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ART IN REVIEW

Daniel Buren: ‘Electricity Fabric Paint Paper Vinyl ...’

By ROBERTA SMITH
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Daniel Buren's striped works at Bortolami include "Projection, Work in Situ," center.

Petzel Gallery
456 West 18th Street, Chelsea
Through Feb. 16

Bortolami
520 West 20th Street, Chelsea
Through Feb. 16

Daniel Buren, the French Conceptualist who reduced painting to awning stripes printed on canvas or paper some 40 years ago, has probably eked more mileage out of this signature end-of-painting motif than any artist could logically expect. His double gallery show in Chelsea finds him caught between a rock and a hard place.

At Petzel, Mr. Buren shows the latest versions of site-specific works in vertically striped paper that date back three and four decades. These pieces are, in effect, intermittent expanses of wallpaper that alter our sense of a space and create a nice graphic, even decorative punch. In "Skirt," black and white stripes cover the lower portions of several walls like extra-short wainscoting.

“Projection, Work in Situ,” consists of a spotlight shining on a wall covered with yellow and white stripes, as if they were a stage curtain. The two best pieces, facing each other in a smaller gallery, are more spatially complex: each engages a wall with positive and negative shapes that use both the front and the back of the striped paper. Figuring out what’s what is briefly engaging.

In two groups of new works at Bortolami, Mr. Buren takes up the striped canvas again, but with several twists. In one he layers the canvas with white-striped Plexiglas to block or expose the colored stripes beneath. In the other group glam-rock chic prevails: the canvas is luminescent, cut with a curved or a diagonal edge that is lined with a glowing strand of fiber optics.

Despite their newness, these pieces conjure the early-1960s work of artists like Frank Stella and Robert Mangold; they are arbitrary and conventional, and could be derivative student works that Mr. Buren abandoned to make the site-specific pieces at Petzel.

Mr. Buren gets credit for choosing art over ideology, but he has to do more than relearn old tricks.