

Art in America

Daniel Buren, Between the Lines

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Entrance Doors Bortolami and Petzel, Work In Situ 2013 (Ref. Galerie Apollinaire Milano, Italy September 1968 & Double exhibition at Konrad Fischer Düsseldorf & Paul Maenz Köln, January 1976)

readymade, homogenizing device that, like Duchamp's urinals, commented on the heroic singularity of art, and the role of the institution in defining what art was. The stripes also tend to transform whatever space they inhabit, rendering familiar public spaces unfamiliar, calling into question the values we attach to these spaces and their role as a forum for competing—and often contentious—artistic, public and state interests.

His work has long had an uncomfortable place in the United States, one which seems to have improved in recent years thanks to the very thing it claims to critique—the institution.

French Minimalist Daniel Buren has been making art with stripes since the 1960s. Vertical stripes to be specific—3.4 inches wide and 3.4 inches apart, over and over. His stripes have temporarily transformed everywhere from the Art Institute of Chicago to the Picasso Museum, in Paris. They have permanently transformed a bridge in Bilbao and the Palais-Royal in Paris, democratizing a former symbol of the French aristocracy.

At the moment, his new two-venue exhibition, “Electricity Fabric Paint Paper Vinyl ... Works In Situ & Situated Works From 1968 To 2013 (Dedicated To Michael Asher),” is on view at Petzel Gallery's new location on 18th Street, and at Bortolami Gallery, Buren's representative in New York. The show runs through Feb. 16 at both galleries.

Buren has long referred to his trademark stripes as “visual tools”—a

His work was famously removed from a group show there in 1971 because of protests by other participating artists, who dismissed Buren's work as crass. Donald Judd called him "a paperhanger." Dan Flavin belittled the work as "French drapery." His solo exhibition at the Guggenheim in 2005 was both validation and reconciliation.

Thirty-two years after the Guggenheim debacle, the New York art world seems ready to acknowledge Buren's work in a way it wasn't in 1971. Several prominent American artists "are slightly indebted" to Buren, said Jason Murison, Petzel's director, in a gallery tour with A.i.A. "Even in the late '80s, [works by] artists like Stephen Prina—they're all manifestations of things that Buren had started."

At Bortolami, the pieces are all new. Buren calls these "situated works" because they are "inspired by a particular location" but aren't pasted directly to the walls as they are at Petzel. With one exception, they can all be crated and shipped like any other painting or sculpture.

Most, like *Paint On/Under Plexiglas on Serigraphy, Diagonal No. 1 Blue, Situated Work*, are constructed from acrylic paint on Plexiglas, on top of a striped canvas. As the name implies, the stripes in this case are blue; The paint on the Plexiglas forms a kind of composite diagonal line atop the stripes of the canvas underneath. Similar works employ the same technique using different colors, forming different configurations.

A second group of works is hung separately and in the dark. There, Buren's stripes are sculpted by glowing optical fibers in the rough outlines of a half-circle, arc and triangle.

Presented in smaller, less site-specific forms as they are at Bortolami, the quick, minimalist sketches retain their quality of institutional critique for all their interchangeability. But that's hardly breaking new ground. Artists from Malevich to the Minimalists who once despised Buren—and indeed Buren, himself—have asked us for decades to consider such basic Minimalist challenges regarding repetition, authorship and the industrialization of art.

Paradoxically, it's the nine "older" in-situ works at Petzel—transposed and adapted to Petzel's dimensions from earlier, site-specific installations from the 1960s and '70s—that feel freshest, and most challenging. The gallery replicated as close as possible the original works, from the colors of the stripes to glossy, gift wrapping-style paper on which they are printed. The work plays with space in an ethereal way, psychically uniting the gallery with spaces in other times and places from around the globe.

The stripes also transform Petzel's walls and windows spatially, teasing perception and perspective, beguiling the eye, seeming almost to vibrate. Their scale forces the viewer to reckon with the work in ways the newer works do not.

Perhaps the most arresting example, *Displacement Work In Situ 2013*, adapts one of Buren's early stripe pieces, first installed in Düsseldorf in 1968. Running from floor to ceiling on the

gallery's 19-foot-high walls, its green and white stripes cover a corner of one large room, creating a kind of pleasant disequilibrium, seeming to warp the room's dimensions and right angles. In a separate room, *Door Projection for 2 Walls, Work In Situ 2013* (taken from an installation in Italy in 1972) is feng shui captured and printed, like a visual transcription of the energy coming through the doorway onto the opposite wall.

Entrance Doors Bortolami and Petzel, Work In Situ 2013, appears in the entryways of both galleries, half in Petzel, half in Borotlami, each filling the missing spaces of the other—in orange and white at Petzel, blue and white at Bortolami. Like the other pieces at Petzel, it references older works: one in Milan from 1968, the other from a 1976 double exhibition in Düsseldorf and Cologne.

It is the most conceptually complex work of the joint-gallery exhibition. Standing before the entrance to one of the galleries, one thinks of the other a few blocks away—while also thinking of the galleries where the work has appeared before. Like Buren's best work, it disrupts the privilege we uncritically grant to the place where we stand.