over-ambitious culture industry hack rather than a political demagogue. He may have picked up the moronic phraseology he employs almost unconsciously and have no idea of what it signifies politically. On the other hand, Boring Ass may be hedging his bets, thinking that ambiguous statements of the kind he is making about the 'altermodern' will ingratiate him with the political establishment in France if there are further swings to the right. It isn't entirely clear to me what Bourriaud's ambitions are, but it wouldn't surprise me to learn he wanted to be director of an institution such as the Centre Georges Pompidou, or else running cultural policy for the French government; and if this is what he desires, then his curational charlatanism (viz re-dating Metzger's work) indicates that he is unscrupulous enough to attempt to achieve it through a somewhat ambiguous redeployment of Nouvelle Droite motifs.

There are only two pieces in the Altermodern show that actually resonate with Bourriaud's inflammatory catalogue essay. Curiously, Adrian Searle in his Guardian online review felt moved to link them: "...one sits and listens to Olivia Plender's description of the relationship between...

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For the Tate Triennial, Bourriaud has adopted a technique much beloved by talentless song-smiths when record companies demand new material they haven’t yet composed, take an existing riff and reverse it. Thus the back cover of the Triennial catalogue announces: "Few books introduce a word into the language as this one does. The term `altermodern' has been coined by leading critical theorist and curator Nicolas Bourriaud to describe the art that has arrived at the end of the postmodern period, made in today’s global context, as a reaction against cultural standardisation." This claim singularly fails to mark out any new field for ‘contemporary’ cultural practice, since art in the modern sense of the term developed more than two centuries ago in reaction to the cultural standardisation of the first industrial revolution, and in the context of the development and global expansion of capitalism (the initial moves from its formal to its real domination, a process that continued until well into the 20th century). And it should hardly need stating that the justification for Bourriaud’s Tate squib is simply Lyon 2005 in reverse. But forwards, backwards or anagramatised, the
The Devil’s knot says: Don’t 100% agree with this text. Also online at:
Art is for Pussies says:
Trippy blog, Sunday, January 18th, 2009 at 12:51 pm.

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wittered on about the traditionalist imbecile Rene Guenon and denounced the INS lecture as 'incoherent' (obviously not aware of the fact that this was its entire point). The next person to gain control of the mike that was being passed around expressed complete agreement with the INS; while a third specified the form in which he wanted his answers, and yet after getting them as scripted rather than as demanded, he still appeared unaware that these had been written in advance.

The Q and A was followed by drinks. The Boring Ass impersonator used this social as an opportunity to parade a trophy blonde who hung onto his arm before the public. While I was enjoying a tipple, a journalist from the TLS mistook me for Thunderbird. I assured her that I was not McCarthy and when she eventually persuaded someone to point him out, she apparently gave him a ticking off for the prank he'd just played. Literary types are still in nineteenth-century notions such as sincerity, and by using the INS as a vehicle to revive the merciless assault on authenticity that characterised the most interesting cultural currents of the 1980s and 1990s, Simon Critchley anyone wanting to cite quotes has to count off the pages by turning them); no doubt if M/M were architects the idea of getting 'transgressive' by designing buildings without foundations would appeal to them. That said, the catalogue's content is even worse that its cretinous design.

Bourriaud's introduction to the Triennial catalogue exposes the lack of anything substantial behind his half-baked notion of the 'altermodern'. To quote Boring Ass directly: "The term 'altermodern', which serves as the title of the present exhibition and to delimit the void beyond the post-modern, has its roots in the idea of 'otherness'." (page 12). If Bourriaud sees a void beyond postmodernism, this is presumably because he is loathe to admit that capitalism (like feudalism and every other form of exploitation to be found in recorded history) has a finite life-span. Likewise by connecting alter to other, Bourriaud reminded me of a book I read a dozen years ago, The Other Modernism: F. T. Marinetti's Futurist Fiction of Power by Cinzia Sartini Blum (University of California Press, 1996). In this tome, Blum 'investigates a diverse array of... futurist textual practices that range from formal experimentation with 'words in freedom' to...
his back (but not his arse) was a truly shitty piece of 'designer' knitwear in grey marl with buttons running down the sleeve. The fake Bourriaud proceeded to camp it up outrageously in his impersonation of an inept and self-important curator, and used a thick but phony French accent to render his 'Franglais' incomprehensible. This had those of us who have seen the 'English' 'translation' of Bourriaud's book Relational Aesthetics, rolling in the aisles. Indeed, my body was so racked by laughter that I failed to write down a single word of the parody Bourriaud speech. Fortuitously a brief sample from Relational Aesthetics (page 29), the text the INS piss-take was modelled upon, will convey its flavour: "Pictures and sculptures are characterised by their symbolic availability. Beyond obvious material impossibilities (museum closing times, geographical remoteness), an artwork can be see (sic) at any time. It is there before our eyes, offered to the curiosity of a theoretically universal public. Now, contemporary art is often marked by non-availability, by being viewable only at a specific time...."

Having lampooned Bourriaud so mercilessly, whatever the INS did next was bound to

modernism, in the sense of a phenomenon arising within the domain of art, resides in its ability to jolt us out of tradition; it embodies a cultural exodus, an escape from the confines of nationalism and identity tagging, but also from the mainstream whose tendency is to reify thought and practice. Under threat from fundamentalism and consumer driven uniformisation, menaced by massification and the enforced re-abandonment of individual identity, art today needs to reinvent itself, and on a planetary scale. And this new modernism, for the first time, will have resulted from global dialogue. Postmodernism, thanks to the post-colonial criticism of Western pretensions to determine the world's direction and the speed of its development, has allowed the historical counters to be reset to zero; today, temporalities intersect and weave a complex network stripped of a centre. Numerous contemporary artistic practices indicate, however, that we are on the verge of a leap out of the postmodern period and the (essentialist) multicultural model from which it is indivisible; a leap that would give rise to a synthesis between modernism and post-colonialism." (page 12).
a structureless constellation awaiting transformation into an archipelago." It looks like what is waiting to kick off here is that old idealist fallacy about consciousness being brought in from outside the 'masses', a trope much beloved by the likes of Lenin and Mussolini. Likewise, while artistic modernism may indeed - as Bourriaud claims - serve to 'jolt us out of tradition', it is important to remember that fundamentalism and traditionalism are also products of modernity in its broadest sense. Given the positions Bourriaud strikes, it unfortunately also becomes necessary to restate once again that artistic modernism is not necessarily incompatible with fascism and/or nationalism, and indeed that fascism is not incompatible with anarchism (see, for example, my text of a dozen years ago Anarchist Integralism).

Bourriaud’s rant about the "threat from fundamentalism and consumer driven uniformisation" and "being menaced by massification and the enforced re- abandonment of individual identity", like his ritual denunciations of multiculturalism, are familiar enough as political rhetoric. That said, most of us are probably more used to seeing such positions}

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