



FONDATION LOUIS VUITTON

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Press kit  
Daniel Buren  
“The Observatory of Light”  
*Work in situ*, 2016

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## I — The intervention

### Daniel Buren, "The Observatory of Light" *Work in situ* Starting 11 May 2016

*"The transparency and quality of a colour projected by means of a coloured filter, as I see it, make it much more alive than painted colour covering a surface"* Daniel Buren

In line with Fondation Louis Vuitton's commitment to contemporary creation and encouragement of innovative encounters with its architecture, as of 11 May 2016 the Fondation Louis Vuitton presents a temporary work by Daniel Buren. Developed in close dialogue with the building by Frank Gehry – whose architecture serves as an inspiration to artists – "The Observatory of Light" is installed across the glass 'sails', the emblematic feature of the building.

The twelve 'sails', formed of 3,600 pieces of glass, are covered by a staggering array of coloured filters that are in turn punctuated, at equal distances from one another, by alternating white and blank stripes perpendicular to the ground. The thirteen selected colours make coloured forms appear and disappear, ever-changing with the time of day and the season.

Through a play of colours, projections, reflections, transparencies and contrasts, both inside and outside, Daniel Buren shows this building in a new light. The interior spaces and various terraces of the Foundation provide an unmatched perspective for visitors to view and admire this spectacular installation in all of its subtlety, especially under the sun.

*"There is a quantity of mirror effects here at the Fondation that actually don't come from mirrors but from the windows. Almost everywhere something is reflected (...) through the coloring of the sails, all those reflections will become more and more present and will awake those sleeping mirrors that are everywhere. I think that this will enable visitors to further understand and enjoy the singularity of this architecture."* Daniel Buren

*"Daniel Buren has designed a grandiose project, pertinent and enchanting, the result of a real dialogue with Frank Gehry and his building. His work responds magnificently to the architecture, in line with his approach, going back to the 1970s, that sees a coming together of colours, transparency and light."* Bernard Arnault, President of the Fondation Louis Vuitton.

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Major international artist **Daniel Buren** (1938-FR) has been developing a radical œuvre characterised by the use of his “visual tool” (8.7 cm-wide alternating white and coloured vertical stripes), since the 1960s. He moved from working with paint (1965-1967) to working with space and its context. All his works are now conceived specifically for the space, context and features of the host venue and are created *in situ*, be that in a public space or in a museum or art gallery.

*\*in situ* is a Latin term that Daniel Buren introduced to the visual arts’ vocabulary. It defines his artistic practice, which takes into account all the site-specific elements of the place where he is invited to intervene, including its architecture and social, economic and cultural aspects.

## Conversation between Daniel Buren and Suzanne Pagé

*Daniel Buren, "The Observatory of Light",*

Co-edited by Fondation Louis Vuitton / Editions Xavier Barral, 2016

Suzanne Pagé (SP):

You and Frank Gehry have known each other for more than forty years. Today you have entered into a new dialogue, *in situ*, after the singular and more distanced one in Bilbao. What was your perception of this building, which you have always been enthusiastic about? [...] What is it that interests you in the idea of reviving that now, ten years later?

Daniel Buren (DB):

You were there. It was in June, I think. Frank Gehry asked me to come. He wanted to tell me how keen he was for me to do something. He imagined types of flags floating amidst his "sails" on two of the terraces, partially covering them. I told him that I needed to take a closer look and that I thought it was already too late for the opening. The flags or other objects in the wind, I couldn't imagine that. However, the use of coloured filters could be spectacular and interesting because of the complexity of the structure, of what is going on over them. I really like this controlled chaos. The transparent glass panels – well, they're silkscreened to attenuate the sunlight a bit – that cover the entire structure, along with the waterfall that disappears under the museum, are, in my view, the most successful parts. There's nothing like that in Bilbao. The only thing the two buildings share is that both are the work of the same architect.

SP: The scale, too, is different.

DB: You can't compare them. In a way, the idea of turning everything here towards the interior by using multiple terraces, which mean that you can be outside while being in the museum, is a rather amusing one and it opens up a whole lot of possibilities. I had nothing specific in mind but I was sure that there were a thousand ways of intervening. So, I thought of filters, which were perfectly in keeping with the spirit of the construction. Of course, Gehry still had to agree to someone touching his structure. But then, he did tell me: "You know, when I make a museum, it's for artists to do what they want in it, to question it, to destroy it." If I was allowed to touch the glass, then I could get to work. I made a model of the project and in August I sent it to Frank, as I did to you, in fact. He answered me the same day: he thought the project was magnificent, but he added: "We need to give the public a bit of time, at least a year, so they can get used to the architecture. After that, you'll be free to transform it." I was expecting him to say that. Gehry naturally wanted the museum to be seen as he had designed it, before letting someone touch it. That's how it started. For me, then, it's great to be going back to this project.

SP: Exactly, what kind of provocation does this building represent for you? Did it constrain you, and did you try to adopt certain principles or, on the contrary, maintain or even create tension?

DB: I knew, even before I made it, that my project would visually challenge this structure. At the same time, it also respects it. It's obvious that the terraces are going to be transfigured on sunny days by the projections, which will completely change what we already know about this new structure. The original construction is very monochrome – creamy.

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Nothing interferes with the golden-brown ambience. Especially in the daytime, because there is no artificial lighting. Adding colour to this structure will radically change the impression it gives. Without physically transforming anything, simply because of the quality of the glass and its curves and dips, the forms will shift even though nothing has been changed.

SP: The structure itself is dynamic.

DB: Very. There are almost no verticals; everything is oblique, curved, highly complex. As for the joining of the sails, which are sometimes folded, it's pretty acrobatic. Much more than in Bilbao, the chaos here is controlled.

SP: All the more so as that's not how it's perceived. Everything seems fluid, when in reality it's extremely sophisticated.

DB: This promenade is magnificent. I really like it, quite apart from the project. Walking between the glass sails and the terraces, moving around these protruding blocks that envelop certain rooms, with views over the garden, the greenery, the water, the sky...

SP: Your basic vocabulary is quite apparent in your project here, that well-known "visual tool" as you call it, with the alternating 8.7 cm stripes, colour-light and transparency and, of course, mirrors. Transparency and mirror effects are exactly what we find in Gehry, too.

DB: There are all kinds of mirror effects that do not come from mirrors but from the glass. Almost everywhere there are reflections. If we do not notice this effect that much, that is because it seems obvious, with all this glass, the beginnings or endings of corridors. The doors and glass walls set up a multitude of reflections, and what is reflected is what is above us, as I said, dressed in a monochrome, or rather in gradations going from off-white to the golden-brown of the beams. It's so fluid, so harmonious that you hardly notice it, it all seems so normal. What I am sure of, though, is that when the sails are coloured these reflections will become much more present and will make these "dormant" mirrors that are positioned all around us more active.

SP: Did Gehry's decisions set rules for you here? How do you plan to assert yourself in the face of the architecture?

DB: That's something which has never bothered me. In most of my pieces, especially the ones articulated mainly around the architecture of a given place, I remain dependent. I play with it while never really trying to dominate. If one side gains the upper hand, it's usually the architecture. The problem here is that Gehry's proposition is, if I can say this, barely visible. That's why I'm sure that when a bit of red or yellow appears in the reflection of the roofing over a stairway, or over the restaurant, say, people will realise that they are being reflected, whereas now you have to be very attentive to see that the transparent sides are all latent mirrors.

SP: Yes, and that sometimes comes across in a rather amusing way. On some evenings, for example, Gehry's fish in the restaurant seem to be swimming in the park. It's a magical effect, a prolongation of the architecture. I'm not sure that Gehry necessarily foresaw all these developments. These kinds of surprises are engineered into the building. Your questioning will also create lots more, notably through projections.

DB: I think that's going to help people be aware of the building's singularity and appreciate it even more. The importance of the mirrors, for example: many of them will become apparent when the roof is transformed. Come to think of it, I wonder if my idea of

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making appear what I want to make appear isn't there already! If so, that would make my addition of mirrors redundant.

SP: It depends on the time of day.

DB: Yes, but above all I'm wagering on something that I can't yet judge.

SP: You have chosen thirteen colours and given us a certain latitude in positioning them on the two-sided sails. Am I right?

DB: Yes and no. When we were choosing the folded sails, I always specified the colour – light or dark – and, having established this principle, as I thought it would be very similar either way, I left the freedom to decide to position the light above and the dark below, or vice versa.

SP: Your choice of colours is very precise, however.

DB: Yes, but at the same time I'm playing with existing materials that have limited possibilities. Also, there are some colours, like the reds or the blues, where you can barely make out the different shades, unless you put them side by side. If, say, I position a sky-blue sail not far from a sail that is in a slightly darker blue, the nuance is so subtle that nobody will see the difference. However, when they're projected onto the walls or the floor the difference between the two blues will be visible. Then the true colour appears. Under the sky, the value is slightly different. That's what I like about these filters: everything is multiple and subtle. The colours that are chosen are basic ones – except when you have the idea of a dark shade and another lighter one. The blue must be a blue, the green, a green, the red a red, the orange an orange. There's no confusing bold colours.

SP: What is specific here is the dialogue with the exterior, with the terraces, as you said earlier, but also – and this is key with this architecture – with the sky and therefore the weather.

DB: Without sunlight half the project disappears.

SP: You play on that intentionally?

DB: How couldn't I? That's why, for one thing, I always prefer, if it's possible – and if you look, it always is – to work with natural rather than artificial light. From that point of view, few other museums offer as much potential, apart from the Pompidou Centre, which also has natural light streaming in on three sides. Daylight started to be a part of new museums in the 1930s. That creates wonderful atmospheres – you can experience it. For example, at the Palais des Beaux-Arts in Brussels, or at the Kroller-Müller in Otterlo. There's no doubt about it, we still haven't found anything better than overhead light for artworks.

SP: We can agree on that. [...] Gehry's architecture solicits multiple gazes. Do you think there is an ideal progress here?

DB: Absolutely not. I think, precisely, that the entrances onto these terraces are all equally interesting. It doesn't matter much where the visitor chooses to walk, double back or ascend. His curiosity impels him to see what's happening above, below – all that matters is the view and the pleasure of walking in the open air. The terraces, as Gehry has created them, are what make the museum original. They are not positioned as they

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usually are at the top of the building but wrapped around it, winding around the closed spaces. A bit like utopian architecture, which, to some extent, conjures up visions of tall blocks surmounted by motorways.

SP: Your intervention also aims to celebrate the architecture.

DB: The most innovative thing about it, in my eyes, is the distribution of the terraces. The magic of the waterfall, too, which seems to disappear underneath the building. More, anyway, than the rooms themselves, which some might deem too small or too big, out of proportion.

SP: That's a point on which there was a lot of dialogue, notably with the artists. They expressed their expectations and Gehry took them on board. The rooms are easy to use. One characteristic, which fits in with what you say, is that there are many interstitial spaces which underscore the autonomy of the rooms. We take this specificity into account – and in fact it is stimulating – with each new hanging.

DB: These spaces back up the terraces at different levels. This way of coming to some of them, of going from one level to another, is really exciting. A bit like in those parks with artificial mountains in them – the Buttes-Chaumont for example... SP: Yes, and Gehry liked the idea of intervening in a children's garden.

SP: Yes, and Gehry liked the idea of intervening in a children's garden.

DB: Personally, I appreciate the quality of the building and this interplay interests me greatly.

SP: What is striking about what you say, and even more in what you do, is the lucidity of your analysis of the place and of what you can do with it. Obviously, you are fully aware of the fun that you are going to create here. You know your reputation for rigidity. Is this playful atmosphere that visitors are going to experience a case of collateral damage or collateral pleasure?

DB: I like the expression. I'd rather it was collateral happiness, but there's no accounting for taste. In reality, though, it's both. I never knew I had a reputation for rigidity. To approach this architecture as a purist would, I think, be absurd, precisely because its rigour so obviously challenges a certain kind of purism. Is it just a game?  
[...]

SP: To simplify a bit, it recalls the general style of Baroque architecture.

DB: Except that it always apparently, much less chaotic. What Gehry manages to do is truly astonishing. It's quite the opposite of a certain architectural purism.

SP: You have the mastery, the total awareness, but paradoxically, it's precisely because of this that the unexpected, that miracles can happen. That goes for Gehry and for you. For any true artist.

DB: Miracles happen when the project is a success. If everything is rigorous enough, if it follows the logic from start to finish, then the person looking at the work is free. If there is the slightest accident, physically or mentally, in the construction, the slightest grain of sand in an engine that was running fantastically smoothly, everything can go wrong. The viewer can no longer be free; all they can think about are the causes of this accident. Everything, in a work of art, is connected, and the viewer or listener has to keep their freedom.



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- SP: With a minimalist economy you can create something that, at the end of the line, produces a maximal effect: you want to embrace the whole structure.
- DB: Yes, the whole structure. Also, you could imagine the same kind of work – as in fact I envisaged it: it which wouldn't have cost a penny more – in monochrome: completely red, or green, or yellow.
- SP: You mean that the precision of the gesture, and not the relative multiplicity of the colours, is all that matters. A vision, first, then a minimal gesture.
- DB: The building's flaws, what you could call its "classicism," would have been exacerbated. Even if you tried to justify the choice of this or that colour, you would only be redoubling what the building already is. The radical transformation chosen here is more powerful. You go from a monochrome calm to a polychrome explosion. In a way, it also brings its own chaos.
- SP: This characteristic mastery of yours has its limits, though: in the visitor's reactions, but also in the weather.
- DB: Of course. That's why I so much like working outside. So many elements are in play, which is part of what interests me. You are not in a suspended state, where you could say, right, let's forget the world and enter another place – which, after all, is the basic ideology of art. We are very much here and we remain here: the sun, the wind and the rain are all in attendance. [...]
- SP: And the light...  
[...] To change the subject, I was really impressed by your very recent intervention in Brussels<sup>1</sup>. A further question has just come to mind. From the critical, almost ideological approach you had at the outset, you have gone to an aesthetic engagement in which the decorative, in the Matissean sense of the word, is in the foreground. I remarked on that when you had your hanging at the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris in the Matisse room. How do you view that evolution, or hasn't there been one?
- DB: Inevitably, there are changes. Evolutions, perhaps. I have always said that, even if I could be extremely critical, I was never just critical. Critique arises from a situation that doesn't satisfy me. I'm not making a judgement
- SP: You were a real killer and you enjoyed it.
- DB: Because the situation, as I perceived it, was disastrous, either you refused to intervene or you overturned it. In a way, that's what I did. The analysis of a given situation is what underlies my propositions, which were generally rebelling against the codes that, in general, were still in force. I didn't replace them. The museum system, however, has changed. Many propositions, from as early as 1968–1970, which were perceived as exclusively critical, are now completely obsolete: quite simply, what I was critiquing back then has disappeared. We won't rehash all that. Some youngsters nowadays wonder how the system can have been different from the one they know. Today, the questions being asked by the art world are not the same as in the late 1960s. I and a few others overturned the system to such an extent that the situation in which artists now have to work is nothing like what it was up to the end of the 1970s. The museum has changed. I was attacking its omnipresence, its almost dictatorial omnipotence. That's finished, completely finished. No museum sets the tone any more. They are all completely chaotic, or contradictory. The Museum with a capital M no longer exists.

<sup>1</sup> «Daniel Buren – A Fresco»,  
BOZAR / Centre for Fine Arts,  
Brussels, exhibition from  
19 February to 22 May 2016.

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- SP: There was the canon, the famous canon established by MoMA, New York, which for many years was exclusive. What's more, people didn't go to museums much.
- DB: All that has changed. That power also had to do with dictating taste: what is valid, what is not, etc. That has all gone.
- SP: The question I was asking you was whether today you are fully aware, I would say, to have developed an aesthetic that accepts the decorative, which is something that for many years, for what in my view were superficial reasons, was despised.
- DB: The idea of the decorative in my work is almost as old as the work itself, just as it is for painting. Nobody saw it, yet the aesthetic has always been present, and therefore so has the decorative. I have always said that it was important, otherwise – and that's why I have so often attacked conceptual art – the worst kind of aesthetics can reappear.
- SP: We can see that now. Kosuth's white writing on a black ground – in the end, that's decorative.
- DB: Kosuth was the first person to claim to be the pope of conceptual art, although he may have been the most restrained of them all. All at the same time, everyone changed. Some of his colleagues and friends, and mine too. They were trying to prove that the idea is more important than the work. It's a position that I have always disagreed with. Kosuth said the same thing, while making works that, when you come down to it, were fairly classical. He fooled everyone because his work – especially at the beginning – was a kind of black-and-white Pop Art, as simple as that. He was playing it both ways. People have always done that, but where it goes wrong is when the work turns into its own form of academicism. The aestheticism that arises from it becomes uninteresting. In the field of the visual arts, I don't see how you can eliminate the aesthetic.
- SP: Exactly, what are your references or genealogies in this regard? You mention them in Brussels. I was touched by that story you told, at the opening. It determined your destiny. One day, at the age of seventeen, you decided to go and see Picasso, although it seemed impossible: you didn't know his address, you were penniless, you had no introductions. And yet, you managed to get him to see you. You were still a kid. He loved the passion: there's no missing a young man who's got the flame. The paradox, though, is that you should have been so eager to meet the studio artist par excellence, when you do not have a studio yourself – unless it's the world.
- DB: Of course, it's always complex. But you shouldn't confuse the young man I was in 1955, the man I became a few years later, and, even less, the man I am today. In Brussels I also chose to evoke a number of artists who never had the slightest artistic importance for me, but who helped me on my journey with their generous hospitality and their commentaries. An artist can be very average in what he does and yet have a great eye. He is capable of instantly spotting the best work out of fifty, even if they are very remote from his own art. His choices are sound, even if he's incapable of doing anything on a comparable level. That eye exists, and it helps. And then you meet someone like Picasso. That's a big help, especially at seventeen, just like talking to Masson or Chagall, who also agreed to see me at the time.
- SP: What view do you take of all that now? I mean, those meetings were incredible, weren't they?
- DB: It all seemed normal to me, and that's why I could do it. Especially as I didn't know anyone, or anything. I remember, before I went to Chagall's place in Vence, that I went

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into a bookshop to look at the postcards to get an idea of what he did. I knew his name, but I didn't even know what he painted.

SP: And Picasso?

DB: I didn't know him very well, but still, a bit better.

SP: Wasn't what interested you the fact that he had broken all the rules?

DB: Yes. In 1955, Picasso was the absolute star. Nobody could get near him. And yet not only did he welcome me, but I was able to see him at work for eight days on the shoot of *The Mystery of Picasso*<sup>2</sup> at the Victorine studios. That was unheard of because, I was told, he would refuse to have anyone in his studio. It was a dazzling sight because, with an artist of such dexterity, you see the work coming together. Spectators of the Clouzot film could all see that the following year. Two years later I went to Mexico. There I discovered the work of the Muralists: I was stunned. I was surrounded by artists who, at the time, challenged everything. Totally unknown in France, except maybe for a few paintings on canvas by Rivera were. In France, the great reference was still the School of Paris. To me, it was their work that was interesting.

<sup>2</sup> *Le Mystère Picasso* (1955)  
by Henri-Georges Clouzot

SP: For its lyrical power?

DB: I found it all amazing. Their ideas, which came out of the context – so different from Europe. There was a whole country to be alphabetised. Hence the illustrative work. The artists left their studios, criticised Western painting, which they saw as the worst incarnation of the bourgeoisie. Nobody had ever told me anything like that here. I continued to be torn between two forms of thought, both of them Western, but one in Europe and the United States, and the other the New World, in South America and, above all, Mexico. That realisation defined me in a number of areas. Getting out of the studio – even if I didn't do it at the time: I didn't even have one to leave – is something that came back later. I've talked about that many times. To come back to my journey to Provence, I went to see about a hundred artists at the time. All were professions; some have remained minor, others have become major figures.

SP: But how did you manage to get into their studios?

DB: When one door opens it opens another and, one thing leading to another, I really did manage to meet a lot of people. Can you believe it? I started out with the idea of doing a study on the influence of the Provencal landscape on painters from Cézanne to Picasso.

SP: So Cézanne meant something to you?

DB: Yes, of course, at the time... I didn't know him well, but it was Cézanne. That was when I discovered some of the artists who feature in my exhibition in Brussels: Camoin, Monticelli – artists not many people outside Provence know. Nobody refused to see me back then. Nobody criticised Picasso in those days, except for André Marchand, who was quite well known at the time, and called him a schemer. All the other artists were really respectful towards him. I didn't have many criteria to judge him by: good, not bad... To me, everything looked interesting, lively. In the two years that followed I went to see exhibitions by these artists in Paris. Every time, except for Picasso, I said to myself: "To think I found that good. The reality is that it's average, or even downright poor." I always used to wonder about what gets lost between the studio and the gallery. Something happens.

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SP: Do you think it's happening here?

DB: I'm certain of it. Only the Masters can go from the studio to the gallery of museum without losing too many feathers. If they're average, it's hopeless. I still believe that today.

SP: So it has something to do with the transition from the private to the public sphere?

DB: It's the transition from intimacy to nothing at all. That applies to the museum as well as to the gallery. All artworks belong in some degree to the realm of the personal. I also think that's one reason why everybody – historians, critics, readers, collectors, the media – relishes stories about artists. It's to recapture something of what gets lost between the studio and public space. A way of filling a void; what they can't find in the work.

SP: Today, when you look at the people who have been important, even if it's a laconic retrospective view, in relation to what you have become, to what you are...

DB: That's not really what happened. After that period I cleared the decks and all the artists disappeared, including Picasso and Masson. This sort of catharsis lasted seven or eight years, at least. Roughly between 1967 and 1975. It was a wild period. I didn't keep anyone around me. Gradually, though, artists found their way in, people I hadn't known well before, or who came back. The Giants. Let's say: Cézanne, Mondrian, Matisse, Newman, Malevich. Why, I really don't know. Most of them had disappeared from my concerns. There are important works by Matisse, who I generally hate, which brought all the others along with them. It took me time to separate what was beneficial and harmful. When done, you become more serene, calm.

SP: The 1920s, no doubt, up to the cut-outs. But the beginning and the end are dazzling.

DB: Yes, exactly. As for Picasso, with time, as things became clear, he has come back into favour and stands as one of the major innovators of the twentieth century – over the duration, much more than Matisse. Picasso's sculpture is constantly inventive. He's the equal of Brancusi, which is saying something. In a single sculpture he did everything Duchamp never managed to do. It's staggering. And all that without being pretentious. I'm thinking of his bull's head with the handlebar and bicycle saddle. My "radicalism" has changed a great deal over the years, which is what I was trying to show in Brussels. It's not all about the work's formal quality, but rather it's the points where it connects with or triggers the work when you're a beginner and you don't know exactly what you can do or want to do.

SP: Did you have contacts at the time, or later, with the American scene? That's another scale.

DB: I met the artists when I was quite young. Five years after I saw Picasso, in 1960, I spent a year working at Sainte-Croix in the Virgin Islands, where I made frequent trips to New York. I saw what was going on there at the time. In 1964 I met Judd and Flavin. I thought they were great and even went to visit Judd in his studio. Then, between 1965 and 1970, we formed that very solid team with Mosset, Parmentier and Toroni. I had always been in touch with the New American art, which meant that I met the people who would become the gurus of the New York scene. In 1971, when they threw me out of the Guggenheim, they were the supreme masters. [...]

SP: It's unbelievable, just to see how much you have done and the sheer inventiveness you have mustered with the same elementary vocabulary. There's this almost organic fluency in the relation to place.

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- DB: Discovering the place is the key thing, the starting point. You have to have the temperament to adapt to it, to criticise and do what you want. I would say that logically any new situation is bound to produce a new proposition.
- SP: What strikes me is the way the solution seems to come in a flash. You think to yourself, "Yes, of course!" It's so apt, it's staggering! That may not be how it actually came about, but there's that seeming ease...
- DB: I do often go very fast, precisely because it's new and the unexpected possibilities just hit you. It's like filling an open, empty book. And so, something about the place allows you to invent.
- SP: For me, your projects are becoming increasingly specific, which means there's no way they can be transposed. The singularity of the place creates the singularity of your intervention.
- DB: If a proposition works, I think, it's bound to be original. The basis of my work is not the material but the possibilities it offers. In this room, for example, there are two walls and there are windows. In 1965–66 putting the canvas on a window would have seemed utterly absurd. Remember that for exhibition I have always chosen places nobody else wanted. This often worked out pretty well and the other artists used to complain, "Why didn't I get the ceiling, like Buren?" But nobody had thought of doing anything with the ceiling. It was another way of working. How many interventions have I done in corridors, I wonder? You know as I do that if you offer artists rooms and more rooms, and then a corridor, they will all choose a room and neglect the corridor. But these places of transit interest me and are often entrusted to me, which allows me to make works that can sometimes be quite interesting. For years, that gave me an incredible freedom. Today, art has become extraordinarily diverse and artists have understood that they can express themselves anywhere, and that a transparent window can be just as interesting as a nice straight picture wall between two doors.
- SP: Ultimately, then, you feel increasingly free? Again, I'm stunned at the speed with which you analyse a place. Like a fish in water, you immediately find the gesture, the intervention. [...] It's hard to imagine you repeating yourself.
- DB: I can't see myself being offered another space as extraordinary as this one any time soon. If I were offered a similar place, in fact, I would stop. Here it's so particular that it's a joy to carry out this transformation of the architecture by means of the positioning of colour.
- SP: The situation here suits you, for sure.
- DB: Exactly, the place provides the occasion. Glass walls and colours are thing I've done often in the past, and the book/catalogue gives a few examples of that, but here, with the same elements, we're going to create something that has never been seen before. You could say that it's the place that makes the thief!

## "The Observatory of Light" in a nutshell

### Principle

Daniel Buren chose to cover *one of every two glass panes* of the Fondation with dyed filters.

He used *13 different colours* in the project:

Blue, golden yellow, pink, dark red, turquoise, green, orange, red orange, dark green, salmon pink, bright red, azure blue and blue green.

*One in six panes* is covered with 8.7cm wide white strips.

These strips lie perpendicular to the ground.

### Key Figures

The roof of the Fondation Louis Vuitton is composed of *ten sails*, formed of *3 528 panes of glass*. *1 472* are covered with dyed filters, and *287* are covered with white strips. *4 884 ORACAL 8300* coloured filters have been installed and *6.5km* of ORACAL 631 strips.

The filters were hung over *29 nights during five weeks*.

Between 8 and 16 operators were on site every night in order to hang the filters.

### Logistics

In order to hang the strips, each operator was provided with a water vaporiser and soap in order to wet the filters, a felt covered squeegee to smooth down the film, and a cutter to cut each filter to the dimensions of the glass panes.

*Four 40m cherrypickers and one 90m cherrypicker* were used to reach each sail of the Fondation's roof, in order to hang the filters.

## Around the intervention

**The catalogue** — On the occasion of Daniel Buren's intervention at the Fondation Louis Vuitton, a namesake catalogue, edited with the artist, gathers for the first time a very important body of work around the themes Buren searched on since the 1970s, including colour, transparency, light, translucidity and projection. A conversation between the artist and Suzanne Pagé, the artistic director of the foundation, illustrates this visual path and provides in-depth insights on the multiple aspects of this encounter with Frank Gehry's architecture, while offering an overview of Buren's body of work and his sources of inspiration.



Daniel Buren « *L'Observatoire de la lumière* »,  
Coédition Fondation Louis Vuitton /  
Editions Xavier Barral, Paris, 2016  
456 pages  
45 € TTC

### Beaux-Arts Hors-Série



Daniel Buren « *L'Observatoire de la lumière* »,  
publié à l'occasion de l'intervention  
à la Fondation Louis Vuitton  
Coédition Fondation Louis Vuitton /  
Beaux-Arts Éditions  
64 pages  
12 € TTC

**Children's workshops** — Children aged 6 – 10 will be able to enjoy the artist's work thanks to "The light trap", a workshop that will enable them to experience the multiple coloured facets of the Fondation Louis Vuitton, which will become a giant kaleidoscope. Tracking the projections and reflections during their discovery process, they will then have a chance to experiment in the workshop with how the play of transparency, opacity and colour modifies one's perception of space.

Starting 28 May 2016. Every Saturday and Sunday, from 2.30 – 5 pm  
Duration: 2½ hours.  
Ticket prices: Adult 18 €/14 € - Child: 9 €

## II — BurenCirque, « 3 times another Hut »

In parallel with this event, BurenCircus will be setting up camp across from the Fondation, for three exceptional and original performances of a new show, "3 times another Hut", on 2, 3 and 4 June 2016. Devised in the early 2000s by Daniel Buren together with Dan and Fabien Demuynck, pioneers of contemporary circus, BurenCircus is a multidisciplinary project in which new talents, national and international, are invited to interact with features created by Daniel Buren. In 2013, Buren designed a new structure with three huts inspired by fairground architecture. Bright by day, they become translucent and mysterious lanterns at night.



BurenCirque Cabanons © Philippe Cibille

### BurenCirque, « 3 times another hut »

2, 3 and 4 June 2016 at the Fondation Louis Vuitton

9 pm

Duration: 1:15 Min

25 € / 15 €

The BurenCirque ticket gives also access to the galleries and the terrasses of the foundation.

Tickets on [www.fondationlouisvuitton.fr](http://www.fondationlouisvuitton.fr)



## BurenCirque

Abstract from the Beaux-Arts Hors-Série,  
*Daniel Buren « L'Observatoire de la lumière »*, 2016,  
published on the occasion of the intervention at the Fondation Louis Vuitton

It was probably no coincidence that Daniel Buren crossed paths with Dan and Fabien Demuynck, two pioneers of contemporary circus. As a child, the circus held a fascination for him that in his teenage years led to a keen interest in the artists who have explored this world through painting (Pablo Picasso, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, Fernand Léger, Georges Rouault and so on) – without him ever thinking that one day he might engage with the subject in his own work.

An initial invitation made to Daniel Buren by the Foraine company in the late 1990s marked the starting point of a fruitful and ongoing collaboration with the two circus artists, giving rise to the creation of BurenCirque at the turn of the 2000s. Combining circus arts, music, singing and visual arts, in a dialogue between Western and African culture, this multidisciplinary project brings together talents from different backgrounds and disciplines in experimental productions, designed on the basis of constant exchange at all levels between its three founders.

Outside, Daniel Buren installs monumental structures of various sizes, redesigning them from one production to the next to redefine the contours of the traditional circus acts being performed within. Inside, tightrope walkers, acrobats, musicians, singers, jugglers and animal trainers interact with the specially created installations. Whether solicited to rethink the traditional space of the circus or to create the sets of an opera, a ballet or any other type of show, a familiar exercise for him, Daniel Buren approaches the project, as he does in the majority of his work, "in situ, in vivo, in vitro and de visu".

The "Buren method" is therefore operating here in keeping with its inherent principles (response to an invitation, travel, a work process related to space, architecture and context) and its formal language – here and there we find 8.7 cm-wide white bands, touches of colour, mirrors or pennants.

2013 marks a new stage in this collaboration with the creation of a dedicated structure presented in the form of three circus tents or cabanons designed by Daniel Buren. Inspired both by fairground architecture, a genre he renews here, and his famous exploded cabins (cabanons éclatés), each tent frames a circular ring 9 meters in diameter and is made up of two pieces – a square with 11 metre sides topped by a cone whose base is equal and parallel to the circumference of the ring and precisely centred over it. The whole thing is suspended from two external arches on which the "visual tool" appears, black and white here. According to the artist, the cabanons should ideally fall in the category of "situated works/*in situ*". Indeed, starting from a structure that is unchanged in form, each new project generates an adaptation that is defined *in situ*, as the definition goes, that is, in relation to the architecture and the social, economic and cultural context of the host venue. Standing out brightly in the daytime, at night they appear like lanterns displaying their chromatics with a pulsating translucency. In these intimate and coloured spaces, the spectator is drawn into an intense sensory experience that renews the relationship to space by favouring listening and vision according to two original configurations: either the spectators remain in place and the artists move from one cabanon to another, or they wander from one to the other to watch the performances.

### III — Photos

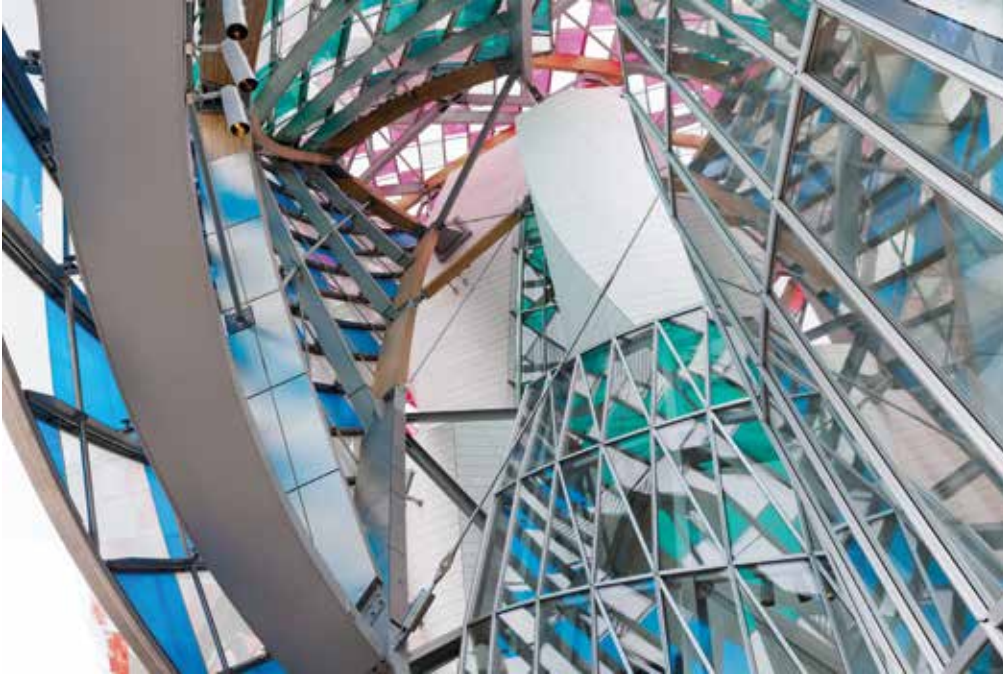


Photo-souvenir: Daniel Buren, «L'Observatoire de la lumière»,  
work *in situ*, Fondation Louis Vuitton, Paris, 2016. Detail.  
© DB-ADAGP Paris / Iwan Baan / Fondation Louis Vuitton



Photo-souvenir: Daniel Buren, «L'Observatoire de la lumière»,  
work *in situ*, Fondation Louis Vuitton, Paris, 2016. Detail.  
© DB-ADAGP Paris / Iwan Baan / Fondation Louis Vuitton

PRESS KIT  
Daniel Buren, "The Observatory of Light"



Photo-souvenir: Daniel Buren, «L'Observatoire de la lumière»,  
work *in situ*, Fondation Louis Vuitton, Paris, 2016. Detail.  
© DB-ADAGP Paris / Iwan Baan / Fondation Louis Vuitton



Photo-souvenir: Daniel Buren, «L'Observatoire de la lumière»,  
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Photo-souvenir: Daniel Buren, «L'Observatoire de la lumière»,  
work *in situ*, Fondation Louis Vuitton, Paris, 2016. Detail.  
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## IV. — Practical information

### Around the intervention

**BurenCircus**  
« 3 times another Hut »  
2-3-4 June 2016 at 9pm.  
Duration: 1¼ hours  
Rates: 25 and 15 €

**Children's workshops**  
« L'attrape-lumière »  
From 28 May to 28 August. Every Saturday and Sunday, from 2.30 – 5 pm.  
Duration: 2½ hours  
Children rate: 9 €  
Adult rate: 18 € and 14 €

**The Foundation app**  
A new itinerary with interviews and unseen videos. Available free on Appstore and Googleplay.

### To book tickets

Visit the website  
**[fondationlouisvuitton.fr](http://fondationlouisvuitton.fr)**

### Press contacts

Isabella Capece Galeota,  
Directeur de la  
Communication de  
la Fondation Louis Vuitton  
*[i.capecegaleota@fondationlouisvuitton.fr](mailto:i.capecegaleota@fondationlouisvuitton.fr)*

### Opening hours

Outside school  
holidays period  
Mondays, Wednesdays and  
Thursdays from 12pm to 7pm  
Friday late-night opening until 11pm  
Saturday and Sunday from  
11am to 8pm  
Closed on Tuesdays

School holidays period  
from 18 April to 3 May,  
8, 14 15 and 25 May  
Everyday from 10am to 8pm  
Friday late-night opening until 11pm  
Closed on 1 May

### Ticket Prices

Full rate 14 euros.  
Reduced rate 10 et 5 euros  
Family rate 32 euros  
(2 adults + 1 to 4 children  
under 18)

*The entrance ticket to the  
Fondation includes access to  
the Jardin d'acclimatation.*

### Access

Address:  
8, avenue du Mahatma Gandhi  
Bois de Boulogne,  
75116 Paris

Metro:  
Line 1, Station Les Sablons,  
Exit Fondation Louis  
Vuitton.

Fondation bus: departures  
every 15 minutes from Place  
Charles de Gaulle, at the end  
of avenue de Friedland.  
Station Vélizy, Fondation  
Louis Vuitton stop  
Bus 244, stops in front of the  
Fondation at weekends.

### Information visiteurs

+ 33 (0)1 40 69 96 00

PRESS KIT  
Daniel Buren, "The Observatory of Light"

FONDATION LOUIS VUITTON

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Bernard Arnault, *President of the Fondation Louis Vuitton*  
Jean-Paul Claverie, *Advisor to the President*  
Suzanne Pagé, *Artistic Director*  
Sophie Durrleman, *Executive Director*