

IKON

Exhibition Guide

Martin Boyce *Out Of This Sun, Into This Shadow*

30 July – 14 September 2008

First Floor Galleries

Born in Glasgow in 1967, Martin Boyce is interested in urban landscape. For Ikon, the artist has created a series of new sculptures presented alongside recent pieces never before seen in the UK. These transform the interconnecting gallery spaces into “a place out of time”, poetically recalling the stark beauty and potential menace of conventional public areas; for example, the playground or pedestrian subway. Drawing on the iconography and fabrication of classic Modernist design for individual works, the installation evokes a dreamlike space. Boyce invites us to consider the lives of these objects now estranged from their natural habitats — the extent to which they are informed by their original context and manufacture, and alternative lives they might lead in different circumstances.

On entering the first room, *Untitled (Pillar)* (2007) provides a key motif for the exhibition overall. Inspired by a photograph found in a book on French Modernist gardens, an image of four concrete trees created by Joël and Jan Martel for the 1925 Exposition des Arts Décoratifs in Paris, this structure connecting floor to ceiling, ‘disappears’ into the architecture of the gallery. According to Boyce, the Martel brothers’ original design “represents a perfect collapse of architecture and nature” and is thereby emblematic of his ongoing exploration of opposing elements within contemporary urban culture: the natural versus the constructed, the populated versus the uninhabited, and the old versus the new.

This tree design is seen again in adjacent screen prints framed in steel. Read as advertising hoardings, the deliberately faded and mis-registered printing adds to the strangely familiar yet eerie atmosphere of the room. The images contain a fluid text giving the exhibition its title, *Out Of This Sun, Into This Shadow*, evocative of a place both comforting and threatening. Such ambiguity also characterises *For 1959 Capital Avenue (While you are waiting things are changing shape)* (2002), two chair-like forms and a table structure, and *Ventilation Grills (Around Every Corner)* (2006), a series of three acid-etched brass panels. Together these works allude to some kind

of interior, real or imagined, which becomes a point of departure for our associative thoughts, a waiting room for a voyage with destinations unknown.

Moving through into the next room, a darkened, uninhabited landscape is suggested. Here new works – screens in galvanised steel – act as discarded barriers. Twisted, apparently damaged, their surface weathered; fragments of a T-shirt, a tubular chair frame and perforated steel forming a mask, are caught in their structure as if wind blown and neglected. Heightening this sense of disturbance, is the light emitted from other work nearby, linear objects reminiscent of a collision between a pivoting wall lamp – a 50s design masterpiece by Jean Prouvé – and the unravelling framework of a door-sized gate frame. *Broken Fall (That Blows Through Concrete Leaves)* (2007), a text in burnished brass interspersed with shaded lights, provides illumination literally through a fractured narrative. Individual letters are positioned across a wall, abstract shapes like some archaic runic form. Low down throughout the room is *Ventilation Grills (Our Breath and This Breeze)* (2007), a second series of brass panels that suggest a threshold connecting the galleries to a notional outside. Their filigree pattern references that of Boyce's abandoned screens and *Untitled (Pillar)*, blackened areas providing clues to the origin of the typography used to create his text works during the past few years.

In the final room, open to daylight, the intriguing story continues. Any shift towards a more optimistic mood, due to the change in lighting, however is contradicted by the work found here. *We climb inside and everything else disappears* (2004), a powder-coated steel tubing structure, reminiscent of an upturned sun lounger, a yellow hose jammed into the seat, suggests an object unnecessary or irrelevant in an alien world it now occupies. This disjointedness is hinted at further by a new piece reminiscent of a dysfunctional telephone booth; its pristine external surfaces are in sharp contrast with an interior disfigured by spray can graffiti. It is an object that doesn't sit comfortably in its present place, and, as such bears out a preoccupation that informs all of Martin Boyce's work, as he himself explains,

I like the idea that these objects are not for here as such, they're for a future location, or from a former location, so it becomes about the time surrounding the object as much as the object itself, as if the object has had a life, or will have a life. That's what interests me, the narrative that might surround things.