



Daniel Buren, the ample field of painting, the place where genders are dissolved. An intervention project in Puente de Rande (Vigo)

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Abstract. Beginning with a project to intervene in Puente de Rande in Vigo (*Project pour la Galice*, 2005) that would never come to fruition, its authors, who accompanied the artist for several days, researched and studied his approach while taking into account his methodical conception. In this methodology are the keys to his work: from a consensual point of view and a projectual discussion to his reconsideration of the use of public spaces and/or museums, making use of his well-known visual resource—the bands of color—and the affirmation of a piece as a “transformation of a place of welcome,” while also taking into account the architecture, design and drawing, light and color, the context as nature of the place, and a feeling of endurance that exalts the essential image of the ephemeral, transcribed, as usual, in its photo-souvenirs and in the possibility of expanded painting.

Key Words: On-site artistic intervention; expanded painting; drawing and light color; visual resource; ephemeral; photo-souvenir.

[es] Daniel Buren, el campo amplio de la pintura, el lugar donde se diluyen los géneros. Proyecto de intervención en el Puente de Rande (Vigo)

Resumen. A partir de un proyecto para intervenir el Puente de Rande, en Vigo (*Project pour la Galice*, 2005), que nunca llegaría a realizarse, los autores, que acompañaron durante varios días al artista, investigan y estudian sus planteamientos, teniendo en cuenta su concepción metodológica. En ella están las claves de su trabajo, desde el consenso y la discusión proyectual, a su reconsideración del *in situ* en los espacios públicos o en el museo, haciendo uso de su reconocido *útil visual* más identitario —las bandas de color— y la afirmación de una obra como “transformación de lugar de acogida”, teniendo en cuenta la arquitectura, el diseño y el dibujo, la luz y el color, el contexto como naturaleza del lugar y un sentimiento de perdurabilidad que exalta la imagen esencial de lo efímero, transcrita, de manera habitual, en sus *photos-souvenirs* y en la posibilidad de una pintura de campo amplio.

Palabras clave: Intervención artística *in situ*; pintura expandida; dibujo y color luz; útil visual; photo-souvenir.

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Sumario: 1. Introduction. 2. *Project pour la Galice, 2005*: In situ intervention, Puente de Rande, Vigo, Spain. 3. Work in situ: his concept and his method. 4. Arquitectura and the museum as experimental spaces in the field of expanded painting. 5. Drawing, color, and light as determinants for the new concept of space. Reclaiming beauty. 6. Conclusions. References.

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1. Introduction

In December of 2004 we were given the opportunity to accompany, for a period of 5 days, Daniel Buren throughout different Galician ports. It was a question of intervening in an emblematic enclave of some of the Galician estuaries where that following year the departure of the *Volvo Ocean Race*, one of the most prestigious transoceanic sailing regatta in the world, would be welcomed. After walking around the ports in A Coruña, Sanxenxo, and Baiona, we entered into the estuary of Vigo where we had navigated, in a scrutinizing way, through one of those dark, gray days of the month that tells us that Christmas is coming. The artist was impressed by the monumental character and the enclave of Puente de Rande, in the aforementioned estuary, which would finally be the chosen place for his intervention.

While navigating, we had talked about the history of the place in which we were going, a place that had welcomed the naval battle of Rande, right in the strait where the bridge that we had crossed earlier that day by car was placed, and that hours later we could perceive in all its magnitude crossing its infrastructure under the waters of a calm sea. We explained to Buren the events which took place on October 23, 1702 in the context of the Spanish Succession War of the last of the Habsburgs, between the squadrons of England and Holland, which formed an alliance where only one side would win, and France and Spain. Strangely enough two years earlier, the Museu do Mar de Galicia (Vigo) had dedicated an exhibition (Catalogue, 2002) to celebrate that fight and its mythical and literary sequels, which led, from then on, to the creation of fables on the treasures which remained in said battle, as Jules Verne recalls to us in his well-known novel *20,000 Leagues Under the Seas: A Tour of the Underwater World*. In it he devotes the eighth chapter of the second part of the novel to the Bay of Vigo.

2. *Project pour la Galice, 2005: Intervention in situ, Puente de Rande, Vigo, Spain*

The Puente de Rande was designed by engineers Fabrizio de Miranda, Florencio del Pozo, and Alfredo Passaro. It was opened to traffic in 1981. With a total length of 1,604 meters it is one of the longest bridges in the world. The cable-stayed structure reaches 694.98 meters and is supported by two giant pillars that are H-shaped and reach 118.80 meters in height. This last one was the zone chosen by Daniel Buren to carry out his intervention to which he would dedicate the study that he sent us five months later. The artist tells us:

[...] I have reflected and worked a lot on the bridge, and after dozens of sketches and various possibilities, I have decided to send you the attached drawings, which are an expression, I think, of the simplest and most interesting ideas I have reached. (Buren, 2005, n.p.).

We received a meticulously illustrated project with a dozen sketches, which as he understood hardly demanded any explanation beyond slight shades concerning perception. In the framework of his bicolor identity sign, Buren had opted for red, although he considered it could have been different, he clarified that its quality should be chosen with great care, something which was not reflected in his sketches. It would be a very lively red that contrasts with the landscape. Analyzing the alternatives to his preference, he intuited that a green would not be adequate, knowing that this chromatic choice would move away from its first intention which was to reinforce opposition to the force of the landscape:

On the contrary, he remarked, a beautiful lively orange, even an electric blue, I think could look great. All this to say that the choice of color is open, and even white could be a bit dazzling under the sun. (Buren, 2005, n.p.).

The different parts of the bridge such as the upper and lower platforms can be seen from the cars when they drive over it as the bridge accommodates around a hundred thousand vehicles a day would be striped in white and in color. The vertical structures in black and white, “where each band should have, as I tend to do, 8.7 cm or even 9 cm, if the process were more controllable.” For the rest of the bridge he would apply a stripe in white and red, and all the parts that overlook the sea —the inside and outside of the pillars— would be painted in a single red tone, similar to the infrastructure of the platform, while the tubes that protect the cables would go in white and red.

In his project, the artist admits consensus and proposes a discussion in order to reach an agreement, although, at first, he knows options:

It will be observed that some sketches have striped bands and inverted monocromas, that is, the bands facing the sea. I prefer another option —although we can also discuss this one— because I think that the colored impact coming from the estuary is the most important and must be monochrome. By contrast, the striped bands in front of the vehicles reinforce the visibility of the pillars of the bridge by the latter, both night and day... The painted area of the bridge could begin and finish in the exact place where the cables leave and disappear. That is, the part that is partially suspended. However, I submit it for discussion. On the other hand, I suggest (without knowing if technically possible) that the road where the cars roll is painted the same color as all the rest”. (Buren, 2005, n.p.).

The artist concluded that, although there were many details to be seen, the bridge was very *beautiful* and *simple* in form, which would allow him to paint it without great difficulties and, thus, to carry out his intervention.

Unfortunately, the administration of the autonomous Galician government, which sponsored the project, refused to do so, given the high material cost involved and the complex human infrastructure to work in situ, which involved doing so much from the sea and more than a hundred meters in height, as well as the difficulties encountered to slow down or partially paralyze traffic during the time of execution.

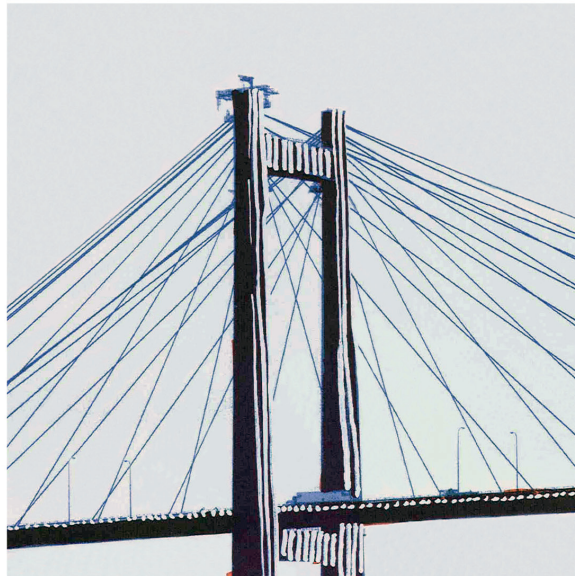
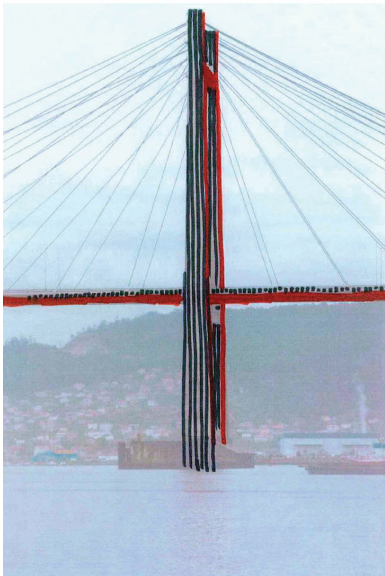


Figure 1. Daniel Buren, *Project pour la Galice*. Artistic intervención on the Rande Bridge, Vigo, Pontevedra, 2005. Aerial and two partial images. (The following images were approved by the artist).

Beyond the disappointment that came from us not being able to realize the project, those of us who had coordinated and accompanied the artist at least stayed with his acknowledgment and the result of a previous preparation that allowed us to delve deep into his work method, which we have been trying to update by accessing his most recent works, especially his texts and interviews where he has shown his thought processes over the years, a thought process that has been compiled in a systematic way into two volumes of his *Écrits* (Buren, 2012).

3. The work *in situ*: its concept and its method

Daniel Buren (Boulogne-Billancourt, Hauts-de-Seine, 1938) is currently the most internationally recognized French artist whose recognition is endorsed by a high demand from institutions and museums around the world. He is a *Golden Lion* recipient at the Venice Biennale in 1986, awarded the *International Award for Best Artist* from the Land of Bad Württemberg Land in Stuttgart in 1991, and winner of the *Praemium Imperiale* of Japan in 2007, which is considered a Nobel Prize equivalent in terms of visual arts.

His expansive way of thinking not only touches upon his conception of art—particularly that of a painting beyond painting—in a broad field, but on his desire to change the world. “Rêvons de changer le monde”, he said not too long ago in *L’Humanité* (Ulrich, 2009, p. 12) to his insobornable sociopolitical commitment from aesthetic positions, to his critical value with the art system, and, above all, to an interpretation of the creative fact that denies the *eternity* of art and is located at the moment of Schelling’s intuited sublimation in nature (Schelling, 1985, p. 72) in so as that 80% of Buren’s works were conceived to only be shown temporarily and to disappear definitively after his exhibition, something unique in the history of art that demands a lot of courage as Catherine Francblin reminds us (Cornu, Francblin & Millet, 2015, p. 56).

The case of the thinker in his performances in space and/or architecture, the idea of temporality, in “which every outbreak of nature has only a moment of full and true beauty, and art, insofar as it represents the essence of that instant, rescues him from time,” (Schelling, 1985, p. 72) an objective that prioritizes the ephemeral nature of his interventions, although, as he has said on different occasions, all this is diluted in the absence of nostalgia (Cornu et al., 2015, p. 76).

Buren has not only asserted the authorship of his works coming from the most rigorous artistic conception, thus guaranteeing the results of his hundreds of performances, but also from his own writing. This latter, as has been stated in multiple interviews over the years, is key to understanding his work and projects as writing consolidates memory, something he has constantly defended:

In what concerns me there are reasons for this ‘literary’ activity, reasons among which I could distinguish: need, urgency, reflection, demand and/or pleasure. Each of my texts is the result of one or several of these reasons. (Buren, 2012, p. 830).

As in the case of his intervention in Rande, the most recognizable piece of Daniel Buren has been marked by an inescapable identity: his model of work *in situ* in the public space and the staging of this by what he has called a *visual tool*. That is



Figure 2. Daniel Buren, *Project pour la Galice*. Artistic intervención on the Rande Bridge, Vigo, Pontevedra, 2005. Aerial and partial images. (The following images were approved by the artist).

to say, its famous bicolor bands. In the prior, the model is brought on by a distinct methodology that has allowed it to act in the most unsuspected places throughout the world such as squares, parks, streets, bridges, walks, bays, harbors, beaches, pleasure boats, buses, buildings of all kinds, and, in particular, in museums of all five continents. A process of globalization that leads the artist to locate his workshop in the precise place of work, as he says to Annick Colonna Césari, and thanks to this he has been able to find his way: “until then I hesitated between writing, cinema, and the visual arts, however, the consideration of the work in situ would become the heart of my work” (Buren, 2008, pp. 14-18). For this reason, the artist is connected to the street, the place where, he says, he began to work, which has prevented him from having a specific studio (with its permanence), and where he will perform his intervention. Such will grant a greater openness of sight to the extent that it will use as a reference what is given by the context itself. This can be defined by nature and landscape, by urbanism or by architecture, but also by materials, materials that will be used according to the place and country as they allow you to define your link to the specific work from that identity or belonging: “in my case a work can never escape an immediate context, that is, what is in *his* field of vision”, (Sánchez, 1990, pp. 14-15). A resource that he commonly employs when his interventions touch any type of architecture, as has happened, for example, in his spectacular intervention in the exhibition *Les Cabanes aux céramiques et aux miroirs*, where the starting point was a Castellón ceramic material and not an architectural idea of the building (Rodríguez, 2006, p. 36). In addition, his link to on-the-job work allows him to counteract all the physical manipulations that the work is subject to on so many occasions (Catalogue 2010, p. 161).

Buren has frequently lectured on this regenerative concept and the very meaning of the word “work in situ,” which is at the core of his reflection, moving away from any common place, once he proposes a changeable idea, which is not only a peculiar alluvial forum of his aesthetic ideas, but is also the broad field that demystifies the traditional genres of art in its stagnation, especially the traditional modes of sculpture as an object and painting as a picture. From this position, the artist affirms the possibility of an expansive and penetrable painting, inserted in an all-around where it is possible to perceive, in an absolutely renewed and different way, the classic values that have endorsed the most legitimate principles of art in the tradition of romantic idealism, to which we will refer later, and which adhere to a newer principles than those of beauty, composition, perspective, light or color.

In the text, *Le volume de la couleur*, recorded in the first volume of *Les Écrits* (1965-1995), Buren writes:

This locution does not only mean that the work is situated or in situation, but that its contribution to the place helps to understand it in an active sense: ‘here is a certain work’ and not in the sense of the result: ‘Look at the work done’. The locution work on the spot could be translated by transformation of the place of reception. Transformation elaborated in different operations starting from the use of my *visual tool*, that can be realized for this place, against this place or in osmosis with it, like the chameleon that on a leaf turns green or gray on a wall of stones. Even in this case there can be a transformation of the place when the most transformed is the transforming agent. Therefore, invariably, there are two transformants in the work: the tool used on the place and the place used on the tool, which, depending on the case, exert a great influence of one on the other. The result is inevitably the transformation of the place by the tool (visual) and access [...]. Finally,



Figure 3. Daniel Buren, *Les Cabanes aux céramiques et aux miroir*, EACC, Espai d'Art Contemporani de Castellón, Castellón de la Plana, 2006. Three visits of the exhibit. (<https://www.danielburen.com/images/exhibit/1324?&lang=fre>).

in my spirit, *in situ* means that there is a voluntarily accepted link between the place of reception and the work that is performed there which is presented and is exposed. All this is valid without any exception, here and there, since 1965. (Buren, 2012, vol I, p. 1,069).

However, in his idea of place, that is, of the public space to intervene, in aesthetic or visual terms, there is no look outside the commitment or, if you will, a certain take of ideological position, because for the French artist this space is necessarily political, as he had recently remembered (Duponchelle, 2016, pp. 4-5). Such is that taking possession of a space to act on it will assume a committed position quite obvious because from the moment it is accepted this idea defines what it will entail and what will gravitate around it.

All this, says Buren, shows the limits in which things occur and the limits in which they find both who creates and who looks. For this reason, it has been thought, from the beginning, and in my opinion mistaken, that my work was essentially critical because it emphasized the conditions of art, in its physical and cultural context or questioned its autonomy both visual and ideological. (Grandas, 1999, p. 27).

For this reason, he also argues that his works, in addition to being determined by their spatial characteristics, are also due to their historical or social conditions of production (Cornu et al., 2015, p. 54). In all cases, we consider, like Javier Hernando, that the works of Buren, by carrying the meanings of the places on which he acts, deny the autonomous character of the artistic object (Hernando, 2007, p. 45), an aspect that he has sustained persistently and in which he has militated with his praxis, considering the contexts and the referents of their places as essential parts of the final result.

Beyond what we have defined as a *travail in situ*, whose works would be inextricably linked to the place in which they were conceived, Buren refers to another category in his artistic production, work located (*travail situé*), works autonomous—the least important in his production, in quantitative terms and of global significance as they are not recognizably linked to artist—that can circulate from one location to another, provided they follow some very simple rules which the artist himself has established. In this sense, a *work situated* would be one that explicitly claims its interest in complex elements, a priori alien to each other, thus allowing a new entity to create multiple *authors*. In short, the value of the unique and autonomous object, which one usually calls “work of art” is not claimed (Buren, 2002). His marble paintings, like so many of his other *movable* works, would be examples of this second type, but if the artist has conceived them only for the floor then they must as Buren indicated (Cornu et al., 2015, p. 66). However, for neither of the two typologies that verbally define their performances, the artist wants to discuss the word installation, because, by not sharing his conception, he has decided to exclude it from his vocabulary (Buren, 2012). Vid.:<https://www.google.es/search?q=daniel+buren+travail+situ%C3%A9&tbm=isch&tbo=u&source=univ&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwj7tfvMg5bZAhUIvhQKHbnYD2sQ7AkINg&biw=1600&bih=769>

Although we have already referred to the identity sign of bichromatic scratching, consisting of white bands and another color, true visual tools, as he has always called it, so present in most of his projects and definitive in the aesthetic and perceptive horizon of ours, we must return to the Puente de Rande, because from the beginning it has been a true “brand,” a peculiar signature turned into material and color and

that, at last, will allow to define any space (Sánchez, 1990, pp. 12-13). A sign that becomes the true link between all the elements he employs or acts on, in the space-bound context to do so, as he himself suggests to Catherine Francblin (Cornu et al., 2015, p. 65) and that Javier Hernando indicates as the first characteristic of the radical reduction to a primary physics that would have an anonymous character regarding its consideration as a repetitive formal scheme (Hernando, 2007, pp. 7 and 15). Its recurring birth has been explained several times by the artist, and he recounts it with particular detail in Volume I (1965-1995) of his aforementioned *Écrits*:

One day in 1965, while I was passing through Paris, I went to the market Saint-Pierre to supply me with fabric. I found a store fabric genre composed of equal bands and I bought it. It was very similar to the one I used as a jacket for my bed. First I used it as a support, partially covering the paint. Although the real break came after I stopped painting. These striped bands then became what I have called my visual tool. Used in different contexts, on the walls, on the streets, in the museums... I have been used to revealing the places intervened... This is how the white and colored stripes that measure 8.7 cm wide have become the visual tool that I have used, without variation, in hundreds of different spaces (public and private, galleries, squares, buses, boats, etc.) since November 1965. (Buren, 2012, vol I, p. 610).

However, these bands, which, as the artist states, have become recurrent elements of his work (Villeneuve, 2009, p. 10), do not really have any significance insofar as beyond that consideration branded. They are very ductile instruments that only acquire their meaning once they have been used. They would be something like impersonal devices, or figurative, or original, or optical; that is, the equivalent of the piano for a pianist. And there are not many signs that have these qualities, says Buren to Angela Tecce (Buren, 2012, vol. I, p. 1,323-1,324).

Considering said differentiators, deep, identitarian traces that have marked his course of actions in the last half century, the artist has had a special predilection for the architecture and space of the city, for a peculiar microubanism that condenses from chromatic manipulation, expansion or wide field of a painting that allows us to see the streets, squares, and parks, or so many artifacts and places mentioned above to the skin of an interior or exterior design of the most prestigious museums, generating not only a new method of work, but a renewed settlement for the praxis of a wide field art, a painting or *peinture élargie*, as untold and surprising. In this way, he has also been able to highlight and question the characteristic elements or meanings of each one of those objects and urban spaces, historical or not, modern architectures and emblematic places of contemporary art (Hernando, 2007, p. 27).

4. Architecture and the museum as experimental spaces in the field expanded painting

Buren is aware that the architecture of the place will always be given more value by the course of his actions rather than the opposite because one of his objectives is to reinforce such idea through the repetition of certain elements as well as a “visual cleaning” that his work takes on implicitly, (Cornu et al., 2015, p. 60). At the end of the 90s, he explained to Olivier Vadrot that over the years architecture was for him one of his great interests and had become one of his passions: he was seduced

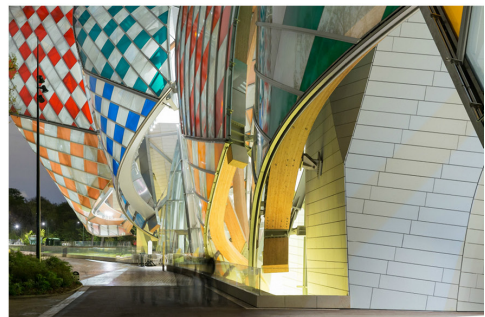
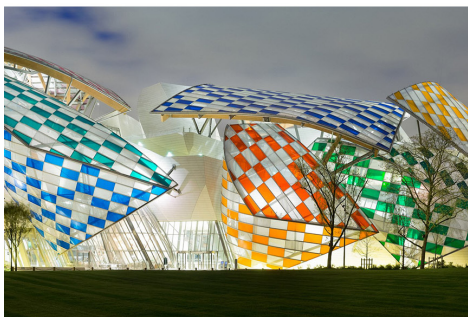


Figure 4. Daniel Buren, *Observatory of Light*, Louis Vuitton Foundation, Paris, 2016. Four images of the artistic intervention.

([https://www.google.es/search?q=Daniel+Buren,+Observatory+of+Light+\(2016\)+Fundaci%C3%B3n+Louis+Vuitton,+Par%C3%ADs.&dc=0&source=lnms&tbn=isch&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwiKr8GjpsfYAhWfCfRQKHZ3SCa0Q_AUICigB&biw=1278&bih=815](https://www.google.es/search?q=Daniel+Buren,+Observatory+of+Light+(2016)+Fundaci%C3%B3n+Louis+Vuitton,+Par%C3%ADs.&dc=0&source=lnms&tbn=isch&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwiKr8GjpsfYAhWfCfRQKHZ3SCa0Q_AUICigB&biw=1278&bih=815)).

by the wonderful constructions of antiquity, including today's great Works (Buren, 2012, vol II, p. 297), as he has recently shown at the Louis Vuitton Foundation. In this space, which Frank Gehry projected at the Bois de Boulogne in Paris, he introduced filters so that the sun, in its daily transition from east to west, would generate a changing light that aimed to transform the architecture in its entirety, assuming that his intervention had constituted a subversion of it (Bousteau, 2016, pp. 9-17 and 96), an experience which, with other resources where he not only took advantage of the lighting, but sought out chromatism, he had carried out in many museum spaces.

Some of his most celebrated interventions like the Parisian Grand Palais (2012), and years before that, the Salve Bridge in Bilbao (2006), and the Louis Vuitton Foundation (2016), reinforce his passion for architecture and show how the artist, with two different methods —*actioning* inside the buildings in a direct way, as is the case in France or abroad as can be seen on the bridge in Bilbao, establishing an umbilical cord between the intensity of the red (that illuminated the bridge) and the green with the titanium of the Guggenheim— manage to approach a new ideal of beauty, absolutely subversive, a meeting place where all genres of art converge, under the primacy of markedly pictorial values.

The museum will be the paradigm of architecture for Buren, and as such he will also carry out the space of his limited experience, because “it allows him to push out the limits of this experimentation as far out as possible and with a great exigence”, (Buren, 2012, vol. II, p. 215). Perhaps, it is the most difficult space to conceive a specific type of work because it is not a neutral space (Cornu et al., 2015, p. 59), and yet a great part of his projects were made for this type of architectural structure despite being critical of said institutions. His famous *Affaire* in 1971, when he appeared in the Guggenheim Museum in New York in a collective exhibition from which he had to withdraw his work that was embedded into Frank Lloyd Wright's architecture because other artists had protested that Buren's work in situ was an interference (Alberro, 1997, p. 68). This reinforced Buren's conviction that the museum demanded the total space, which was when his course of actions had acquired that dialogic personality within the space becoming, then, scenography of his restored and subversive *wide field*. As would happen, years later, in his numerous specific works in museums around the world where among them he would mention the act of aesthetic reparation, he was given a new invitation from the Guggenheim Museum in New York in 2005. From this perspective, the true critical dimension of Buren will place more emphasis in the work done that in the discourse given, to which, in many occasions, has been prioritized.

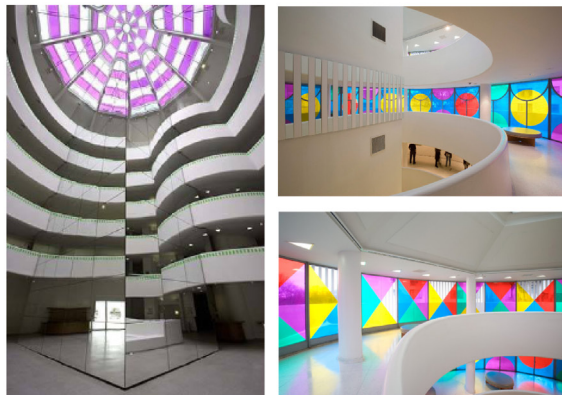
The artist defends himself by affirming that instead of forming a critique what he has tried to do is make an analysis of a system or a place:

For example, if I say that art is not autonomous and depends on the manipulation of the director or museum, one can claim that it is a radical criticism of painting and sculpture. However, what I want to say is that works of art can be manipulated, which is why I try to create works that cannot be manipulated. (Spiegel, 1996, p. 28).

That is to say, Buren appeals to the processes of decontextualization that the museum generates in works of art, a place that isolates these pieces from their own reality, and that is why when Buren intervenes in these spaces, he not only gives



Excentriques (2012) Monumenta V, Grand Palais, Paris. Three visits of the exhibit.



The Eye of the Storm: Works in situ (2005) Guggenheim Museum, New York. Three visits of the exhibit.

Figure 5. Daniel Buren, *Excentriques* (2012) and *The Eye of the Storm: Works in situ* (2005).

(https://www.google.es/search?dcr=0&biw=783&bih=815&tbm=isch&sa=1&ei=VLc5WuaEAcn5UMnXnLgD&q=Daniel+Buren%2C+Excentriques+%282012%29.+Monumenta+V.+Grand+Palais%2C+Par%C3%ADs.&oq=Daniel+Buren%2C+Excentriques+%282012%29.+Monumenta+V.+Grand+Palais%2C+Par%C3%ADs.&gs_l=psy-ab.3...524776.524776.0.526717.1.1.0.0.0.283.283.2-1.1.0....0...1c.2.64.psy-ab..0.0.0....0.pHx38G3LLhA).

(https://www.google.es/search?dcr=0&biw=783&bih=815&tbm=isch&sa=1&ei=ZLk5WsjwPMfbUbG4gLG0&q=Daniel+Buren%2C+The+Eye+of+the+Storm%3A+Works+in+situ+%282005%29.+Museo+Guggenheim%2C+Nueva+York&oq=Daniel+Buren%2C+The+Eye+of+the+Storm%3A+Works+in+situ+%282005%29.+Museo+Guggenheim%2C+Nueva+York&gs_l=psy-ab.3...310698.310698.0.312179.1.1.0.0.0.256.256.2-1.1.0....0...1c.2.64.psy-ab..0.0.0....0.pU_5UJxsaQA).

them with new meaning, rather it is his specific actions that establish a critical *dimensión*—making it clear that it is not something against the museum— rather he is putting in question, in addition to painting easel or the paintings that are exposed there, the institution itself, apolitical thoughts, as Catherine Francblin reminds us (Cornu et al., 2015, p. 54). Therefore, if he has criticized the structure of the museum, as he has never done so against his own interest, it is because that criticism is the same that underlies his very own work (Rodríguez, 2006, p. 49). But the artist makes a recurring analysis of said role in the last half-century setting aside, in this case, his true interest in his architecture; thus, arises the Buren ideologized when he thinks that during the 60s and 70s the museum was a place of value, a center of great power and decision-making over art, something that started to decline in the 1980s with the multiplication of these institutions whose effect would be the loss of their aura and, ultimately, the ability to distinguish and impose. For this reason, it considers that in order to recover its value, the museum should be reinvented (Millet, 1996, p. 63, Rodríguez, 2006, p. 46, and Grandas, 1999, p. 28).

In addition to his identity construct in the staging of a physical space with the described springs, which are the ones that would define, in global terms, the broad field to which we have already referred, we should analyze this in pictorial terms parting from essential, classical values in the particular nomenclature of artist such as the search for beauty, the primacy of color and light, and the reconsideration of a design that does not discard the decorative, value subject to an ideology of temporality that Javier Hernando (2007) has described as a process of “post-painting in the expanded field” as reference to Buren’s work in entirety. Hence, we can deduce a distinct and recurring vocabulary that would define the great *in situ* actions of the French artist who has dismantled traditional painting, which some analysts call “painting non site”, from its own classic characteristics, while proposing a new alternative to the one with the same values with which has always been withheld resorting to the dilution of all the genres of art. This new perspective, which Almudena Fernández has so accurately defined as “painting site” is born from the transformation of a real space that can not only can be penetrated but also inhabited by the viewer, who will become a member more of a “marked architectural habitat” (Fernández Fariña, 2014, p. 27 et seq.).

5. Drawing, the color and the light as determinants of a new concept of space. Reclaiming Beauty

In the use of those classic values to which Buren goes to determine his broad field or *the painting site*, drawing will never be an end result, however, as has happened in the intervention project of the Rande Bridge. The sketches (Buren, 2005) are the essential basis of his preparatory work: the experience of those sketches are born before manipulating them. The artist first makes photos of the chosen place and then the underlying design of them (Sánchez, 1990, p. 16). However, pictorial values such as color and light are non-negotiable in his work and it is impossible to dissociate them in the processes of the transformation of their spaces, because, for him, color is light and vice versa. He cites an example of that mutation: “When the sky is blue, the power of light turns yellow into green” (Bousteau, 2016, p. 96). On more than one occasion, Buren has considered that “color is pure thought, something totally



Les Deux Plateaux (1985-1986) Patio of Honor of the Palais Royal, Paris. Three images of the work.



Arcos Rojos (2006) Salve Bridge, Bilbao. Three images of the work.

Figure 6. Daniel Buren, *Arcos rojos*, 2006 and *Les Deux Plateaux*, 1985-1986.
 (https://www.google.es/search?dcr=0&biw=1084&bih=815&tbm=isch&sa=1&ei=67w5WoCsB4P-UvrigoAJ&q=Daniel+Buren%2C+Les+Deux+Plateaux+%281985-1986%29.+&oq=Daniel+Buren%2C+Les+Deux+Plateaux+%281985-1986%29.+&gs_l=psy-ab.12...3452.5466.0.6488.2.2.0.0.0.132.254.0j2.2.0....0...1c.1.64.psy-ab..0.0.0....0.n9O4ONg07_E).
 (https://www.google.es/search?dcr=0&biw=783&bih=815&tbm=isch&sa=1&ei=nro5WvTXFsnwUsKIjIgB&q=Daniel+Buren%2C+Arcos+rojos+%282006%29.+Puente+de+la+Salve%2C+Bilbao&oq=Daniel+Buren%2C+Arcos+rojos+%282006%29.+Puente+de+la+Salve%2C+Bilbao&gs_l=psy-ab.12...510812.510812.0.514111.1.1.0.0.0.292.292.2-1.1.0....0...1c.2.64.psy-ab..0.0.0....0._H4fTM37aAg).

unspeakable, as abstract as a mathematical formula or a philosophical concept” (Bousteau, 2016, p. 96). Therefore, at every moment, it must be invented and so as to reinforce its extraordinary character, because one can only experience it. Color is the best expression of its spirit and it is unique, “because the individuals who perceive it are all different and each one does it his way” (Bousteau, 2016, p. 96). This was his philosophy when he faced his most conflicted work, *Les Deux Plateaux*, in the Courtyard of Honor of the Palais Royal in Paris (1985-1986) where he tried to include a living chromatic in his bicolor stripes only shuffle the possibility of using blue, pink or red marbles in the sobriety of that neoclassical building. Although, in the end he opted for the alternation of white and black, in fact two non-colors, and did so according to add to a weighty argument: Paris. He knew that in a year those marbles would have taken on the gray tone of the stone. And just as warm chromatism had foreseen for that bare ground of the palace courtyard (a red or green asphalt), but after analyzing its consequences, and especially the effect of the rain, he realized that the bases of the walls would have a pink dye, which is why he opted for black asphalt producing the same qualities in relation to color as black marble and granite (Duponchele, 2012).

Buren is aware of the prejudices that his perception has provoked due to part of his critique and of the artists who have defined conceptual art as the only serious art when it comes to color, something which one can observe as trivial and frivolous, because they do not understand that “color is also *joie de vivre* (joy of living)” (Buren, vol II, 1996-2012, p. 178; Bousteau, 2016, p. 97 and Mammi, 2016, n.p.). Since the sixties, Buren has faced dogmatic views that presupposed the extinction of painting and thereby also including color:

I always played with color, especially when conceptual art treated it in an insignificant way, because, according to the philosophy of then, [he says to Catherine Francblin] color was not respectable, whereas beiges, the works of Beuys, black cubes, writing and photos in black and white, those were serious. (Cornu et al., 2015, p. 53).

The artist, however, rejects radically the theoretical, psychological, and symbolic values to which colors are often linked to in modern art thought and practice as Arnaud Debois shows in *Ethnography of a Practice of Colorization in Contemporary Art*, whose thesis defends such values against Buren’s more visual and conceptual consideration (Dubois, 2015, pp. 100 et seq.) who uses them as a formal and neutral expression of an atmosphere that will reinforce our perception of architecture and landscape through the process of appropriation of the chosen space.

Therefore, when Buren selects the color he does not do it with traditional terms of a tonal dimension in mind as they correspond to certain sensations that come from the psychology of the perception or to the inherited symbolic values. Nor does he want to express a certain taste which is why he often falls back on monochrome and random colors to obtain another value that is more conceptually neutral as happened in his intervention of *Monumenta* in 2012 at the Paris Grand Palais: “I used the only colors of film plastic that existed” (Duponchelle, 2012), while in the Rande Bridge project he chose the color from a purely visual and intuitive position taking into account the design and the way of constructing his *passable frame* only to reveal the space of contrasts that he wants to offer us: “...It is necessary a very lively color that contrasted with the landscape” (Buren, 2005). The artist associates color with light as a pictorial value that acquires a double dimension. He does so with natural light,

especially in the exterior, provoking a refraction of the latter by taking advantage of the greater or lesser inclination of solar rays as he intended to do in his project for the Vigo estuary: "...the white could be a bit dazzling under the sun." As he did in the aforementioned intervention, in the Vuitton Foundation he looked for the mutation of architecture following the transition of the Sun, and finally, he incorporated the direct use of artificial light, as he had done in a large part of his interventions either inside or outside. A direct example of this is the Bridge of the Salve of Bilbao where in order to interact with the Guggenheim Museum he took advantage of the darkness of the night.

However, it is his direct vision of the phenomenon of light, which will determine the incidence of light in a concrete way (Bonnet, 2012), because, as often happens in his works *in situ*, there is also the problem of random phenomena that result from the actual climatology of the time and place; that is, of the amount of light, the sun, the clouds, the rain, etc., like in his installation for *Monumenta* in the Grand Palais (Buren, 2012). Light has acquired a primordial force in all these manifested pieces, interacting as the true element of transformation and mutation, along with color, which characterizes the breakdown of staticism—a break that has always existed in the works of Buren. The Bilbao Salve Bridge is good example of this, and its "red lighting in the night of Bilbao" had been obtained with the interrelation of the red of the bridge against the green and gray of the titanium of the Guggenheim that was reinforced with a double system (both static and dynamic), which is projected on the sides, painted with its classic black and white stripes, making a constant movement along the structural edges of the bridge (Redondo, 2006, pp. 72-73) and generating a striking dialogue between a light and dynamic atmosphere under the dark. In the Louis Vuitton Foundation, he was able to transform the atmosphere in *Observatoire de la Lumière* (Observatory of Light) where "harmonized colors covered the glass veils of a multicolored domino, turning Frank Gehry's building into a huge kaleidoscope with the sun highlighting its overprints" (Bousteau, 2016, p. 96).

Buren's preoccupation with traditional pictorial values applied to a type of painting that breaks radically with its inherited formats, an option for which he himself opted for in the 60s, is the one that will position him in what is known as *expanded painting*, a term coined in the 80s, as opposed to *expanded field* that Rosalind Krauss had applied to sculpture. These values that acquire, in spite of the new context—the physical and social space of a landscape of an architecture or simply the spirit of any urban structure—a classic dimension and, therefore, a permanence in the time, establish a direct relation between painting and context: refractive and reflective space of a global dimension that we find in artists of the last few years and who have definitively abandoned said specific genre (Castro, 1999, p. 71) but, to some extent, have also come to similar conclusions that Buren had already anticipated almost half a century ago, conclusions and assumptions that have been so closely analyzed by the aforementioned Javier Hernando in his postpainting in the expanded field.

Buren's classicism is emphasized in a subsequent search for not less traditional qualities, inheritors of the self-referential Kantian idealism and romanticization, which become concepts such as decorative or beauty. One of its aims being:

If beauty is no longer the purpose of art, then what exists now more than ever and is expressed in each of the best productions of this century and is all the more visible and surprising when it appears in an unexpected way... (Buren, 2012, vol. II, p. 143).

In his more critical judgment, the artist considers that the beautiful as a concept has been devalued since the end of the nineteenth century by the artists themselves; hence why there is no mention of it, because the canons have disappeared. Although the term is still used, and for him can be obsessive (Bousteau, 2016, p. 96), he knows that the creators “have literally invented dozens and dozens of types of beauties that respond to unique and original canons” (Cornu et al., 2015, p. 69). But, in all such cases, from the beginning, as he confesses to Anne Baldassari in 1987, “a beautiful thing is such because it has a logical, perfect, internal functioning”, and this is one of Buren’s objectives while constructing his pieces: remaining conscious of the beauty of a work having more to do with its concept than with its aesthetic appeal or, moreover, with the formal result (Buren, 2012, vol. I, pp. 1,164-1,165).

The same debate about his work has arisen with the term *decorative*, in part due to some of his naysayers who have come to describe him as a decorator, because on several different occasions he has claimed his appeal for decorative arts. Overcoming such assumption of this concept, something cardinal in his projects, that, Buren argues, for a good part of these critiques and artists “indicates mediocrity”, has pushed for a better argument and shows greater strength on his part. When others wanted to reduce his work only to a simple discourse, he posited the following question: what is decorative? In that way, he reminds us that in Matisse and in other prestigious modern artists, from Mondrian and Picasso to many others present, the decorative aspect is inherent and essential to great art in its vast majority (Bousteau, 2016, p. 96).

6. Conclusions

There is a trait in Daniel Buren’s artistic work, that comes from the understanding of his *in situ* projects, that breaks with one of the essential objectives of all time frames of art: the idea of durability, given that these pieces have been conceived from the idea of the ephemeral, is subject to a temporality that has already been decided from its inception—they are not transportable or marketable as it is stated in their contracts—while keeping in mind that these pieces must then be destroyed (Rodríguez, 2006, p. 36). Hence, the importance of the contribution of documentation, whether written or photographic, whose result is summarized in its already recognized *photo-souvenirs*, which has come to define as “waste that provides evidence that a certain work has been completed.” These are the visual echoes of those creations that “may become more memorable after their disappearance, because people have continued to keep [them] in their memory” (Cornu et al., 2015, p. 76). In this sense, Buren evokes the philosophy that the sculptor Giovanni Papini had imagined in *Gog* through the figure of Matiegka. He tells Gog that he has created a new sculpture, never realized by anyone, dynamic, cinematic:

[...] The only possible plastic solution is to move from immobility to ephemeral. The most perfect art, music, beats passes and disappears... Matiegka placed a blackish paste to which it set fire. A dense, thick column of smoke had risen straight over the brazier... The sculptor began to model the smoke, and the dark column took on the appearance of a human figure... He looked, quickly, and printed the form in his memory! In a few

seconds the statue will have vanished like a melody ending... The masterpiece has died as all masterpieces die, cried Matiegka. Does it matter? Each work is unique and should suffice for the joy of a unique moment. If a statue lasts for ten seconds or ten centuries, what difference does it make in relation to eternity, what difference does it make, whether its marble or smoke, if it must disappear in the end? (Papini, 1982, p. 124).

From this position, the artist explains, in *Les Écrits* (Buren, 2012, vol. I, p. 1,370), that *photography-souvenir* serves as a memory-aid, provides proof of formal existence, past or present, of the event, especially to the people who have seen and experienced the intervention before, even though a photographic resource is what's left for us to have an image and a memory, that in no sense can be replaced or can replace the reality of the work itself.

In addition to this, what has also become as important in the identity of his works as the values analyzed is Buren proposal of what he calls *point de vu* where he inscribes it within the framework of a plural reading that follows the Duchamp-esque ritual of creativity. While *point de vu* takes on another aspect when the spectator experiences the phenomenon of transmutation, by which, says Duchamp, determines the weight of the work in the balance of aesthetics and puts it in contact with the outside world to decipher and interpret their internal qualities. In short, it is the viewer who concludes the work (Duchamp, 2010, p. 67) and thereby Buren also submits his interventions to such poetry, as he shows us in his "Project for Galicia," whose dimensions leave a space for election or, at least, for debate and discussion with his own collaborators who are also positioned as spectators.

It is true that Buren closes the circle of his productions *in situ* with this coparticipation level, understanding that the "points of view" that he offers can be multiple, although, not obligatory; that is to say, free:

I am interested in the point of view that implicitly leads me to take into consideration the perceiver, the one who looks, because there cannot be those points of view without people. Conceiving an object implies that it can be observed, since a work begins to *exist* once someone other than the one who produces it, looks at it. To speak of the point of view means not only to confront the position of the spectator, but also its irreplaceable existence and to be sensitive to the relations that maintains an intervention with its place and with the one that runs it. (Buren, 2012, vol. II, pp. 178-180).

A willingness that prolongs the differing readings that could be made of his works, considering that in everything he does there are at least two, three or four ways of interpreting them and all of them would be partial, he admits that only one could be that of a critical dimension that is usually attributed from the beginning, to its realizations, invariably away from any unequivocal meaning (Rodríguez, 2006, p. 46). Even so, Buren runs from an ideologized aesthetic despite the fact that in the 1970s he had refused to work in countries with nondemocratic regimes such as Brazil or Argentina —"My position has not allowed me to expose officially under a dictatorship"— and even in Israel, until said country signed the Camp David Peace with Egypt. Also, years later, in Belgrade in the midst of the Bosnian War (Millet, 1996, pp. 58-59). Yet this conviction was not decisive, because he thought that the core of interest of a work does not derive from critical or self-critical levels —"A work that was not more than that would be very limited"— to which he does not

give an important space at the center of his reflection because if said levels were to overlap, his interventions would have definitively been subordinated to these levels of interpretation (Grandas, 1999, p. 27), something which he has always fled from.

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