The inaugural exhibition at Bortolami Gallery’s new space begins before you set foot in the door, with black vinyl stripes adhered to the five columns on the building’s facade. Since 1965, Buren has used vertical stripes to investigate the relationship between art and its surrounding structures. He has literalized this avenue of inquiry inside the gallery by encasing Corinthian columns, a permanent feature of the space, within square columns that leave the ornate capitals visible. Similar columns, reaching from floor to ceiling, fill the rest of the space, placed alongside the others in a tight grid formation.

Upon entering the gallery, the viewer sees columns painted red, blue, and yellow on alternate sides. As she advances, a glance backward reveals the columns’ black-and-white-striped backs, which completely alters the perception and experience of the space. From one angle, the blue and striped sides create a cold and somewhat clinical atmosphere, while from another the yellow and red combine to create a sunny ambience, recalling that of a children’s classroom. The effects and associations continue to change with the viewer’s passage through the installation, which is precisely Buren’s intention: to transform the environments in which he works, compelling his viewers to carefully consider the space around them. —Eloise Maxwell