

confesses to a recycling mentality so determined that it must surely merit some kind of special city tax deduction (or indicates that she is secretly German). This project reflects the careful accumulation and meticulous dismantling and flattening of boxes of every kind of domestic product—Band-Aids, butter, toothpaste, Saran Wrap, and more—that the artist purchased during the course of a year and then categorized by size. This was not a manifestation of obsessive-compulsive disorder, however, but the by-product of an idea to create stencils-in-negative, templates around which Kent drew in pencil on top of the mezzotint ground.

The mezzotint itself not only points to the artist's formal training in traditional printmaking techniques; it also takes so much ink that the color becomes almost like paint. It does not serve merely as a ground in the way that prepared paper might—for as Kent points out “the color is not secondary, it is fundamental.” At this point in the process, she says, she formed an assembly line in the studio, setting out the printed sheets in rows. Rather than finishing one and moving on to the next, she worked on them all at the same time. Sometimes she applied gouache freehand to the ground and layered the open boxes on top, drawing around them in pencil to superimpose forms to which then she applied blocks or flecks of gouache—thus subverting the notion of repetition and reproduction traditionally seen as fundamental to the character of printmaking. (But she also tends to undermine her own systems from time to time; in *Miracle Grow #4*, for example, she randomly introduces another technique, silkscreening irregularly formed red rectangles onto the gouache layer.) In this way, Kent establishes bizarre juxtapositions of color and scale that frequently escape the confines of the matrix of the rectangle—abstract protuberances suddenly seeping and extending from it at odd angles and in disturbing groupings.

For all the apparently modest sensibility of these works and the use of quotidian materials in their creation, the sheets in *Miracle Grow* positively challenge the predictable and the mundane. Kent's almost architectural approach to building a print edition through the layering of a variety of materials and techniques establishes a structural and intellectual exploration of the most fixed notions of the very nature of printmaking. “I'm looking for a kind of torquing of the clear,” she admits, “ways to make it a little uncomfortable.” And, she adds, “I've always been aware that you have to make art look so you can't take your eyes off it.” ■

—Catherine Bindman

William Kentridge

Universal Archive (2012)

Ongoing series of linocuts on dictionary and encyclopedia pages, 35 x 27 cm to 109.5 x 146.5 cm. Over 70 different editioned works to date, edition range: 15 to 40. Printed by Jillian Ross and Mlungisi Kongisa, published by David Krut Print Workshop, Johannesburg. R20,000–R290,000.

Procrastination would seem an unlikely activity for William Kentridge. The highly productive multi-media artist first gained wide recognition with his labor-intensive *Nine Drawings for Projection* (1989–2003), animated films for which each sequence was made from a single sheet of paper that the artist photographed repeatedly, altering the figures by erasing, redrawing, adding and elaborating. Kentridge's most recent linocuts, however, derive from drawings made whilst whiling away the time when he was supposed to be preparing his Norton Lectures for Harvard.

Under the title *Universal Archive* the images are essentially doodles on encyclopedia and dictionary pages, and include familiar themes from the artist's lexicon—

among them a teapot, a nude, a bird, a tree—in varying stages of finish or dismantling. (Occasionally, there is the self-inflicted critical thought scrawled out across the prints, like “Do you have anything to say?” or “You brought this on yourself.”) The entire group was on display recently at David Krut Projects New York.

Linocut was Kentridge's first printmaking medium in the 1970s, and it has a deep history in his native South Africa [see *Art in Print*, Vol 1., No. 2 and No. 3 for discussion of South African prints exhibited at MoMA], the country that has formed the aesthetic and thematic core of much of his work. In *Universal Archive*, the medium is used to uncharacteristically free, gestural effect. The printers achieved the fluidity of Kentridge's ink drawings, and the images are deceptively effortless, their sense of animation true to the artist's body of work.

Clearly, procrastination is a very productive activity for Kentridge. But perhaps this is not all that surprising. He has said that when making art, he doesn't begin with meaning—he starts with images that resonate with him, and plays with them, using whatever happens to intervene (an infestation of ants once served him, by means of lines of sugar laid on the ground, as a drawing medium in *Journey to the Moon* (2003)).



William Kentridge, *Twelve Coffee Pots* from the series *Universal Archive* (2012).

Or, as he put it in one of the six Norton lectures (which he did eventually finish and delivered earlier this year), “My job is to make art, not sense”.

The lectures were not a reflection on what he has made, but rather what he has learned through making. Kentridge characterized the artist’s studio as the ground zero of production, and emphasized that the process of art is not just about technique but is a way of understanding the world. One can see these prints as a companion to the lectures—his ruminations made visible, artifacts of what he learned while not making, while just being in the studio, tinkering and stewing.

The lectures (which can be seen online¹) are artistic performances in themselves: projected behind him were his drawings, peeks into his notebooks, clips from his films. Throughout, he gave complex yet improbably approachable treatises on creativity, the nature of knowledge, the origins of colonial impulses and power. In one projected vignette from his studio, his hand was shown manipulating one of the solid black, cut-paper figures used in *Shadow Procession* (1999) as he spoke about our role, as viewers, in constructing what we see. Even when little information is given, as with shadows, we make the image whole.

The images in *Universal Archive* are solid black, depthless sketches repeated, altered, manipulated, reduced, or elaborated upon and splashed across the regular, rational typeface pages in a manner similar to his artist’s book *Portage* (2000) and multi-media work *Sleeping on Glass* (1999).

At David Krut the prints were arranged such that a tree could be seen either becoming whole or going to pieces over a series of pages; elsewhere a cat is made whole from a scramble of printed fragments—the texts on which the fragments are printed are gathered into a mound and the cat seems to become coherent by its own design, resembling a paper puppet with hinged limbs.

As Kentridge explains, “It is in the very limitations and leanness of shadows that we learn; in the gaps, in the leaps we have to make to complete an image; and in this we...perform the generative act of constructing the image.” In *Universal Archive*, we are left to do just that, but the repetition of familiar images enables us to watch them move between coherence and fragments. Our “agency in seeing,” as Kentridge describes it, is merged with direct insight into the artist’s way of seeing. ■

—Sarah Andress

1. <http://mahindrhumanities.fas.harvard.edu/content/william-kentridge-drawing-lesson-one-praise-shadows>.



Cameron Martin, *Balentane* (2012).

Cameron Martin

Balentane (2012)

Lithograph in 8 colors, 22 5/8 x 35 1/2

Partinem (2012)

Lithograph in 11 colors, 22 7/16 x 34 5/16

Albenast (2012)

Lithograph in 8 colors, 22 1/2 x 35 5/8 inches

Editions of 20 each. Printed and published by Tandem Press, Madison, WI. \$1800 each.

Executed entirely in shades of translucent white inks, these three veiled yet oddly blinding images are only legible as landscapes through subtle changes of tonality. Placed at an unidentifiable viewpoint facing an anonymous birch forest, riverscape and snow-capped mountain range, we are unable to determine either the scale or specific contours of what we are seeing. In fact, they are not real places, but the inventions of an artist whose concern is a nature so mediated by prior representations that it can no longer be comprehended in a “natural” way. Even his titles—*Balentane*, *Albenast* and *Partinem*—are “fictions, like the images,” he wrote me in a recent email; the names carry the whiff of distant planets in a sci-fi novel.

Among the paintings Martin showed in a 2011 exhibition at Greenberg Van Doren in New York, he included a version of the birch forest; as in the other paintings there, drained of pigment and executed in sprayed acrylic with no trace of the hand, it was almost impossible to identify even the medium—it could have easily been a photographic screenprint. Here, the birch forest assembles itself via lightly dappled shadows, and appears as if seen through mist or snow. When you get close to each of the prints you are able to see the overlapping ink in tiny patches, making the entire-

ly indirect execution (he printed with Joe Freye at Tandem Press) feel oddly handmade by comparison with the earlier seamless paintings. The longer we look at all three prints, the more paradoxically coloristic they grow as well, with the white inks shading to silver and yellow. Indeed, their extreme opticality trumps the kind of subjective inner journey that one associates with the experience of the sublime, particularly in the American 19th-century painting. Cameron’s prints so effectively adumbrate.

At the Whitney Museum Independent Study Program, which he attended in 1996, Martin began his critique of the landscape tradition by appropriating and copying advertisements with unlocatable “magnificent” views; as time passed he began inventing his own generalized images, the essence of grand, unpopulated wildernesses. (Born in Seattle in 1970, he grew up in the shadow of the Cascade Mountain Range; the eruption of Mount St. Helens in 1980 was a formative experience.) His is the zero sum total of the tradition begun by Albert Bierstaedt and Thomas Moran, who invented “the West” through paintings that incorporated idealized views realized in the studio.

Martin’s imaginary views take into account the subsequent history of photography and media tropes, which he references in his paintings through bracketing and framing devices. Yet there is another aspect to his work, one that conditions their melancholy cast. Cool as they are, his mediated landscapes, with their distancing effects, cannot but remind us that we are no longer able to look at nature without experiencing a sense of loss, as environmental catastrophe looms. Gone is the nature that ultimately informed, generations of lives and images ago, these beautiful and chilling prints. ■ —Faye Hirsch