

MOCA

THE MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART 250 South Grand Avenue Los Angeles, CA 90012
tel 213/621-2766 fax 213/620-8674 moca.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media contact:

John Hindman jhindman@moca.org, 213/621-1750

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
December 2005

**MOCA PRESENTS RECENTLY ACQUIRED WORK BY WILLIAM KENTRIDGE
IN THE MUSEUM'S FIRST-EVER EXHIBITION OF THE
INTERNATIONALLY ACCLAIMED SOUTH AFRICAN ARTIST**

William Kentridge: 7 Fragments for Georges Méliès
December 11, 2005 through February 26, 2006
MOCA Pacific Design Center



William Kentridge, Still from *Journey to the Moon*, 2003
16 mm, 35 mm, and video transferred to DVD, edition 5/8; dimensions variable
The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, purchased with funds provided by Brenda R. Potter and Michael C. Sandler

Los Angeles—The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (MOCA) is presenting a recently acquired major work by the internationally acclaimed artist William Kentridge (b. 1955)—*7 Fragments for Georges Méliès* (2003), plus two related films *Day for Night* and *Journey to the Moon* (both 2003)—in what is MOCA's first-ever exhibition of the multi-disciplinary South African artist. Paying homage to the great phantasmagorical cinema of the early French filmmaker Georges Méliès (1831–1868), the works fuse theatre, film, music, and the visual arts into nine video projections. *William Kentridge: 7 Fragments for Georges Méliès* opens at MOCA Pacific

(more)

William Kentridge: 7 Fragments for Georges Méliès

Page 2 of 4

Design Center (8687 Melrose Avenue in West Hollywood) on December 11, 2005 and remains on view through February 26, 2006.

7 Fragments for George Méliès, *Day for Night*, and *Journey to the Moon* were recently given to the museum by MOCA Trustee Michael C. Sandler and his wife Brenda R. Potter, along with Kentridge's *Medicine Chest* (2001) and several related drawings. Mr. Sandler and Ms. Potter have through their generosity made the exhibition possible.

The works included in the exhibition pay tribute to and draw inspiration from Méliès's pioneering cinematic explorations, which were the first to employ such techniques as stop-motion photography, fade-in and fade-out, dissolves, and multiple exposures—methods that became essential tools of the cinematographer's standard vocabulary.

Known for his mastery of drawing in charcoal, printmaking, collage, and animated films, Kentridge connects these various art forms into a singular but multivalent artistic approach. In addition to casting a broad formal net, Kentridge reveals his keen social observation in his explorations of human nature that evoke the specific social and political conditions he experienced living in South Africa during apartheid.

7 Fragments for Georges Méliès combines drawing with live film action, producing a looped series of what the artist identifies as seven distinct fragments: *Auto-Didact*, *Balancing Act*, *Feats of Prestidigitation Invisible Mending*, *Moveable Assets*, *Tabula Rasa I*, and *Tabula Rasa II*. He makes reference to both Méliès's portrayal of the artist in his studio and the legendary private studio performances of American artist Bruce Nauman that became known to the public only through film and video documentation. Kentridge evokes split-screen and double-exposure techniques by rendering and manipulating his relationship to himself on film, and his actions are performed in reverse order which he then reverses again, creating the effect of a string of implausible events.

The two related film works also on view, *Journey to the Moon* and *Day for Night* (both 2003), reveal Kentridge's experiments with filmic conventions and techniques, extending his dialogue with the history of cinema as well as with the relationship between artist and studio. *Journey to the Moon* is a more narrative video work and shows continuity with *7 Fragments for Georges Méliès* in terms of materials and approach to subject. Kentridge made *Journey to the Moon* in direct reference to Méliès's celebrated film *Voyage to the Moon* (1902) and was also inspired by Jules Verne's *From*

(more)

William Kentridge: 7 Fragments for Georges Méliès

Page 3 of 4

the Earth to the Moon, Stanley Kubrick's 1968 film *2001: A Space Odyssey*, and Nick Park's 1989 animated film *A Grand Day Out*. Reflecting on the creation of *7 Fragments for Georges Méliès* and *Journey to the Moon*, Kentridge said, "If the first seven fragments are about the artist's time spent in the studio waiting for something to happen, *Journey to the Moon* was an attempt to escape."

Day for Night records a drawing in progress, made by allowing ants to crawl across a sheet of paper lined with trails of sugar. Using the light-filtering process employed by the great French filmmaker Francois Truffaut in the film of the same name, the artist applies the same reversal technique by changing the tonality of the film. The white paper becomes black and the color of the ants becomes white. Kentridge describes this work as a screensaver because of its semi-static quality, but the work reveals a stream of frenetic movement created by hundreds of moving ants. The insects' movement becomes spectral as they scramble and swirl across the blackened space of the film.

William Kentridge: 7 Fragments for Georges Méliès demonstrates MOCA's ongoing commitment to acquiring new work for the permanent collection. Since its founding in 1979, MOCA has assembled a renowned grouping of the art of our time, currently holding approximately 5,000 works in all visual media, ranging from masterpieces of abstract expressionism and pop art to recent works by young and emerging artists.

William Kentridge: 7 Fragments for Georges Méliès is curated by MOCA Associate Curator Alma Ruiz.

About the Artist

William Kentridge was born in Johannesburg, South Africa, in 1955, where he currently resides and works. In 1976, he received his BA in politics and African-American studies at the University of Witwatersrand. He studied etching at the Johannesburg Art Foundation from 1976–78, and mime and theatre at the Ecole Jacques Lecoq in Paris in 1981–82. Kentridge represented South Africa at the 1993 Venice Biennale and showed at Documenta X in 1997. He also participated in the Istanbul, Havana, São Paulo, Sydney, and Johannesburg biennials, and in solo exhibitions at the Castello di Rivoli, Museo d'Arte Contemporanea, Rivoli, Italy; The Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York; Museum of Modern Art in New York, and Walker Art Center in Minneapolis. Kentridge is the winner of the 1999 Carnegie Prize.

(more)

Public Programs

MOCA Art Talks Presented by Gallery C

MOCA Art Talks Presented by Gallery C are informal discussions on current exhibitions led by arts professionals. The talks take place in the exhibition galleries unless otherwise noted. Attendance is free with museum admission and no reservations are required. The MOCA Art Talks Presented by Gallery C series is made possible by The Times Mirror Foundation Endowment and Gallery C.

William Kentridge

In a rare Los Angeles appearance, South African artist William Kentridge will discuss his work in general and the current MOCA exhibition. Book signing and reception to follow across the plaza at the new MOCA Store location that features a rare selection of new and out-of-print contemporary art catalogues.

Sunday, December 11, 3pm, SilverScreen Theatre, Pacific Design Center

Funding

William Kentridge: 7 Fragments for Georges Méliès is made possible by the generous support of Brenda R. Potter and Michael C. Sandler.

####

The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (MOCA) is your source of creativity and inspiration in Los Angeles through innovative exhibitions and programs by significant and compelling contemporary artists. MOCA is a private not-for-profit institution supported by its members, corporate and foundation support, government grants, and admission revenues.

MOCA Pacific Design Center is open 11am to 6pm on Saturday and Sunday; 11am to 5pm on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday; 11am to 8pm on Thursday; and closed on Monday. Admission to MOCA Pacific Design Center only is free.

For 24-hour information on current exhibitions, education programs, and special events, call 213/626-6222 or access MOCA online at moca.org.