

I'm going to talk about William Kentridge. Here is his 1998 self-portrait, charcoal on paper.

Kentridge was born in 1955 in apartheid South Africa, to white Jewish parents who were both defense lawyers defending the victims of apartheid, including Nelson Mandela.

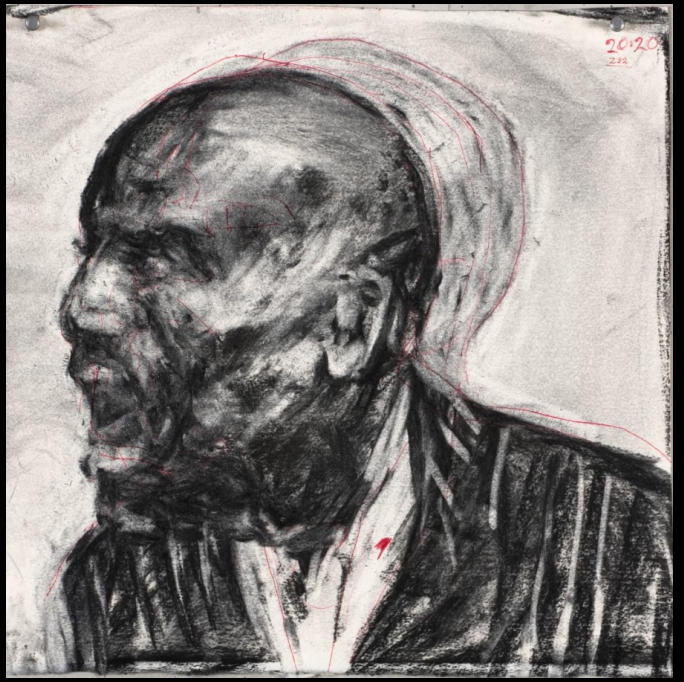
He has a Master in Fine Arts but has also studied politics, acting and mime, so he has a theatrical and political turn of mind.

His style has been described as Neo-expressionist. His pieces are certainly strongly emotive, they are gestural and loose, and they often portray social injustice and/or dystopian worlds.

SOURCE for photo: <https://www.artforum.com/events/william-kentridge-6-186709/>.

Drawing for
'Other Faces'
2011.

Charcoal and coloured
pencil on paper,
17 3/8 x 17 1/4 in.



This slide and the next one are drawings for the 2011 animated short film titled 'Other Faces'. His animation process is spectacular -- he takes repeated photos of the same paper as he revises or progresses a scene, making the blurred erasures integral to the film and creating a jittery stop-motion animation. In exhibitions he shows 20 or 25 drawings like this one alongside the final film. ANALYSIS: Greyscale charcoal portrait of a man's head and shoulders in 3/4 profile. He is yelling and glaring at something off page. About a third of the page is negative space, light grey with scant markings. The composition is slightly asymmetric, the head left of centre, with the negative space behind the head shows erasures from his previous positions. The mark making on the figure is coarse and highly visible, not only lines but also erasures. There are a few thin red lines on and around the figure, including outlines of the back of his skull as it moved across the page. I'm unclear about the purpose of the red marks, and interested to hear what others think. The mood is emotionally charged, angry or aggressive, yet the inexact and blurred lines make it provisional or tentative. SOURCE:

<https://www.mariangoodman.com/exhibitions/113-william-kentridge-other-faces/works/artworks28004/>

Drawing for
'Other Faces'
2011.

Charcoal and
coloured pencil
on paper,
31 x 48 in.



This is another drawing from *Other Faces*. This one is a horizontally-oriented rectangular landscape in grayscale charcoal. The top quarter is sky, the bottom quarter is a pathway entering the scene, and the middle half is a sparsely treed grassy plain leading to a flat plateau, on which there is a tall structure, maybe a billboard or movie screen. The plateau occupies most of the left horizon. There are buildings and towers further away, occupying the right horizon. The plateau is the energetic focus, with all pathways, diagonal lines, and shading leading the eye to that point. There are no obvious figures, though small dark marks on the plateau may be humans observing the screen. The technique features visible coarse mark-making and erasures, with atmospheric and linear perspective used to create depth. The overall mood is uncertainty or unease. There is a clear invitation to enter the pictorial space, yet there isn't an obvious route to follow. There may be a show happening up on the plateau, on that screen, but are there any people there? Is it safe to proceed? Am I invited to approach?

SOURCE <https://www.mariangoodman.com/exhibitions/113-william-kentridge-other-faces/works/artworks27993/>

Drawing for
*'History of
the Main
Complaint',*
1996.

Charcoal on
paper.



<https://www.kentridge.studio/william-kentridge-projects/drawings-for-projection>

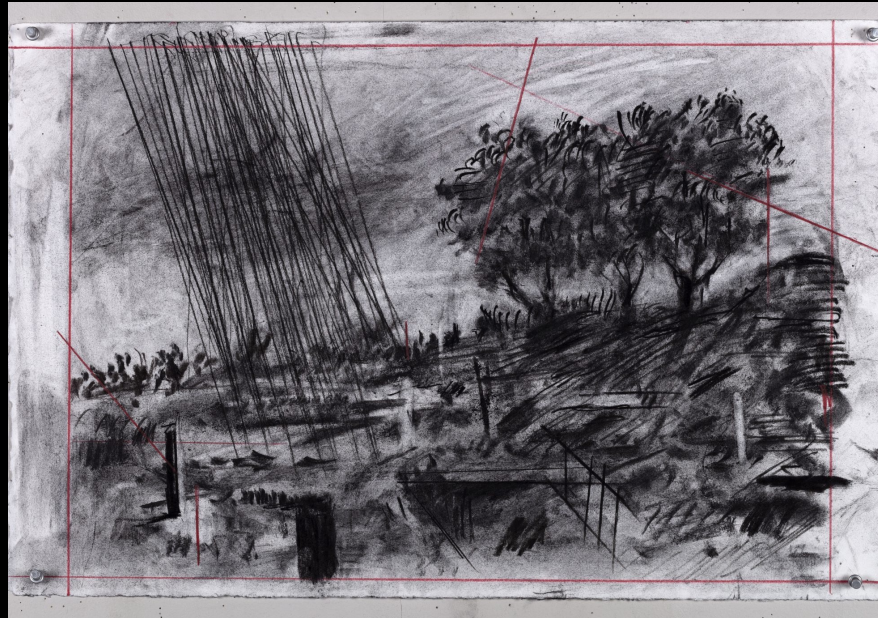
I couldn't learn the dimensions of the piece. Note that excerpts of these short films can be seen on Kentridge's website – the link at bottom right would get you there.

This is a greyscale charcoal drawing with a reduced tonal key (highs and lows, but not much in between). It is a close-up cropped view of part of a face, viewed from an odd angle below and to one side. We see half the mouth, the underside of the nose, one eye, bushy eyebrows and a deeply lined forehead. The mouth hangs slackly open and is a dark cavern as are the two nostrils. The right eye is glassy and gazing upward, it isn't clear whether the person is still alive. The cheek is brightly highlighted through erasures, as are select areas around the eye, lips, nose and forehead. There is a small amount of light grey background visible beyond the head. The mark-making is coarse, messy, and highly visible. The mood is dark and anxious – this person may be dying or seriously ill, we are pressed up right up close to this experience, and it is unfolding in a graceless, harsh environment.

SOURCE: <https://www.kentridge.studio/william-kentridge-projects/drawings-for-projection/>.

Drawing for
'Studio Life'
Episode 9
(Thundershower),
2022

Charcoal and
coloured
pencil on
paper



This landscape is darker and coarser than the first one. The space is evenly divided between land below and sky above. The horizon starts one-third of the way up the left side of the page and slopes gradually up to the right. Three trees rise from the right side of the hill into the sky. Several dozen thin black lines slash down on a steep angle from the top of the drawing to hit the land below – these occupy a similar amount of space in the left half of the sky as the trees do in the right, making for a roughly balanced composition. The hatch marks, blended marks and erasures sketch out features on the land - angular for fences and structures, rounded for vegetation and rocks. There are a dozen thin red pencil lines, marking the edges of the landscape but also making diagonals across the page, sometimes outlining a major feature like the trees. There is a limited sense of depth to the land and even less to the sky, except for one dark thundercloud, and the foregrounded lines that invoke heavy rainfall. The mark making is emphatic and draws attention to itself. The mood is set by the title but even more by the darkness and coarseness of the scene. I find it threatening in the sense of needing shelter from a storm, and from the sense of an inhospitable land devoid of people. The trees are the saving grace – they feel warmer to me than everything else, and they would be my shelter here. SOURCE: [https://www.kentridge.studio/explore-art-william-kentridge/#!jig\[1\]/ML/23278](https://www.kentridge.studio/explore-art-william-kentridge/#!jig[1]/ML/23278)

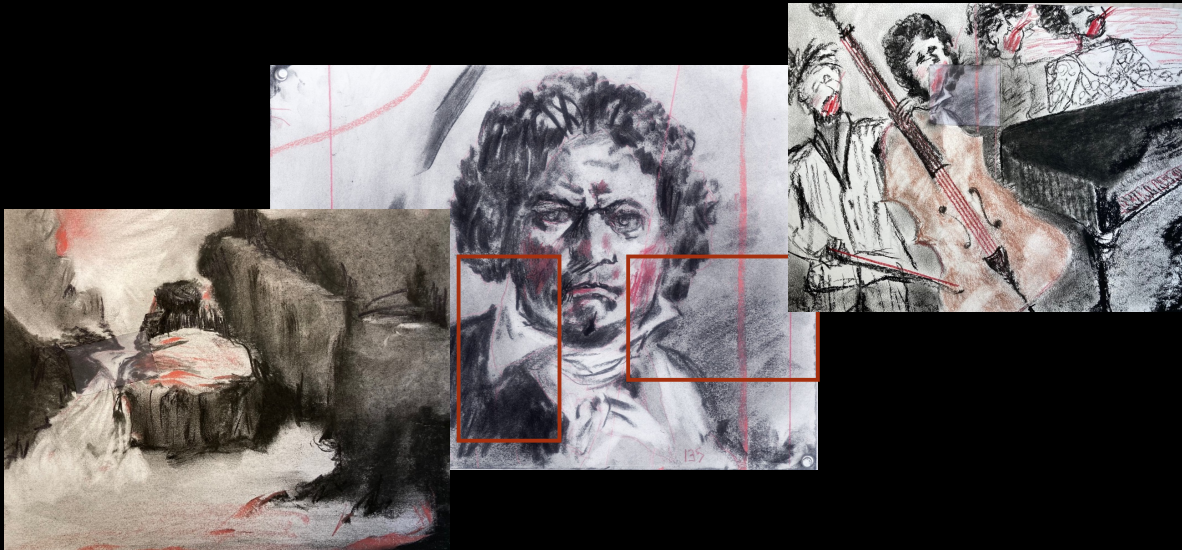
Drawing for
'Studio Life'
Episode 5
(Beethoven),
2021.

Charcoal, pastel,
and red pencil on
paper, and
coloured pencil
on paper,
11 3/4 x 15 3/4 in.



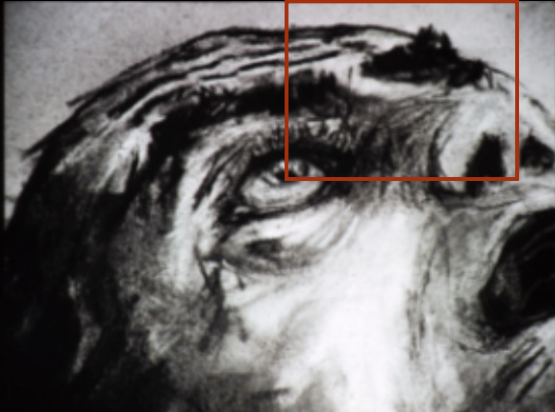
This is a head-and-shoulders portrait of a man with a frontal view of the face and an angled body. His eyes gaze intently at the viewer. Shadows on his face suggest a primary light source in front of him to his left. The work is in greyscale charcoal except for rough red pastel and pencil marks in patches on cheeks, lips and forehead; in faint thin lines around curves in the hair, drapery, and face; and in vertical lines quite unrelated to the figure. He is neither young nor old, and he certainly has a thick head of hair. Composition-wise, the figure is displaced right of centre, with ill-defined dark shapes or shadows in the background to his left and right. Collectively these make a triangular shape with his hair at the apex, nearly touching the top of the page. The triangle shape is repeated in his nose, in the shirt collar, the tie, the right shoulder. This has more of a full-key tonal range than the other portrait we looked at, although the amount of contrast is still exaggerated. There is a mixture of blended charcoal marks with the artist's typically visible mark-making, as in the vest, hair, the shadow under his nose. The title of the work identifies its subject, Beethoven, and I find the mood very intense – I can just about hear the opening four notes of the Ninth Symphony. SOURCE: [https://www.kentridge.studio/explore-art-william-kentridge/#!jig\[1\]/ML/23155](https://www.kentridge.studio/explore-art-william-kentridge/#!jig[1]/ML/23155)

Technical Exercise: Blending crops into my own work



I made several attempts at the blending some Kentridge cropped marks into my own compositions. These two from Beethoven were good learning. I used paper with a yellow cast to it with the musicians so it was harder to match the light greys, and I also forgot to tone the paper before glueing on the crop. But it was fun. The landscape on the left was a more successful blend, in part because I used the same copier paper to print the excerpt and to draw my piece. It is difficult to deal with charcoal dust accumulating on the cut edge of the crop, which makes the edge too visible

Technical Exercise: Blending into my own work



"LAST GASP"

This crop was a more successful integration with the darker tones, but still troublesome where the light grey sky meets the top edge of the crop – again, some charcoal dust tended to accumulate and exaggerate the cut edge. The piece I cropped immediately made me think about landscapes, caves and trees and rocks. But it turned into a commentary on our ill-treatment of the land and by extension, ourselves.