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Au Palais de l’Élysée, Buren revisite la verrière du jardin d’hiver


Ce lundi 13 septembre, Emmanuel et Brigitte Macron ont révélé la nouvelle installation de Daniel Buren à l’Elysée. Alors qu’il avait en 1986 réaménagé la cour d’honneur du Palais Royal sur demande de François Mitterrand, y installant ses fameuses colonnes, il s’est attelé cette année à donner des couleurs à la verrière du jardin d’hiver du palais. Teintant çà et là les vitres de bleu, de blanc ou de rouge, il signe ainsi, avec Pavoisé, une œuvre in situ que le président de la République a qualifiée de « résolument patriotique ».
Une œuvre tricolore

Les 250 mètres carrés de la verrière ont été habillés de filtres bleus, blancs et rouges, illuminant ainsi le lieu aux couleurs du drapeau français. Certains des carreaux présentent également des motifs de rayures, signature de l’artiste. Emmanuel Macron a salué une œuvre audacieuse et libertaire : « Au moment où la vie reprend ses droits, cette œuvre d’art traduit la volonté non seulement de faire de l’Elysée un lieu de création contemporaine, mais de vous demander à tous de partager l’esprit d’audace, de liberté et de réinvention de notre pays, car je crois que c’est fondamentalement le monde des artistes ». L’écrivain et critique d’art Donation Grau, quant à lui, évoque un hommage à Claude Monet, « qui avait peint un espace pavoisé, aux couleurs du drapeau français, dans son chef-d’œuvre La Rue Montorgueil (en 1878), au moment où la République était consolidée ».


Une installation temporaire

L’œuvre, censée être temporaire, sera présentée au public lors des Journées européennes du patrimoine ces samedi 18 et dimanche 19 septembre, et devrait rester en place jusqu’en février 2022. Buren ne semble cependant pas opposé à sa pérennisation : « Ces œuvres ne peuvent pas être transférées ailleurs, donc si elles restent longtemps en place, elles finissent par se fondre dans le lieu. Si elles restent peu de temps, elles auront un effet plus temporaire, mais dans les deux cas, je pense que quelque chose d’intéressant se produit entre l’œuvre et le lieu, qui deviennent inséparables ». 
Daniel Buren: reimagining space through stripes

The French conceptual artist discusses bringing his signature motif on to the streets and into galleries

Visitors to Frieze New York this year will be expecting an understandably pared-down version of the sweeping, swarming art fairs we were once accustomed to. They may still, however, be taken aback by the restrained presentation offered by Lisson Gallery.

At a time when wall space at any physical fair is precious, just a few small strips of striped linen cut into triangular or wavy shapes will be positioned, sparingly, at the corners and around the edges of their booth. Their presence will probably do more to heighten the starkness of the white cube than detract from it, an intentional effect no doubt enhanced by social distancing.
Those with a passing familiarity with the artist, French conceptualist Daniel Buren, may also be miffed. A string of major public commissions have made his signature stripes hard to miss, but we are more used to seeing them in the form of dramatic, colourful and, in some cases, colossal statement pieces. Examples include the ticket hall at Tottenham Court Road station in London, the courtyard of the Palais-Royal in Paris and, New Yorkers may recall, his controversial “Peinture-Sculpture”, a 20-metre banner of blue and white stripes that briefly dangled down the rotunda at the Guggenheim. Installed for a group show in 1971, it caused complaints and was quickly removed.

When I speak to Buren over Zoom I find him affable and prone to finish statements with a chuckle. At the age of 83, his dark eyebrows produce a striking contrast with his thick white hair. I quickly get the impression that he has spent decades patiently fielding questions about his work from people who don’t quite get it. To help me understand the works at Frieze, made in the 1960s and 70s, he takes me back to the early days of his career.

Where most artists cite a formative period of artistic training, Buren brushes over several years as a student in Paris to tell me about a job he scored soon afterwards, painting murals at a hotel in the US Virgin Islands. The large-scale abstract works helped him, in his words, “to get clean” from traditional art historical influences that would otherwise have taken years “to wash out”.
Buren went on to form an association with some of his peers and “decided to really shake up the situation in Paris,” he says. Together they staged farcical exhibitions, including one in which they took down all the artworks on opening night.

“This impulse to question and critique the art world was keenly felt, but the turning point came in 1965 when Buren spotted the striped linen used for window awnings at a market. He was drawn to the stripes because their uniformity was “totally uninteresting and completely banal”. Fearful that the materials might be perceived as ready-mades, he added his own barely perceptible interventions in white paint. Remarkably, these muted gestures would, in 2007, win him Japan’s prestigious Praemium Imperiale for painting.

Buren’s interest in repetition and reduction, to move beyond traditional pictoriality towards a new neutrality, chimed with minimalist experiments happening at the same time in New York. He puts this down to the French notion of “l’air du temps”, or a mood of the time that affected many people unknown to each other.
As he began working with stripes, which Buren calls a “visual tool”, he realised “this tool is so minimal, so uninteresting that what becomes interesting is where the tool is posed. When you put such a tool in two different spaces, it’s not saying the same thing. How is that possible?”

Having discovered the power of this tool, Buren ran with it. Unable to afford rent, he closed his studio and took to the streets, where Parisians began to see his “Affichages Sauvages”, striped posters, crop up over billboards. “That was the beginning of what I consider a very serious work”, he says.

As is often the case in our conversation, Buren recognises the far-reaching consequence of these early decisions but pins them primarily on circumstance. “Of course it wasn’t a programme, but when I see it in a retrospective it looks well-thought out. So does the idea of quitting the studio, but for me it was interesting to quit the studio to analyse why an artist needs a studio, not because I thought I would never have a studio again.”

By accident or design, the decision to produce art on the street was the first step towards Buren’s concept of working in situ. “When I speak about ‘in situ’,” he says, “it means the work is done at a certain place and is playing with that space and the people who go there.”
The neutrality of Buren’s stripes are intended to draw our attention to their surroundings, which is what makes them so effective in museum and urban settings. “Everything that makes these works possible is not mine. They have nothing to do with my work! So what I consider a work of mine, as I present it to the public, is a total integration of a lot of foreign objects or foreign architecture or foreign colour.”

Though doubtful about even calling himself an artist — “if you use the word “art” it just ends the conversation” — Buren was soon invited into art institutions. A 1980 group show at Lisson included “A Work in Four Parts for One Wall”, one of three works that will be faithfully restaged at Frieze. “They were more or less a starting point for all the experimentation that I did”, he says of these rare early works which saw him cut up the striped linen into pieces and use them to frame a wall. The effect was to trick the viewer into paying attention, not to the stripes, but to the surrounding gallery space.

“The stripes are really recognisable. So people who know my work can connect them to other pieces. There is always a connection to my other works”, says Buren. In this sense, the pieces at Frieze can be seen as early fragments of a larger conceptual work that is not yet finished.

Asked what will be different about their exhibition at the fair, he says “the elements will be presented exactly the same, although the wall might be bigger or smaller, which would change the physicality of it. But even if the wall is the same, what’s the difference between these two things that look very much the same? Forty-five years. Nothing could be more different than 45 years, so the piece has changed.”

He has a point. When the works were first exhibited, Buren was still making a name for himself and the world was getting to grips with conceptual art. Some 45 years later, we now see the same works through the lens of the momentous and historic projects he has realised since. As a viewing experience it will indeed be at once very similar, and yet completely different.

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In Conversation

PIERRE YOVAROVITCH & DANIEL BUREN

“MY WORK IS SITE SPECIFIC, SO I KNOW THAT NINE TIMES OUT OF TEN, IT WON’T LAST. IT’S NOT TRANSPORTABLE, AND IT OFTEN ENDS UP BEING DESTROYED. IT DIFFERS IN MANY WAYS FROM MORE CONVENTIONAL ART, AND THAT’S WHAT I LIKE MOST ABOUT IT. IF YOU HAVE A PAINTING, YOU CAN JUST STICK IT IN THE BASEMENT. WHEN YOU ACTUALLY LIVE INSIDE THE WORK, YOU EITHER HAVE TO GET USED TO IT, OR DESTROY IT.”
French conceptual artist Daniel Buren’s work has punctuated cityscapes and gallery spaces — including Paris’s Palais Royal and the Fondation LVMH — the world over for more than 50 years. Working with graphic form, most notably stripes and grids, and bold colour, his in situ interventions simultaneously challenge and enhance their surroundings. Equally concerned with, and adept at the use of colour and form, is French interior architect Pierre Yovanovitch, whose artful vision of contemporary elegance has established him as the ultimate aesthete. They sit down to talk about their creative processes, the legacy of their work, and the pitfalls of being a collector.

How did you meet?

Pierre Yovanovitch: I first met Daniel when I was working on a large house in Paris. I had come up with plans to put a tall, narrow window in the stairwell. I was thinking something more traditional, from an architectural standpoint — something with stained glass, for example — but the client was worried that stained glass would feel too religious, or dated. So I thought it over, and showed them a project of Daniel’s that was part of a temporary exhibition at the Strasbourg Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art. It was an impressive interplay of colour, shadow, and light. I showed it to the client and said: “Let’s forget the stained glass idea and call in Daniel Buren. I think he’d be able to come up with some good ideas.”

Daniel, did you know Pierre’s work before you met him?

Daniel Buren: No. I discovered his work the first time we met, and I really liked what I saw. I still haven’t seen so much of his work in person, though — I’ve seen it mainly through photos in magazines.
How did the collaboration work for the two of you, in a practical sense?

PY: When you’re working with a great artist like Daniel, you can’t even attempt to control everything. You have to be able to let things go, and tell yourself: this is what we came up with, but now it’s up to Daniel to take that idea and run with it. We brainstorm together, of course, but in the end, it’s his heart and soul that’s going to shine through. The ball is in his court.

Your work has to fit within both a physical space and a moment of time. Does the idea that it might not last play on your mind?

DB: In my case, that thought is essential, and it’s what first sparked my career 50 years ago. My work is site specific, so I know that nine times out of ten, it won’t last. It’s not transportable, and it often ends up being destroyed. It differs in many ways from more conventional art, and that’s what I like most about it. I don’t get upset if a piece doesn’t last, or if the customer decides to move out, or gets tired of it. If you have a painting, you can just stick it in the basement. When you actually live inside the work, you either have to get used to it, or destroy it.
PY: In my profession, we take our orders from the clients. When they ask us to build them a house, for example, that’s something that’s meant to last for a long time. A painter, on the other hand, produces works that have a market value. Both those things are completely different from site specific art. Site specific art — regardless of whether it’s permanent or eventually destroyed — has no market value, and I think that’s really important and fascinating. The artwork combines with the surrounding architecture, and comes to life. It’s there for good, or at least for a very long time, so the collector is like a sponsor. They don’t do it because they’re looking to make a speculative investment, but rather because they are passionate about the art. Unfortunately, there are lots of collectors out there today who are more like businesspeople, and who see art solely as an investment. The true collector is in it for the beauty. And that’s what I love about permanent works.

*Do the two of you collect anything?*

DB: I have some very nice pieces, many of which I’ve acquired through trading works with friends who are artists, but I’m not a collector. Ever since I was little, I’ve always rejected the idea of becoming a collector. If I were a collector, I wouldn’t be able to stop myself. It’s sort of like smoking. I don’t smoke, because I know that if I started, I’d never stop. Even when I was 16 years old, I knew better than to start smoking.

PY: Doesn’t it make you want to keep collecting when your artist friends give you works?

DB: No. I know a lot of collectors, and I think some have a real obsession. True collectors can’t stop. If they did, they would go crazy. The more art they see, the greater their desire becomes to obtain that one piece they don’t have.
PY: I think you’re right, and my problem is that I can be like that, too! I’m not like my customers, though — they’re far wealthier than I am. When they see a piece they like, they’ll do anything to have it. We go to big contemporary art shows all over the world — Basel, Miami — and they have to decide, in a span of just a few minutes, whether they’re going to buy a really expensive painting. It’s incredible. I collect vintage furniture and some art too, mostly by young artists. But I completely agree with Daniel: once you start, you’re always looking to acquire something better, and to up the prestige of your collection. It can become an obsession.

DB: And it doesn’t matter what you collect. Heck, it could even be cheese boxes! It’s all the same. Now, I’m not saying that all collectors are neurotic. Collectors in general are obsessive. And that includes the person who collects really ordinary objects, as well as someone on the lookout for an obscure artist. The thing that’s so fascinating is that there’s no end to it. The guy who collects cheese boxes will always find one that he doesn’t have yet.

*How much do clients direct your work?*

PY: They tell us what they want. And whether it’s a house or an office, or whether we’re building or renovating, we always have constraints. An artist like Daniel, on the other hand, has much more freedom. Aside from site specific projects, he doesn’t receive orders. So he has complete freedom to do what he wants.

DB: That’s true. I like working with constraints, but mine are probably very different from the architect’s. The architect has to deal with all of the construction related constraints ...
PY: For site specific projects, even Daniel’s work must fit within a space!

DB: There’s a double constraint, I think, when you’re working on a project that’s part of someone’s home. You don’t want to say to your customer: ‘I’m the artist, so I’m going to do what I want, and it’s the same price whether you like it or not.’ I think it’s more intelligent to listen to the customer — if they have anything to say, that is! Sometimes the customer gives no instructions at all. I don’t like it so much either when they just say: ‘I really like your work, so do whatever you want.’ In that case, I’ll ask the customer questions like: ‘Which room do you spend the most time in?’, or, ‘Is there a work of mine in particular that you like, so that I can try to do something similar?’ It gives me some direction or rules. Without that, it can be extremely complicated. There are a million different things you could do.

PY: I try to be as tactful as possible, because I do guide customers a lot.

DB: I really like it when customers impose things. When it comes to picking colours, I try to make sure that I’m not always using the same scheme, and that I’m not imposing my own taste. So if someone suggests something, and I think it could work, then that’s a way for me to branch out and work with colours that I normally wouldn’t work with. It’s also good to remain open and ask questions, because some people hate certain colours. You have to remember, this is where they’re going to be living. If they say, ‘anything but green’, that’s important to know! You don’t want to make them a living room or bathroom that they won’t enjoy being in. Other customers might want to impose everything! They’ll tell me they want blue here, yellow there, green there. Now, there’s nothing wrong with being a decorator, but that’s not what I am. So when that happens, it could create conflict. I’m not necessarily going to say ‘yes’ to everything. I’d have to tell the customer: ‘Sorry, but I can’t do that.’ It’s a very delicate job!

PY: You’re right! It’s a challenge no matter what project you’re working on. Just as you’re not a decorator, I’m not a general contractor. I want to work on projects that I find interesting. There is a balance. You need to have a sort of benevolent authority.
Daniel Buren on Masterpieces and Perfect Design

“The perfection of a masterpiece (a painting, sculpture or any visual art object) has nothing to do with any function in my mind.” Elephant asks Daniel Buren about perfection in art, design and, of course, his own work.

First let’s say that any important work of art, what we call a masterpiece (these works can be very different from one to the other), is always perfect. A painting by Cézanne is perfect. A painting by Matisse is perfect. A ready-made from Duchamp is perfect. A dripping painting from Pollock is perfect. A work from Mondrian is perfect. A piece from Carl Andre is perfect. A triptych from Francis Bacon is perfect. I can continue like that for hundreds of artists’ works not only from the twentieth-century.

As these works can be completely contradictory from one to the next, we already understand that the word perfection does not cover a single type of work, has no general rules and will never drive you (at least in the visual art field) to a single solution. Perfection in the art field is a kind of coherence between thousands of aspects which are done with fantastic invention by individuals who are usually called artists. But the word perfection, when used for some masterpieces, has no connection whatsoever with the same word when used about the appreciation of a chair or an automobile! Perfection in that case, outside of the possible beauty of the object, is mainly the result and the quality of function, of the chair or the automobile, which can achieve perfection as much as possible.
The perfection of a masterpiece (a painting, sculpture or any visual art object) has nothing to do with any function in my mind, as artworks are objects a priori free of any function. It’s possible perfection has nothing to do with the perfection of any tool. The huge gap between a work of art and architecture, a great art form in its own right, is the fact that the second can only be erected to accomplish a certain function, whereas the first is accomplished as a gift for whoever might like or accept it, with no function whatsoever, done for nothing, for no use, sometimes even for somebody who does not yet exist, at the request of absolutely no one—a priori for no one known.
So I do hope that when a work of mine makes some sense it’s because it provides some coherence between what it is and where it is. When this connection is visible someone can speak about perfection, but to be frank it’s not a word I will use or even think about towards my own work. Now if someone uses the term perfection to say: this piece of marble is perfectly cut or perfectly polished, or the material quality of materials in use are perfect, it’s a possible mental satisfaction to see that the use of such material is well done but it’s certainly not enough to give to the work of art in question the qualification of perfection, at least for me. The perfection of an artwork in my eyes requests much more subtle and stronger qualities than just the ability to work well with any material, which is often important but never enough.

In terms of design, I think that perfection occurs when the perfect function for an object is connected with the possible aesthetic beauty of the object itself. We have many design objects which have one but not both. In that case, I am not sure they achieve perfection.

Installation view, Lisson Gallery London, 1976
© Daniel Buren

**Daniel Buren: Pile Up: High Reliefs. Situated Works**
Until 11 November at Lisson Gallery, London
lissongallery.com
All images courtesy the artist and Lisson Gallery, London unless otherwise stated

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Daniel Buren – possibly France’s most adored living artist – knows the walls of Lisson Gallery very well. He’s been working with them since the 1970s. In 1976, he painted rows of violet and brown stripes onto the walls, for an audacious installation called ‘On two levels with two colours’, an attempt to subvert the usual gallery-going experience, and force the visitor to consider the purpose of the commercial gallery, as a social, economic and political space, and its implied neutrality.

Since that first exhibition, London has changed a lot. ‘So many things indeed. The city is even more cosmopolitan, busier, richer, more chaotic in term of traffic, and, funny enough, much more French!’ Buren muses. ‘Of course I cannot forget to mention how the physicality of the city itself changes. It’s absolutely amazing if you look at London from a high point, like the new Tate observatory, you realize how the “landscape” is transformed, and continues to be, with cranes everywhere and old famous buildings known as the landmarks of the old city disappearing – masked by huge new structures which seem to make these referential architectural monuments appear like mere models of an old time (as if they were ashamed of those monuments).’

The 79-year-old master of colourful conceptual art has often suggested that it’s what surrounds his works – the architecture, environments, and people who inhabit them – rather than the works themselves, that give them their power and presence. In 1965, he first introduced his 8.7cm wide, iconic vertical stripe, a size he has never deviated from, and since then, he has only worked site-specifically, and very often, and deliberately, with gallery spaces. In his Lisson exhibition in the 70s, Buren’s stripes encouraged the visitor to take a certain path around the galleries.

Unveiling his latest Lisson exhibition in London last week, ‘Pile Up: High Reliefs. Situated Works’, the stripes of his high reliefs serve a similar purpose: ‘These works imply to the spectator the necessity to walk from left to right (or the contrary) in doing a sort of semi-circle in front of it, or if you prefer, an angle of 180 degrees (at least he or she doesn’t want to see really how these pieces are working?) Like for most of my works, the movement of the spectator is necessary if he or she wants to really see the work. To stay just in front of it, is not and will not be enough.’
It's clear that Buren's approach hasn't changed, but his work couldn't feel any more contemporary, five decades on: it's easy to see why artists who, like Buren in the 70s, work outdoors, (among them Maser, Camille Walala and Maya Hayuk) have been inspired by his approach to activating the meaning of different kinds of spaces, as much as by the aesthetic of his monochromatic stripes.

The new, distinctly architectural structures – perhaps in part a reference to the physicality of London's shape-shifting urban landscape – go up the walls, and we travel with them: triangular aluminium prisms, painted in brilliant reds, blues, yellows, poke out, while mirror-finished panels draw you in. This action itself makes you think about the place of art now and the way we engage with it. Buren's works do not try to change Lisson's walls, but they can make us feel differently within them – and about them.

For example, staring into one work, the green of the trees and the red brickwork are reflected back from outside the gallery – and seem to find themselves, somehow in the vibrant green and red of the protruding prisms. Elsewhere, it's the edges of other works that come into view, or the sharp lines of the stairs and skylights, creating new patterns within themselves.

What keeps the artist motivated after so many years? 'Take Picasso, Cézanne, Matisse or Titien, Michelangelo, Claude Monet, Joan Miró and so many more and you will see that they never stopped, and some of them even produced some of their most interesting and fresh works during their last years. I believe that any new work come from previous one and that every new work opens a new door,' Buren says. 'So, if you don't stop working, your own curiosity is kept always in alert – you are anxious to see what's happening behind the new door – and from one step to the next, you are working non-stop with any more work refreshing your appetite to see more, to know more, to do more. I guess all artists, able to work long and continuously, will have similar answers. Any new project is a hope for the future, and you are excited to see it done. Nothing, except death, can stop you to see such an exciting program'!

Buren is probably not as radical as he was in the 70s – but he certainly still knows how to work a room.
Daniel Buren says Tottenham Court Road tube station artwork is “a bubble of oxygen for the spirit”
The first permanent UK public commission of French artist Daniel Buren has officially been inaugurated today in Tottenham Court Road tube station. Titled *Diamonds and Circles, works in situ*, the work takes over the renovated station with his well-known op-art style geometric shapes and striped patterns. His work joins the station's famous Eduardo Paolozzi's mosaics created in the 1980s, which was the subject of controversy when 5% of the historic works had to be removed as part of the renovation.

Daniel said at the opening this morning: “A public work is interesting for me because you can develop the place, the people who use the space, and connections between all of these things...Museums attract only a portion of the population. The public in the Tube station is everyone, and there is a constant flux of people running both ways. I want to offer them a beautiful bubble of oxygen for the spirit.”

Daniel is considered one of France's most influential living artists. He has previously been celebrated with solo shows at the Guggenheim in New York, Paris' Centre Pompidou and Fondation Louis Vuitton, and has exhibited at the Venice Biennale 11 times.

Eleanor Pinfield, head of Art on the Underground, which commissioned Daniel's work, says the work “ask us to consider the pace and path we take as we pass through the station. Daniel Buren has brought the extraordinary into our everyday journey. With works by two of the finest artists of the past fifty years, Tottenham Court Road station is a testament to the power of art in public space.”
Make room for modern art

High-end hotels are queuing up to acquire daring artworks that add a certain je ne sais quoi, says Samuel Muston

High on the Rue du Faubourg St-Honoré in Paris is a place of luxurious hush. The type of place where the carpet is so thick you feel you may sink to your knees in it and the staff glide about as if on casters, dispensing “sirs” and “madams” as liberally as confetti.

Here you pay your money and your whim is treated with the reverence of biblical writ. To arouse irritation in guests is a failing on a par with, say, spilling sauce charcutière down a guest’s shirt front. And yet, in the well-manicured courtyard garden of this 188-room, 91-year-old hotel there is an art installation that can’t fail to provoke a reaction.

Daniel Buren, the French artist who recently exhibited at Fondation Louis Vuitton to wide acclaim, has erected a large pergola in modish coloured glass. It leaps out from its Neoclassical surroundings like Derek Drouin on the high jump. Inside, in the bar, Moroccan-born artist Hicham Berrada has projected his ethereal creations on to mirrored screens.

Both projects run against that unwritten rule that art in hotels ought to be as unchallenging and inoffensive as possible. And it is not just Le Bristol, either. Not far away at The Meurice, one of the most storied and glamorous hotels in Paris, once a home from home for Salvador Dalí and the King of Spain, artist-designer Philippe Starck has created a surrealist Murano glass sculpture that seems to melt like translucent candle wax amid the pastoral frescos and gilt of the dining room (a space more used to having room service called “madams” as liberally as confetti.

At Le Meurice’s sister hotel, London’s 45 Park Lane, they have a dedicated, changing exhibition space: at the moment it is displaying black-and-white inkjet pieces by Bruce McLean and has Sir Peter Blake’s Dancing Girls Over Rotten Row (a pop art-ish take on the historic flaneurs’ spot in Hyde Park) above the fireplace in The Penthouse Suite.

Meanwhile, the permanent collections of Das Stue in Berlin and the Byblos Art Hotel Villa Amistà, Verona, would rival many international galleries, and Le Sirenumse in Positano has just unveiled a Martin Creed. None of the art these properties are displaying could be described as “easy”.

Traditionally, hotels bought their art by the yard, as Robert Diament, director of Carl Freedman Gallery in Shoreditch, points out: “The reason they used to go down that route - and also why many hotels continue to do so - is very much due to budget constraints and practical reasons such as insurance. To create a successful installation in a public space needs time, planning and very careful consideration.”

But there was also something else, something that accounts for the rise of the beige canvas with black squiggles on it: hotels would choose the route of least resistance (read: least eyebrow-raising) - which meant abstraction. Who, after all, could splutter into their champagne at the sight a black squegee?

Some hotels have, of course, acquired significant art collections down the years, but these have tended to be the exception rather than the rule. The greatest of these is La Colombe d’Or, the hotel at Saint-Paul de Vence in the South of France. Art is everywhere here: the dining room, the halls, the bedrooms - it seems to pullulate when you turn your head, here a Picasso, there a Braque, beyond that a gold-hued Miró. What makes this unusual is that the artists actually bestowed the work on the hotel’s owners, sometimes in exchange for lodgings. The artists came for the Provençal light and left behind them a gallery’s worth of art.

Today the process is a little more difficult. “We frequently turn down requests from hotels for artworks because it’s very important for our artists’ works to be presented correctly and not just as ‘wallpaper’ or for purely decorative purposes,” says Diament. Certainly at the Belvedere Restaurant at the Peninsula Beverly Hills, which has 11 works by Yayoi Kusama, Sean Scully and Robert Indiana, the process was not all plain sailing.

“When we first approached Fabienne Verdier to do a commissioned artwork she immediately declined. She had thought we intended to display her work at the hotel as decorative art,” says Robert Zarnegin, the hotel’s art partner. “Obviously, she’s a very talented and substantive emerging contemporary artist. It took me several months to convince her of how I truly felt about her work and reassure her that it would be displayed alongside works by giants.”

When art is successfully curated, sensitively and cleverly, it doesn’t simply mean guests get the chance to interact with it in an informal manner, without labels and expectations - it also can make the space it fills.

“Great art not only transforms the room you’re in but can also transport you to somewhere new and open your mind,” says Diament. “It’s really obvious to say but the really special thing about art is that it is unique - and...
it’s that rarity that makes it even more special. So for a hotel to own a particular work can be very powerful – it can add to the atmosphere but it also becomes a destination to visit if you want to see a particular artwork."

Some might snipe that to hide great art in hotels is sacrilege, but consider this: is a few euros spent on a coffee at Le Bristol not worth it if it means you get an hour with a great work of art, unencumbered by crowds? Avoid the throng this autumn, hit the hotels.

Samuel Muston travelled from St Pancras to Paris by Eurostar (eurostar.com). Fares start at £59 return.

Art attack: left, Byblos Art Hotel Villa Amista; Belvedere at the Peninsula Beverly Hills

Bright ideas: left, Daniel Buren’s coloured glass pergola at Le Bristol in Paris. From top, Das Stue in Berlin; La Colombe d’or in Saint-Paul de Vence; Sir Peter Blake’s Dancing Girls Over Rotten Row. Inset top, London’s 45 Park Lane
PARIS — For nearly five decades, the French conceptual artist Daniel Buren has been applying stripes in varying colors, sizes and materials to assorted objects and environments, including bridges, bus stops and museum walls.

The latest canvas for Mr. Buren is the Louis Vuitton Foundation building here, a Frank Gehry design that rises above the Bois de Boulogne like a ship cresting a wave.
Mr. Buren has covered the museum’s 12 glass-paneled “sails” with a checkerboard of translucent colored gels, punctuated by panes of white stripes. The installation, “The Observatory of Light,” opened on Wednesday and runs through the end of the year.

Mr. Buren has described his signature stripes as a “visual tool” he uses to draw attention to a given space or context. “Here, they are always pointing toward the ground, creating the only system of verticality,” he said as he sipped Champagne at the preview on Tuesday night. “Because, as you already saw, there are not too many vertical things in this building. So the stripes are spatial anchors, in a way.”

Mr. Buren inside the Louis Vuitton Foundation, designed by Frank Gehry.
DB-ADAGP, Paris/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York 2016/Martin Argyroglo/Fondation Louis Vuitton
Seen from the outside, the bright panels pick up hues and textures present in their surroundings: green expanses of forest, the red of neighboring buildings.

“The colors go anywhere the sun hits,” Mr. Buren said, “so as it moves throughout the day, they might end up on the reflecting pool outside at one moment, or on the grass. It travels.”

Mr. Buren took a similar approach in a 2005 installation at the Guggenheim in New York, which included a web of colored filters plastered to the skylight over the main atrium.

“But this space is even crazier than the Guggenheim,” he said. “The Guggenheim looks very traditional compared to this one.”

Mr. Buren has other plans for the Louis Vuitton Foundation. On June 2 to 4, he will stage a series of performances in what he calls the BurenCirque in three brightly colored tents on the building’s lawn.
“This circus has nothing to do with the circus you saw when you were young,” he said, describing the events as “somewhere between poetry and philosophy.”

Inside each tent, which can accommodate up to 150 people, Mr. Buren has asked his performers to react to the space — a square, topped by a cone — and to the expanses of primary colors. The shows will take place simultaneously, so that sounds from one will be audible in the next, creating a multisensory experience.

But what would Mr. Gehry think of all the modifications — albeit temporary — to his design, which he described as a “work in progress” soon after its completion.

“The building was designed to allow artists to work in between the glass and the solid parts of the building — the icebergs,” Mr. Gehry said on Thursday in an email. “I had always hoped that the foundation would allow artists to take on the space in different ways.”

“Knowing Daniel’s work, I knew he would not be timid,” he added.

Mr. Buren said it was the architect who had asked him to do the project, although Mr. Gehry had not yet seen the colorful panels.

“Of course, I am not working with him directly, because I am working with his architecture,” Mr. Buren said. “But in a certain way I am working with him.”
Daniel Buren Transforms the Fondation Louis Vuitton to an "Observatory of Light"

It was only about two years ago, when the LMVH group inaugurated their magnificent Fondation Louis Vuitton Louis Vuitton on the edge of the large city park at the Bois de Boulogne.
A dozen years and some $135 million in the making, the Fondation Louis Vuitton is like no other museum in the world. It’s entirely private, supported by LMVH and Bernard Arnault and showcases contemporary art in a remarkably distinctive structure.

Designed by Frank Gehry in his usual opulent architectural language, the museum even outshines his Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, Spain. “The original idea was to build a place of movement. It’s like a cloud; it changes,” said the architect of the building’s exterior, notably the enormous panels of milky glass that resemble the sails of a ship. Now, running from the 11th of Mai 2016 trough the end of the year, the Fondation Louis Vuitton’s 12 glass-paneled “sails” are covered with a checkerboard of translucent colored gels, punctuated by panes of white stripes.
The “Observatory of Light” is an installation by none other than conceptual artist Daniel Buren. Since the 1960s, the French artist has been applying stripes in varying colors, sizes and materials to assorted objects and environments, including bridges, bus stops and museum walls, becoming the main representative of the French Minimal Art.

Mr. Buren has described his signature stripes as a “visual tool” he uses to draw attention to a given space or context. “Here, they are always pointing toward the ground, creating the only system of verticality,” he said. “Because, as you already saw, there are not too many vertical things in this building. So the stripes are spatial anchors, in a way.”
Seen from the outside, the bright panels pick up hues and textures present in their surroundings: green expanses of forest, the red of neighboring buildings. “The colors go anywhere the sun hits,” Mr. Buren said, “so as it moves throughout the day, they might end up on the reflecting pool outside at one moment, or on the grass. It travels.”

Mr. Buren has other plans for the Louis Vuitton Foundation. On June 2 to 4, he will stage a series of performances in what he calls the “BurenCirque” in three tents on the building’s lawn. “This circus has nothing to do with the circus you saw when you were young,” he said, describing the events as “somewhere between poetry and philosophy.”

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Actually, the minimalism has past it’s prime and even the post-minimalists are no youngsters anymore. They fell into oblivion over the past years but we can tell that there’s a reawakening going on in Paris, or at least in the Bois de Boulogne where the Neo-Baroque is erupting. The “Observatory of Light” brings Buren’s minimalist ideas to present. The sunlight falling through the sail almost raises sacral effects in the interior of the Museum.

The building was designed by Frank Gehry to allow artists to work in between the glass and the solid parts of the Museum – the icebergs. He had always hoped that the foundation would allow artists to take on the space in different ways. Knowing Daniel Buren for more than four decades and being familiar to his work, Mr. Gehry knew his approach to the subject would not be timid – and he was right!

The “Observatory of Light” has become a wonderful yet temporary locus, where architecture and art have merged solely for the purpose of light to reign.
Observatory of Light: Daniel Buren at Fondation Louis Vuitton, Paris

Frank Gehry has invited long-time friend Daniel Buren to create an in-situ work that casts new light on the Fondation Louis Vuitton. Photography: Iwan Baan / Fondation Louis Vuitton
Few would look at a building as incomparable and architecturally complex as the Fondation Louis Vuitton and see a blank canvas. But in a sense, that’s how Frank Gehry arrived at inviting long-time friend Daniel Buren to create an in-situ work that casts new light – and a riot of colour – on the soaring volumes and oblique angles.

Officially revealed this week after five weeks of after-hours installation, *Observatory of Light* covers all 12 ‘sails’ with a precise grid of filters to produce an effect that is dynamic and ever-changing. Depending on weather, time of day, placement within or outside the building and proximity to the pattern, the experience shifts in dramatic degrees. Sun will paint shadows; greyness will emphasise the geometry. Whereas the overlapping panels viewed up close become chaotic, from a distance, the building becomes a deconstructed rainbow. Wallpaper* visited the museum on a rainy afternoon when the light remained flat; yet the tones of dandelion, azure blue, emerald and rose made the giant partitions feel like vibrant shields.

For Buren, who says he is always inclined towards ‘a multitude of different aspects’, the beauty of this project came down to the interior-exterior relationship between the upper terraces and enveloping expanses of glass – and how he could subsequently introduce the sky as an active participant. Of the 3,528 total panes, 1,472 are covered in transparent PVC film and another 287 boast white strips that run parallel to the ground. Buren selected 13 colours among an existing palette of ORACAL 8300 filters.

While Buren’s penchant for tiling would seem to share the same vocabulary as the iconic Louis Vuitton ‘Damier’ pattern – a concept not lost on Marc Jacobs, who asked the artist to create the maison’s runway set for the S/S 2013 collection – he insists the checkered motif has more to do with the interplay of sky. For comparison, covering the surface in solid colour would prove impactful yet preclude the same graphic dance. As Suzanne Pagé, the Fondation’s artistic director, points out in a video detailing the project, '[Daniel] has an exceptional sense of visual strategy'.

Like several other large-scale works by Buren, this one offers an enchanting accessibility; of course, the experience is heightened from within the Fondation Louis Vuitton, but even those passing by can admire its lively statement. This, combined with the openness of interpretation is what he continues to find so satisfying. 'One of the most important things is to give to people the freedom to see the way they’d like,' he says.

**Tags**: Louis Vuitton, Frank Gehry
Officially revealed this week after five weeks of after-hours installation, Observatory of Light covers all 12 'sails' with a precise grid of filters to produce an effect that is dynamic and ever-changing. *Photography: Iwan Baan / Fondation Louis Vuitton*

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*Photography: Phillipe Guignard / Air Images / Fondation Louis Vuitton*
Of the 3,528 total panes, 1,472 are covered in transparent PVC film and another 287 boast white strips that run parallel to the ground. Photography: Iwan Baan / Fondation Louis Vuitton
Daniel Buren fills Brussels show with all of his favourite things

The conceptual artist pays tribute to his friends and masters—just don’t call him a curator

by HANNAH MOGUYERN | 26 February 2016

Daniel Buren’s work resists the retrospective treatment. Since he developed his visual signature of alternating coloured stripes (each 8.7 centimetres wide) in the 1960s, the French conceptual artist has notched up more than 2,600 site-specific exhibitions. From pasted papers on the billboards of Paris—the *affichages sauvages*—to rows of tulips in the Netherlands, most of Buren’s works are ephemeral and survive only in the fragmented images, or “photo-souvenirs”, of his personal archive.

Buren’s new exhibition at Bozar, the Brussels Centre for Fine Arts, is billed as a creative solution to the dilemma. A Fresco (until 22 May) is the title of both a multiscreen film directed by the artist and what appears to be a group show, featuring works by more than 100 other artists who have influenced Buren during his nomadic 50-year career. Here he explains why the exhibition might just count as a work of art in its own right.
The Art Newspaper: How did you get around the dilemma of staging a retrospective?

Daniel Buren: When I’ve been offered retrospectives, I always say, if you know what I do, I can’t do a retrospective. My work is either elsewhere or it’s disappeared.

To try for the first time to offer insight into 50 years of work through images in the most informative way possible, I made a film. The film is an introduction; it’s the first room of the exhibition. Nobody will see it in full because it’s three and a half hours. But there is a mass of information for those who are interested.

Did you always plan to make a film?

No, I’ve always wanted to make a great wall of images, but that could never be realised because it was too difficult to make and very expensive. With digital you can do something big, with music, sounds, stills, moving images, and it’s three or four times cheaper than 25 years ago.

But it’s huge. I wanted there to be 95 chapters. The director I worked with told me that if we went over 30, we’d never be able to finish it. So I cut it down to a third. But it could have gone on for ten hours.

Photo-souvenir: Sha-Kkei ou Emprunter le paysage, travail in situ, Ushimado (Japon), novembre 1985. Détail. © DB-ADAGP Paris
How did you organise the material?

The film is organised into broad themes like movement or the *affichages sauvages*. The chapters are in alphabetical order, within which the works are presented chronologically. There are photos and films, interviews with architects, choreographers, other artists, directors, people I have worked with.

It wasn’t a choice between the most and the least interesting works; it was mostly random.

Has the film helped you to see a progression in your career?

I see differences but not progression in the sense of better or smaller or bigger. People don’t realise [the variety] and I think that’s what’s interesting about the film.

For 18 years I’ve worked with a circus that has travelled all over the world, and almost no one knows about it. There will be many surprises—but very few people will stay to watch the whole three and a half hours. I’ve seen it twice in full and that’s all.

The exhibition itself is filled with works by other artists. Why?

The idea came from [the independent curator] Joel Benzakin, who invited me to exhibit. His idea was to show the artists who have made an impression on me.

I was very opposed for several reasons. Firstly, I’ve had many exhibitions where I’ve played with the works of other artists in collections and museums. I couldn’t do something I’d already done.

Secondly, the idea of playing with works in a museum has—for around 15 years—been a fashion for institutions. I find that ridiculous. They’re exercises in style.

Gradually I saw a possibility in the fact that this museum has no collection. I eliminated the idea of doing something with only famous artists and chose only the ones I admire. I don’t even want to put the ones I don’t admire there as a critical position—there are no Surrealists, no Warhol, no Duchamp.

I quickly saw that what was maybe even more influential than the great masters is a group of people I’ve been working with for 50 years. We’ve been in group shows together, our works have always been compared. From Carl Andre to Lawrence Weiner or Hanne Darboven, they’re people I find as interesting as Cézanne and Pollock.
This then led me to choose younger people who I knew because I’ve worked or exhibited with them, or they were my students.

There are also tributes to artists who were never well known but who were important to me. When I was 17 I did a project on the influence of the landscape on art being made in Provence. I met Picasso, Chagall and Masson, and then I met many artists who have disappeared today but they’re here as an homage. They were enthusiastic or critical of what I wanted to do and were as decisive as seeing the works of Cézanne.
How did you organise the hang?

The hang is organised in a very specific way, and at the same time like a game, in alphabetical order. All the artists and works are distributed from A to Z. It takes away any question of taste, harmony... not that the result can’t be aesthetic.

There are strange combinations, but not intentionally, because of relationships of colour or time period. Since the works spread across 115 years, it’s obviously not chronological. The only relationship is A to B.

Is the exhibition a work by Daniel Buren?

Without pretensions, I think so. It is precisely not a group exhibition. It’s an exhibition of mine which uses works that I like and admire, that are important or have a particular interest, like the painting by my teacher, who no one knows but she’s there, like the others. I use all these artists and all these works as materials.

Do you consider yourself a curator?

No, I’m too wild to be a curator. It panics me to see how the museums that have lent protect their works. There’s a whole system that makes many works difficult to obtain.

We have a magnificent work by Brancusi on loan with the obligation to present it on a new plinth and inside a plastic box. In my opinion, the Brancusi no longer means anything. And that’s signed off by the museum. The way of preserving it is to destroy it, but to destroy it in appearing to look after it.
All change

At the rebuilt Tottenham Court Road Tube station in London, Daniel Buren's geometric installations are set to make a connection.

PHOTOGRAPHY: TIM GUTT, WRITER: AMY SHERWIN
ARTIST DANIEL BUREN WITH PART OF HIS PERMANENT INSTALLATION FOR THE ART ON THE UNDERGROUND PROGRAMME
When Daniel Buren was a little-known conceptual artist back in 1970, he somehow managed to charm a woman working for Paris’ transport system to let him hang his striped paper in the advertising frames of Metro stations for a short time between ad campaigns, an operation he called *affichage sauvage*, or clandestine billposting.

Today, the Frenchman — now one of the world’s best-known living artists — is putting his signature stripes up in London’s newly rebuilt Tottenham Court Road Tube station. Unlike the Paris installation nearly half a century ago, the current artwork is official and permanent, created in tandem with the station and part of the walls themselves.

The projects are different enough that the artist does not make a connection between them until asked. ‘The only thing they have in common is the question: “What is the Underground?”’ he responds, sitting in the offices of the Lisson Gallery, his London art dealer. ‘It’s all about movement. And then there’s this thing you might stop to look at.’ Aged 77 and as busy as ever, Buren is a compact man with an easy-going manner and dark eyebrows that contrast with his white hair, a colour scheme not unlike the stripes he’s famous for.

‘What I find interesting about the metro is the idea of motion and speed,’ he says. ‘The physical circulation of people who plunge underground, then emerge. The constant coming and going of hundreds of thousands of people in a precise chaos. And that’s not even taking into account the trains arriving and disappearing.’

Tottenham Court Road is one of London’s busiest stations, and one that will also serve the new Crossrail high-capacity railway starting in 2018. At that point, an estimated 200,000 people — office commuters, weekend shoppers, nightclubs — will rush through this subterranean site every day, and at all hours.

When Buren’s project is fully completed in 2016, his artwork will greet them loudly and cheerfully at two different entrances. At the Oxford Street entrance, open since January, the walls facing and adjacent to the escalators are covered in big, brilliant, black and white striped circles and diamonds. As you descend the escalator, the 2.4-m-high shapes loom towards you.

To one side, they take up the entire two-storey wall, disappearing into the floor and the ceiling. Buren says the shapes are ‘fundamentally banal’ on their own. But oversized, they create what he calls an ‘enormous, enveloping fresco’. The walls are glossy and reflective, made of clear laminated glass, screenprinted with the artwork. The alternating geometric forms unfurl across the surface, the diagonal line of the escalator slashing across it. At the bottom, people gliding off the moving staircase are framed from behind by a striped rhombus, a near-cinematic effect.

On the opposite side of the station, at the Northern and Southern Plaza entrances, another two-storey wall next to the stairs and escalator will be covered by the same shapes in bright, solid colours against vertical black and white stripes. Buren is also placing a transparent dividing screen inside the ticket hall, with the shapes engraved in glass. A display case exhibits two sculptures, a blue circle and yellow diamond, thick and shiny like enormous liqueurice allsorts.

The artist says with a chuckle, ‘They are presented like a museum piece, but I would never do something like that in a museum. In the metro, it seemed amusing.’

Standing in just the right place, you will be able to glimpse all four compositions at once. And though it may not be obvious to the hurried commuter, the sculpted pieces in the glass case set the rhythm for the whole installation. ‘If you pushed them straight back to the colourful wall, they’d generate the circles and’
lozenges,' says Harbinder Birdi, a partner at Hawkins\Brown, the principal architects for the station upgrade (in collaboration with Acanthus Architecture\LW).

As Birdi explains, the black and white wall is actually a mirror image of the coloured one, and the overall feeling should be of a continuous artwork, disrupted here and there by the infrastructure. 'There are various layers of discovery,' he says. 'We hope that when people use the station time and time again, they will start picking up on the different ways the artwork manifests in the station.'

Commuters have grown used to seeing first-rate art at Tottenham Court Road station, where the passageways and platform walls are covered with mosaics created in 1984 by Eduardo Paolozzi, and where there are plans for future works by Douglas Gordon and Richard Wright. Indeed, the London Tube as a whole has an impressive history of art and design going back to Frank Pick, the visionary administrator who commissioned works including the typeface, symbol and map a century ago. In recent years, several artists have reimagined the map, including Buren, who layered the iconic blue and red roundel to make something he compares to a Scottish tartan.

Buren's Tottenham Court Road installation is a permanent part of the 'Art on the Underground' programme, which Transport For London established in 2000 (under a different name) to commission new artworks, most of them temporary. The programme's head, Eleanor Pinfield, says, 'I want to build on our reputation for innovative commissions. We have a unique audience – all of London. We have the power to bring art to that group. I feel strongly we have to be on the cutting edge, providing for that wide audience.'

The committee chose Buren in 2008, before Pinfield arrived. Referring to the original sketches – which are surprisingly faithful to the final result – Pinfield says the jury had been struck by the proposition's boldness and ambition, as well as Buren's understanding of the environment and how to highlight its strengths. 'His work plays to wonderfully to create a sense of location at those two entrances while having continuity.' Friends can agree to meet at the coloured entrance or the black and white one, with zero chance of confusion.

No stranger to architecture, Buren's creations are all intimately connected to their locations. He never works in an atelier (he doesn't even have one), but chooses to do everything in situ, creating pieces that interact with a particular building or place. Stripes are his trademark visual tool, his way of defining and manipulating a space. They are always vertical and always presented in two contrasting colours precisely 8.7cm apart. He started using this width in 1965, after coming across a piece of striped upholstery fabric at a Paris market. He says the size and motif are neutral and legible on surfaces both small and large, and sketches an example in a reporter's notebook as proof.

His best-known work is 'Les Deux Plateaux', in the inner courtyard of the Palais-Royal in Paris. Made of black and white striped and variously truncated columns, this intrusion of contemporary art in a historical site created a furore when it went up in the mid-1980s. Buren recalls that people tried to destroy it while construction was still underway, and that he and the architect paid a security guard out of their own pockets to protect it.

Now it's an integral part of the Parisian landscape. Kids play on it, tourists take photos. The thing about permanent, public artwork, he notes, is that you can't set out to please everybody. An artist can dream that he's making a masterpiece, but it's unpredictable how people will view it. 'The biggest danger is that people will stop seeing it, as though there was nothing there at all.' It's hard to imagine this happening at Tottenham Court Road station, where hordes of people will engage with Buren's creation simply by walking past it. *
FRENCH conceptual artist Daniel Buren is not afraid of a challenge. In the mid-1960s he rejected painting on canvas for the city streets, plastering hundreds of striped posters on walls and in the Paris Métro. A maverick who has devoted his 50-year career to agitating and fighting the constraints of artistic practice, he has transformed the courtyard of the Palais Royal with a series of monochrome columns, unfurled a banner down the central staircase of the Guggenheim New York and installed a kaleidoscope of circular discs inside the Grand Palais, creating a visual wonderland in a space famous for taking no prisoners.

Even so, he admits he was somewhat aghast by the Hospicio Cabanas in Guadalajara, Mexico. 'I was completely overwhelmed by the quality and the beauty of the place,' he says, 'I thought it very sober, and in a way brutal and yet also extremely sophisticated.' Built in the early 1800s by the Neo-classical Spanish architect Manuel Tolsedo, Hospicio Cabanas was one of the first hospitals in Latin America and also contained a workhouse, orphanage and almshouse, which are linked by 23 courtyards. It was mostly in those connecting spaces that Buren 'intervened' earlier this year. 'There is such a variety of styles in the patios,' he says; 'they are all different, offering endless possibilities. You never know what you are going to find, and that made it extremely exciting.'

It is obvious Buren took great delight in the commission; the entire installation is a joyful conversation between the building and the artist. Called De un para otro, it is like a game of hide-and-seek. In some of the patios his interventions are almost invisible; you really have to look to see the narrow vinyl stripes edging round the columns in a snake-like coil. In others, the artist has suspended mirrors, upsetting the classical dimensions of the courtyard, or painted a mirror reflection of the arches in burning orange and green. In the intense light of the region, the installation seems to echo the designs of the Modernist Mexican architect Luis Barragán (1902-1988), a master of space and colour, known for creating spaces that encouraged meditation and reflection. 'I met him when I was 19 years old,' says Buren, 'and I was so impressed by him. Since then I have come to regard him as having created some of the most beautiful architecture of the 20th century. It is impossible for me to say whether I am influenced by him because he has been part of my background for so many years.'

Buren's first trip to Mexico was in 1957, when he came to study the Mexican murals, and it was to have a profound impact on the young artist. 'Not to say I liked or agreed with everything they did,' he says, 'but I admired the way they fought for their own culture and against the bourgeois during the Mexican revolution. Coming from France, where the school of Paris was such a dominating force in the Western world, to a place where artists were really fighting against the hegemony of Europe's avant-garde, it was such a fantastic discovery for me.' Their desire to create works in situ and their rejection of art as an object partly inspired Buren to later develop the revolutionary concept 'degree zero of painting'.

In 1963 he horrified the art world by stripping down his practice to a simple set of vertical lines and using this monochrome stripe - always 8.7cm wide - to question what painting was, how it is presented and the physical and social environment in which an artist works. 'Part of that came from the idea the muralists had of getting away from painting in a studio. I was strongly moved by that,' he explains.

One of the most famous of those muralists, José Clemente Orozco, was commissioned to paint a series of murals in the main chapel of the Hospicio Cabanas in 1936. The resulting imagery is considered to be some of the most striking produced during the Mexican Muralist Renaissance - in particular the hellish baptism of fire in the cupola. Not surprisingly, Buren approached that side of the commission with a certain caution. He created a homage to Orozco by painting his own fresco on the walls outside the chapel. 'I didn't want to be in competition with one of the masters of mural painting,' he says. The response to Buren's installation has been unanimously positive. Audiences have delighted in his visual capers, a far cry from the early 1970s when his work so enraged the American art establishment it had to be removed from an exhibition at the Guggenheim. 'As soon as you complete a work of art it is given over to the public,' he says, 'and as much as you can take a position, the thing is totally open. I am always surprised by the reaction my work generates, and that is good.' At 76, he shows no sign of slowing down. A major solo exhibition is currently running at the Baltic in Newcastle and earlier in the year he made a video to accompany Team Lab's grand computer game Ode to The Thunder Ode. Londoners will not be disappointed in his visual
brilliance when Crossrail opens at Tottenham Court
Road tube station in 2018. In that way life has of re-
peating itself, it seems Burvill has come full circle,
back to the underground, where his affiches sau-
vages first drew attention to this radical yet benign
artist with a thirst for a revolution in art.

'Daniel Burvill: Catch as Catch Can: Works in Situ' runs at
the Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art, Gateshead NE8
5RA (0191 478 2810; balticmill.com), until 12 Oct.
Opposite: for the smaller of the two chapels, stained glass in red and green glows through the windows to project coloured light on to the tiled floor. This plays a part in the multi-level construction, set to a series of visual games that playfully, announce with a Manuel Tolsá's existing architecture.
From top: Buren regards his stripes and patterns as visual tools to alert us to space, colour, and the surrounding architecture; the artist created several sculptural interventions inside the courtyard, such as these double arches. "When you say "red", you are describing nothing" Buren says. "Only by seeing it can you understand it."