

Neiman Center Masters the Craft of Teaching

By Donna Cornachio



Kiki Smith's photogravure *Tidal*, incorporating photos taken from Columbia's Rutherford Observatory.

If you happen to walk into the LeRoy Neiman Center for Print Studies at its full operational level, you might be forgiven for thinking you've gone back to the time of the medieval craft guilds.

Housed on two floors in Dodge Hall, the Neiman Center, founded in 1995 with a gift from the eponymous artist, offers printmaking classes in a variety of media: serigraphy, lithography, relief, intaglio and photogravure. It also operates a gallery and a professional print shop.

Master artists work surrounded by attentive apprentices. The artist offers instruction and guidance; the apprentices act as the labor force in making editions (or a numbered grouping) of the artist's prints, while at the same time picking up invaluable lessons in the craft.

Artists are invited to come and spend a working academic year at the center; in return they receive nearly half the editions they produce. The center keeps the remainder of the art editions, the sale of which supports the expenses of running the program.

"Other print shops work under a commercial pressure—the artists have to produce a certain amount within a certain time frame," says Tomas Vu-Daniel, director of the Neiman Center. "Because we're run through an endowment, we never have that pressure to make money. It's a luxury for an artist to be able to come in here for a year and create art."

Visiting artists at the center have included Neiman himself (one of the most popular living artists in America, best known for his brilliantly colored, energetic images of sporting events), Elliott Green, William Kentridge, Alexis Rockman and Kara Walker.

Kiki Smith was one of the center's first visiting artists in 1998 and has returned several times since. One notable result was the photogravure *Tidal*, a panel of 13 full moons and their upside-down reflections in the ocean's waves, as if seen from the moon's perspective. Smith arranged to have the moon

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photographs taken from Columbia's Rutherford Observatory. The work, one edition of which is on view at the Neiman Center, was also bought by MoMA.

"Going to the observatory to use the facilities and resources unique to Columbia is a lot different than working in a print shop," says Smith, who currently teaches advanced print making at the center. "What's also uncommon to print makers is learning from the students, too. One of the pleasures of my life is having those kinds of intergenerational relationships."

It's a pleasure for the students as well. Paula Wilson, who

graduated in 2005, was studying print at the Neiman Center while Kara Walker was in residency. "Being able to work with the artists and watch those steps unfold before you is such a special thing," Wilson says. After she graduated, Wilson worked as an assistant in Walker's studio.

"As a student, you're given an opportunity to do projects on your own as well as to work with blue-chip and emerging artists," adds Megan Foster, an alumna of the Neiman Print Center who graduated in 2002 and is now a master printer. "That hands-on experience and those connections you make are invaluable."

Sarah Sze, a current visiting artist at the center, is working on a print construction of ladders, balconies and fire escapes made out of archival loose-leaf notepads. "My idea was to question the very nature of a print," she says, "to stretch the boundaries with something that is printed matter and everyday and mundane, and to produce it as fine art." The pads themselves are three-dimensional prints: Every pad is hand-printed, and even each line is hand-printed on archival paper. Some 30-odd editions of each construction are being made at the center, with most of the journeyman work done by the students.

The students "are phenomenal," says Sze, who also teaches advanced printmaking with Kiki Smith. "They're very innovative and technically very strong ... A lot of their ideas are very abstract. The dialogue with them is great, too."

ON EXHIBIT: THE CHILDREN'S ART CARNIVAL

Social change is the theme of a new exhibit June 12 to 19 at the LeRoy Neiman Gallery in Dodge Hall. *Change Starts With Me: 2* features paintings, collages, video and sculptures by students of The Children's Art Carnival, a Harlem-based arts organization for at-risk and underserved youth. How students feel about themselves and

the world, and their ideas for social change, are reflected in their artwork. Co-sponsored by Columbia's office of government and community affairs, the exhibit's opening reception will be held June 12 from 4:00 to 7:00 p.m.

—By Record Staff



KEEFER TO STEP DOWN

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Elizabeth J. Keefe, the University's general counsel since 1997, is stepping down to take a job at a Washington, D.C., consulting firm.

A search is under way for her replacement at Columbia.

Keefe, known as Libby, is joining TMG Strategies, a strategic communications and management consulting firm that works with corporations, think tanks and the government on issues ranging from reputation challenges, class-action lawsuits, antitrust or patent disputes as well as employment, environmental and government issues.

In her nearly dozen years at Columbia, Keefe has been instrumental in a number of issues facing the University. She arrived just as the medical center was merging its Columbia-Presbyterian Hospital with Cornell's New York Hospital to form NewYork-Presbyterian. Her office has also handled the University's growth of its intellectual property and patent portfolio. More recently, Keefe has been a linchpin of the legal efforts regarding Columbia's expansion into Manhattanville.

"She's a terrific counselor as well as a lawyer," said Robert Kasdin, senior executive vice president of the University. "She has fantastic judgment on legal and non-legal matters."

The University's office of general counsel has great breadth, encompassing all the usual legal matters found at most firms, plus everything from academic governance to intellectual property to research compliance. It represents the entire University, advising trustees, officers, faculty and staff in their official capacities.

"Every one of us who has worked with Libby knows first hand her high intelligence, ethical character, and clever humor. But



Elizabeth "Libby" Keefe

most importantly we know her as a friend," said Columbia President Lee C. Bollinger. "That makes this a sad and happy moment."

Keefe will return to Washington, where she began her career in 1977 as a trial attorney for the Federal Trade Commission. She later worked at the U.S. Department of State in a number of capacities, including arbitrating claims related to the Iran hostage situation from 1979 to 1981, handling legal and congressional issues having to do with the Iran-Contra investigations and assisting then-Secretary of State George Schultz with his testimony before Congress regarding the affair.

From 1989 to 1992, she was deputy undersecretary of the Air Force. She returned to private practice as a partner at Hughes Hubbard & Reed, from which she was recruited to join Columbia.

Keefe made news after graduating from Barnard College in 1971 by being hired as Columbia's first woman assistant in its athletic department, where she was made director of the tennis club at Baker Field. According to a 1972 *New York Times* story about her job, headlined "Columbia's Tennis Looks Better with Libby Keefe on the Scene," she was at the time doing pre-med work and was planning to become a veterinarian. Fortunately for Columbia, she changed her mind.