RSS 3

## C.G.BOERNER DEALERS IN FINE ART SINCE 1826

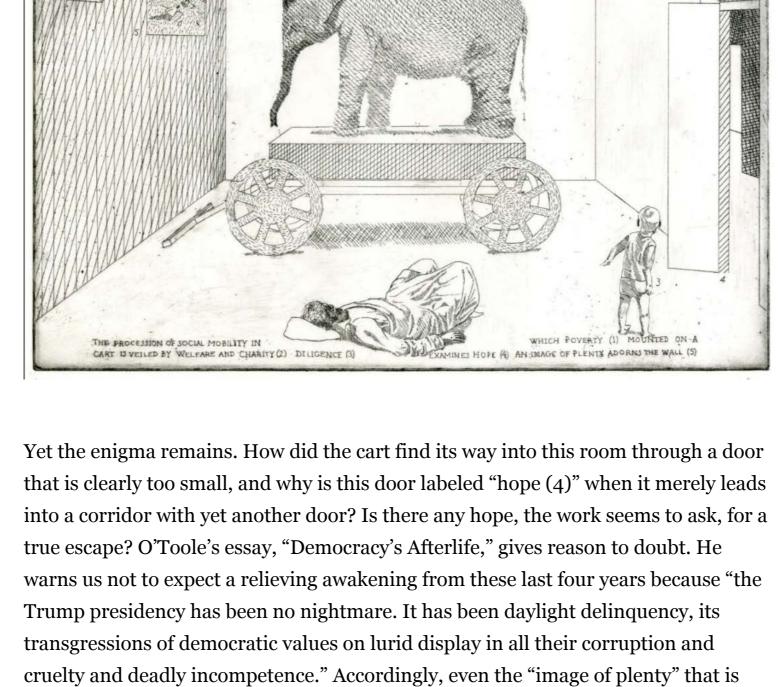
Distraction / Abwechslung

## 17 November 2020 When reading Fintan O'Toole's bitingly candid reckoning with Amercia's Republican

Party and its "zombie politics—the life-after-death of a former conservative party" in the current *New York Review of Books*, one encounters two etchings by the young British artist Alexander Massouras, both made in 2011.



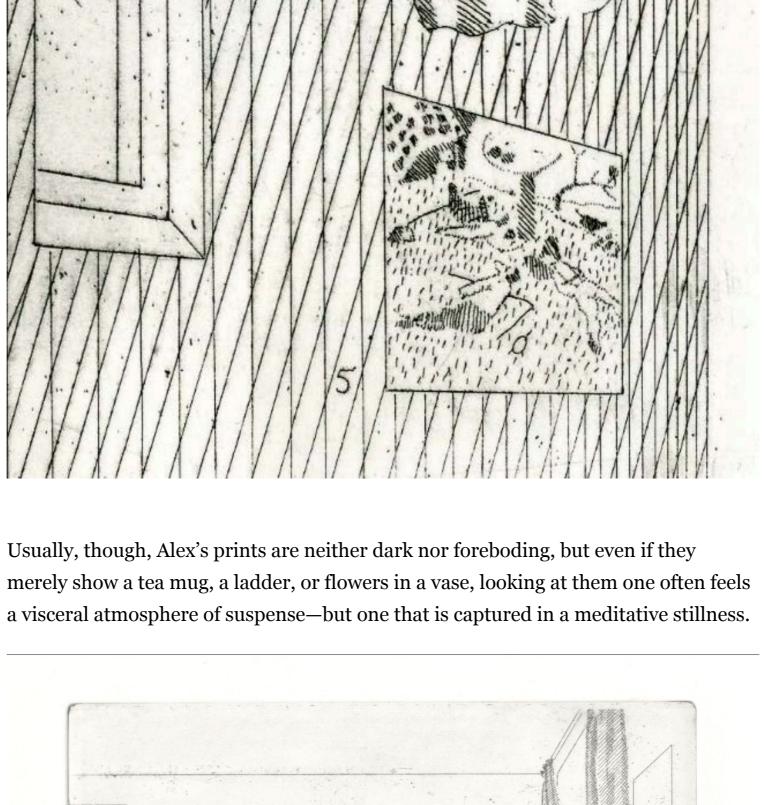
which poverty (1) mounted on a cart is veiled by welfare and charity (2) diligence (3) examines hope (4) an image of plenty adorns the wall (5)."



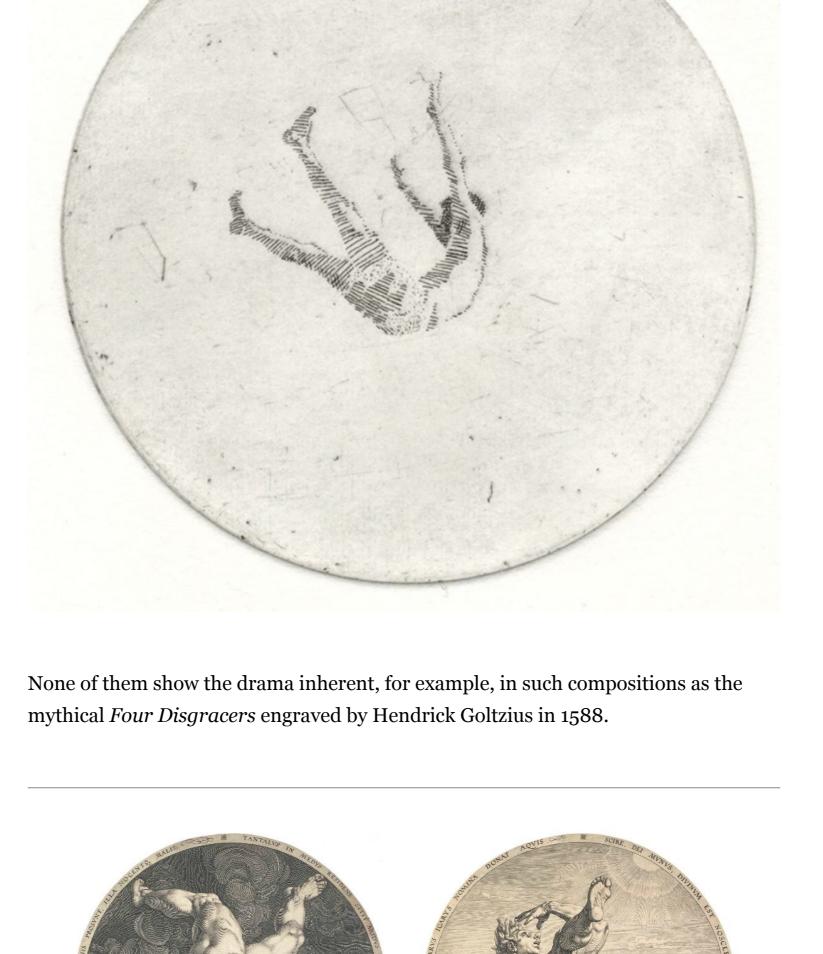
hanging on the wall to the left is hardly something to be wished for: it shows Pieter

of the spiritual emptiness that derives from gluttony and sloth.

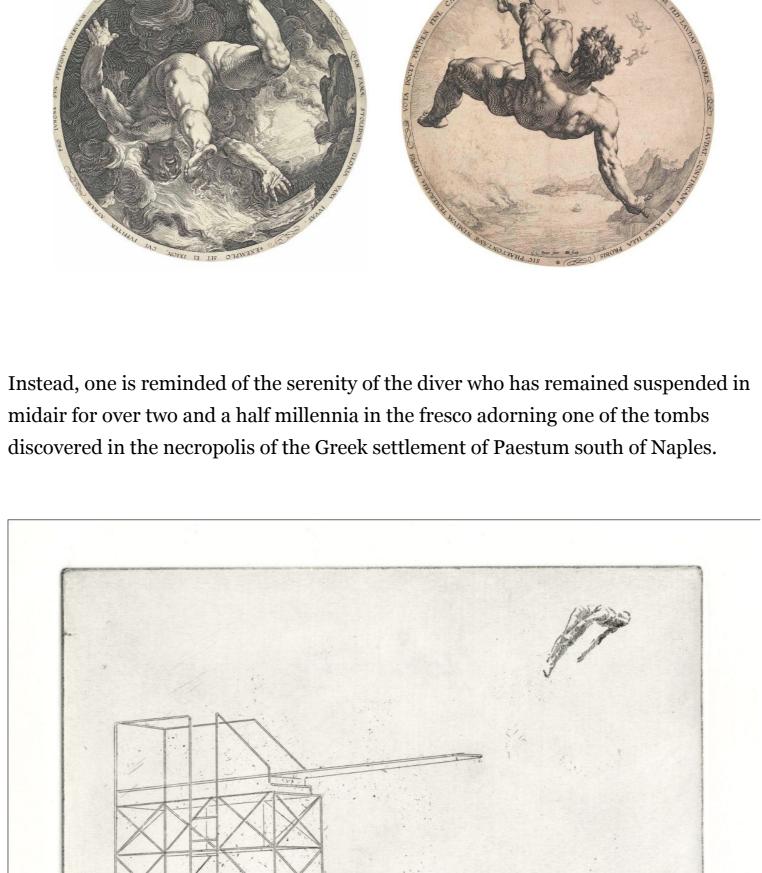
Bruegel's Land of Cockaigne (1567), long since its creation interpreted as an allegory

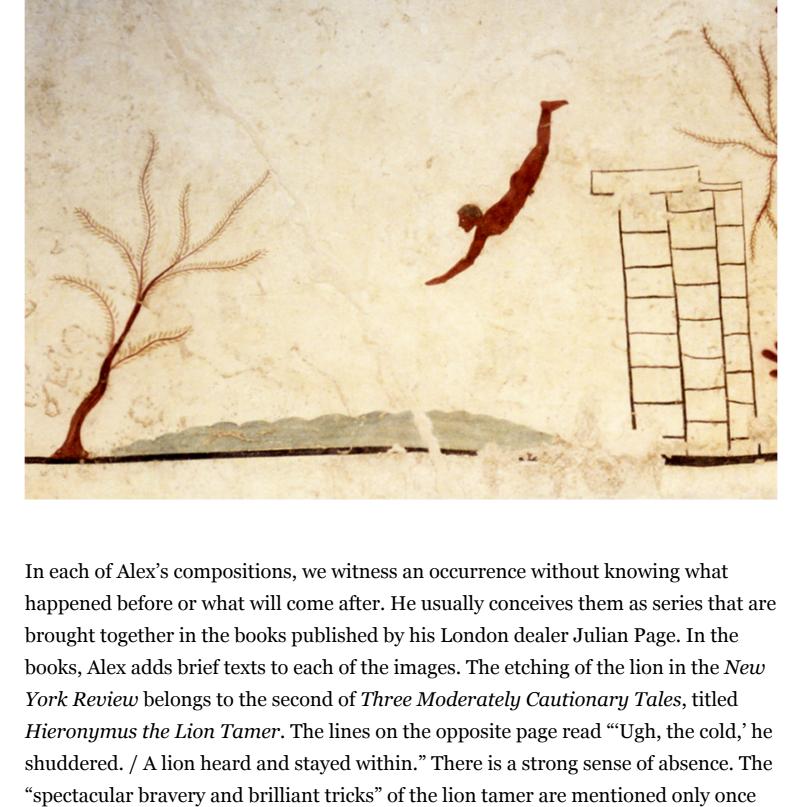


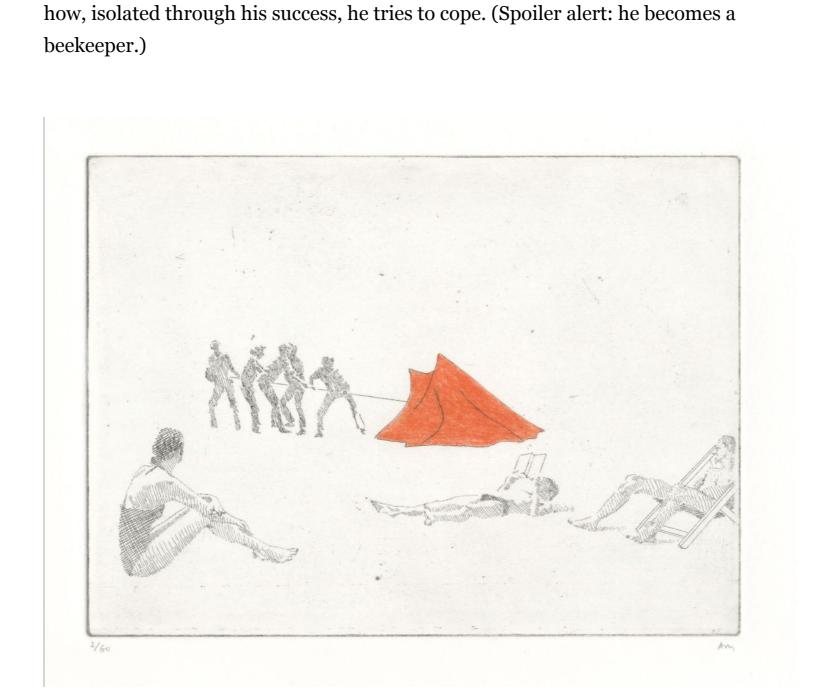
The same is true for his images of swimmers jumping from springboards into pools, of figures in free fall or tumbling down a manhole.



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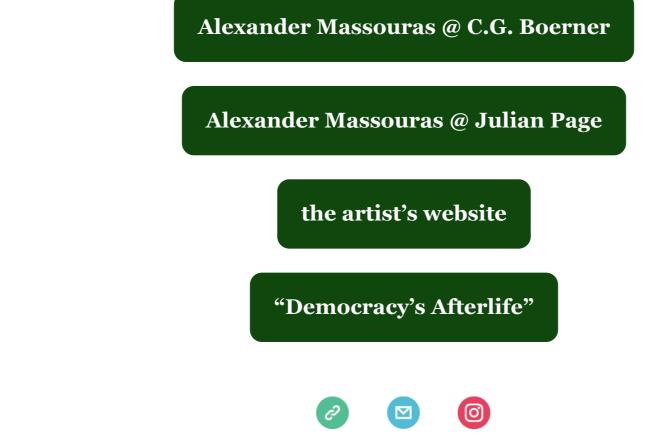


in the series and shown only on a poster, an image within the image. Yet since

Hieronymus's fearsomeness "frightened everything else away too," the story is about

His latest, not-yet-finished series *Late Work* is subtitled *New Narrative Experiments*, and this is indeed what all of Massouras's print projects are. While seemingly simple narratives, they are situated along the very edge of comprehensibility. They explore how stories can be formed through image and text, with each element adding a different perspective. The artist focuses on the inbetween; his true subject is the tension between the different media and how this gap can be calibrated in exactly the right way to be neither merely illustrative nor too broad to still be relatable.

Ultimately, Massouras's approach to image making creates an openness that lends itself to be used—rightly or wrongly—in ways beyond the loose confines of the artist's own narratives. In the context of O'Toole's essay, the etchings become metaphors but for what? Is the lion, if unhooked from the story of the lion tamer, a threat for those not watching their back? Or did the picture editors of the *Review* mean to imply that the scene's absurdity reflects, in a more general way, on the absurdity of the current government's incapacity to accept its defeat? Those who bother to listen to Trump will learn that "a fraud on the American public" was committed, since the only true public can be the one who voted for Trump. O'Toole comments on this by quoting Bertolt Brecht's famous poem The Solution, written after the failed uprising of East German workers on June 17, 1953. In it, the Secretary of the East German Writers' Union complains "that the people / Had forfeited the confidence of the government," which the poet counters with the question: "Would it not be easier / In that case for the government / To dissolve the people / And elect another?" So herein perhaps lies the solution to the problem faced by the man (still) sitting in the White House . . .



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