BY KRISTIN STERLING

In an age of digital reproduction and the purported obsolescence of limited edition prints, Wallach Art Gallery’s latest exhibition Reflection Seven Years in Print—The LeRoy Neiman Center for Print Studies offers a timely counterpoint. It suggests that the medium of printmaking continues to offer itself up to reinvention. The exhibition is a survey of the innovative and diverse printmaking pursued at the University’s LeRoy Neiman Center for Print Studies since the Center’s inception in 1995.


Among the prints is a series of editions of antique typefaces by William Kentridge that exploits the gummy quality of the sugar-like linotype to conjure up the somewhat blurry, irregular quality of the type produced by such machines, which in the modern age of laser printing has all but disappeared. Kentridge created these etchings while serving as artist-in-residence at the School of the Arts. To the artist, the Neiman Center’s large Duffa VII offset press (a rarity in fine-art printing) enabled him to explore the intaglio technique of the Center’s offset lithography nudes, “Move,” “Tumble” and “Watch,” to create the effects of translucent watercolor washes and splotches. In an innovative and ambitious combination of offset lithography, silkscreen, and chine collé, Sze’s two print project “Day” and “Night” achieves a print equivalent, in both scale and imagery, to the artist’s sculptural installations in which a myriad small components are magically brought together in room-size assemblages balanced or suspended in seeming defiance of gravity.

Founded with a generous gift from the artist LeRoy Neiman and his wife Janet, The LeRoy Neiman Center for Print Studies at Columbia University is dedicated to the advancement of printmaking through education and the production and exhibition of prints. As a central part of its mission, the Neiman Center invites professional artists—including those who have not previously had an opportunity to investigate printmaking— to produce edition prints, and provides the time and materials, and skilled technical assistance. The exhibition includes editions produced while the artist was in residence at the Neiman Center, working closely with master printers and printmakers in- training and receiving active assistance from both undergraduates and graduate students in the Visual Arts Division of Columbia University’s School of the Arts. The projects produced at the Center embrace a complexity and ambition that are made possible from the ample time and generous resources provided by the Neiman Center and its unique access to the resources of a leading university.

The Wallach Art Gallery is located in Schermerhorn Hall, 8th Floor, Gallery hours: Wednesday through Saturday, from 10:00 to 5:00 p.m.

BY MICHAEL LARKIN

Created almost 25 years ago by Columbia’s academic computing center to help manage the high demand on the University’s mainframes, a software program known as Kermit has leapfrogged all the way to the International Space Station where it is being used in a scientific experiment.

Designed to allow two different computer systems to interact, Kermit was used to solve a compatibility problem on the space station. Using two versions of a program, one of which was modified specifically for NASA, an experimental device referred to as CLSM-2 can now share information with another computer on board the space station that transmits data back to earth.

“Kermit and Kermit 95 have been invaluable tools to improve our computing efficiency, both in development and in the final operational system,” said Dave Hall, senior engineer, ZIN Technologies on Kermit’s Columbia website.

The significance of Kermit is not entirely its invention or its inclusion in the space-art experiment, but its ability to evolve and to retain its viability in the always-expanding computer industry.

As one of its creators admits, it was not obvious back then that Kermit would develop the way it did. “Nobody expected the protocol and software to become a worldwide de facto standard, but even if we had, there are not many things we would have done differently, except in choosing a name,” said Frank da Cruz, a manager for NASA. Founded the Kermit Project has remained dedicated to making sure the program is available for humanitarian causes. Kermit was in use in relief missions in Bosnia and by HIV/AIDS researchers in England, and it provided the communications backbone for the 1994 Brazilian national elections, the largest and most complex in history up to that time.

“We enjoy the work, the technical challenges, the contact with people around the world, and the chance to lend a hand when we can,” said da Cruz.

In recent years, the Internet and the World Wide Web have surpassed Kermit as a popular desktop communications tool for “ordinary users,” but Kermit continues to be an invaluable asset in more specialized areas, such as the Space Station experiment.

“By keeping pace with evolving technology and the increasing demand for security and automation, Kermit has grown into a powerful tool for the creation of secure communications applications and continues to thrive in the medical, scientific, engineering, manufacturing, and business sectors,” said da Cruz.

Visit the Kermit Project website at www.columbia.edu/kermit

International Space Station Incorporates Columbia’s Kermit Software Program

BY KEVIN HICKLE

The International Space Station orbiting the earth.

PHOTO COURTESY OF NASA

The Wallach Art Gallery Exhibition Reflects on the Neiman Center’s Seven Years in Print


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