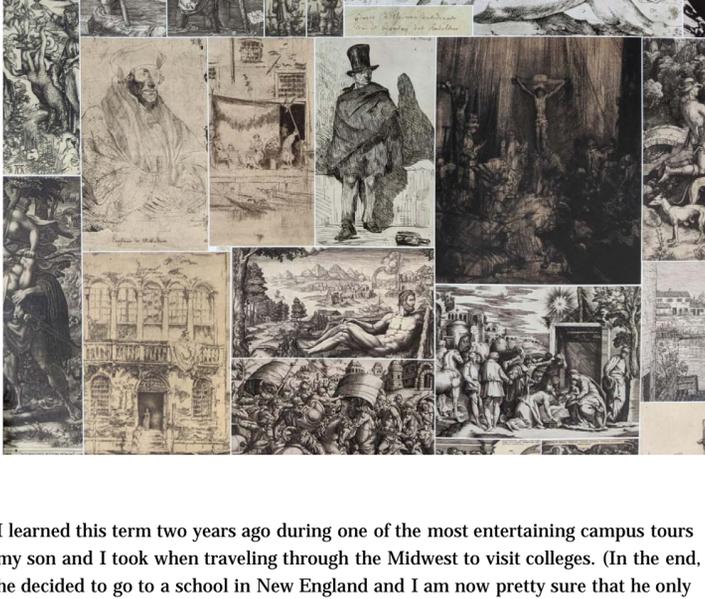


C. G. BOERNER

DEALERS IN FINE ART SINCE 1826

Distraction / Abwechslung
9 June 2021

I am not a synesthete, or at least I don't think I am. Synesthetes experience the stimulation of one sensory or cognitive pathway in a different one; one might, for example, perceive numbers or dates as precise locations in space. Recently, however, in the course of my move (which, to make it more palatable, I looked at as a very thorough spring cleaning), I came across an old poster. The first thing that came to my mind when seeing it again after nearly a decade was: "solid noise."



I learned this term two years ago during one of the most entertaining campus tours my son and I took when traveling through the Midwest to visit colleges. (In the end, he decided to go to a school in New England and I am now pretty sure that he only came along to watch some Major League Soccer games, visit the Iowa State Fair, and give his old dad an excuse to post lots of #lovethemidwest photos on Instagram.) So, there we were, in Oberlin, Ohio, as a slightly dorky but positively funny student led us through the grounds. (He was also cool enough to not feel the need to walk backward throughout the tour, as many campus tour guides do, and could therefore skip all the predictable jokes associated with it.) One of his many amusing stories was about Oberlin's student radio station and its quirks, the most distinctive being its utter unpredictability—especially late at night. The way he told it was that, at, say, 2 a.m. in the morning, one might hear an indie rock ballad only to then, without any transition, be shook up by "solid noise." While he did not elaborate further on what he meant by that, the term stuck with me. I imagined it (some synesthesia being at work already then) as a "wall of sound"—and *not* of the Phil Spector variety with all its layering, echo, and spill, as can be heard on albums from the Beach Boys to Abba and all the way through to the Bruce Springsteen of the *Born to Run* years. "Solid noise" made me think more of fortissimo passages in the music of György Ligeti or Karlheinz Stockhausen.

The poster that had triggered these associations was a color-accurate contract press proof for a catalogue we produced back in 2012, when we had the privilege to offer the print collection of New York collectors Rose-Helen and Goodwin Breinin. Back then, the only way to produce a decent catalogue was through offset printing, and the only way to truly check the quality of the illustrations was to order such a proof printed on the same press on which the catalogue is to be printed. It is time-consuming and, in turn, expensive. To keep the costs down, J.S. McCarthy Printers in Maine came up with a clever solution: they created a random montage of all the images (or at least of sections thereof) on *one* single matrix and ran that through their machines. We must have thought it cool enough to keep a few samples, and then came the college tour, and now here we are.

*

Inspired by this, we created some new montages, this time in a digital format. We thought they could serve as reminders that the online NY Satellite Fair is still open through the end of this week.



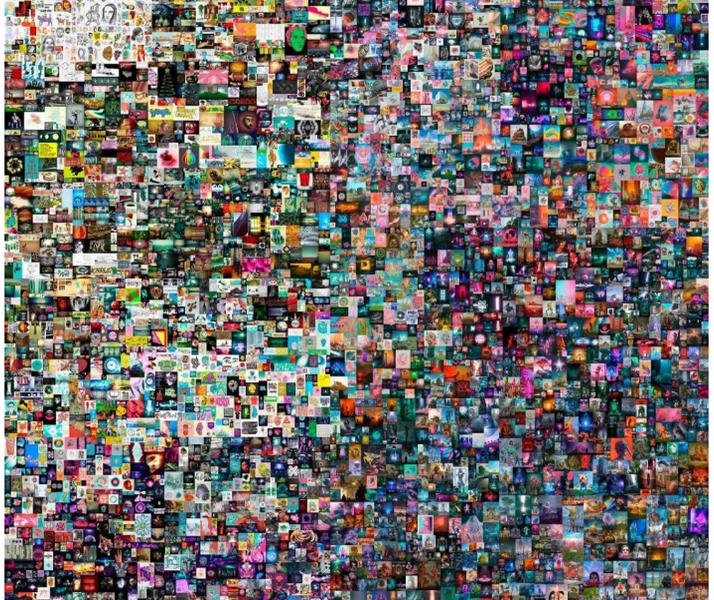
We hope, of course, that these walls of images won't overwhelm but entice.

NY Satellite Print Fair

And even if you were to perceive them as sounds, the choice—Beach Boys or Ligeti—is yours. After all, what is pleasurable for one person might be conceived as just "noise" by another.

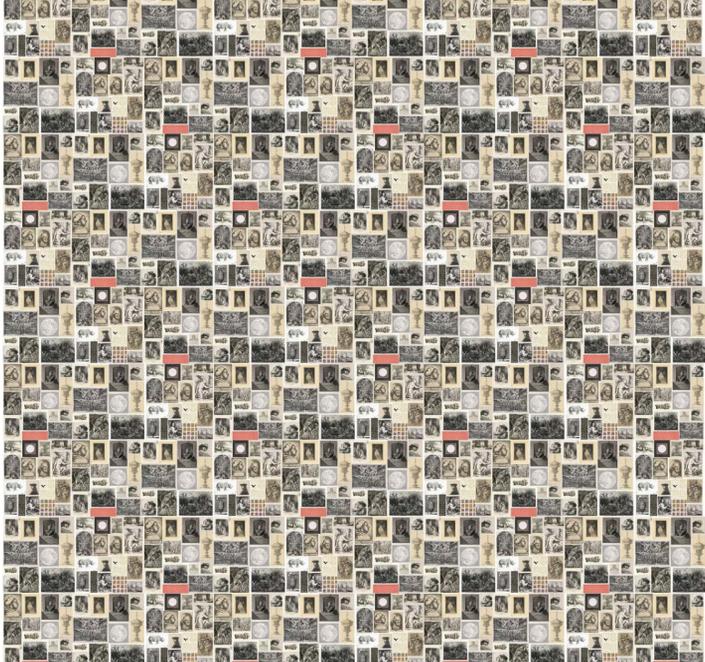


Diverting this *Distraction* one step further, I wonder if there are not parallels to be found in the visual structure between these old-mastery kaleidoscopes and some of the colorful pastiches that are lately selling as "nonfungible tokens" (NFTs).



Mike Winkelmann (aka Beeple; b. 1981), *Everydays: the First 5000 Days*, May 1, 2007 to February 21, 2011; the work's nonfungible authentication token could have been yours for US\$69 million

Practically anything digital—images, songs, short video clips of highlights from sporting events or piano-playing cats, perhaps even my distracting missives—can be encrypted by a digital code, thereby making them unique in a "nonfungible" way. That the image, video, or message can be endlessly copied and shared, does not seem to be of much concern, as long as there is an authenticating token. I can't help being reminded of the certificates that often come with the purchase of truly dreadful impressions of Rembrandt prints sold in fancy shopping malls or on cruise ships. The very official-looking certificate would usually state that what me, I am *buying* was an "early posthumous proof" of an original by the master (trust me, I am *not* making this up). Come to think of it, the poor and tired Rembrandt might actually still have at least *some* residual value when compared to an NFT. With the latter, it seems as if *all* its worth (and I am not even saying anything here about a possible aesthetic value) has shifted to the authenticating token, which is, in essence, not dissimilar to the certificate that accompanies the crappy cruise-ship Rembrandt.



Perhaps, instead of handling fine old master prints, we should start authenticating our image collages with blockchain tokens. Then, once we have found a way to fund our electricity bills (mining each token consumes a vast amount of energy), we would never again have to worry about the quality of impressions, let alone explain the multiple nature of prints.

