

C. G. BOERNER

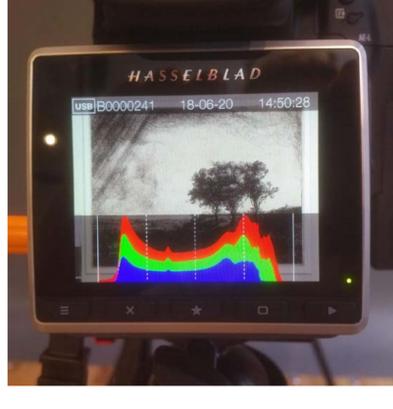
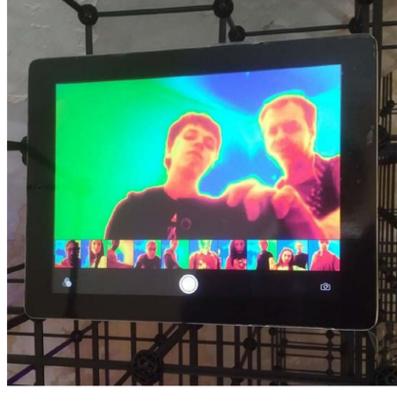
DEALERS IN FINE ART SINCE 1826

Distraction / Abwechslung
27 October 2021

Halloween is approaching soon, the evening before All Hallows' Day, when Christians pray for the recently-departed and honor their saints. The origins of All Hallows Eve are complex since they are intertwined with older, pagan traditions that celebrated the beginning of winter around that time of year.



When looking at the image-saturated world we live in today, it is worth remembering that prints played a very important part in its formation. One of their essential qualities is their replicability, from which follows a multiplicity that allowed for their wide dissemination. Even if this understanding of what a print is remains decidedly limited (Susan Tallman brilliantly demonstrated this in her lecture on "Printmaking in the Expanded Field," presented as part of this year's iteration of the IFPDA's Print Month), what remains beyond doubt is the fact that half a millennium after the invention of printmaking images are everywhere. Yet, these days, the overwhelming majority of them glimmers on luminous sheets of glass, and their warm glow can only partially make up for their lack of materiality.



That's where a recourse to non-digital manifestations of art comes in, not just to prints but also to drawings, paintings, sculptures, objects—to everything that still maintains a physical presence.



a recreation of Rembrandt's *Kunstkamer* in the Rembrandthuis, Amsterdam

But what does this have to do with Halloween? Well, when reading about the feast's history, I came across a footnote suggesting that during the Middle Ages the poorer churches, those that did not own any relics of martyred saints, encouraged parishioners to stand in for them, to dress up as saints and walk through the streets. This is how the costumes must have come in. And thinking along these lines: aren't our post-Romantic, aura-infused artworks the descendants of those relics, only now venerated not through prayers but with money? This, in turn, would make us art dealers colleagues of Brother Tetzl whose hawking of indulgences so enraged Martin Luther.



how Luther saw the Roman Church's commercialization of Salvation
(detail from a hand-colored woodcut by Lucas Cranach the Younger, ca. 1545)

Looking at our relationship to images from the perspective of the history of religion, what else are we if not the heirs to the medieval peddlers in promises of salvation? Consequently, in this age of the immateriality of the image, the downloading of a high-resolution JPEG from a museum's website could be seen as the equivalent to dressing up for Halloween. For anyone interested in acquiring pieces from the true cross, however, this brief musing is meant as a reminder that the two marketplaces that are currently offering such pieces in myriad forms and for a wide range of prices are coming to an end this Sunday, October 31, on the night of Halloween ...

IFPDA Fine Art Print Fair

New York Satellite Print Fair

