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## News

### NEWS

# William Kentridge unveils 550-metre frieze along Rome's River Tiber

Mural pays tribute to city through more than 80 figures from Roman mythology to the present

by FEDERICO CASTELLI GATTINARA, HANNAH MCGIVERN | 22 April 2016



William Kentridge unveils Triumphs and Laments, his 550m-long frieze for Rome. Photo: Sebastiano Luciano



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William Kentridge gave the city of Rome a birthday present to remember yesterday, 21 April, at the inauguration of his monumental mural along the right bank of the river Tiber, *Triumphs and Laments*. The date marked the *Natale di Roma*, the anniversary of the capital's legendary founding in 753BC. The 550m-long frieze depicting a procession of more than 80 figures from Roman mythology to the present is the South African artist's largest public work to date. To celebrate its launch, Kentridge and his long-time collaborator, the composer Philip Miller, have devised a series of performances featuring live shadow play and more than 40 musicians, which continue tonight, 22 April.

The figures, which are up to 12m high, chart the city's historic victories and defeats, ranging from Romulus and Remus to Pier Paolo Pasolini, the filmmaker, writer and intellectual who was murdered outside Rome in 1975. "I'm not interested in telling a chronological history of Rome," Kentridge has said, choosing instead to present "fragments [from which the public] can reconstruct a possible history".

The dark silhouettes were created from the layers of accumulated grime on the naturally pale travertine embankment wall by applying high-pressure water jets to giant plastic stencils, a technique better known to street art as "reverse graffiti". The images will be temporary, gradually fading and disappearing after three to five years as the pollution builds up again.

The project, which is supported by the artists' dealers, Marian Goodman Gallery, Galleria Lia Rumma and Goodman Gallery, has been a long time coming. Kristin Jones, the head of Tevereterno, a non-profit organisation campaigning for the cultural regeneration of the Tiber waterfront, first approached Kentridge with the idea more than a decade ago. Securing permission from Rome's municipal and regional public authorities has been "the real colossal project", the artist told the Italian news agency Ansa.

In return, Rome's museums are paying tribute to Kentridge. More than 80 of the artist's preparatory works for *Triumphs and Laments* are on show at the Museo d'Arte Contemporanea Roma (MACRO), including charcoal sketches first presented in the Italian pavilion at the Venice Biennale last year, unseen drawings in ink and pastel and cut-out shadow puppets that will be carried by performers at the inauguration (until 2 October). The Maxxi, meanwhile, is showing all six of the works it holds by Kentridge in its new collection displays.

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