

## Keir Leslie

## Looking at Martin Boyce's *For 1959 Capital Avenue* After the Death of God

*Kanye West sits in his Parisian loft, typing on his matte black MacBook Pro. A journalist is in the room. He turns to one of his people, an architect. 'How do you spell Mies van der Rohe?'*<sup>1</sup>

By now, mid-century modernist design and architecture has become an established part of the vocabulary of contemporary cultural production. Kanye West employs an adviser on modernist style; Jorge Pardo re-uses furniture by Alvar Aalto and Isamu Noguchi in his own work.<sup>2</sup> Owen Hatherley attacks New Labour's Britain by reference to modernist architecture.<sup>3</sup> The Victoria and Albert Museum turns modern design into a blockbuster exhibition for the 2006 season.<sup>4</sup>

Currently, this turn towards modernism is felt across the breadth of cultural activity, and is particularly evident in contemporary artistic practice in, as Ryan Gander and Stuart Bailey put it, 'this epoch that will come to be known in the future as the era of faux-modernism.'<sup>5</sup> Leafing through glossy Phaidon surveys, re-visitations of key moments in modernist history repeatedly appear.<sup>6</sup>

Glasgow artist Martin Boyce's practice is strongly motivated by an engagement with the histories and legacies of modernist practices. His work exemplifies a modernist turn, and he has enjoyed a prolific and high profile career to date. Boyce's work is best understood against the histories of modernist design, the operations of influence, and the impact of cultural and economic shifts and changes. It operates both as continuance and critique, with an implicit grounding in modernist practice, but reaches beyond pastiche or imitation in a way that is best illuminated by an understanding of the deaths and ends of industry, art and God.

Theories of the altermodern, irony, pastiche and refinements of post-modernity have all been adduced to explain this return to modernism. Nicolas Bourriaud's theory of postproduction and Harold Bloom's theory of influence are two different ways at looking at reuse and influence, while the post-Hegelian idea of 'the end of art' allows us to radically reconsider both of these theoretical stances. From economics, the notions of the post-industrial economy and the precarious worker allow a materially

grounded critique of the neo-liberal order. The theological idea of the death of God allows for a deeper *process* of critique, centred around the idea of *kenosis*, or radical, self-altering revision. Read together, this suggests that the re-presentation of modernity functions as way of processing the post-industrial nature—the economic post-modernity of our times—through a determined process of misreading modernism—what Bloom would refer to as a kenotic process—and that we can use a kenotic theology to understand this dethroning of modernity.

This return to modernity, a return to a certain era and a certain cultural economy, is often expressed through a return to particular parts of the modernist design canon: furniture, particularly chairs. Ludwig Mies van der Rohe occupies a central role in this high modernist canon. His work, and the canon he exists within, embeds certain ideas about art, society, and economic form in its structure. He is also a core precursor for Boyce, and in particular, the installation *For 1959 Capital Avenue* can be read as determined rereading—or, perhaps, a determined *misreading*—of Mies' work.

Ludwig Mies van der Rohe was born in Aachen in 1886, and worked as an architect in Germany. He served as the director of the Bauhaus (1930-33), before moving to America in 1938.<sup>7</sup> As the designer of a series of iconic modernist buildings—the Barcelona Pavilion, the Tugendhat House, the Lake Shore Drive Apartments, the Seagram Building, the Farnsworth House and the Neue National Galerie—Mies occupies a central place in the histories of modern architecture.

Along with Lily Reich, who was his collaborator in the interwar years, he was also a major figure in the development of modern furniture.<sup>8</sup> Their work is central to architectural high modernity.

The Barcelona Pavilion was erected by the German Republic for the 1929 Barcelona Exposition. It was a spare and quiet arrangement of open, airy spaces formed by freestanding walls of marble and glass. An early work of high modernist architecture, 'it was considered the most outstanding masterpiece of the twentieth century' by 1960.<sup>9</sup> In his monograph on the building's critical reception, Juan Pablo Bonta describes the discursive construction of a critical orthodoxy as a result of which '[t]he Barcelona Pavilion is nowadays saluted as one of the major achievements of modern architecture.'<sup>10</sup>

The Barcelona Pavilion did not contain many objects: a sculpture by Georg Kolbe, a few tables, chairs, and stools. Within the mostly empty and free flowing pavilion, the furniture became a key formal cue in defining and delineating the spaces of the pavilion. The furniture is stylistically unified by a consistent materiality of chromed steel, leather, and glass. This is one aspect of the use of 'materials as luxury' (as the Smithsons phrased it in their note on Lily Reich)<sup>11</sup> that permeates the pavilion. Marble, glass, chromed steel, water, leather, all form a sympathetic suite of materials, uniting the pavilion and the furniture made for it.

In the late 1920s and 30s Mies, along with Reich, developed a range of furniture based on that used in the Barcelona Pavilion. He would continue to use this

range in his buildings throughout the rest of his career. They would become iconic aspects of his practice, and of modern architecture more broadly. As he used and reused this furniture, the importance placed on it as a store of meaning and as a method of organising space increased.

Alison and Peter Smithson attached a great deal of importance to the role of chairs in architecture: 'of all pieces of furniture, the chair is most able to carry, like some portable shrine, the essence of the style of its period'.<sup>12</sup> It is not just that chairs simply hold style: they go beyond that, reflecting the nature of the broader society, for 'when we design a chair we make a society and a city in the small.'<sup>13</sup> In particular, in Mies' case 'the Miesian city is implicit in the Miesian chair.'<sup>14</sup> His practice is so consistent, so deeply worked out, so that 'we have a perfectly clear notion of the sort of city and the sort of society envisaged by Mies van der Rohe,'<sup>15</sup> a city that is a 'machine-calm city—open, civilised, patrician.'<sup>16</sup>

Like the Barcelona Pavilion, Mies' Neue National Galerie represents a German nation and like the Pavilion it operates as a space to present works of art. The Smithsons suggest an historical context for the grandeur and scale of the Neue National Galerie: when, in the nineteenth century, pictures were moved from house and church to museum, 'pictures began to be painted especially for the museums and become almost totally dependent on them'.<sup>17</sup> At the same time, museums began to quote temples: Schinkel's Altes Museum is a key forerunner of the Neue here. As a result, the Smithsons say, many art works are now 'cult objects' requiring 'every bit of presentation, mythmaking, and commentary they can

get'.<sup>18</sup> The Neue National Galerie 'accepts that and clarifies what is going on—that art now needs a big reliquary box to sustain it'.<sup>19</sup> The Neue National Galerie can be seen as part of an exhibitionary complex that begins with churches, moves to temple-quoting museums, and finally ends in a purist 'reliquary box', a complex that ties art to religion, and modernity to rituality.

However, where the Barcelona Pavilion represented Germany in Spain, the Neue National Galerie is a major public building placed within the ideologically charged spaces of post-war West Berlin. And as with all Mies' buildings, but especially the Barcelona Pavilion, the furniture performs a highly charged function in defining the building, in setting the tone for the materiality of the structure, and in delineating the spaces of the building.

Global Architecture printed a series of lavish photographs of the Neue National building in Ludwig Glaeser's hagiographical presentation of the building.<sup>20</sup> The first photograph of the south front shows an almost impenetrable glass facade, dominated by the reflection of a series of cranes. Across the glass skin, a series of posters incorporating the image of the Berlin Calder advertise a jazz concert. Another poster advertises a Mark Rothko exhibition, while it is possible to make out a group of hanging panels supporting large Rothko canvases within the building. Glinting across the building, the flashes of steel that betray the presence of Mies' furniture can be seen. In all but one of the interior shots, the Barcelona furniture is visible, and it operates in the same way as it did in the Barcelona Pavilion: it articulates

Looking at Martin Boyce's *For 1959 Capital Avenue*



Martin Boyce, *For 1959 Capital Avenue*, 2002, powder coated steel and aluminium, glass, brass, acrylic paint, Trevira CS fabric, dimensions variable, installation view at the Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt am Main. Collection of Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt/Main (MMK Frankfurt). Courtesy of the artist and The Modern Institute/Toby Webster Ltd, Glasgow. Photo by Boris Becker, Cologne.

and dominates space within the vast emptiness of the gallery. Because the interior partitions of the Gallery are arbitrary and unrelated to the structure while the furniture has both a direct formal relationship to the architecture and a solidity of construction, it seems far more integral to the building than anything else. It is possible to conceive of the Neue National empty of all art, but it is almost impossible to imagine it empty of furniture. Here, the Barcelona furniture returns to its original role, as a way of constructing the German state.

Nicolas Bourriaud and Harold Bloom propose different theories of artistic influence. Both can be located within a cluster of deaths—the death of art, the death of God, and the death of manufacturing. These deaths are part of the transition between broadly modernist and broadly post-modernist societal, economic, and cultural forms. By explicitly conceptualising these as discrete, historicised events, they become tools with which we can think through the relationship between the practice of Martin Boyce and the modernist canon he draws upon, a relationship which crosses that boundary between modernism and post-modernism. This transition includes the ongoing move of industry away from the traditionally heavily industrialised regions of the West. It includes the culmination of the process of western secularisation and the ensuing proclamation of the ‘death of God’. It includes the aftermath of modernism in the arts, and the advancement of the ‘end of art’ thesis. The resulting framework allows for an analysis of Martin Boyce’s resurrection of Miesian tropes, and suggests that Boyce’s reuse operates as a complex and sophisticated

system of bifold critique, both of Mies’ original work and milieu, and of Boyce’s own time and milieu.

Bourriaud’s short book *Post-Production* (2001) deals with the titular idea of post-production. It is a companion piece, or perhaps a follow-on, to *Relational Aesthetics* (1998). For Bourriaud, this idea is a way of explaining a phenomenon that appeared in the early nineties, where ‘an increasing number of works have been created on the basis of preexisting works; more and more artists interpret, reproduce, re-exhibit, or use works made by others or available cultural forms.’<sup>21</sup> It is a world where artists tend more and more to show work based on other pre-existing work, or pre-existing patterns and structures. In Bourriaud’s description the art world is characterised by the continual reference to and reuse of previous work, an art world that is self-consciously aware of its status as palimpsest.

Importantly, Bourriaud ties this artistic shift to differing emphases on aspects of the economy. He notes that ‘as a set of activities linked to the service industry and recycling, post-production belongs to the tertiary sector, as opposed to the industrial or agricultural sector, i.e, the production of raw materials’.<sup>22</sup> But Bourriaud’s grasp of economics is stereotyped: he conflates manufacturing and agriculture, and places them in opposition to services.<sup>23</sup> It is from this simplified model, one that erases the complexity of the modern economy, that Bourriaud’s lack of analysis of the broader effects of de-industrialisation arises.

But Bourriaud does not simply discuss visual properties, or technical

Looking at Martin Boyce's *For 1959 Capital Avenue*



Martin Boyce, *For 1959 Capital Avenue*, 2002 (detail).

problems of this way of working. He goes on to propose certain aesthetic ordering principles of this shift: that 'precariousness is at the centre of a formal universe in which nothing is durable, everything is movement: the trajectory between two places is favored in relation to the place itself, and encounters are more important than the individuals who compose them.'<sup>24</sup> And again, precarity is a concept that reappears in the worlds of economics and work. I will return to precarity later on, when I discuss de-industrialisation further, drawing on the work of the economist Dani Rodrik and the sociologist Guy Standing to present a more nuanced account of the concept.

In distinction to Bourriaud's glowing tones, Harold Bloom develops a theory of influence underpinned by anxiety and melancholia. What for Bourriaud is a culture of use and reuse, is for Bloom a culture of abuse and misuse. This is not a triumphalist account. 'The poet 'quests after an impossible object'; he is continually engaged in an impossible quest. But the quest is not just impossible, it is ruinous, disastrous, for the poet's Oedipal quest to defeat his precursor must inevitably, unavoidably result in the 'diminishment of poetry'.<sup>25</sup> Bloom's theory of criticism is poetic, for he believes that through the action of influence, criticism inevitably becomes poetic, and poetry criticism. It is dependent on the impossible, on faith, on apocalypses.

The core of the theory is the assertion that 'a poem is a poet's melancholy at his lack of priority.'<sup>26</sup> Poets are in the impossible position of always being too late, always lacking 'priority'. The young

poet's heart, Bloom quotes Malraux as saying, 'is a graveyard in which are inscribed the names of a thousand dead artist but whose only actual denizens are a few mighty, often antagonistic, ghosts.'<sup>27</sup> He experiences a contradiction. He feels that 'the poem is *within* him' but 'he experiences the shame and splendour of *being found by* poems - great poems - outside him.'<sup>28</sup> The quest, then, is a quest to defeat and escape these ancestral figures, to impossibly achieve priority over his precursors, his creators.

Bloom then supposes that, in order to escape from this bind, artists have developed strategies for misreading their predecessors. In fact, Bloom goes further: 'there are no interpretations but only misinterpretations'<sup>29</sup> and, as 'Borges remarks, [...] poets create their precursors'.<sup>30</sup> It is only through these strategies that the strong poet imposes himself upon history: 'the history of fruitful poetic influence [...] is a history of anxiety and self-saving caricature, of distortion, of perverse willful revisionism without which modern poetry as such could not exist.'<sup>31</sup>

And as a result of these strategies, Bloom says, 'we never read a poet as poet, but only read one poet in another poet, or even into another poet.'<sup>32</sup> In the same way that it is impossible to understand a person without understanding their 'family romance'—Bloom follows Freud here—it is impossible to understand a poet without understanding the poet's family romance as a poet. If we accept Bloom's argument, he is saying it is no longer open to us to look at an artist on their own, or in isolation. We must look at them within the matrix of influence that has produced them.

This is a particularly aggressive theory of influence. Where Bourriaud appears content to let artists use and reuse without rancour, Bloom feels that 'sublimation of aggressive instincts is central to writing and reading poetry, and this is almost identical with the total process of poetic misprision',<sup>33</sup> while he 'can recognise a strength that battles against the death of poetry' in the most important contemporary poetry. Bloom relies upon the most aggressive passages of Nietzsche and Freud in this book, depicting promethean geniuses engaged in oedipal struggle with titanic predecessors. Bloom's is also a theory overcome with religious terminology. The tradition becomes a god: 'this god is cultural history, the dead poets, the embarrassments of a tradition grown too wealthy to need anything more', while the strong poet's problem is phrased in the language of salvation: 'to be judicious is to be weak, and to compare, exactly and fairly, is to be not elect.'<sup>34</sup>

These are two theories of influence, one which is broadly positive and constructive, the other broadly negative and deconstructive. Simply to look at them alone, without consideration of context, is misleading. Bloom inches towards suggesting the death of art, while Bourriaud presumes the death of manufacturing. Lurking near these two deaths is a third death, the death of God. It is through a consideration of the death of God, and the radical theologies growing from that death, that we can begin to consider a history of the death of art, and that we can begin to criticise the death of manufacturing.

The death of manufacturing is one way of conceptualising the facts that from

1970 to 2011 manufacturing's share of global GDP went from 27% to 13%,<sup>35</sup> at the same time that manufacturing shifted away from western economies. Princeton economist Dani Rodrik gives an economist's account of this process: 'As economies develop and become richer, manufacturing—'making things'—inevitably becomes less important.'<sup>36</sup> Rodrik is well aware that this is an unavoidable process: as we become richer, more and more of our needs extend beyond the economy of things. It is possible, however, for the process of de-industrialisation to go too fast, to begin to mismatch the society that the economy is embedded within. This imbalance leads to, 'economic underperformance, widening inequality, and divisive politics.'<sup>37</sup> Rodrik argues, therefore, for the importance of the manufacturing sector, the base upon which a solid industrial working class in secure work can rest, in opposition to a service-oriented, 'precarious' economy of temporary and casualised workers.

What does it mean to be precarious, when we leave the world of economic jargon? For Bourriaud, precariousness is an aesthetic quality, whereby 'encounters are more important than the individuals who compose them.'<sup>38</sup> For many employers, precariousness (or 'labour market flexibility') is an economic concept, whereby work is more important than the individuals who do it. For sociologist Guy Standing, 'the precariat has a feeling of being in a diffuse, unstable international community of people struggling, usually in vain, to give their working lives an occupational identity'.<sup>39</sup> It is a feature of current economic life that replaces secure occupations with insecure, precarious

work, a degradation of the worker's position in relation to capital. Seen in this light, Bourriaud's emphasis on precarity, contingency, and incompleteness begins to take on more sinister tones.

Having killed manufacturing, it would seem that the arts offer some respite, in the logics of late capitalist regeneration. But we find that art, too, has been killed. The death (or end) of art is a well-worn trope in post-modernist art theory. I draw the term 'death of art' from Hans Belting<sup>40</sup> and Arthur Danto, who in turn took it from Hegel. Danto suggests that 'art has come to an end',<sup>41</sup> that the ongoing project of art (and art history) that has animated western art making for the previous six centuries has come to an end. Danto quotes Hegel: 'art is and remains for us a thing of the past.'<sup>42</sup> He does not reach a firm conclusion, maintaining a philosophical detachment, simply noting that it is 'possible that art history has the form we know because art as we know it is finished.'<sup>43</sup> As with Fyodor Dostoevsky's 'if God does not exist, then everything is permitted,'<sup>44</sup> for Danto, now art is dead, 'it does not matter what you do'; you may be 'an abstractionist in the in the morning, a photorealist in the afternoon, a minimal minimalist in the evening.'<sup>45</sup> This does not mean that art making will stop, it is simply that art in the sense that it has previously existed in the west, as a project driven by certain internal rules and imperatives, has reached an end.

Hegel is Danto's source for the death of art; Nietzsche is our source for the death of God. In *The Gay Science* Nietzsche writes that 'God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him.'<sup>46</sup> This Nietzschean theme is taken up again in

the 1960s by a loose group of American theologians, the so-called 'death of God' group.<sup>47</sup> This group developed a series of theologies broadly grouped around a motif of the death of God. This essay is not a theological essay, and it is not interested in developing a correct theology of the death of God, or laying out a correct history of that death. Instead I want to use aspects of that theology to attack problems in the history of art, and so I will present a limited account of the position. This limited account centres around two statements, and the notion of kenotic Christology developed by Thomas Altizer.

The two statements are about the death of God, and the consequences. Firstly, 'we must recognise that the death of God is a historical event: God has died in *our* time, in *our* history, in *our* existence.'<sup>48</sup> God is dead. It is not that God never existed, or does not exist. God has *died*. And God has died in history: his death is an historical event, one that we have witnessed. Secondly, 'the death of God as a theological concern means that God is a problem for us, not a reality.'<sup>49</sup> We cannot use God as a solution anymore. Instead, God has become a problem.

We can rephrase these two statements into four new ones, by a process of analogy. First, we must recognise that the death of art is an historical event: art has died in our time, in our history, in our existence. Second, that the death of art as a concern means that art is a problem for us, not a reality. Third, we can also say that we must recognise that the death of manufacturing is an historical event: manufacturing has died in our time, in our history, in our existence. And, finally, the death of manufacturing as a political

concern means that manufacturing, making things, is a problem for us, not a reality.

Thomas Altizer developed his theology to place a kenotic Christ at the centre, instead of the dead God. This Christ is a kenotic word that 'acts or moves by reversing the forms of flesh and spirit.'<sup>50</sup> It is through this kenotic Christology that Altizer continues to develop a theology after the death of God. Kenosis, for Altizer, is that radical reversal, that self-emptying process. This is a precise understanding of the meaning of Christ: God becomes human and lives in poverty with prostitutes and tax collectors, and submits to a cruel and degrading death. Christ, Altizer says, is 'the embodiment in time and history of the self-sacrifice or self-emptying [the *kenosis*] of the glory and sovereignty of God.'<sup>51</sup> This disavowal, this sacrifice and emptying out of the glory and sovereignty of God is central to radical theology, indeed is precisely what makes it radical.

It is important to realise that the death of God is not an event that was imposed on Christianity, and that it is not an event that either can (or should, according to Altizer) be undone. He says: 'if this process led to the collapse of Christendom, it nevertheless is a product of Christendom.'<sup>52</sup> Likewise, if the processes of modern art led to the collapse of art, they nevertheless are a product of art. Bloom argues that modern poetry *necessarily* 'encompasses the diminishment of poetry', that the poet must, inherently, always battle against the death of poetry. Similarly, the processes that led to de-industrialisation are a product of industrialisation. The deaths of art,

industry, and God are implicit in the lives of art, industry, and God.

Radical theology, in its attempts to kill God, is particularly focused on the death of the immanent sovereign God. This sovereign God is felt to be incompatible with the post-war world, a shift that can be linked to the Danto's end of art. Interestingly, Danto brings this shift between pre- and post-war to the fore at the point where he goes to see a show about chairs spanning the time between modernity and post-modernity (he finds it quite amusing) and says 'in a more revolutionary way of thinking, the shambling of chairs, the artistic attack on chairs, may be an attack on a concept of power, rank, submission, domination, subservience which we feel to be incompatible with a more liberal form of life.'<sup>53</sup> The Smithsons, writing in the mid-60s, apply this metaphor of the death of God to the works of a Dutch modernist of the 'heroic period', Jan Duiker. His buildings possess 'a purity and a faith that we find almost too hard to bear', for they are 'all religious buildings of a faith that died in the late thirties.'<sup>54</sup>

This cluster of deaths—of God, art, and industry—open up the kenotic possibilities that both Bloom and Altizer gesture towards. They allow us to understand the ways in which Boyce's practice misreads Mies, and the way this revisionary, this kenotic, use of Mies functions both as homage and critique, both of Mies and modernity, and of post-modernity.

*For 1959 Capital Avenue* was a 2002 installation by Boyce at the Museum für Moderne Kunst in Frankfurt. A tall curtain of transparent blue-silver fabric running



Martin Boyce, *For 1959 Capital Avenue*, 2002, installation view (detail).

parallel to, but displaced from, the long axis of the gallery, started slightly below the museum's glass roof, and dropped the three stories height of the gallery to the floor where it bunched and crumpled along the marble tiled floor. Two sets of black powder-coated steel chair-like forms were arranged in relation to two low glass-topped steel tables, one with a slanted brass ashtray and the other without a glass top. Painted on the walls, in large, gridded characters, the phrase 'punching through the clouds' lifted and turned through the space, echoing the visitor's path from the stairs leading up to the hall, through the hall, and then rising out again on the stairs exiting.

The key referent of *For 1959 Capital Avenue* is the practice of Mies van der Rohe. Formally, almost every element in *For 1959 Capital Avenue* derives from Mies. 'Punching through the clouds' is a Mies quote; it is depicted in a gridded manner that recalls his gridded facades. The tables are Miesian; the manner of the arrangement of the chairs, in pairs and quads that define and control space, is Miesian. Even the curtain hanging in the space is derived, in a wry manner, from the curtains that shade the inside of the Neue Nationale Galerie, and it bears a similar relation to the main axis of circulation that the Seagram Building bears to Park Avenue. If we read 1959 as a date, it is the year after the completion of his Seagram Building. If we read it as an address, it is a sort of ghost of the actual address of the Seagram, on Park Avenue. If we read it for meaning, we are given the start of commentary on Mies' role as the architect of corporate modernism. The death of industry is not so explicitly present (or, perhaps, not so explicitly

absent) in *For 1959 Capital Avenue*, which is more directly concerned with the deaths of art and God. Still, it is worth noting the emphasis that Boyce places on *passing through*, on the installation as a configuration of objects in a space through which the viewer passes, from stairs to hall to stairs again. It is an intrinsically temporary (and temporal) installation, in a way that recalls Bourriaud's emphasis on precarity.

The Smithsons give a clear description of the banker's cool of the Miesian city, and the way that the Miesian chair defines that city. Boyce takes those two claims, and fashions them into an installation. If Mies' furniture defines a society, to critique Mies' furniture is to critique a society. It is through the absolute assumption of the Miesian system that this critique functions. To use Bloom's terminology, Boyce 'empties himself', humbling himself before Mies in his almost absolute assumption of the Miesian system and aesthetic. But, as Bloom puts it, this emptying out also empties out the precursor, truncating them. It is through this emptying, this kenotic reversal of Boyce's, that Mies is both summoned, made present, and then critiqued. The critique of Mies that Boyce presents is one that goes directly to Mies' view of society, and the ways in which it now fails us (and, perhaps, always failed us). The banker's machine calm is represented in a stripped, bared beauty, and made to seem very blank and empty.

In their discussion of Mies' Neue National, the Smithsons make a telling point: that it is a reliquary, a support structure for that art which relies on the museum. Boyce has reduced the gallery to the simplest possible signs for the

gallery: a top lit space with white walls, modernist gallery furnishings, and wall text. To present a work that is made up almost entirely of direct reference to the museum furnishings of an architect is to present a work that almost entirely escapes being art. It is art that relies on the social loading of the physical characteristics of the space to exist as art. It is art that flirts, even darts towards non-art. Given the museum's dual coding, both as a ritualised reliquary and a formalised space for the display of art, the turn towards non-art likewise has a dual function as a way of absencing art and a way of absencing faith from the gallery. Read one way, it is the death of art. Read the other, it is the death of God.

It is, I think, through further explorations of the discontinuities and breaks that form the context of current practice that an ongoing analysis of the modernist turn in contemporary practice can occur. The history of modernity is key to contemporary practice and as a way into that history the critical histories written by Alison and Peter Smithson offer a path that emphasises the heroism, and even faith, of the modernist canon.

Bourriaud and Bloom's theories of influence and reuse are helpful tools to construct a broad framework to consider contemporary practice within. A cluster of deaths or ends—the death of art, the death of god, and the death of manufacturing mark part of the transition from a broadly modernist to broadly post-modernist period, and in so doing they allow for a way of looking at Boyce's practice, and its relationship to that transition. This transition includes the move of industry away from the early industrial nations. It includes the radical

theological movement focused around the death of God. In the arts, it is the period of the end of modernism and the start of post-modernism; it is point of the advancement of the 'end of art' thesis. This rich detail and historical specificity add to the broad framework laid out by Bloom and Bourriaud (and in some cases critiquing it) and so enables us to think through the relationship between the practice of Martin Boyce and the source material he draws upon in a deeper, more systematic manner.

The depth of the absence, the absoluteness of the blankness, in Boyce's work is key to allowing this range of theoretical constructs to be brought to bear. It is precisely this absence, this emptying out, this kenosis, which make his work so rich.

1. 'Kanye West on his new album Yeezus, and Kim Kardashian', *W Magazine*, 19/6/2013, URL: <http://www.wmagazine.com/people/celebrities/2013/06/kanye-west-on-kim-kardashian-and-his-new-album-yeezus/> (accessed 31/10/2013).
2. Nicolas Bourriaud, *Postproduction* (New York: Lukas & Sternberg, 2005), 14.
3. Owen Hatherley, *Militant Modernism*, (Winchester: ZerO Books, 2008).
4. 'Modernism: designing a new world' was held at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, 6 April–23 July 2006.
5. Christoph Keller, ed., *Appendix Appendix: A proposal for a TV show by Ryan Gander and Stuart Bailey* (Zurich: JRP Ringier, 2007), 9/134.
6. *Vitamin 3D* (London: Phaidon, 2009), *Vitamin P* (London: Phaidon, 2004), and *Unmonumental*, (London: Phaidon, 2007).

7. *Mies in America*, ed. Phyllis Lambert (New York: Harry N Abrams, 2001), unpaginated insert.
8. Matilda McQuaid, *Lily Reich: Designer and Architect* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1996).
9. Juan Pablo Bonta, *An Anatomy of Architectural Interpretation: A Semiotic Review of the Criticism of Mies van der Rohe's Barcelona Pavilion* (Barcelona: Editorial Gustavo Gili, n.d.), 57.
10. Ibid.
11. Alison and Peter Smithson, *The Heroic Period of Modern Architecture* (New York: Rizzoli, 1981), 65.
12. Alison and Peter Smithson, *Changing the Art of Inhabitation: Mies' pieces, Eames' dreams, the Smithsons* (London: Artemis, 1994), 144.
13. Smithsons, *Changing the Art of Inhabitation*, 14.
14. Smithsons, *The Heroic Period of Modern Architecture*, 57.
15. Ibid.
16. Smithsons, *Changing the Art of Inhabitation*, 17. Ibid., 22.
18. Ibid.
19. Ibid.
20. Ludwig Glaeser, *Mies van der Rohe, Crown Hall, IIT, Chicago, Illinois, U.S.A.. 1952-56, New National Gallery, Berlin, West Germany 1968* (Tokyo: ADA Edita, 1972).
21. Bourriaud, *Postproduction*, 13.
22. Ibid.
23. He describes the 'industrial or agricultural sector' as engaged in the 'production of raw materials.' The industrial and agricultural sectors are different, and where the agricultural (or primary) sector is based around the exploitation of natural resources the industrial/manufacturing (or secondary) sector is that which manufactures outputs with little direct extraction or exploitation of natural resources.
24. Ibid.
25. Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973) 25.
26. Ibid., 96.
27. Ibid., 26.
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43. Ibid., 34.
44. Quoted in Thomas J. J. Altizer and William Hamilton, *Radical Theology and the Death of God* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, n.d.), 63.
45. Lang, *The Death of Art*, 34.
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47. Theodore Jennings, the rabbi Richard Rubenstein, John D. Caputo, Gabriel Vahanian and John Robinson were prominent in this tendency alongside Altizer.
48. Paul H. Wright 'Reflections on the God Killers' in *The Death of God Debate*, eds. Jackson Lee Ice and John J. Carey (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1967), 34.
49. Fred M. Hudson, 'Four Meanings of "the Death of God"' in *ibid.* 45.
50. Altizer, *Radical Theology and the Death of God*, 154.
51. Thomas Altizer, *Towards a New Christianity: Readings in the Death of God Debate* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1967), 9.
52. Altizer, *Radical Theology and the Death of God*, 111.
53. Danto, *Philosophizing Art*, 163.
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