical program created in collaboration with South African composer Philip Miller, featuring live shadow play and two brass bands. Plus, over 60 volunteers will be invited to join “a multicultural ensemble of soloists and musicians.”

The project is led by artistic director Kristin Jones, who conceived of a mural in Kentridge’s prolific charcoal style in 2001. “[William’s idea was to embrace all of time](#) from mythological time to the present tense reality of immigration,” she explained to The Creator’s Project. “That the work would question how history is told and by whom, that the greatest triumphs of Rome would be contrasted [with] great tragedies.”



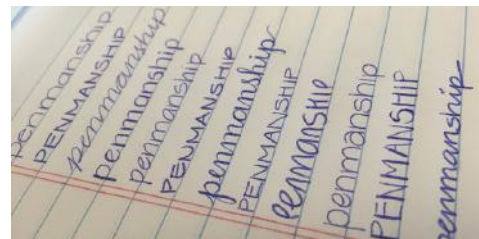
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WILLIAM KENTRIDGE/KICKSTARTER

Kentridge’s Kickstarter campaign calls for help in funding the public art feat, hoping to raise a whopping \$80,000 before April 1, 2016. In exchange for support, he offers everything from personalized tours of the work to limited edition lithographs, such as the one above, depicting an ink drawing of “La Dolce Vita,” one of the figures for “Triumphs and Laments.” He explained the image in an email to The Huffington Post:

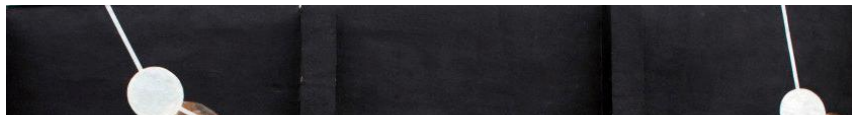
“My parents took me and my sister on a summer holiday to Rome in 1961,” Kentridge recalled. “I was 6 and mesmerized by a city and world so utterly different to the suburban Johannesburg I had lived in. I think it was the terror of the [Bocca della Verità](#) as much as The Trevi Fountain and fettuccine Alfredo that transfixed me. At any rate, since that first exposure to Italy I have felt a closeness to the



“So when in 2012 I started thinking about images of ‘Triumphs and Laments,’ one of the glories of Rome that I wanted to celebrate was that image of The Trevi Fountain with Marcello Mastroianni and Anita Ekberg, in a moment of wished for exuberance and freedom,” he added. “When all seems possible — as it did at 6 years old. To put it into the procession (and it is the penultimate image), The Trevi Fountain had to be shrunk into a bathtub.”

[Check out more on “Triumphs and Laments” here.](#)

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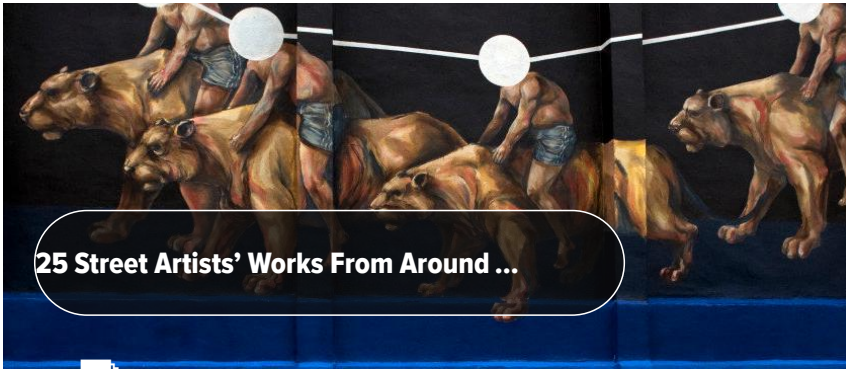


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