

Martin Boyce: When Now is Night, October 2, 2015-January 31, 2016

This is the first solo exhibition in an American museum of the work of Glasgow-based artist Martin Boyce (Scottish, b. 1967.) A survey of sculpture, installations, and photographs from throughout the artist's career, *When Now is Night* demonstrates how Boyce reinterprets or transforms iconic examples of 20th-century design and everyday phenomena to explore the psychological, social, and emotional dynamics of our relationships to the objects and buildings that surround us.

Boyce is internationally recognized for his thoughtful, restrained reflections on the contemporary experience of modern art, architecture, and design. He was awarded Britain's coveted Turner Prize in 2011 and represented Scotland at the 2009 Venice Biennale, and since the late 1990s his work has been exhibited in numerous solo museum presentations and group exhibitions.

The exhibition is accompanied by *Martin Boyce: When Now is Night*, a fully illustrated catalog co-published by Princeton Architectural Press and the RISD Museum, featuring texts by the artist; Dominic Molon, exhibition curator and Richard Brown Baker Curator of Contemporary Art at the RISD Museum; critic and curator Russell Ferguson; and British artist John Stezaker.

CHECKLIST OF THE EXHIBITION

Martin Boyce
Scottish, b. 1967
Chair (Noir), 1999
Gelatin silver print
Collection of Shawn & Brook Byers TL116.2015

These two related works recall how chairs—particularly as seen in the intensely dramatic film-noir movies of the 1940s and 1950s—can be used to barricade doors, providing protection from potentially violent intruders. Here, Boyce has made a practical modification which allows the chair to be adjusted to accommodate various door-handle heights. Both *Chair (Noir)* works develop Boyce's consideration of the more sinister or ominous implications of everyday situations or phenomena.



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Martin Boyce
Scottish, b. 1967
Chair (Noir), 1999
Powder-coated steel, lacquered plywood
Collection of Edmund Hubbard TL130.2015

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Martin Boyce
Scottish, b. 1967
Now I've Got Worry (Storage Unit) 1, 1997
Nickel-plated steel, birch plywood, plastic laminate, painted plywood
Mackert Collection TL131.2015.1

Here Boyce refabricated a 1950s storage unit designed by Charles and Ray Eames, replacing the refined original plywood panels with rough sections of board, including a sign that reads GO HOME THERE IS NOTHING 2SEE, copied from a sign held aloft in a crowd gathered before O.J. Simpson's 1995 murder trial.



Now I've Got Worry (Storage unit) 1 addresses the disparity between the idealism of 20th-century modernist design—which proposed to improve the world through simplified forms—and the complicated realities that exist within or as a result of that idealism. For example, low-income urban housing projects built on these principles quickly became associated with substandard living conditions and rampant criminal activity. This work also reflects on middle-class paranoia, and on the gated communities prevalent in suburban America.

Martin Boyce
Scottish, b. 1967
Interiors, 1992
Chromogenic development prints
Courtesy of the artist and The Modern Institute/Toby Webster Ltd,
Glasgow TL132.2015.4

These four images isolate empty interior spaces in the 1985 crime thriller *Jagged Edge* to suggest how familiar architectural structures can become ominous when viewed or presented from a certain perspective—for example, the point of the killer in a movie. Created

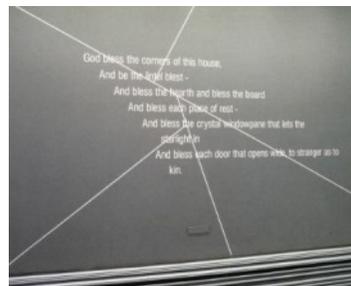


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at the beginning of Boyce's career, *Interiors* provides an early indication of the central role that the psychological dynamics of the built environment would play in his subsequent work.

Martin Boyce
Scottish, b. 1967
House Blessing (from the White Album by Joan Didion 1979), 1999
Wall painting
Gift of the artist and The Modern Institute/Toby Webster Ltd
2015.66

This work features a prayer sometimes embroidered and displayed in traditional American homes. The text, as discussed by Joan Didion in her classic book of essays *The White Album* (1979), evokes the sense of protection and security that for many Americans was shattered by the home invasions and murders perpetrated in 1969 by Charles Manson and his followers. Boyce's placement of the house blessing within jagged lines resembling a broken window prompts a reflection on how familiar spaces can become compromised, strange, and even threatening.



Martin Boyce
Scottish, b. 1967
When Now is Night, 2002
Fluorescent light fittings, plywood, powder-coated and lacquered
MDF, altered Series 7 Jacobsen chair parts, silkscreened wallpaper
Private collection, Europe TL129.2015

When Now is Night comprises two separate installations with various components, including a suspended network of fluorescent lights in the shape of spiderweb, accompanied by a mask sculpture, a modified storage cabinet, and wallpaper endlessly repeating the grid-like facades of modern office buildings and skyscrapers. These objects collectively suggest how positive aspects of contemporary life such as structure, order, and light possess the potential to become threatening, especially within an urban setting.



Martin Boyce
Scottish, b. 1967
Disappear Here, 1999
Gelatin silver prints
Courtesy of the artist and The Modern Institute/Toby Webster Ltd,
Glasgow TL132.2015.1



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I come to a red light, tempted to go through it, then stop once I see a billboard sign that I don't remember seeing and I look up at it. All it says is "Disappear Here" and even though it's probably an ad for some resort, it still freaks me out a little and I step on the gas really hard and the car screeches as I leave the light.

--Bret Easton Ellis, *Less Than Zero*

The title of this work is taken from Bret Easton Ellis's 1985 novel *Less Than Zero*. Ellis depicts dysfunctional and disturbing scenes in 1980s Los Angeles, whereas Boyce's multi-part work features fragmentary texts and imaginary locations suggesting a range of psychologically charged associations. Various images incorporate a grid-like graphic inspired by Saul Bass's opening credits for Alfred Hitchcock's 1959 film *North by Northwest*. This pattern reappears in the wallpaper portion of Boyce's 2002 work *When Now is Night*, presented at the beginning of this exhibition.

Martin Boyce

Scottish, b. 1967

Concrete Autumn (Phantom Tree), 2005

Gelatin silver print, painted wood frame

Courtesy of The Stolbun Collection PTL96.2017.2

Since the mid-2000s, much of Boyce's work has featured motifs and details inspired by the concrete trees Art Deco designers Jan and Joël Martel created for the 1925 Exhibition of Decorative Arts in Paris. The title *Concrete Autumn (Phantom Tree)* suggests how the translation of the organic into the man-made and geometric reflects the alteration and destruction of nature in the modern era, and also evokes the way the Martel concrete trees "reappear" in this work.



Martin Boyce

Scottish, b. 1967

Between the Airport and the Beach, 2013

Jesmonite, painted wood, veneered MDF, brass, painted steel

Private Collection TL113.2015

Between the Airport and the Beach, like Boyce's other works in Jesmonite, possesses the qualities of both sculpture and painting and conveys the sense of an urban setting. By removing a hexagonal section of the surface and inserting layers of different shapes, colors, and textures, Boyce evokes abstract paintings and the openings in our built environment, including boarded-up windows. The shape of the keyhole in the work matches that of the large hole in the panel; both apertures suggest the style and sensibility of the Martel concrete trees found in other works in the exhibition.



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Martin Boyce

Scottish, b. 1967

Fear Meets the Soul, 2008

Steel, powdered-coated steel, acrylic paint, altered Eames plywood leg splint

Courtesy of the artist; Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York; and The Modern Institute / Toby Webster Ltd, Glasgow TL114.2015.1



Martin Boyce

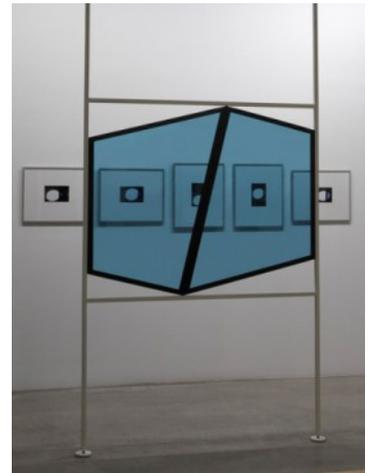
Scottish, b. 1967

The Sun-Comprehending Glass, 2013

Steel, glass, colored plastic gel

Courtesy of the artist; Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York; and The Modern Institute / Toby Webster Ltd, Glasgow TL114.2015.2

These works explore the window as a structural and material presence that “disappears” because of its transparency. By placing panes of glass within a simple metal framework and tinting them blue, the artist calls attention to them as objects capable of simultaneously occupying and revealing space.



Martin Boyce

Scottish, b. 1967

And Beyond It, The Deep Blue Air, 2013

Steel, glass, colored plastic gel

Courtesy of the artist; Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York; The Modern Institute / Toby Webster Ltd, Glasgow TL114.2015.3

These works explore the window as a structural and material presence that “disappears” because of its transparency. By placing panes of glass within a simple metal framework and tinting them blue, the artist calls attention to them as objects capable of simultaneously occupying and revealing space.



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Martin Boyce
Scottish, b. 1967
Now I've Got Worry (Mask and L-Bar), 1997-1998
Plywood, chromed steel
Courtesy of the artist TL115.2015



Martin Boyce
Scottish, b. 1967
A Raft in the Roof, 2009
Steel, galvanized steel, chain-link, powder-coated aluminum, steel chain, electrical components
Collection of Jill & Peter Kraus TL117.2015

This work was included as part of a larger installation, *No Reflections*, the artist created for the Scottish Pavilion at the 2009 Venice Biennale. Like other works in that exhibition and this one, the design and composition of *A Raft in the Roof* is inspired by Jan and Joël Martel's concrete trees, presented in the 1925 Exhibition of Decorative Arts. Here Boyce has provided those historical forms—which now only exist in photographs—with a material afterlife of sorts, creating an evocative scene in which we might envision ourselves or others.



Martin Boyce
Scottish, b. 1967
Anatomy (for Saul Bass), 2003
Powder-coated steel, Jacobsen series 7 and Ant chairs
Courtesy of Ugo Rondinone TL118.2015

The structure of *Anatomy (for Saul Bass)* echoes Saul Bass's poster for *Anatomy of a Murder*, with parts of Jacobsen Series 7 and Ant chairs similarly evoking a human figure broken into segments. The connection to the body is further underscored by the chair's function in supporting the human form.



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Martin Boyce
Scottish, b. 1967
Mask (For 1056 Endless Heights), 2007
Altered Jacobsen Series 7 chair parts, nickel-plated steel
Private Collection TL119.2015



Martin Boyce
Scottish, b. 1967
Night Tulip, 2009
Altered Eames plywood leg splints, brass, cardboard, MDF, acrylic
paint
Collection of Lisa Roumell and Mark Rosenthal TL120.2015

This work incorporates a mask Boyce fashioned from a portion of a plywood leg splint designed by Charles and Ray Eames in 1942 for the U.S. Navy. The Eames splint, originally celebrated for its functionality, has become prized as an elegant representation of midcentury modern design.

Night Tulip explores the multiple meanings that masks possess in contemporary culture, from use as protective guards for the face to associations with the rituals of non-Western peoples to the dehumanization of malevolent figures in horror films and television shows.



Martin Boyce
Scottish, b. 1967
We Pass But We Never Touch, 2003
Powder-coated steel, Jacobsen Series 7 and Ant chairs
Boros Collection TL126.2015



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Martin Boyce
Scottish, b. 1967
The Breeze in the Branches, 2013
Painted and rusted steel, weathered Jesmonite, galvanized and weathered steel
Margot and George Greig TL128.2015



Martin Boyce
Scottish, b. 1967
Black Screen, 2000
Powder-coated steel and aluminum
Mackert Collection TL131.2015.2



Martin Boyce
Scottish, b. 1967
Evaporated Pools, 2009
Paraffin-coated crepe paper
Courtesy of the artist and The Modern Institute/Toby Webster Ltd,
Glasgow; Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York; and Galerie Eva
Presenhuber, Zurich TL132.2015.2



The accumulation of these fabricated leaves suggests the gallery space has been breached by the elements of the outside world; their presence also underscores Boyce's interest in the synthesis of the natural and the constructed in modern culture. Despite the leaves' stylized design, they bear an uncanny resemblance to their organic counterparts, making their appearance in the museum space alternately strange and strangely unsurprising.

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Martin Boyce

Scottish, b. 1967

Last Hours of Evening Light, 2015

Painted aluminum, cement fondue, painted and stained steel, brass wire

Courtesy of the artist and The Modern Institute / Toby Webster Ltd, Glasgow TL132.2015.3

Inspired by a fireplace mantel in a house designed in the 1960s by eccentric Italian architect Carlo Mollino, *Last Hours of Evening Light* recalls numerous representations of fireplace mantels in fine art and popular culture. These associations include the hearth's signification of comfort, tradition, and domestic bliss, and the fireplace as a portal to imaginary places and situations.



Martin Boyce

Scottish, b. 1967

Ventilation Grills (for a house in the woods), 2010

Acid-etched brass, brass screws

Courtesy the artist; Galerie Eva Presenhuber, Zurich; and The Modern Institute / Toby Webster Ltd, Glasgow TL133.2015

Ventilation Grills (for a house in the woods) quietly introduces an ordinary domestic object into the gallery space to suggest the significance of details that remain hidden from plain view. The abstract pattern in this work, derived from the Martel tree motif featured in other works throughout the exhibition, changes subtly and almost imperceptibly from one grill to the next. Discreetly placed throughout the space, the grills prompt a consideration of architecture as a living, breathing entity, and reveal the otherwise hidden parts of a building.



Martin Boyce

Scottish, b. 1967

Fall, 2012

Jesmonite, steel

Private Collection, Munich TL134.2015

In 2009 Boyce began using Jesmonite, a cement-like industrial material, to create works that, like *Fall*, blur distinctions between painting and sculpture. Here the Jesmonite surface evokes concrete walls and shuttered windows while the steel text—rendered in a typeface Boyce developed in response to the Martel concrete trees—prompts consideration of the different meanings of the word fall, from the physical action of falling to associations with the season of the year.

