

OSBORNE SAMUEL

MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY ART

WILLIAM KENTRIDGE (B.1955)



Casspirs Full of Love, 1989

Drypoint

148.61 x 81.2 cms

(58.40 x 31.91 in)

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P.O.A.

1989-2000

Kentridge created the plate for this drypoint etching in 1989. An edition of thirty, it was printed in two stages. The image was based on a drawing the artist made earlier that year for his solo exhibition at Vanessa Devereux Gallery in London. This impression aside from the edition of 30 inscribed and signed 'W. Kentridge '90 A/P' (lower left); inscribed 'For Sue with many thanks from William Oct. 90' (lower right)

This provocative and perturbing image of a cabinet filled with disembodied heads is the work of contemporary South African artist William Kentridge. His diverse oeuvre includes works on paper (which he also uses to create animated films), sculptures, and set designs. During the late 1980s, Kentridge became involved in printmaking and created multiple large and impressive images, including this piece, *Casspirs Full of Love* (1989-2000). The arresting depictions of jumbled piles of heads appear to tremble due to the scratchy, sketch aesthetic of Kentridge's drypoint. Aside from being a haunting image in its own right, the title of the work indicates this piece is a veiled reference to an episode of South African military action. In 1974, the military dictatorship in Portugal was toppled, which subsequently resulted in much unrest in the former Portuguese-controlled colonies of Angola and Mozambique. In response, South Africa dispatched armored riot-control vehicles known as casspirs to defend their northern border with Angola and Mozambique. During the incident, parents sent the somewhat ironic phrase "casspirs full of love" as a greeting to their servicemen sons via a popular South African radio show. Kentridge further plays on that irony by forging the association between the heartfelt phrase and the eerie cabinet full of decapitated heads.

Internationally acclaimed, Kentridge's work has been influential in South Africa for more than twenty years. He continues to live and work in his native Johannesburg. The inclusion of his work in the 1997 documenta X exhibition in Kassel, Germany, and the Johannesburg and Havana Biennials shortly thereafter, brought him widespread critical acclaim and international exposure. Though not explicitly political, Kentridge's work certainly arises out of South Africa's turbulent sociopolitical history and affirms a strong anti-apartheid stance. Aside from its political commentary, his work has also played a seminal role in the development of film and media-based art. He is widely known for his animated film series *Drawings for Projection*, of which he has completed eight shorts. Kentridge utilizes a very particular style of low-tech animation in which charcoal drawings are created and photographed, then erased and reworked to create the next frame of the film, and continuing so forth. The crudely animated drawings highlight the graphic nature of Kentridge's oeuvre as well as his interest in how meaning and content are accrued through the process of making. Kentridge was honored in the fall of 1999 as the recipient of the prestigious Carnegie Prize. A retrospective of his work was organized by the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, and the New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York, and traveled to the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C., and the South African National Gallery in Cape Town.