

## Méliès' moon is a late 19th century colonial moon ... “my lunar landscape is just outside Johannesburg”

**Johann Oppermann**

College of Human Sciences, UNISA

opperja@unisa.ac.za

Although the contemporary South-African artist William Kentridge has practised his creativity in many domains (as observer, activist, artist, storyteller and thinking director) in a wide range of media (including land art, sculpture, etchings, video installations, shadow plays, stage, theatre and opera productions), it is chiefly his large charcoal drawings in process (drawings for animation) and his unique, short, handmade, animated films and their projection that have given him international fame and added to his dynamic stature. The question is how technological media underwent a process of retrospective alienation in William Kentridge's animation processes. The development of Kentridge's large wall drawings to drawings for animation and projection is discussed, while mark making, montage and editing within the greater filmic whole are emphasised. Although Kentridge uses Méliès' idea of a trip to the moon and a moon landing, he transfers the voyage to the moon and the lunar landscape to the Highveld landscape that is known to him.

**Keywords:** William Kentridge, performance, theatre, multimedia, animation, Drawings for animation, Drawings for projection, Georges Méliès

### Méliès se maan is 'n laat 19de eeuse koloniale maan ... “my maanlandskap is net buite Johannesburg”

Alhoewel William Kentridge as kontemporêre Suid-Afrikaanse kunstenaar uiting aan sy kreatiwiteit op verskillende maniere gegee het (as waarnemer, aktivis, kunstenaar, storieverteller en denkende regisseur) in 'n wye verskeidenheid media (waaronder landkuns, beeldhou, etse, video installasies, skaduspel, en verskeie verhoog-, teater-en operaproduksie (*performance*)), is dit veral sy groot, performatiewe houtskooltekeninge (*drawings for animation*) en sy unieke kort, handgemaakte animasiefilms en die projeksie daarvan, wat hom internasionale erkenning besorg het. Dit het die vraag laat ontstaan hoe tegnologiese media 'n proses van retrospektiewe vervreemding in William Kentridge se animasieprosesse ondergaan het. Die ontwikkeling van Kentridge se groot muurtekeninge tot tekeninge vir animasie en projeksie word ondersoek, wyl merkmaking, montage en die redigering daarvan binne die groter filmiese geheel beklemtoon word. Alhoewel Kentridge Méliès se idee van 'n reis na die maan en 'n maanlanding gebruik, verplaas hy die ruimtereis en die maanlandskap na 'n landskap buite Johannesburg wat aan hom bekend is.

**Sleutelwoorde:** William Kentridge, *performance*, teater, multimedia, animasie, *Drawings for animation*, *Drawings for projection*, Georges Méliès

This article examines how early film-pioneers, August and Louis Lumière and Georges Méliès left their mark on Kentridge's work. It was especially Méliès's *Le Voyage dans la Lune* (1902) that encouraged Kentridge a hundred years later to make his commemorative animation films, *Journey to the moon* and *Seven Fragments for Georges Méliès* (2003), in which he too uses stop motion photography, unpretentious story lines and visual tricks.

Kentridge links his filmic themes and subjects to the work and themes of early twentieth-century filmmakers such as Dziga Vertov, Luis Buñuel and Salvador Dalí, and comments on them in this way. It was their interest in the machine, the Kino-eye and film as a product for the masses that influenced Kentridge's oeuvre.

In his drawings for projection and his stage productions Kentridge incorporated a wide variety of old and new media, drawings, graphic prints, and ragged waste paper. He filmed and photographed these bits and pieces repeatedly, used these with some mechanical constructed figurines, added miniature theatre models which he displayed on tables and other surfaces, and projected some experimental footage on an old school blackboard, or used front and rear projections on miniature theatres. The completed animated film as a work of art is used in stage productions (theatre/opera) and in performances as both decor element and narrator, and provides the audience or spectators with a unique experience to be decoded and enjoyed. In his double-portrait film installation, *Balancing act* (2003), Kentridge experiments with illusory filmic images and the reality of the film as he moves in and out of paintings.

Many contemporary artists and filmmakers make use of technology and other methods to engage with entertainment, leisure and pastime options, for example the magic lantern, film, television, projection, puppets and the automaton.<sup>2</sup> Horkheimer and Adorno (2002:109), however, totally reject this critical aspect of enjoyment, seduction and distraction, scattering and enjoyment/entertainment (art as *divertissement*)<sup>3</sup> because it is not only the opposite of art, but its complementary extreme (Horkheimer & Adorno 2002:113). According to them, “[a]musement congeals into boredom [...] well-worn grooves of association” because the viewer needs no preconceived ideas of himself, because the product determines the response. Moreover, they state that “Amusement itself becomes an ideal, taking the place of the higher values it eradicates from the masses by repeating them” (Horkheimer & Adorno 2002:115).

Michael Fried (2009:12) compares and visualises the concept of theatricality to the cinematic experience in the book *Why photography matters as art as never before*. He claims that large fragmented, projected film images “[...] are the shards of the outmoded thespians.” The viewer is therefore presented as a part of society shaped by the communal process of continuous exposure and proliferation of these images. He continues, “The audience is not watching the product of the action of a machine; [...] it knows it through the labor or trying to forget it [...] Cinematic spectatorship is a somnambulistic approach towards utopia.”

In his introduction to Mieke Bal's *Looking in: the art of viewing* (2001:1) Norman Bryson questions the origin, formation, meaning and causality of the artwork. According to him, Bal's art of the past lies undeniably in the present, “[...] the present life or images is part of their on-going history” and each viewer brings his own frame of reference and codes by which the work will be seen and interpreted (Bal 2001:2-3). Bryson (2001:4) stresses the fact that the viewer cannot fully interpret the work of art by only seeing it once and concludes that in this respect “her writing goes against the goal most art historians believe they are pursuing.”

## **Photography and the motion picture camera**

When the word “photography” is translated from Greek, it literally means to draw with light and shadow. By means of photography a focused, projected, chemical-fixated and chemical-developed shadow is captured, i.e. a mechanical image of some object(s) is captured on photographic paper in the space in front of the camera.

James Gibson (1980:xi-xviii) joined the image of the *camera obscura* and the *camera lucida* and identified ten variations/image concepts from it. Gibson makes a clear distinction between a camera image and the photographic camera image. He describes the camera image (*camera obscura*) as the picture that is projected through the pinhole on the inside surface of a dark room or a reflection on the opposite wall. According to Gibson (1980: xvi), this projected image is often classified as the arrested image when it is in fact much more progressive. Gibson (1980: xvi) describes the photographic camera image (*camera lucida*) as an image captured (arrested) by a complex process that includes the camera shutter, the film emulsion, a latent image on the film emulsion, a negative image on the film and a positive image on another surface. The photographic image is thus caught while the camera shutter is open.

According to David Company (2008:7), although photography has existed for about sixty years, the film was indeed a new development. According to Laurent Mannoni's article, "The art of deception", film was established in 1895 when the first public film projections in Europe and the United States occurred (Mannoni 2004:41).<sup>4</sup> Throughout 1895 the Lumière brothers displayed<sup>5</sup> their films at private performances. On 22 March 1895 the Lumières screened their first film, *Sortie des Usines Lumière à Lyon*,<sup>6</sup> for a small, private audience. Their first public performance for a paying audience followed on December 28, 1895 in the Salon Indien, Grand Café, Boulevard des Capucines, Paris. When the realistic film images of a fast moving train were projected on the theatre screen, pandemonium broke out in the room as the naive audience was frightened and they started screaming and running around - thus the cinema was born! This filmic breakthrough immediately gave the Lumières the status as inventors of the cinema; the novelty did not last long: the spectators were looking for films with an underlying story – and this is where Georges Méliès played an important role.

## Georges Méliès

The word “cinema” has its roots in the Greek word for movement, namely “kinetics”. It can refer to film and films (cinematography) or a movie theatre or cinema. A film can be described as a series of still images that are recorded in sequence and projected by means of a cinematic projector to display an action, event or movement.

After Méliès attended the Lumière brothers' public Cinématographe film projection on 28 December 1895 in Paris, he realised the new illusionistic possibilities that the Lumière *Cinématographe* could offer his theatre. He approached the Lumières with an offer to purchase the Cinématographe, but they refused to sell it.

Three months later, Méliès bought an early *Animatographe* projector from Robert W. Paul<sup>7</sup> in London. With the assistance of his engineer friend, Lucien Reulos, they modified the projector into a film camera with which he could film special film effects like disappearances and metamorphoses: objects and people were for one moment visible on the screen and the next moment they disappeared altogether; or some characters magically flew through the air or metamorphosed into other objects. Méliès specialised in optical tricks to easily make everyday objects such as furniture, tools, paintings and other objects appear or disappear.

## The spectator/audience and reception

According to Butler et al. (2009:194), drawing was exalted in the early 1990s from a less popular art form to an important contemporary art form with expanded meaning, subjectivities and innovation as subscribed in a new globalised world. William Kentridge's geopolitical signed *Drawings for projection* films reflect the narrative timelines, his unique and structured drawing activities which he also captured on film. According to Butler et al. (2009:195), Kentridge's drawings dating from the 1990s already “seemed to map a space of embodied consciousness”, while the story is being revealed. Kentridge reversed the drawing process by using his eraser to erase parts of the drawings and making new drawings between and within frames (redrawing). Kentridge as director integrated the visual, auditory and theatrical movement elements within the stage production as a central metaphor that the spectator/audience could perceive and interpret in order to understand the underlying narrative.

As an artist and director, Kentridge communicates his message through the visual and auditory work of art (his stage production and film) – the sets and screens he presents to his audience on the stage. Through his filmic animations Kentridge portrays widely differing emotions, such as anxiety (e.g. when *Felix Teitlebaum's anxiety fills the house in Johannesburg* (1989), fear (e.g. ironic logo in his work, *Arc/Procession: develop, catch up, even surpass* (1990), hope (Kentridge uses for example Tatlin's iconic *Monument to the Third International* as a symbol of hope (McCrickard 2012:34)), happiness (for example, when Felix Teitlebaum and Mrs Eckstein lie in a pool of water in *Sobriety, obesity and growing old* (1991)) and trust (e.g. the miniature pet rhino in *Mine* (1991)) in the portrayal of his production. His underlying message is devoted to social, cultural and historical values.

A number of basic components are involved in the audience's reception of the work of art, namely their participation, the appropriation of the performance (*Aneignung*) and the completion of the theatrical performance by the participation of the audience. Secondly, there is the social component of reception. Kentridge's audience consists of gallery visitors who see and experience his multimedia artworks, his *drawings for projection* drawings, the miniature theatre models, and grand multimedia productions and performances. Kentridge involves his audience/fans through his multimedia works of art – see, for example, his *Phenakistoscope* (2000), when the handle of his phenakistoscope is turned, the central mounted disc decorated with sequential drawings turns and it seems to the viewer as if the figures on it would move. In his theatre model, *Preparing the Flute* (2005), Kentridge displays his passion for live theatre and film, mechanical objects (automata) in motion, *drawings for animation*, archival photographs and documentary material. This work reflects Kentridge's passion for bringing the theatre to the studio (Rosenthal 2009:54) and “it also represents a novel variation on the installation or large-scale art manifestation, wherein the viewer is immersed in a theatrical experience within the museum milieu.”

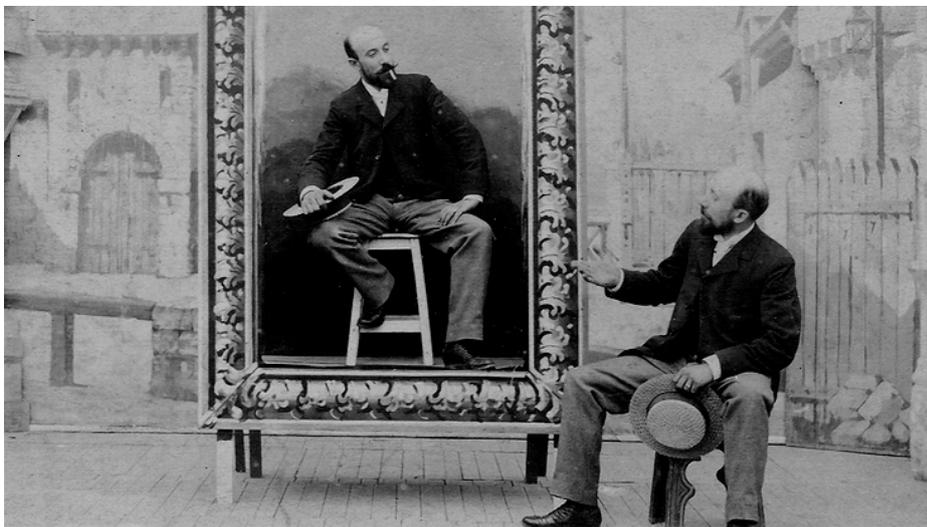
Kentridge brings this fully machine-operated theatre model to the gallery space, art fairs, biennials and museums. He exhibits this multimedia theatre in the centre of the gallery space with his *drawings for projection* artworks hung on the walls. He places rows and rows of chairs (as in a conventional theatre) where visitors to the exhibition space can sit and experience the theatre production and become part of the larger gallery-cum-theatre experience. The third component of reception coincides with the historical experience of reception. At Documenta 13 Kentridge displayed his latest filmic multimedia procession entitled, *The Refusal of time* (2012) in the Hauptbahnhof.<sup>8</sup> When the public sit and watch a Kentridge theatre production, they are in the process agitated and provoked, while their social-emotional experience and judgement are led by the imagined virtual reality to the fictional realities of the artist/producer (to an imaginary world).

In Méliès's film, *Le portrait mystérieux* (1899), a man (Méliès himself) walks behind a large, empty gilded picture frame, then in front of it, then behind it again, before he climbs through it to prove that this is empty indeed.<sup>9</sup> When the empty backdrop sheet with a painted landscape is rolled up, a (painted) castle becomes visible. The man then picks up a canvas and fits it securely in the frame and puts a chair in front of the canvas, which is still within the frame. The same man takes a seat on the chair outside the picture frame. While he stares at the painting, it gradually becomes hazy before it gradually intensifies again. The same man now sits on a chair in the new painting. The two similar men communicate (gestures and responses) with each other and it even seems as if they share a joke. Thereafter the portrait becomes hazy and the empty chair stands in the empty landscape once again (film ends). By using these special effects, Méliès stands out as a highly professional stage illusionist.

In essence, the viewer is confronted with the superimposition technique whereby the mysterious double portrait becomes alive and converses with Méliès himself (a film within a film). In this short film Méliès clearly portrays the filmic transition between the painted landscape and the living portrait. Instead of using a quick cut, he rather brings the filmic

image within the frame slowly into focus, while the frame, background and actual Méliès remain in focus.

Just as Méliès in *Le portrait mystérieux* (1899) (Figure 1), Kentridge uses double photographic images of himself in his studio for his ambiguous animation movies like *Balancing act* (2003), *Seven Fragments for Georges Méliès* (2003) and *Carnets d' Egypte: acquire* (2010) (Figure 2). In the Musée du Louvre's book, *William Kentridge: Carnets d'Egypte*, Kentridge writes (2010a: 55-56) that he always took his sketchbook along when visiting museums such as the Louvre. He would make written notes rather than drawings: "What drawings there are, are diagrams, rather than renderings ... my drawings and sketchbooks are rather drawings of sketchbooks, or the idea of traveller's notes. The real sketchbook is the video camera" (Musée du Louvre 2010:56). In his double portrait works of art Kentridge divides the screen into different invisible parts where two or three selves can act on the same screen (Figure 2).



**Figure 1 :**  
Still image from  
Méliès' film, *Le  
portrait mystérieux*,  
1899.



**Figure 2:**  
Double portrait of  
Kentridge working  
in his Johannesburg  
studio – still image  
from his film,  
*Carnets d'Egypte:  
acquire* (4'34'')  
(2010).

With his video camera as sketchbook Kentridge made his drawings, amended and re-photographed the drawings until he was satisfied with the end product - see for example his film, *Carnets d’Egypte: Isis tragedy* (6'05") and *Drawing lesson 30* (2010) in which four performing artists are portrayed: two euphonium players (both Kentridge) - one of these musicians also delivers spoken and sound contributions, while the other tempers the sounds of his tuba with a rubber drain plunger; while the next actor (also Kentridge) delivers monologues and makes different sounds;<sup>10</sup> and a moving megaphone on a tripod sings soprano.<sup>11</sup> Although the title refers to a “drawing lesson”, it is not a traditional drawing or drawing lesson that is offered, but rather a drawing made with audio and visual performance images. The different sounds and voices are recorded separately and thereafter joined by means of collage and editing (Kentridge 2010a:60). In his film, *Carnets d’Egypte: Nubian landscape* (2'42 ") (2010), Kentridge performs by experimenting with the sounds of five metronomes - each set to their own beat while they add to the central sound composition.

### **Kentridge’s *Seven Fragments for Georges Méliès***

In his art film installation series, *Seven Fragments for Georges Méliès*, Kentridge uses the double portrait technique as used in the *Balancing act* double portrait. In this film installation series Kentridge acts as magician/artist at work by collecting objects around him and making drawings while walking around in his studio, waiting for something to happen (McCrickard 2012:65). Kentridge is portrayed as a gloomy and ubiquitous actor in front of a wall with changing drawings in his studio - during his performance he draws and meditates for a few moments, while walking backwards like Charlie Chaplin in *Modern Times* (1936), and putting pieces of torn drawings together in order for them to metamorphose into an original drawing (telekinesis/ambiguity).

Throughout his career Kentridge has engaged in different kinds of productions (animations, short films, movies, videos, plays, puppet theatre, opera, installations, performances, and multimedia performances) to convey his narrative. Kentridge, however, hides his narrative from the visual surface in order for the spectators to discover, experience and decode. Because of their participation in the Kentridge production, the spectators feel that they are inherently part of the filmic and theatrical presentation of such reality while sitting in the audience, experiencing and enjoying the stage production.

Repeatability and repetition are features of all performing arts and can be compared with “performativity” and “reproduction”. By means of the film medium the filmic recorded reality may be experienced and enjoyed by the spectators. Decoding runs continuously throughout the production as part of the appropriation of reception. Each member of the audience may therefore have another interpretation of the theatrical events. According to Scheub (1998:04), the diversity of the different interpretations of the story lie in the harmonisation of the "idiosyncratic experiences and histories of the members of the audience; it occurs within the context of the audience's emotions." Consequently every member of the audience will have another meaning or a different explanation for what is presented visually, whether by film screenings or stage productions.

With the invention of the motion picture camera, film and the projector, a new set of visual rules was established when filming and interpreting everyday events. Social changes occurred in combination with technical devices such as the camera, film, and projector (for example, new distribution channels, theatre spaces and public spaces) away from the individual onlooker and a work of art in a museum. Together this became the new medium. Film, as a new medium, divided what was invisible to the naked eye into the fatal distinction between popular mass entertainment within the theatre space and an elitist avant-garde that embraced revolutionary pretension. When the filmed images were projected on a screen, they left a tremendous impact on the viewer or viewers and some images would be remembered long after being projected, whilst others might rapidly disappear into oblivion.



**Figure 3**  
Still image from Méliès' 19th century colonial moon from his film, *Le voyage dans la Lune*.



**Figure 4**  
The moon above the Kentridge's Highveld lunar landscape.

### **Méliès' *Le voyage dans la Lune* versus Kentridge's *Journey to the Moon***

In 1902, Méliès made his first successful epic science fiction film, *Le Voyage dans la Lune*.<sup>12</sup> In this film Méliès combines the underlying narrative with elements of fantasy and humour, for example when the rocket spacecraft hits the right eye of the man in the moon, which subsequently sheds a tear.

Kentridge's film, *Journey to the Moon* (2003), refers to the French director and cineaste, Georges Méliès's masterpiece, *Le voyage dans la Lune* (1902). In Kentridge's tribute the artist drinks coffee in his studio, while he makes drawings of a naked woman and the moon in his sketchbook. Suddenly the espresso cup transforms itself into a telescope with which the artist gazes at the stars. Then the coffee pot transforms itself into a spacecraft that takes off and collides with the lunar landscape. This lunar landscape conjures up images of the African landscape that are so much part of Kentridge's visual experience (Figure 4).

Although the cameras of both Méliès and Kentridge are static, as he films his images, Méliès incorporates filmic tricks such as “dissolves”, “disappearances” and “metamorphoses”

in order to make his film visually interesting for the spectators. Apparently, Méliès's camera became stuck one day when he was shooting a horse cart. When Méliès's film started rolling again, the later movements of the horse were filmed directly after where it stopped. Once the film was developed, Méliès experienced the magical leap between first and last scenes, which became known as stop-motion photography.<sup>13</sup> Because Méliès stopped his film at calculated moments in time to make amendments and changes before continuing to film, he accomplished clear illusions of movement and metamorphosis. Méliès' stop-motion technique can thus be seen as an important precursor of animation.

In his *Le Voyage dans la Lune* (1902) Méliès metamorphosed a telescope into a chair, while creatures from the moon disappear phantasmatically in a cloud of smoke. Paul Wells (Nelmes 2003:214) claims that this film brought Méliès international fame:

Animation can defy the laws of gravity, contest our perceived view of space and time, and endow lifeless things with dynamic vibrant properties. In short, animation can change the world and create magical effects, but most importantly, it can interrogate previous representations of 'reality' and reinterpret how 'reality' might be understood – a point well understood by pioneer film-makers such as Georges Méliès, and early animators, [...] Emile Cohl.

A hundred years later, Kentridge too uses stop-motion photography, simple storylines and spectacular stunts which make objects appear, disappear or transform into completely new objects in commemorative animation films, such as *Journey to the moon*, *Seven Fragments for Georges Méliès* (2003), and *Day for night* (2003). Méliès was also honoured in the recent Martin Scorsese film, *Hugo* (2011).

For his film, *Seven Fragments for Georges Méliès*, Kentridge was inspired by the creative films of artists such as Bruce Nauman<sup>14</sup> who made their films in their studios, the photographs of Hans Namuth, the films of Jackson Pollock's action painting, and the experimental films of Georges Méliès. Like these artists, Kentridge uses his body in "improvising actions within the studio context" (Rosenthal 2009:53). According to Butler et al. (2009:201), Kentridge was especially inspired by Nauman's early films, where he moved backwards and forwards in his studio<sup>15</sup> (just like the Méliès films with their painted backdrops). While Nauman moves restlessly in his studio "as waiting for an idea to come to him", Kentridge portrays himself as quiet and comfortable while drawing, giving a talk or conversing, just talking, lying down, acting, moving and performing while he visualises time (Rosenthal 2009:201).

In his essay, "William Kentridge: portrait of the artist", Mark Rosenthal (2009:53) argues that while Kentridge made his films *Seven Fragments*, *Journey to the moon* and *Day for Night*, he made a dramatic move by portraying himself at work in his studio. Kentridge took upon himself the identity of cinematic author by referring to the work of François Roland Truffaut (an influential French film director and creator of the model-author theory stating that the director was the "author" of his work with his own unique style and influences), Georges Méliès and Dziga Vertov.<sup>16</sup> Kentridge as South African *auteur* referred to both French and Russian examples and found parallels in the contemporary visual arts, for

example Bruce Nauman's *Mapping the Studio* (2001), as well as in films of other artists working in their studios.<sup>17</sup>

It was, however, Méliès's use of magical qualities, emerging film technologies<sup>18</sup> and his film, *Le Voyage dans la Lune* (1902) (Figure 3), that Kentridge (2010a) explored and used freely as he feels in a creative manner very close to Méliès. Kentridge's tribute consists of a series of eight video projections<sup>19</sup> that combine film, performance art and animations to a creative peak. Kentridge (Rosenthal 2009:13) writes that the seven short Méliès film fragments are not only a tribute to Méliès as film pioneer, but these films also hint at the studio as subject. The series consists of the studio as model, the artist as model, and the model as a model. In works such as *Seven fragments for Georges Méliès* (2003) and *Journey to the Moon* (2003), the studio holds a double function: it is both the subject and the work of art.

For his narrative film, *Journey to the Moon* (2003), Kentridge used elements from Méliès's masterpiece *Voyage dans la Lune* (1902), as well as previously used objects and drawings from his Méliès fragment films. Kentridge filmed known, everyday objects and materials from his studio space, like an espresso cup which he used as a telescope; an Italian mocha/espresso coffee pot which was used as a spacecraft; an ordinary white saucer which was used as a moon (Figure 4); and hordes of crawling ants to complete his spatial pictures. Kentridge made drawings (cloud patterns) with sugar water on paper – the small household ants completed the “drawing”. The negative images of these ant drawings form the zodiac constellations in his Méliès films.

Kentridge combined and used all of the above objects and images like exotic items in a *Wunderschrank's* drawer or a *Kunstkammer's* shelf with simple filmic tricks to make his Méliès fragment films. The negative image theme and negative shade as positive were later re-used in his film, *Day for night*, whereby the black ants become white in their new environment. Rosenthal (2009:51) describes it as: “... as the paper's coloration reverses, befitting the title”. He sketched objects from his immediate environment with a charcoal stick and video camera, thereafter redrawing them before photographing them once again. Kentridge used these *Kunstkammer* images again and again in works of art to follow.

Kentridge states: “I discovered that the studio, which I had hoped could be a whole universe, became only the enclosed rocket” (Rosenthal 2009:13). While making these films, Kentridge hoped to escape the restrictive space of his studio, but he “ended up still stuck inside it, looking out through the window of the rocket ship (i.e. staring at a sheet of black paper pinned to the studio wall)” (Rosenthal 2009:13).

All kinds of different and unusual objects from Kentridge's studio – even the emptiness and anxiety of a clean page - are used to portray the voyage to a distant planet in space. While he is busy telling the story of a great lunar landing visually, a parallel story is being told by various visual fragments: the historical colonisation of Africa - the theme and so-called mapping of the “Dark Continent”, the domestication and advocacy, as well as the ultimate possession thereof.

In Kentridge's *Journey to the Moon* (2003) Kentridge is portrayed in his studio with an espresso cup. Once the cup is empty, he uses it both as a magnifying glass and as a telescope to survey the approaching procession in the landscape and watch the celestial bodies. Both the coffee pot and espresso cup have some magical qualities that allow him to see through objects, beyond his immediate space, while the coffee pot slowly departs to the moon, just like Méliès's rocket. Kentridge states the following about his version of *Journey to the Moon* (2003):

A bullet-shaped rocket crashes into the surface of the moon; a fat cigar plunged into a round face. When I watched the Méliès film for the first time at the start of this project, I realized that I knew this image from years before I had heard of Méliès. I was far advanced in the making of the fragments for Méliès. I had resisted any narrative pressure, making the premise of the series, what arrives when the artist wanders around his studio. What arrived was the need to do at least one film which surrendered to narrative push.

Other similarities between Kentridge's *Journey to the Moon* (2003) and Méliès's *Voyage dans la Lune* (1902) are the march of the ants and the procession of people, the Highveld and the moon, and the man in the studio and the man in the moon. Although Kentridge had a trip to the moon, he returned to his beloved South Africa. Kentridge (Rosenthal 2009:52) explains that Méliès' moon is "a late 19th century colonial moon ... My lunar landscape ... just outside Johannesburg" (Figures 3 and 4).

In this article the researcher investigated how Kentridge experimented with huge charcoal drawings as a graphic medium and how he incorporated optical toys and devices and film and photography fragments into his drawings. Because he frequently made use of obsolete techniques and technological media that he displaced to a contemporary environment and modern technological infrastructure, he consequently showcased the expressive features of his medium meta-referentially. Kentridge can indirectly be described as a visual wizard because he used and researched existing old techniques and technologies, deconstructed, renewed and made it his own – consequently created a type of *Wunderkammer* or cabinet of curiosities, images and graphics in which he created his own iconography.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> In Michael Auping's interview with Kentridge (Rosenthal 2009:244-245) he states: "The productions [with the Junction Avenue Theatre Company] were often political, but not dogmatic - mostly about the absurdities of apartheid, very Brechtian. It was almost like a support group of multidisciplinary people - artists, performers, psychologists, writers, everyone contributed to the narrative. "

<sup>2</sup> See the video projections of Susan Chen: *4 x 5 degrees* (2012) (<http://www.susanchen.com/video/4-x-5-degrees>) and *Fata Morgana* ([http://www.susanchen.com/video/fata-](http://www.susanchen.com/video/fata-morgana)

*morgana*); Mat Collishaws installations: *Midnight Icarus* (2010) and *Magic Lantern* (2010) (<http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/m/mat-collishaw-magic-lantern/>); as well as Pierre Huyghe's puppet theatre and super 16 mm film with quadrophonic sound, *This is not a time for dreaming* (2004) (<http://vimeo.com/5705760> and <http://www.pbs.org/art21/images/pierre-huyghe/this-is-not-a-time-for-dreaming-production-still-2004>).

<sup>3</sup> Griffiths (1987:65) describes it as follows: "The same is 'the principle of blind spot' (lethargy) (divertissement) and the ruse (the means) used by the work to lead us through a certain reverie (detachment, blindness),

- 'put to sleep' by fiction, towards the lucidity of that wakefulness that leaves the book, the work, in order to devote itself to its outside (i.e. life) while remembering the works, while knowing 'what it's all about'."
- 4 In 1895 Louis and Auguste Lumière's patent for their Cinématographe movie camera and projection system was approved (Campany 2008:7) and they could thus start their public performances.
- 5 After the Lumière brothers saw the Edison kinoscope peepshow in Paris in 1894, they patented their own movie machine in February 1895 and baptised it *Cinématographe* - it was a camera, printer and projector all in one. Unlike Edison's kinoscope where only a single observation was possible through a single peephole, the Lumière *Cinématographe* projected the film image on a large, central screen that could be enjoyed by a bigger audience all at once.
- 6 *Sortie des Usines Lumière à Lyon* (1895), 48 seconds.
- 7 The Englishman Robert W. Paul experimented with images of old cars – he made them disappear and then magically let them reappear (Manvell 1980: no page numbers).
- 8 In his filmic multimedia work, *The refusal of time* (2012) (c. 24 minutes), William Kentridge, Philip Miller and Catherine Meyburgh join hands to project his five channel projections in conjunction with megaphones and a resuscitator that simulates the breathing of an elephant. See <http://d13.documenta.de/#/research/research/view/the-refusal-of-time-2012>
- 9 See <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IIvftGggs24&feature=related>
- 10 The monologues delivered include Percy Bysshe Shelley's *Ozymandias* (1818), chunks of text from the sacred Haggadah, a Jewish prayer book for Easter, Richard Huelsenbeck's poem, *Holla da funga*.
- 11 The soprano, Linda von Copenhagen, interpreted portions of Jean-Baptiste Lully's *Isis Tragedy* (1677) [C'est lu do not les Dieux ont faix choix ... c'est and Vain que l'Envie a Ligue Aunt Roys ... Heureux l'Empire qui suit six lois!]. Euphoniums played by Daniel Bouyer (tuba) and Etienne Mecloen (trombone) (Kentridge 2010a:60).
- 12 *A trip to the Moon*, 35 mm, black and white silent film, c. 11 minutes - different lengths of this movie are in circulation. The film roll was 825 feet, or 14 minutes. The first part of the film was inspired by the Jules Verne's (1828-1905) novel, *De la terre à la lune* (*From the Earth to the Moon*, 1865); while the second part was inspired by HG Well's story, *The first one on the Moon* (Frazer 1979:98). The central theme of the film is a man's journey through space and his visit to the moon.
- 13 Stop-motion photography required that the movie camera be stopped so that elements could be moved or added. Once the scene was changed, the filming continued. By using this stop and continue action technique a definite movement effect is created in the film. Thomas Edison's assistants used the technique as early as 1895, but they did not develop it further. In Méliès' film, *Cendrillon* (*Cinderella*, 1899), all the movie scenes are sequenced together almost as with slideshows. According to Salt (1992:34), Méliès did not use this technique to portray elapsed time, but it was used to join loose film shots/fragments.
- 14 During his New York residence (2002), Kentridge attended several Nauman exhibitions at the Columbia University as well as a lecture on Nauman at the Dia Art Foundation, New York Shipping (Rosenthal 2009:53).
- 15 See the Bruce Nauman-film, *Walking in an exaggerated manner around the perimeter of a square* (1967-68). Obtainable from: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qml505hxp\\_c](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qml505hxp_c) (accessed 06 September 2013).
- 16 Dziga Vertov is the pseudonym for David Abelevich Kaufman who specialised in Soviet documentary film, newsreel director and cinema theorist. The name 'Dziga' refers to the sound the film makes when it goes through the projector; also "spinning top".
- 17 See Hans Namuth and Paul Falkenberg's film, *Jackson Pollock 51* (1951), which portrays Jackson Pollock while painting his enormous canvasses in his studio ([http://www.metacafe.com/watch/yt-CrVE-WQBcYQ/jackson\\_pollock\\_51/](http://www.metacafe.com/watch/yt-CrVE-WQBcYQ/jackson_pollock_51/))
- 18 See [http://criticalinquiry.uchicago.edu/agency\\_and\\_automatism\\_photography\\_as\\_a\\_rt\\_since\\_the\\_sixties](http://criticalinquiry.uchicago.edu/agency_and_automatism_photography_as_a_rt_since_the_sixties).
- 19 In this series of films Kentridge pays homage to Georges Méliès who had "the magical possibilities that the nascent

technology or film could afford”

(<http://www.atjoburg.net/?p=75>).

## Works cited

- Bal, Mieke. 2001. *Looking in: the art of viewing*. Amsterdam: G+B Arts International.
- Butler, Cornelia H., Hecker, Judith B. & Biesenbach, Klaus. 2009. *Walking the line: drawing, printmaking, and performance in the art of William Kentridge*. Rosenthal (ed). 2009: 194–203.
- Campany, David. (ed). 2007. *The cinematic*. London: Whitechapel & Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Campany, David. 2008. *Photography and cinema*. London: Reaktion.
- Christov-Bakargiev, Carolyn. 2009. *On tears and tearing: The art of William Kentridge*. Rosenthal (ed). 2009: 110 – 129.
- Fried, Michael. 2009. *Why photography matters as art as never before*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Gibson, James J. 1980. *Foreword: A prefatory essay on the perception of surfaces versus the perception of marking on a surface*. Hagen (ed). 1980, 1: xi–xviii.
- Griffiths, A. Phillips (ed). 1987. *Contemporary French philosophy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hagen, Margaret A. (ed). 1980. *The perception of pictures, 1: Alberti's window: The projective model of pictorial information; 2. Dürer's devices: beyond the projective model of pictures*. New York: Academic Press.
- Horkheimer, Max & Adorno, Theodor W. 2002. *Dialectic of enlightenment; philosophical fragments*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Kentridge, William. 2009. *Parcours d'Atelier: Artist in the studio*. Rosenthal (ed). 2009: 12–35.
- Kentridge, William. 2010a. *Nose: thirty etchings*. Edited by Bronwyn Law-Viljoen. Johannesburg: David Krut.
- Kentridge, William. 2010b. *Seven fragments for Georges Méliès, Day for night and Journey to the moon*, <http://www.gallerytpw.ca/publications/pdf/1006-Kentridge.pdf> [Accessed: 07 April 2014].
- Law-Viljoen, Bronwyn (ed). 2007. *William Kentridge: Flute*. Parkwood: David Krut.
- Law-Viljoen, Bronwyn. 2007a. 'Introduction'. Law-Viljoen *et al.* (eds). 2007: 17.
- Mannoni, Laurent; Nekes, Werner & Warner, Marina. 2004. *Eyes, lies and illusions. The art of deception*. Catalogue for the exhibition Eyes, Lies and Illusions, Hayward Gallery, London, 7 October 2004 – 3 January 2005). London: Lund Humphries.
- Mannoni, Laurent. 2004. The art of deception. Mannoni *et al.* 2004: 13–23.
- Manvell, Roger. 1980. *Art & animation. The story of Halas & Batchelor animation studio 1940/1980*. London: The Tantivy Press.

- McCrickard, Kate. 2012. *William Kentridge*. Johannesburg: David Krut.
- Musée du Louvre. 2010. *William Kentridge: Carnets d’Egypte*. Paris: Éditions Dilecta.
- Nelmes, Jill (ed). 2003. *An introduction to film studies*. Third edition. London: Routledge.
- Opperman, Johannes A. 2013. *Retrospektiewe vervreemding van tegnologiese media: animasieprosesse by William Kentridge*. PhD thesis. University of the Free State.
- Rosenthal, Mark (ed). 2009. *William Kentridge: A portrait of the artist*. Rosenthal (ed). 2009: 36 – 65.
- Rosenthal, Mark (ed). 2009. *William Kentridge: five themes*. Exhibition catalogue. San Francisco, CA: San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.
- Scheub, Harold. 1998. *Story*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Wells, Paul. 2003. *Animation: forms and meanings*. Nelmes (ed). 2003:213 – 237.

Johann Oppermann obtained his PhD (Art History) in June 2013 from the University of the Free State. The title of his thesis is *Retrospective alienation of technological media: the animation processes in the oeuvre of William Kentridge*.