

#10.0 Just Beyond the Undertow Martin Boyce

01.11 2019 – 01.03 2020

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Convent presents *Just Beyond the Undertow*, a solo exhibition by Scottish artist Martin Boyce (1967, Hamilton). In his work Boyce regularly researches the visual language of modernist architecture and design, especially intrigued by how the meaning of iconic designs changes over time. He thus focuses on historic furniture pieces of famous designers such as Arne Jacobsen, Charles and Ray Eames, Carlo Scarpa and Charlotte Perriand, which he takes out of their original context (and related ideology) and gives them new meaning in an altered form. In his exhibitions Boyce often brings different sculptural elements together into installations reminiscent of urban locations like parks or neglected playgrounds. Although instantly recognizable, these places remain to keep an imaginary and dreamlike character, as if they are a representation of something that has now been lost. Likewise in *Just Beyond the Undertow* the artist brings together a selection of existing sculptures (2003–2018) in a custom installation for the exhibition space complemented with some new works.

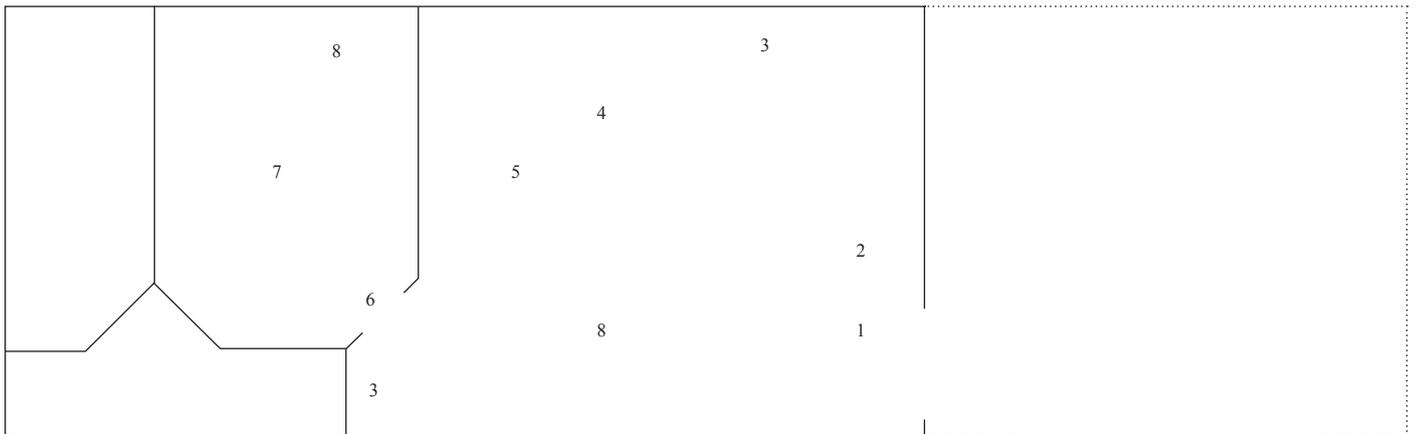
Centrally the exhibition features a number of recently made mobiles, a series of works made of steel hanging from the ceiling using chains and also containing some small metal lanterns. On the one hand these sculptures, made by the artist since 2001, seem to formally reference the colourful mobiles of the American sculptor Alexander Calder, while the chains and the characteristic lanterns on the other hand suggest the artist's interest in Oriental culture. The specific shape of the light fixtures is based on a self-developed geometrical form language that since 2005 has been regularly appearing in his work through various guises. In that year Boyce came into contact with an historic image of four concrete casted trees, which were created by French sculptors (and twin brothers) Jan and Joël Martel in 1925, on the occasion of the World's fair

that took place in Paris under the name *Exposition internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels modernes*. These abstract trees, according to Boyce “a perfect collapse of architecture and nature”, were conceived for the garden of the Pavillon du Tourisme, designed by French avant-garde architect Robert Mallet-Stevens. Based on the contours of these Cubist geometric trees Boyce developed a completely new visual language, from which he even formed his own typography.

Similarly, the paper objects strewn across the floor of both rooms are based on the visual imagery stemming from the design of the Martel trees. The title of this collection of carefully designed, cut and folded leaves, *Evaporated Pools*, insinuates that the exhibition space is a dried-up swimming place of which the water recently evaporated or was stopped being replenished. The leaves have previously been shown together with a group of works he put together in 2009 under the title *No Reflections*, in the framework of the 53rd Venice Biennale. The installation in the 15th century Palazzo Pisani was reminiscent of a secret abandoned garden scene where the artist merged together interior and exterior, which induced an enhanced sense of alienation. Later on the paper objects were also part of his large-scale installation *Do Words Have Voices*, a kind of urban park in the fall, for which Boyce received the prestigious Turner Prize in 2011. The tranquil scene is completed by *Daybed Frame (you wake up somewhere outside)*, a steel bed whose design is inspired by the branching pattern of two trees and a hanging lamp that like the other mobiles gives no light. After all, the light fixture of *Dead Star (Sorrow)* has been cast in bronze thus making it impossible for a lamp to illuminate. Likewise the accompanying bronze electric outlet fails to fulfil its purpose and contributes to the lonely, abandoned atmosphere of the space.

His continuing fascination with abandoned or even disused sites is also evident in the small space of Convent, an exhibition space located itself in the gymnasium of a former convent school. Especially for this room, the artist designed a chair that barricades the door so the interior can be seen only through a steel frame. Next to the chair is *Alone On The Water*, a work that, just as the dried leaves at some time floated on the surface of water, seems to be suggesting the absence of water. In combination with the fallen leaves the artist creates a scene that is taking place neither inside nor outside, but seems to be frozen in memory, time and space.

Martin Boyce lives and works in Glasgow. He studied at the Glasgow School of Art and the California Institute for the Arts (CalArts) in Los Angeles in the 1990s. He is currently a professor at the Hochschule für bildende Künste (HfbK) in Hamburg. In 2009 he represented Scotland at the 53rd Venice Biennale with the solo presentation *No Reflections* at the Palazzo Pisani and in 2011 he received the Turner Prize for his installation *Do Words Have Voices*, exhibited at The Baltic Center for Contemporary Art in Gateshead. *Just Beyond the Undertow* is the first solo exhibition of Martin Boyce in Belgium.



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| <p>1) <i>Before The Leaves</i>, 2016
Blackened galvanised steel, blackened nickel plated steel, painted steel, chain
Courtesy the artist and Esther Schipper, Berlin</p> <p>2) <i>Untitled</i>, 2019
Blackened galvanised steel, blackened nickel plated steel, painted steel, chain
Courtesy the artist and The Modern Institute, Toby Webster Ltd, Glasgow</p> <p>3) <i>Dead Star (Sorrow)</i>, 2016
Painted steel, blackened steel, cast and painted bronze, cast bronze
Courtesy the artist and Esther Schipper, Berlin</p> <p>4) <i>Daybed Frame (you wake up somewhere outside)</i>, 2003
steel, cushion
Courtesy the artist and The Modern Institute, Toby Webster Ltd, Glasgow</p> | <p>5) <i>Untitled</i>, 2016
Blackened galvanised steel, blackened nickel plated steel, painted steel, chain
Courtesy the artist and The Modern Institute, Toby Webster Ltd, Glasgow</p> <p>6) <i>Just Beyond the Undertow</i>, 2019
Steel
Courtesy the artist and The Modern Institute, Toby Webster Ltd, Glasgow</p> <p>7) <i>Alone On The Water</i>, 2018
Painted wood, painted and stained steel, brass chain, brass, dyed fringing
Courtesy the artist and Esther Schipper, Berlin</p> <p>8) <i>Evaporated Pools</i>, 2009
Paraffin coated crepe paper
Courtesy the artist and The Modern Institute, Toby Webster Ltd, Glasgow</p> |
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Many thanks to the artist, Scarlett Williams (Studio Martin Boyce), Esther Schipper (Berlin), The Modern Institute (Glasgow), Tom Berden (TB Engineering), Woningbouw Merckaert (Geraardsbergen) and Pauline Scharmman. With the generous support of Mobull, the City of Ghent and Duvel Moortgat.

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