

Artist: Matthew Darbyshire
Commissioning body: Kettles Yard
Production Budget: 4,000 GBP
Working Title: *ukfun-ky*



A 3D model of the *ukfun-ky* building wrap in situ.

Introduction.

My proposal for the hoarding commission would assume the form of a typical building-wrap, occupying the entire left-side of Kettles Yard Castle Street entrance whilst renovation works for the new education wing take place. Depicted on the perforated building-wrap would be a fictitious “coming soon” development under the current working title *ukfun-ky*.



Some examples of existing building wraps in London and Glasgow.





Close-up illustration of the *ukfun-ky* trompe l'oeil building-wrap design.

The trompe l'oeil building wrap, as is usually the case, would aim to insinuate what might be under construction behind it. While of course Kettles Yard isn't really planning a dire regression in to Nineteen Eighties, Thatcherite, low-cost vernacular - nor is it really planning to become the mixed-use One Stop Shop more typical of our current times that it implies - *ukfun-ky* wants to comment on the unnerving plausibility of such a situation arising.

ukfun-ky sees architecture as one of our most reliable signifiers and believes that from it's detail, stylistic tendencies and materials we can make our most accurate judgments as to where we might be heading socially, politically, economically and culturally.

Form.

Owing to the early stage of this proposal, the exact form and content is of course very open and neither are by any means resolved. The renders attached however do provide some indication as to the direction I could see this intervention going if Kettles Yard were to support it. Recent London Metropolitan University graduate Bob Hobbs has kindly assisted me in producing these mock-ups and has agreed to make himself available if I were to go forward with this commission.



Artists impression of building wrap in situ.

These are very low-res renders at this stage intended only to convey the general idea. I anticipate many changes and developments might take place if we were to embark upon this research project and suspect it's texture and complexity would be further enriched through site visits, conversations with the Kettles Yard curatorial team and off-site studio research.

Budget and Practicalities.

The banner would be produced by Universal Image Solutions in Colchester, Essex and it has been estimated would cost approx £2,300 to print the 120 square metres necessary. Architect Bob Hobbs has agreed to collaborate, produce and render high-res image files that are suitable for printing at this large scale for a set fee of £1,000. I estimate the installation and fixings would cost around £700.

These prices would of course all be confirmed in due course if we decide to take the proposal to the next stage.

With regards to the installation of the piece, practicalities and logistics would of course need to be negotiated with the contractor but I suspect it would be best to simply hang the perforated banner either directly against the buildings façade from the top coping to the pavement, or upon any scaffolding that is intended to be there anyway. Being perforated there will be no obstruction to views from inside the building and no significant reduction in light coming in.

Premise.

While playing on the name of the UK's most popular urban dance genre, *ukfun-ky* obviously incorporates the Kettles Yard acronym in a painfully telling attempt to re-brand and rejuvenate itself, as so many institutions do, from art museums to job centres and from political parties to management consultants.

Playing on the reality that what is in fact being built on Castle Street is an education centre, *ukfun-ky* deliberately infantilises itself by way of trying to mask its fusty, right-wing appearance with cool rhetoric and zing that hopes to access and appeal, while of course only actually serving to patronize and offend, those it's trying to draw in.

Whilst *ukfun-ky* will deliberately instill confusion momentarily, incorporated within the installation would be a conventional information plaque detailing the art works captions (ie. artist, title, media etc.). This initial confusion however is an important part of the work as it wants to play on the bland, soulless, interchangeability of our built environment that makes it increasingly difficult to differentiate one use, service or amenity from another, and wants to warn of the perils of surrendering such autonomy.

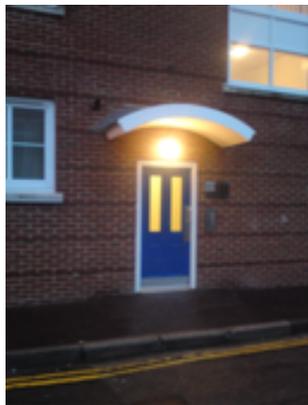
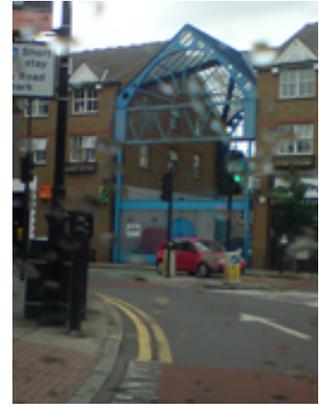
While Cambridge enjoys some of the most celebrated examples of authentic Gothic, Tudor, Georgian and Modernist buildings in the country, *ukfun-ky* begins by stating that here in the UK we are witnessing a terrifying social and political relapse reminiscent of the times, when much of Cambridge's less popular low-grade postmodern architecture crept in and discretely butted itself against it, under the deceitful guise of economic efficiency and pragmatism. *ukfun-ky* highlights the similar arguments being repeated today as we watch the authorities shoehorn mass developers ill conceived master plans through planning in hope of achieving short-term, 'band-aid' solutions to some of the most pressing and neglected social concerns of our time.



Some examples of the more abject yet pervasive identikit housing around the Kettles Yard area.

ukfun-ky calls to mind the regrettable mistakes of the 1980's and evokes fear at the potential replacement of an institution as auspicious as Kettles Yard with a *One Stop Shop* style mixed-use cultural hub with adjacent *Costa Coffee* and *Tesco Express* style concessions. By doing this *ukfun-ky* wants to talk of the thoughtless and insensitive developments we saw in the Eighties incentivised only by profit, and through its uncomfortable plausibility wants to remind us just how close we are to a revival.

Still not yet fully passed through the House of Commons we are all admittedly still guessing at the full impact of Grant Schapps localism agenda but the evidence so far suggests a complete regression to the troubled times of the Eighties and with that, I predict, an inescapable return to its stylistic tendencies too. Localism it seems doesn't necessarily mean 'arrived at through local consensus' but rather local to clichéd notions of national heritage and misinterpreted via a mass developers checklist of architectural faux pas that has now become what I refer to as 'developers vernacular'.



Various examples of developers vernacular – some built in the early 1980's and some in the last two years.

Alongside mock tudor beams, meaningless patterns in brickwork, bare breeze blocks pretending to be sandstone, ugly oversized pvcu porticos, plastic pediments, faux-lead roof flashings, mock steeples, high paranoiac parameter railings, bulbous romanesque cast-concrete columns, token miniature gardens out front, faux obelisks on either side of entranceways etc. we'll no doubt also continue to see one or two of the sturdier remnants of the new labour legacy such as the tokenistic cedar clad thrown here and there to tick the 'sustainable' box; the randomized geometry in the hermetically sealed and unopenable window panes that wink at modernisms socialist convictions whilst of course not over-committing; the light-hearted pop-feel aspects introduced by Alsop, Urban Splash et al to distract from the dubious financial structures beneath them; the incompetent design and the ultimate dysfunction of what ever it was they were permitted to build on behalf of the government; and the symbol of the phoenix of course being reborn from the flames and regenerating all in its path through impotent outreach initiatives executed by service providers up and down the country.

Conclusion.

As demonstrated above, at this stage I'm very much in fear of the likes of Wimpey, Bovis and Barratt returning to their old tricks and am quite keen to entertain the idea of a complete revival of low-grade 'neo' based on the terrifying regressions we're seeing across both the architectural world and beyond (ie. the Tories being back in, Prince Charles regaining the ears of whoever those people are that have the final say on what gets built, the public sector striking, Duran Duran back on the radio, trade unions and the welfare state doing a Houdini, economic austerity replacing any vague hope of happiness, Gaddafi showing his true colours and everyone happier than Larry 'cos once again we've got a new princess to wow over).

Yes my money's on a return to a flimsy version of whatever was there before, steeped in community-up rhetoric that thinks a half-hearted backward glance is somehow more sensitive and sensible than our last governments deterritorialized frivolity.

ukfun-ky marks the end of the candy-coloured noughties icon project and the beginning of the ConDems more right-wing and sentimental approach. Norman Fosters out and HRH Prince Charles is firmly back in the driving seat - only without the budgets for a true Pombury-style backward glance, I dread to think what low-grade renditions Clegg and Cameron might have up their sleeves.

In a recent *Building Design* article on the subject of the so-called Big Society, Fran Tonkiss speculates that "the signature building of the new localism bill could be equal parts Tesco Express, open prison, police station and sorting office. A sort of one-stop clink-cop-post shop....with allotments".

...I worry she might be right!

Selected Previous Works.



Blades House, Gasworks 2008



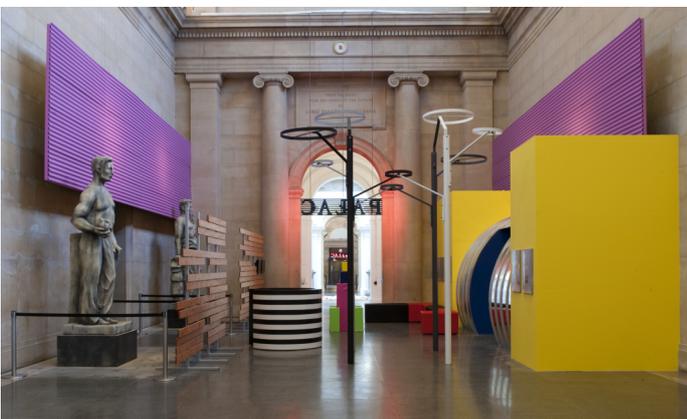
Elis, Herald Street 2010



Everything Everywhere, Frieze Projects 2010



Funhouse, Hayward Project Space 2009



Palac, Tate Britain 2008



Woolworth Tower, Zabudowicz Collection 2011

REVIEWS: UK

Scott King, Matthew Darbyshire

Herald St, London
9 April – 15 May

With brightly coloured knickknacks adorning tastefully sparse furnishings, and what at first appear to be insightful and inspirational quotes from artists and famous figures lining the walls, Scott King and Matthew Darbyshire's dual exhibition could easily be imagined as the reception for some 1990s yuppie executive. While we idly await our meeting, Darbyshire's *Untitled Homeware No. 14* (all works 2011) has the cubicle-jockey's frosted-glass-and-polished-steel coffee-table present us with a flocked-plastic fluorescent-pink elephant vase holding a set of plastic orchids. In the second room is *Untitled Homeware No. 13*, a yellow Buddha with a blue Union Jack tied around his neck – another hip blasphemy emanating that particular sincere ironic cool of recent decades. The unattributed quotes, though, sit off-kilter to your typical corporate aspirational wall texts: plans for a fleet of 'Taliban Library Vans', or the artist of a certain *Angel of the North* describing how, in preparation for creating work, he would 'drink heavily, take coke, crack, LSD, heroin – anything to reach the right transcendental state where one can see right through society'. It's right at the back of the exhibition that you find *Art and Politics: A Reappraisal*, a text decrying a certain kind of 'Wiki-Art' where 'rare' but 'cool' information is repackaged as art commodity. The texts certainly seem to be just such a beast, choice quotes unearthed and proudly held up – and all of a sudden it's possible that the whole installation is somehow the same, as if Darbyshire and King found online images of the inner sanctum of the chief executive of Urban Outfitters and replicated it here.

The titles of King's text canvases each provide a breadcrumb trail; dutiful searching online to verify their 'Wiki-Art' status reveals that they take their names from a sprawled set of articles and memoirs, but the quotes are King's imaginary insertions and addenda into the lives of Victor Burgin, Irving Kristol, GG Allin, Anish Kapoor and Antony Gormley. King's trail of references is both reading list and hit list; some are whimsical jibes at historical heavy hitters, such as US secretary of state Henry Kissinger describing, in his 1992 memoir, *Years of Upheaval*, accidentally wearing one red sock and one yellow sock to a meeting with Chinese premier Zhou Enlai, or the darkly comic image of French Marxist philosopher – and eventual wife-strangler – Louis Althusser, in his *The Future Lasts a Long Time* (1992), hopping across his spouse's freshly mopped kitchen floor on one foot. The texts could appear as the sort of private jokes that run through your head while you're reading, but instead of making the works more personal, their status as 'fake' found quotes posing as conceptual Pop art increases their distanced self-conscious hipster stance.

Darbyshire and King share the method of inhabiting the garb of commodified Pop, using its remarkably easy back-and-forth absorption and reabsorption of a range of different ideologies. This gives a sense of easy one-liners and quick punchlines, but it is this fluid surface they are willingly skating upon and mapping, in the way Darbyshire's *Homewares*, for all their shouty colours, fade quietly into the background, or how King's texts, even once they slowly unfold, still manage to feel like quick soundbites. Here they provide the decoration for the boardroom where the terms and conditions for how Pop will continue to eat itself are endlessly negotiated. *Chris Fite-Wassilak*



Matthew Darbyshire, *Untitled Homeware No. 13*, 2011, yellow flocked Buddha statue, turquoise flocked vintage Union Jack bag, coloured glass, glass and steel support, 135 x 98 x 93 cm

LONDON

“British Art Show 7”

HAYWARD GALLERY

“The best British art show ever,” gushed the *The Guardian* when “British Art Show 7: In the Days of the Comet” opened late last year at Nottingham Contemporary. Could the London outing of forty artists born or resident in the UK live up to the fanfare? Easily, it turns out. Perhaps any exhibition with Christian Marclay’s immensely popular video *The Clock*, 2010, is guaranteed success. Marclay’s splendid, twenty-four-hour work made of existing film clips displaying the actual time, thus becoming a functioning screen-size clock, relentlessly pictures not just ticking timepieces but our uneasy relationship with time, as characters perpetually wait, rush, panic, or simply find ways to kill time on-screen.

Just as Marclay proves himself a consummate filmmaker—as does Emily Wardill in her tense 16-mm film *The Diamond (Descartes’ Daughter)*, 2008—the other artists represent their media like virtuosos. In painting, Phoebe Unwin’s unstable yet exacting abstractions were rivaled by George Shaw’s exquisite suburban elegies and Michael Fullerton’s ventriloquized painting styles. Tris Yonna-Michell’s spoken poetics in *balustrade #2*, 2011, were equaled by sound artist Haroon Mirza’s uncanny music-making apparatus about the doomed rock star Ian Curtis, *Regaining a Degree of Control*, 2010. Lightness was a leitmotif; near Ian Klier’s barely there painting-based installation



Matthew Darbyshire, *An Exhibition for Modern Living*, 2010. Mixed media. 8' 2 3/4" x 11' 9 1/2" x 14' 8 3/4". From “British Art Show 7.”

Melnikov project, silver, 2010, floated Karla Black’s irresistibly pink chalk powder and transparent polyethylene hanging sculpture *There Can Be No Argonents*, 2011, which seemed to blow fairy dust as you brushed past. Juliette Blightman’s delicate net curtain adorning a concrete window, *and so a day is not really a day because each day is like another day and they begin to have nothing*, 2011, attempts a cozy domestic corner—just as so many Brits have struggled to do for years in their tower-block homes. Sarah Lucas excels with her twisted, intestine-like sculptures from the series “NUDS,” 2009—, made of cushion stuffing, wire, and nylons set on heavy cinder blocks and plinths. The pedestals’ weight fails to distract from the unnerving realization that, despite their marblelike presence suggesting the innards of a giant Henry Moore figure, they are more like weightless craft projects, begging to be unceremoniously bounced off the wall or borrowed for a game of keepy-uppy on your knee. On the other hand, there was little angst (Nathaniel Mellors’s tragicomic *Ostrhouse*, 2010, being an exception), little autobiography, and almost no politics—save for a nostalgic 1970s throwback in Duncan Campbell’s unforgettable *Bernadette*, 2006, about the outspoken Ulster activist-politician Bernadette Devlin. Overall, this is work marked by composure, competence, and an understated knowledge of contemporary artistic discourse, reflecting the intelligence and skill not only of the artists but also of the show’s curators.

In the midst of such hearteningly accomplished work, Matthew Darbyshire’s showstopping *An Exhibition for Modern Living*, 2010, occupied a central gallery like a Trojan horse. This roomlike installation is lined with shiny new open shelving stocked with scrupulously chosen designer objects, mostly in black, white, pink, and silver. A keffiyeh, once a sign of radical solidarity, hangs neatly ironed and artfully knotted on a novelty coatrack that imitates dripping paint. Politics has been reduced to a color-coordinated arty accessory to be donned or tossed off to suit the mood. Adjacent to sequin-covered Union Jack throw pillows are a few objects eerily reminiscent of artworks from the past: a velvet pink Jesus sharing a strange kinship with Katharina Fritsch’s yellow Madonnas, a chromed gnome which hints at Jeff Koons’s 1980s silvery stainless steel figurines, and playful bookends not unlike Keith Haring’s radiant baby, now toddling upright and cherubically shoving ceramic books together. On the wall label, Darbyshire politely thanked such design companies as Branex and Kartell for kindly lending him these hugely seductive things: a covert name-and-shame exercise brilliantly smuggled in under the guise of institutional gratitude. Among so many uplifting works, Darbyshire’s seemed bitterly cynical, prompting one to wonder: By the time “British Art Show 9” rolls around ten years from now, how much of this brilliance will be available, in watered-down and insipid form, at an IKEA near you?

—Gilda Williams

Ned Beaman

A novelist who lives in London. His novel, Boxer, Beetle (Sceptre, 2010), was nominated for the Guardian first book award. His second novel, The Teleportation Accident, will be published in 2012.

In Matthew Darbyshire's *An Exhibition for Modern Living* (2010), taste is the bait and class is the snare. Installed in Nottingham Contemporary's large street-side window like a display of merchandise, the work brings together dozens of items of colourful mid-price interior design: lamps, bookends, hat-stands, telephones, curtains and so on. They are all repellent and depressing, and the effect of being surrounded by such a dense cage of them is unexpectedly powerful. As the narrator observes in Elizabeth Price's video *User Group Disco* (2010), which is shown at the New Art Exchange: 'We are aware that works of art can shock the unwary by their resemblance to accumulated domestic monstrosities.' But what makes *An Exhibition for Modern Living* so much more vicious is the text Darbyshire puts next to it.

'With thanks to the following lenders,' it reads, 'without whom the production of this work would not have been possible,' followed by a list of 19 brands. This is, of course, disingenuous – Darbyshire could just have bought all this stuff if he needed to. The brands participate unwittingly in their own humiliation. But if they aren't in on the joke, you start to think, who else isn't? British Art Show 7 starts off in Nottingham. Not everyone that sees it is going to realize that the installation is supposed to be grotesque; a lot of them probably love this kind of trash. They don't know any better. No, that's not an excusable

thought to have, but if it goes through your head just for a second, then Darbyshire has you. And even the surrounding printed matter seems to be complicit in setting up a notional class divide around the interpretation of his work. The free exhibition booklet gives no hint of *An Exhibition for Modern Living*'s satirical intentions, observing blandly that 'the work explores the mass availability of design classics and the pervasive idea of achieving "tasteful" living through their acquisition', and alluding to an eponymous 1949 exhibition at the Detroit Institute of Arts that well-meaningly 'set out to showcase "modern taste"'. It's only in the exhibition catalogue – priced at a distinctly unproletarian £14.99 – that we get any whispers of 'kitsch' and 'cliché' and 'doubt'.

Inaugurated in 1979, the British Art Show's original mission was to bring contemporary art to the provinces, and Darbyshire – like a more devilish Pierre Bourdieu – begins an interrogation of class, taste and the regional art-going public that seems to taint these good intentions almost indelibly. Apart from as a reference to H.G. Wells' 1906 novel, why is it, one wonders after seeing his work, that curators Lisa Le Feuvre and Tom Morton have titled their show 'In the Days of the Comet'? Is a comet like this five-yearly survey not only in the sense that it blazes across the country at regular intervals, but also in the sense that it establishes a divide between the astronomers,

**In Matthew Darbyshire's
An Exhibition for Modern Living, taste is the bait
and class is the snare.**

who recognize it as a celestial phenomenon, and the yokels, who see it only as an omen, a prodigy, an enigma? In Nottingham, to obtain the 'art passport' that allows you to get into the Castle Museum & Art Gallery section of the exhibition free of charge, you first have to get the tram across town to the New Art Exchange, where Duncan Campbell, Christian Marclay and Elizabeth Price are showing. It is almost as if the curators, in a strategy that could have come straight out of David Cameron's patrician 'nudge unit', were bribing the masses £5.50 each to see the part of the show that makes the greatest demands on your curiosity and spare time.

Such speculations might seem mean-spirited, but the alternative is to ascribe to the British Art Show a sort of a sincere democratic optimism about its missionary activities. Well, the products in *An Exhibition for Modern Living* are full of optimism – they're cheerful, affordable, patriotically inscribed with sparkly Union Jacks. They're also dismal. If this is democratic optimism, Darbyshire suggests, perhaps it would be a good thing if curators did have at least a measure of elitist pessimism about Nottingham, Glasgow and Plymouth. Or at least he seems to suggest that. The installation itself, again, is too deadpan to take any position of its own – it's just stuff on some shelves – and all the wrangling above is outsourced to the reluctant brains of its visitors. When BAS7 moves to the metropolitan surroundings of London's Hayward Gallery in February, many of these themes will inevitably fade from view, and that's something to regret, because *An Exhibition for Modern Living* subjects the survey to the sort of ideological stress tests that you won't find anywhere in the catalogue.



Courtesy: Herald St, London, and the artist.

Matthew Darbyshire
*An Exhibition for
Modern Living*
2010
Mixed media
2.5 x 3.6 x 4.5 m

Gasworks, London, UK

Estate agents' brochures drop through the letter box, their design indistinguishable from that of life-style magazines. Newspaper supplements profile the homes of young stylists, galleries and environmental activists, as though their choice of soft furnishings might provide hard news about their psyches. MTV Cribs shows us around 50 Cent's Connecticut ranch house ('I ain't gonna tell you no lies, these chairs came from Mike Tyson'). Interior designer Laurence Lowenthal-Bowen launches a collection of tableware on his website with the words: 'I've always had a theory that the way we display specific objects in the dining-room is unwittingly or at least subconsciously inspired by Roman altars to the household gods'.

Curated by Anna Colin, Matthew Darbyshire's exhibition 'Blades House' at Gasworks (the title is taken from the name of a nearby social housing development, parts of which are now privately owned) began with a human figure, or rather its absence. Suspended from the ceiling of a silver-walpapered antechamber was a man's suit, its fabric patterned with the logos of various luxury and budget brands, from Ralph Lauren to George at Asda. These empty vestments suggested an invisible man, consumed by consumerism. Who is he? How might we know him? The answer's simple - step inside his beautiful home.

Beyond the dangling suit lay a door which opened onto a mock-up of the interior of a white-walled, windowless and almost oppressively neat one-bedroom apartment, based on the floor

plan of a unit in the exhibition's titular block, and belonging, in Darbyshire's words, to 'a fictitious, urban middle-class professional in his mid-30s'. Paddling across the entrance hall's orange carpets, the visitor was greeted by a Brompton folding bicycle (also orange), framed prints by Patrick Caulfield, Michael Craig-Martin and Henri Matisse, and a hatstand on which was hung a hooded top that seemed snatched from the wardrobe of some Nu-Flave kid from the television youth drama *Skins* (2007-ongoing). This perchant for mixing bright colours with bold shapes (Darbyshire is quietly masterful in his controlling of tone and form) was repeated in the bedroom, where the click-wheel of a tangerine iPod Nano was echoed in a CD logo painted in a rainbow of muddy, Morris Louis-like washes onto the surface of a bedside lamp. Period details proliferated - a Muj-bee, a Paul Smith striped shirt, a Robin Day 6-Series chair of recent manufacture - and the room might easily have featured in a magazine piece on the contemporary bachelor pad (combine classic Modernism with a witty Pop sensibility and the acid palette of the Third Summer of Love) or functioned as a museum display depicting a 'nougeities' interior that, characteristically, hasn't quite shrugged off the 1990s, or that decade's preoccupation with retro chic.

Such shuffling of fashions from the recent past was also in play in the living room. Here an outboard graffiti tag provided the backdrop for an anthropomorphic Ikea floor lamp, two prints by Andy Warhol were hung next to one by Takashi Murakami, kitschy statuettes of Jesus and Mary were shelved next to a bust of the Buddha, and - brilliantly -

Arne Jacobson 'Egg' and 'Swan' recliners shared floor space with a pair of contemporary 'Bistro' stacking chairs sold by the British supermarket giant Tesco (cheap knock-offs of Jacobson's own 'Series 7' chair from 1955, 'democratic design'? As the Tesco slogan says: 'Every little helps!')

And yet, for all the fan that Darbyshire had with these juxtapositions, 'Blades House' was also a sharply unsettling place. On a plasma TV screen the artist showed a looped video that spliced together dramatic moments and musical numbers taken from a number of Hollywood movies of the rags-to-riches genre, including *Oliver!* (1948), *The Jerk* (1979), *Flashdance* (1983), *Brewster's Millions* (1985) and *Billy Elliot* (2000). We might imagine this jumble of aspirational messages screening in the mind of the flat's absent inhabitant. It's a hard-knock life, sure, but he's reviewing the situation, and sooner or later he'll hit the big time, through talent, blind luck or more darkling means.

While 'Blades House' hints at the upwardly-mobile-consumer-turned-killer horror of *16*, Ballard's novel *Rise* (1975) and Bret Easton Ellis' novel *American Psycho* (1996), it belongs very much to now, in a world in which even supermarkets invite us to 'Taste the Difference', a measure of bought exclusivity is available to all but those of the most modest of means. How, then, might the apartment's owner signal his own apartment? How might he carve the material world into an image of his immaterial soul? Walking through Darbyshire's tense, unsettling installation, it's hard not to feel that somebody's going to get hurt.

Tom Morton

Matthew Darbyshire
Blades House
2008
Installation view



Matthew Darbyshire



Tate Triennial 2009

TATE BRITAIN, LONDON
Edgar Schmitz

TRUE TO ITS FUNCTION as a naming ceremony of sorts, Nicolas Bourriaud's Tate Triennial aimed at nothing less than inaugurating an alternative modernity. It understood itself as both harbinger and incarnation of this new cultural constellation and was premised on what Bourriaud calls "the emerging and ultimately irresistible will to create a form of modernism for the twenty-first century." Fittingly for an exhibition predicated on a ringing declaration of a new epoch, "Altermodern" was surrounded on all sides by gestures of initiation, programmatic statements, and declarations of intent that ostensibly buttressed Bourriaud's assertions. The exhibition was preceded by not one but four "Prologues," daylong events featuring lineups of artists, critics, and theorists and addressing the themes "Altermodern," "Esiles," "Travel," and "Borders." Serving as yet another prologue of sorts was a curatorial manifesto posted on the Tate's website as a primer for the mystified. "POSTMODERNISM IS DEAD," Bourriaud declares emblematically in this text. "A new modernity is emerging, reconfigured to an age of globalization—understood in its economic, political and cultural aspects: an altermodern culture." This grandiose tone is echoed by the ambitious exhibition catalogue, which elaborates the idea that our nascent modernity is coalescing under truly global terms—meaning that the

Western biases of both utopian modernism and the end-of-history condition of postmodern melancholy are being done away with. Or as an unsigned catalogue blurb states: "Art made in the times we live in . . . is conceived and produced as a reaction against standardization and nationalism. The art is characterized by artists' cross-border, cross-cultural negotiations"—negotiations evincing a dynamic of creolization that, Bourriaud states, may finally subsume the outdated paradigm of harmonious multiculturalism. (True to the notion of the artist-traveler, the category of Britishness was erased from the triennial's organizational logic; the twenty-eight artists in the show were from all over the world.)

Physically, too, the viewer's entry into the exhibition was carefully orchestrated via a trio of works that functioned as a kind of drumroll, greeting visitors before they passed through the triennial's ticket barrier. The first of these, encountered on entrance to the museum, was Pascale Marthine Tayou's *Private Collection, Year 3000, 2008*. Fusing African and European pop-culture figurines into a display set up to evoke a private museum of the next millennium, this arrangement of fiction-fetish artifacts collapsed the distance between recent past and imagined future, as well as that between Cameroon and London. Nearby, in the Tate's Duveen Galleries, was Matthew Darbyshire's *Palac, 2009*. This architectural mash-up re-created elements of Warsaw's 1955 Palace of Culture and Science and of a new, Will Alsop-designed community center in England's West Midlands. Here, what was fused were Soviet pomp, echoed in the architecture of the Duveen Galleries (built in 1937), and the anodyne avant-gardism of New Labour's built environment. Against the backdrop of Subodh Gupta's towering mushroom cloud of stainless-steel dining utensils, Tayou's and Darbyshire's works indicated a kind of multiple sitedness (in London and Cameroon, in Poland and England, in the past and the future). Significantly, a particular concept of sitedness or rootedness is central to Bourriaud's current thinking. In his most recent book,

The Radicant (Sterberg Press, 2009), he defines his title neologism thus: "To be radicant means setting one's roots in motion." Per Bourriaud, radicant artists remap the present as a field of temporal and spatial dislocations. It is in this paradoxical notion of radicated mobility, perhaps, that Bourriaud's concept of the altermodern protagonist as cultural nomad—a global flâneur constantly moving across time, space, and signs—acquires whatever actual newness it may possess.

And yet, the almost too-precise correlations between these concepts and Tayou's and Darbyshire's installations underscored the degree to which the exhibition's elaborate discursive apparatus had the effect of predetermining readings of the works. (According to Bourriaud's logic, it was supposed to happen the other way around, with art generating both the discussion and, to a great extent, the shift toward altermodernity itself.) More broadly speaking, all these proclamations and performances of artistic, curatorial, and theoretical concerns had contradictory effects on the show. On the one hand, they dramatically expanded the remit of the triennial, whose previous three editions were considerably less ambitious, by appropriating the kind of discursively expanded exhibition format formulated in 2002 by Okwui Enwezor for Documenta 11 (which was presented as a series of five global platforms, of which the actual exhibition in Kassel was only one). On the other hand, however, there was a kind of narrowing, or shrinking. Bourriaud's very insistence on inventing a new paradigm ended up periodizing the altermodern, ossifying its position as chronological successor to modernism and postmodernism. Bolstering this sense of genealogy was the fact that the curator's theorizing of altermodernity itself lifts key tropes from modernist models (the manifesto, the artist-flâneur, and of course the emphatic notion of the now and its ostensible newness) and post-modernist ones (with the 1990s figure of the nomadic artist standing out as the most prominent and the most consistently disavowed).