

The New York Times

Daniel Buren

Variable/Invariable

Bortolami Dayan
510 West 25th Street, Chelsea
Through Thursday

This show concentrates on a turning point in Daniel Buren's career, when he was in transition from making paintings in a mish-mash of abstract styles to having them made for him, from off-the-bolt striped awning fabric. This material became his lifetime Readymade, operating somewhere between Frank Stella's

stripe paintings and Dan Flavin's fluorescent light fixtures, but more versatile than either.

The paintings in the exhibition catch up with Mr. Buren in 1965-66, near the end of the transition, when he had adopted the awning fabric but was painting on it as if it were regular canvas. He divided the striped surface with wavy outlines to create biomorphic squares à la Jean Arp. Then he limited himself to adding irregular edges at the sides and tops of the stripes, which made them resemble a collage. These works seem a bit fussy and tentative, as if Mr. Buren were working up the nerve to leave the stripes alone.

The gallery has copies of a newly published catalogue raisonné of Mr. Buren's work from 1964 to 1966, which gives a clearer idea of how quickly he was moving. He can perhaps be forgiven for lingering a bit before he finally kissed the paintbrush good bye.

In an empty lot adjacent to the gallery, there is a new installation piece: squares of Plexiglas, some striped and some not, hanging from the underside of the High Line rail structure. It suggests that despite his limited means, Mr. Buren has not run out of things to do. Like all his best work this arrangement hovers between painting and design, and between personal expression and anonymity, making you see anew whatever space you're in.

ROBERTA SMITH