

PRESS RELEASE

Martin Boyce
The Stars Are Out

June 3 – July 22, 2023

Opening on Friday, June 2, 6 – 9 pm

Artist talk with Martin Boyce and Christian Kobald, 7 – 8 pm

Lichtenfelsgasse 5, A-1010 Vienna

Galerie Eva Presenhuber is pleased to present *The Stars Are Out*, the gallery's fifth exhibition with the Scottish artist Martin Boyce.

"There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy."

—William Shakespeare, Act 1 Scene 5, Hamlet

For his first solo exhibition in Vienna, the Glasgow-based, Turner Prize-winning (2011) artist Martin Boyce further elaborates on a reductive visual repertoire that consolidates aspects of architecture and design within the tenets of modernist production, repetition, and seriality. Consistently throughout his career, Boyce has used an economy of means to produce sculptural tableaux that distill and transform these structures into self-contained vessels of refinement. They underscore the shapes and patterns that surround us to the point of invisibility. With balletic precision, the twin poles of literary imagination and constructive pragmatism infuse Boyce with the power to distill the quintessence of an object. His playful material engagement with the components of high design belies his innovative solution to sculptural display in the manner of Carlo Scarpa, and Diego Giacometti, right on up to Wiener Werkstätte, and Franz West. In his installative stagings, form follows function; function segues into allegory suggesting a lapse in linear order. The minimal is there. Patterns intersect and repeat, unusual juxtapositions align, a low-tech logic ensues.

With such parameters in mind, Boyce has produced two distinct new bodies of interconnected works. An easel / armature displays the original woodblock that is the starting point for the new works. Meanwhile, seven rudimentary, washed-out, mixed-media, monochrome painting/woodblock collages in steel frames continue his exploration of minimalist painting. They leave exposed traces of his production methods. Each panel corresponds to color residues left upon the surface of the wood grain. Additionally, three woodblocks are framed and hung on the wall as further elaborations of repeating patterns. Where the industrial moire panels of his recent output suggest retro sci-fi room interiors and film noir, the new hybrid works look to the stars. The mystery of the constellations have long held fascination for artists as diverse as Van Gogh (*Starry Night*), visionary Japanese print maker Kawase Hasui (1883-1957), right on up to Vija Celmins.

As a principal of Boyce's oeuvre, he condenses the minutiae of what is often overlooked, and transforms the information by making connections between what constitutes the seen and unseen. The natural rings and veins exposed in milled wood connect us to heavenly patterns, as the seasonal constellar movement of the stars affects nature. And when a tree reaching vertically towards the firmament was felled, its afterlife became the basis for early civilization. The once reliably predictable rhythms of the four seasons were analogous to the time-based construct of our man-made environments; the sun rises and the sun sets, along with the phases of the moon etc. In the urban fabric, we're all on the clock. And, we're all surrounded by shapes and sounds that converge into a dense tapestry of materials.

Hence, you have Boyce's collaged ink prints on finely honed plywood panels, the type barricading construction sights anywhere on the global map. In these public settings of urban archaeology, you have interventions in the guise of posters announcing cultural events and concerts pasted onto their surfaces. The imprints are starry patterns collaged amidst cut-out holes in the panels. These ruptures on the densely monochromed wood surface are in line with Boyce's sculptural leitmotifs on the screen and porosity, with barriers and fencing. Boyce strips away the noise of the commercial sell while homaging Daniel Buren's *Affichages Sauvages*, the striped posters

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Buren glued to public kiosks all around Paris in the heady Situationist days of protest between 1968-1969. In a matter of weeks, the ubiquitous posters, which had multiplied everywhere, were forgotten. Their datable configuration is now a ghostly, weather-beaten palimpsest, unnoticed, pasted over again. They're still there, but have sunk into obsolescence.

Inscribed upon their surfaces are Boycean axioms; for Boyce well understands the silent power of words to evoke richer meanings within the mental realm of physical space. This, his very own concrete poetry, is fashioned out of the laser cut steel letters of his classic tree alphabet, first developed 20 years ago in a distinct, hard geometry of runic style forms, now softened around the edges of the typeface. The phrases are epiphanic snippets of a lucid imagination, arranged as a tumbling visual cipher across the abstract field: *Drilled Out of Time*, and, *The Stars Are Out*. The text *No Stars*, appears on a medium-sized panel silkscreened onto a print, and furthermore, three framed woodblocks contain one word each: *Oceans, Falling, Always...*

Once again, the circularity and movement of repetition reinforces the spatial dynamics of Boyce's cross-referencing media. Here, in a microcosm, the abstract monochrome and heaven's golden alphabet, converge in a linguistic assignation of meaning. All language consists of representative signs, and those signs are best that effect their purposes with the greatest precision and dispatch. In Boyce's baroque language, we have an enticing mode of communication; both an architecture of forms suspended within a luminous field, and the esthetic principal of a design. Such for all common purposes are the audible signs called words, which are still considered as audible, whether addressed immediately to the ear, or through the medium of letters to the eye. In their rich vocabulary a sublime picture of the cosmos then emerges. At the speed of light, Martin Boyce interprets the signs in the sky and its astronomical patterns, marking new terrain with an earthly Shintoist regard for the animate and inanimate. Ineffably, the exhibited painting/woodblock hybrids, and sculptural objects augur evidence of a stellar vision of celestial phenomena that at the appointed midnight hour, circle back to life on *terra firma*.

Max Henry

Martin Boyce was born 1967 in Hamilton, UK, and lives and works in Glasgow, Scotland. Boyce was honored with the 2011 Turner Prize for his installation *Do Words Have Voices*, presented at the Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art in Gateshead, UK. He represented Scotland at the 53rd Venice Biennale in 2009. He has been the subject of solo exhibitions at international institutions including Haubrok Foundation, Berlin, DE (2021); CONVENT Space for Contemporary Art, Ghent, BE (2019); Mount Stuart, Isle of Bute, UK (2019); A4 Art Museum, Chengdu, CN (2018); Tate Britain, London, UK (2016); Museum für Gegenwartskunst Basel, Basel, CH (2015); Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, RI (2015); Tramway, Glasgow, UK (2012); and Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt, DE (2002).

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