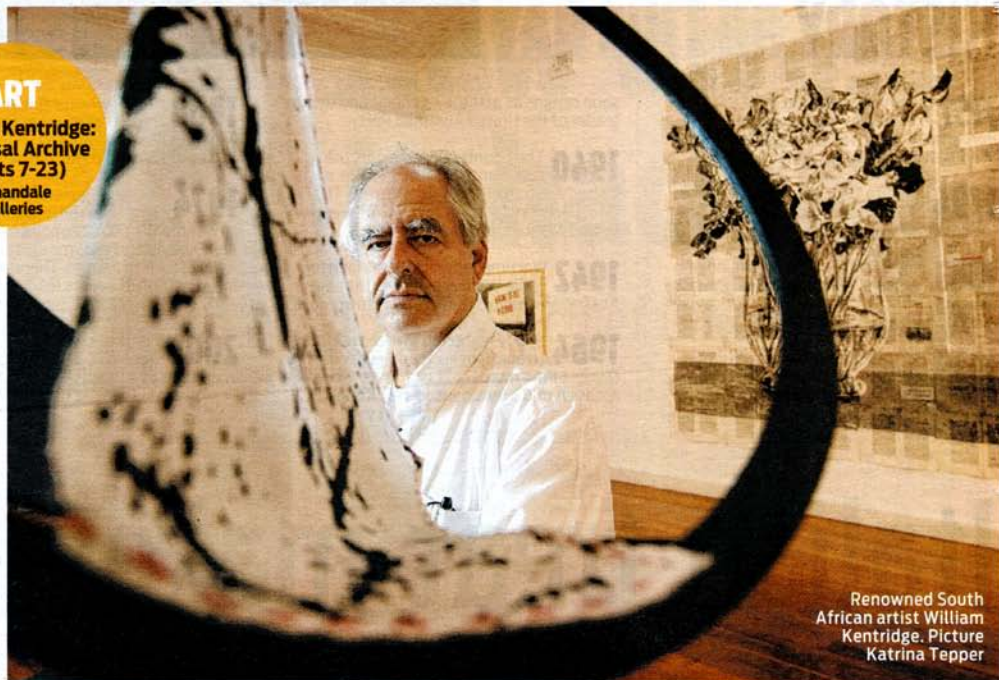


## ART

William Kentridge:  
Universal Archive  
(Parts 7-23)  
Annandale  
Galleries



Renowned South African artist William Kentridge. Picture Katrina Tepper

# No book is safe from this prince of old print

ELIZABETH FORTESCUE  
VISUAL ARTS WRITER

William Kentridge is one of the most famous artists in the world. But that doesn't stop the Johannesburg-based South African from getting some strange looks in second-hand bookshops.

Kentridge's problem is that he asks for odd things.

"Quite often I'll go to a bookshop and they say, 'Well, what book are you looking for?', and the description has to be 'at least 15cm by 20cm and the subject's not so vital but I mainly want to feel the pages,'" Kentridge says.

"Some bookkeepers look at you and say, 'Oh well, you must be crazy', and sometimes they say, 'Oh yes, you're one

of those artists that wants to draw on the old books'. They kind of know."

Any Kentridge aficionado knows how regularly this artist uses printed book pages on which to draw, paint or print his works. This is why the "feel" of the pages is vital. Will it absorb ink? Will charcoal smudge on it?

In his current exhibition at Annandale Galleries, Kentridge has drawn in charcoal on the neatly scribed pages of old South African goldmine ledgers, sourced from second-hand bookshops and very expensive because of demand by interior designers who use them to lend "a false sense of authority" to accountants' offices.

There are linocut prints done on pages from the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary and Chambers Encyclopedia, and even Kentridge's small bronze bird sits comfortably on

a stack of second-hand books whose titles rather randomly include *Thoracic And Abdominal Viscera*.

While in Sydney for his exhibition, Kentridge will visit some second-hand bookshops and buy something as a souvenir. Not a guidebook, though. Perhaps a 1930s engineering text, he says.

Literature has inspired entire bodies of Kentridge's work. Gogol's *The Nose* and Italo Svevo's *Confessions Of Zeno* are classic examples. With his love of books, Kentridge admits the odd second-hand volume seduces him into reading it rather than "disembowelling" it.

His Sydney exhibition includes works which incorporate "found pages", as well as animated films, sculpture and a couple of huge tapestries done in collaboration with weaver Marguerite Stephens. The National Gallery of Aus-

tralia has bought one of the films, *Other Faces*, 2011, for \$357,500.

To make his animated films, Kentridge works mainly in charcoal on a single piece of paper, adding or erasing marks, and taking a photograph of the page after each alteration. The result is the illusion of a magic stage on which Kentridge's visual narratives unfold and develop independently of their creator's hand.

A major Kentridge survey is also on view at the Australian Centre for the Moving Image in Melbourne. *William Kentridge: Five Themes* samples more than 30 years of work across animation, drawing and printworks to theatre models, sculpture and books. [fortescue@dailytelegraph.com.au](mailto:fortescue@dailytelegraph.com.au) [@Ozartwriter](https://twitter.com/Ozartwriter)

Annandale Galleries,  
110 Trafalgar St, Annandale; until April 21,  
9552 1699, [annandalegalleries.com.au](http://annandalegalleries.com.au)