

Kentridge tapestries exhibited in Spain



**Fat Horse
Sculpture** with
Shower woman
and **Dancing**
couple tapestries
on the wall behind

*Photo by
Tina Weavind*

We have come to expect William Kentridge to impress us. Whether it's an opera or puppet show, a movie or an exhibition of paintings and drawings, we expect no less than to come away intellectually and visually stimulated and thoroughly charmed.

Yet walking into a room adorned with monumental Kentridge-designed tapestries is less charming initially than it is simply staggering. It took a few moments to process the magnitude and energy of hundreds of square metres of drama, Kentridge style.

In Spain, at the Centro de arte contemporáneo de Málaga (Contemporary Art Museum of Malaga), the largest body of Kentridge tapestries to date were recently on show. With them were shown the original designs on which the tapestries were based, as well as some ink drawings and a select group of mosaics and bronze sculptures, the images of which were reflected and repeated in the warp and weft hanging on the walls all around.

Kentridge has experimented successfully in just about every medium you can shake a stick of charcoal at, including film, opera, sculpture, puppet making, writing, mosaic and tapestry - as well as drawing and painting. And there is little of his work that doesn't resonate somewhere somehow with anyone who sees it.

The designs - which were done specifically for the tapestries - involve maps, sometimes old and torn, or the pages of encyclopedias, similarly dated, torn and reassembled. On top of these backgrounds, shadow characters are superimposed. Slashes of reds or blues bring colour and energy, dictating one's line of sight and electrifying the otherwise natural monochromatic greys, browns and whites.

Some of the mohair used in the woven translation is in the undyed natural form and in other places two different colours are twisted together, creating texture and vibrancy. The original design is photographed and blown up to about double its original size for tapestry maker Margarite Stephens to work on. She traces each shape, colour and hue onto acetate and in close consultation with Kentridge, manipulates, discards and adds elements so that the final image is both amplified and refined.