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DEALERS IN FINE ART SINCE 1826

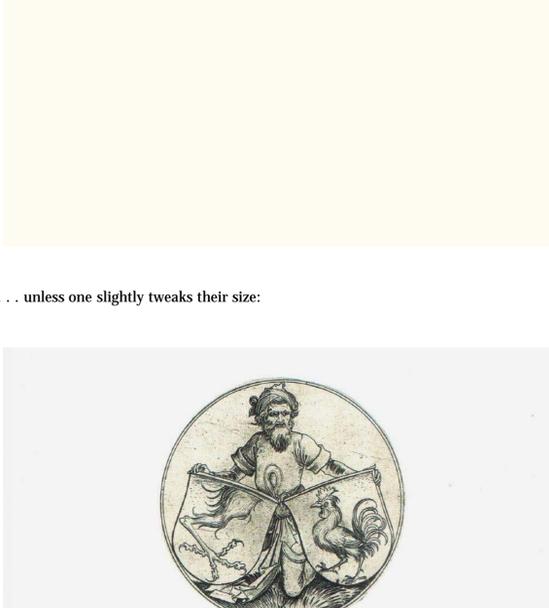
Distraction / Abwechslung
14 May 2021

Needless to say, we are all hoping to soon find ways to present works of art in person again. For now, however, another round of online fairs will have to do. On the upside, staying in the virtual realm means that we can attend more than one fair at the same time, and the fair running concurrently with the one organized by the IFPDA, will be, true to its original name, a real "satellite." We can therefore invite you to "stop by" both of these events.

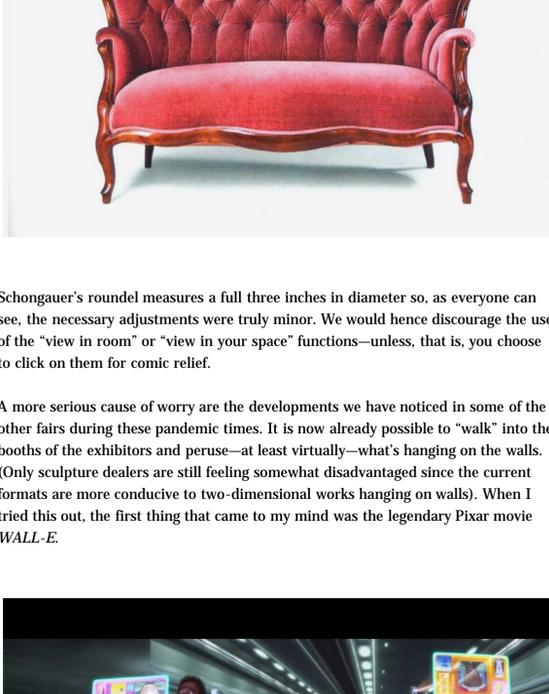
IFPDA Fair

NY Satellite Print Fair

That one platform might come with more bells and whistles is of little concern, given the nature—and more importantly the size—of our old master prints. As I have lamented before, this is how most of them present themselves in those "viewing rooms" . . .



. . . unless one slightly tweaks their size:

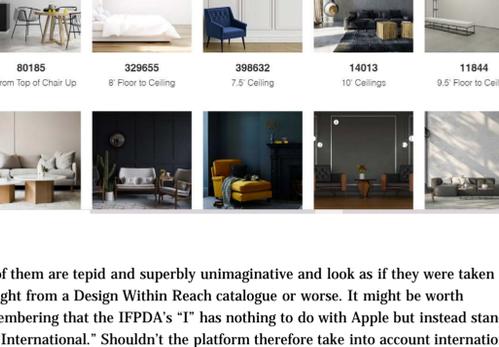


Schongauer's roundel measures a full three inches in diameter so, as everyone can see, the necessary adjustments were truly minor. We would hence discourage the use of the "view in room" or "view in your space" functions—unless, that is, you choose to click on them for comic relief.

A more serious cause of worry are the developments we have noticed in some of the other fairs during these pandemic times. It is now already possible to "walk" into the booths of the exhibitors and peruse—at least virtually—what's hanging on the walls. (Only sculpture dealers are still feeling somewhat disadvantaged since the current formats are more conducive to two-dimensional works hanging on walls). When I tried this out, the first thing that came to my mind was the legendary Pixar movie *WALL-E*.



Wouldn't it be rather dispiriting to think that all we can expect to do in the future is to look at images on colorful screens while we degrade into increasingly unfit humanoids? In the film, mankind has deserted an over-polluted Earth and drifts around in space on the cruise-spaceship *Axiom*. The only creature left behind on our home planet is said trash compactor *WALL-E* (which stands for Waste Allocation Load Lifter, Earth Class).



WALL-E is faithfully following its routines until, one fine day, it gets a visit from the Extra-Terrestrial Vegetation Evaluator *EVE*.

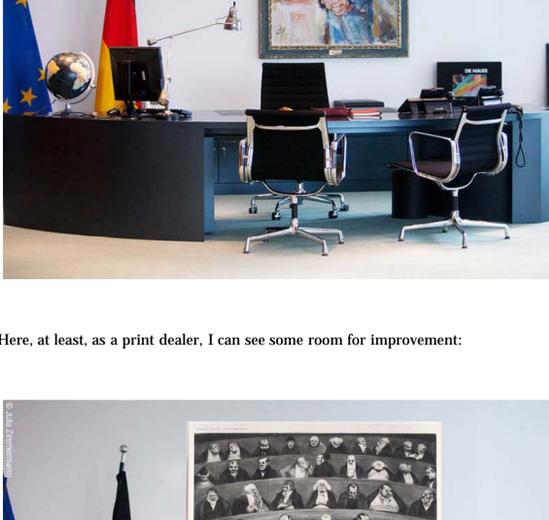


The movie came out in June of 2008, a year and a half after Apple had launched the first iPhone. By then the iPod had already been around for a full seven years. *EVE*'s shiny appearance, with a whiteness that suggests just a tad of transparency on the surface, can easily be seen as alluding to the slickness of those Apple gadgets (and their imitations) that have since become omnipresent in our lives.

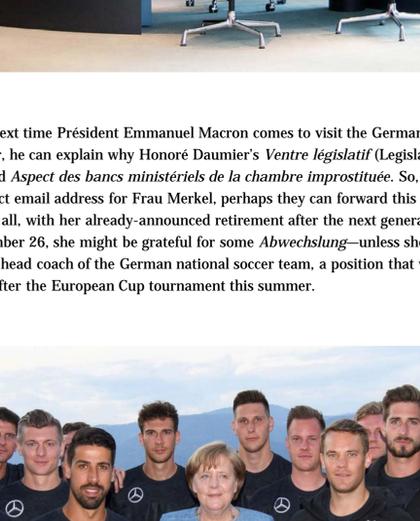
Of course, my sympathies as an old master print dealer are with the rusty trash compactor who is also a helpful reminder that not everything needs to be glossy, bland, and uniform. This idea would clearly be lost on the webmasters who designed the platform used for the current IFPDA fair. Take, for example, the choices they offer for the so-called "ArtPlacer Widget"—the backgrounds (or "predetermined spaces") that can be selected for the "view in room" function on the site:



All of them are tepid and superbly unimaginative and look as if they were taken straight from a Design Within Reach catalogue or worse. It might be worth remembering that the IFPDA's "I" has nothing to do with Apple but instead stands for "International." Shouldn't the platform therefore take into account international preferences for decorating our homes? Look, for instance, at the splendid grandeur of the French:



Or the cozily relaxed clutter of the English:



I have to confess, though, that I ran into some difficulties with my in-depth (albeit virtual) research for this missive when it came to my own countrymen. Try searching for a combination of the words "Interieur" and "deutsch"! This is what the Google algorithm comes up with:



Can it really be that the only interiors Germans like to decorate are the cabins of a *U-Boot*? Yet I was not ready to give up so easily and searched further until I ended up with a series of images titled *Interieur der Macht* (Interiors of Power). Among them was the office of Chancellor Angela Merkel—a rather aseptic modern affair, decorated with Oskar Kokoschka's portrait of *Altkanzler* Konrad Adenauer.

Here, at least, as a print dealer, I can see some room for improvement:

And the next time *Président Emmanuel Macron* comes to visit the German chancellor, he can explain why *Honoré Daumier's Ventre législatif* (Legislative Belly) is subtitled *Aspect des bancs ministériels de la chambre improstituée*. So, if anyone has a direct email address for *Frau Merkel*, perhaps they can forward this missive to her. After all, with her already-announced retirement after the next general election on September 26, she might be grateful for some *Abwechslung*—unless she takes on the job of head coach of the German national soccer team, a position that will need to be filled after the European Cup tournament this summer.

