

DANIEL BUREN
INTERVENTION II, works *in situ*

Since he emerged onto the European art scene in the mid-1960s, Daniel Buren has produced thousands of works for more than 1000 interventions in museums, galleries and public spaces. Hugely influential in his interrogation of the different structures that define art and give it value, from the museum to the market place, his work remains embedded in a refined pictorial sensibility of colour, line and form, in which the viewer is always central.

In 1973, Buren was invited by to make a work in what was then Modern Art Oxford's only upper floor gallery. Using the iron cross beams of the gallery's Victorian architecture, he suspended six, 4.2 metre squares of fabric, striped in white and orange, brown, red, black and blue; the outer white stripes painted over with white, both front and back. Visitors to the exhibition could walk beneath the evenly spaced canvases, which billowed in the space like large street banners.

Returning to the Gallery in 2006, Buren has once again used its architecture as a support and a reference from which to install and pace his work. On this occasion, he has taken the three large windows at the end of the Upper Gallery as the model and measure for a series of frames which simultaneously multiply and diffract the space into luminous, overlapping planes of colour. At any one moment, the work varies according to the position of the viewer and the changing light throughout the day.

The installation in the John Piper gallery plays on this same multiplication of views and perspective by way of a vividly coloured, chessboard composition painted directly onto the gallery walls. Superimposed with a series of moveable screens, the compositional rhythm changes according to the positions of screens, which are, in turn, overlaid with a sequence of colours and can be moved by visitors to different points along the wall. Buren's working sketches, presented in one of the two middle galleries, shed light on his compositional systems for the works in Oxford, beginning with aspects of the building's architecture to his choice of colours and their arrangement in the space.

Born in Paris in 1938, Buren studied at the École des Métiers d'Art and the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux Arts. In 1965, he began making paintings using linen woven with alternating bands of white and color, which he found at the Marché Saint-Pierre, a textiles market in Montmartre. The alternating stripe of equal width of 8.7cm became for Buren a "visual tool", an invariable visual element used in a multitude of different contexts. In 1967, he started printing the same stripes onto paper, which he pasted onto poster sites in the streets and metro stations of Paris. In the same year, he gave up working in the studio to work '*in situ*'. Working with a set number of rules or systems, beginning with his alternating stripes, Buren found that these defined elements could take on a different characteristics depending on the place and the context in which they were presented. In 1986, Buren realised a controversial public commission in the courtyard of the Palais Royal in Paris, *Les Deux Plateaux*, an underground fountain and overground sculptural ensemble covering 3,000m². Commonly referred to as "Les Colonnes de Buren" (Buren's Columns), the commission provoked an intense debate over the integration of contemporary art and historic buildings.

Although most of Buren's works are made *in situ*, the same works can be installed in a different place if they follow the same set of rules, in which case they are called 'sited works'. While the system of alternating stripes is still visible in Buren's works today, the use of colour as structure, and as solid, reflective and transparent planes, made from a variety of materials and on a scale that ranges from the monumental to the intimate, has become increasingly important. These dynamic interventions continue to be anchored a simple set of rules or systems from which a multiplicity of perspectives is let loose on both the suspecting and the unsuspecting viewer.

Suzanne Cotter, Senior Curator

Daniel Buren will be in conversation with Michael Craig-Martin at Modern Art Oxford on Wednesday 24 January at 6.30pm.

Please ask one of our Gallery Assistants or enquire in the Entrance Space if you like to find out more about the exhibition and our programme of talks and activities.