

DANIEL

BUREN

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Daniel Buren (b.1938) is a French conceptual artist. Born in Boulogne-Billancourt, within the western suburbs of Paris, he began painting after graduating from the capital's *École nationale supérieure des arts appliqués et des métiers* in 1960. Buren has since emerged as one of the most influential figures in contemporary art.

Buren spent a year at the Grapetree Bay Hotel on the Caribbean island of Saint Croix, contracted to paint traditional, mosaic-like frescos. His work here was later damaged in 1989 as a result of the Atlantic hurricane Hugo.

By 1965, the artist had abandoned traditional painting for a technique that would become his signature style; regular, contrasting coloured stripes. Describing the 8.7cm wide stripes as a 'visual tool', Buren uses them as a prompt to read the work's surroundings, rather than the work itself.

*"...the visual tool is no longer a work to be seen, or to be beheld, but is the element that permits you to see or behold something else."*¹

Made with paint, fabric, paper and tape, aluminum, wallpaper and fibre optics, the stripes appear in his site-specific interventions in galleries, museums and public places.

His works explore **colour, pattern, light, site-specificity, architecture** and **space**.



ABOUT THE WORK

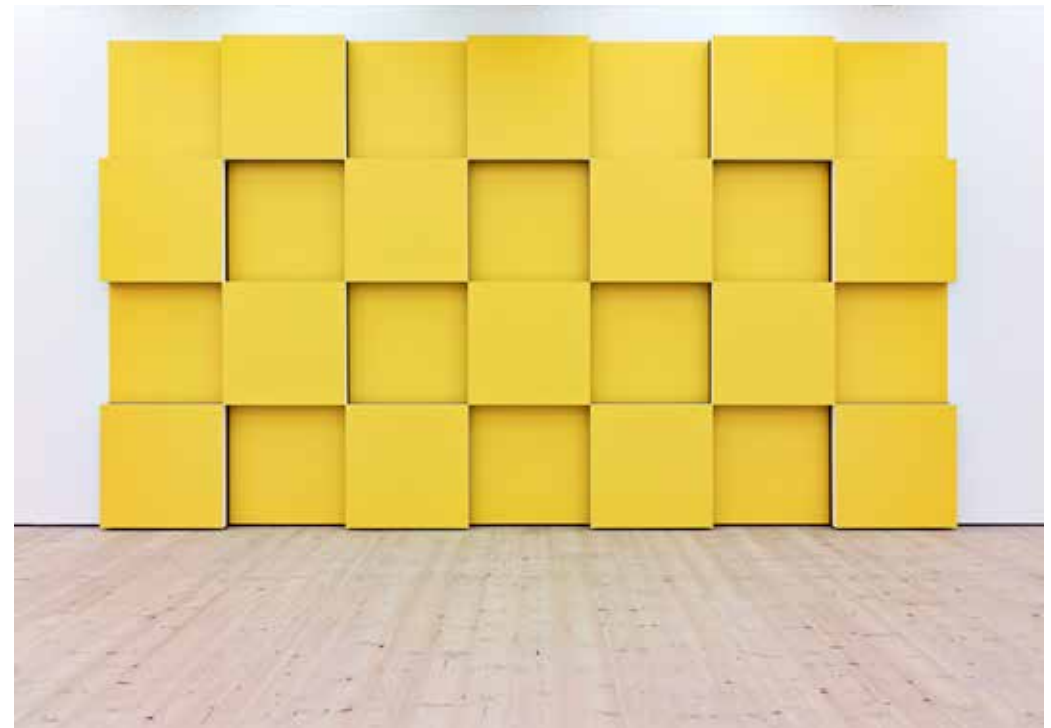
Although Buren's work is now in great demand across the world, it was once considered to be controversial.

Buren courted criticism in 1971 when, invited by the Guggenheim Museum, New York, he conceived a large-scale piece called *Peinture-Sculpture* focusing on the museum's Frank Lloyd Wright architecture and its orientation around an open spiral ramp. Buren proposed a 20x10 metre canvas banner, striped in blue and white, to bisect the gallery's open central area, from top to bottom.

Other artists, including Dan Flavin and Donald Judd, protested that the banner blocked views across the rotunda, compromising their works. Buren, in turn, said Flavin's fluorescent lights coloured his banner. The night before the opening, the banner was removed.

For almost 4 decades, Buren has chosen to make works in-situ. Some, like *Peinture-Sculpture*, are designed for interior sites, others for exteriors. Many combine elements of both.

*"...for the most part {my work is} inspired by a particular location... reinstalled in different sites following a series of rules, changing each time in response to the given place. In turn, the site is changed by the work."*²



ABOUT THE WORK

At BALTIC, Buren has transformed the building into a spectacular artwork. Covering the windows of the main façade with transparent, coloured vinyl, the artist has saturated the building's interior with swathes of coloured light which pour into its spaces and passageways.

Titled *20 Diamonds for the Façade: work in situ 2014*, this new commission stretches over 30 metres high; the full length of BALTIC's glazed frontage. BALTIC has become a direct support for, and part, of Buren's art. Coloured reflections on the floor and ceiling integrate the building and its floors into the work.

Likewise, the view of the River Tyne and the Newcastle/Gateshead Quayside, seen now through red, green, blue and yellow filters, become part of the visual experience. Changing throughout the day, each visitor encounter is different and dependant on the time of day and the intensity of light flooding through the glass.

Buren is only the second artist to incorporate BALTIC's west façade into an artwork. In 2006, street artist Invader, installed a grid-like space invader onto BALTIC's Level 5 windows, as part of the gallery's exploration of international urban art.



THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

Buren's 20 Diamonds, like Mark Wallinger's *Heaven and Hell* 2012 mirror installation in BALTIC's public stairwell, provides an instant engagement with a contemporary artwork without entering a gallery space.

- Consider how you interact with this artwork as you move towards, around and through BALTIC.
- How does it change the space within the gallery? How does it change the space outside it?
- Look at this artwork from different perspectives:
 - across from BALTIC Square
 - up from the Ground Floor
 - out as you travel in BALTIC's lifts
 - down from Levels 2, 3 and 4
 - through in Level 5's Viewing Box

How does experiencing this artwork differ from interacting with those in the gallery spaces? How is it the same?

The diamond is a powerful symbol that alchemists have associated with refracting light. Practiced primarily between the 5th and 17th Centuries, alchemists looked to transform ordinary metals into gold and find an elixir of life. In ancient alphabet, the diamond is also the geometric symbol for creation.

- Explore associations and references relating to the diamond in history, popular culture, language and science.
- Imagine the installation with a different shape. What's the impact?



IN MY OPINION

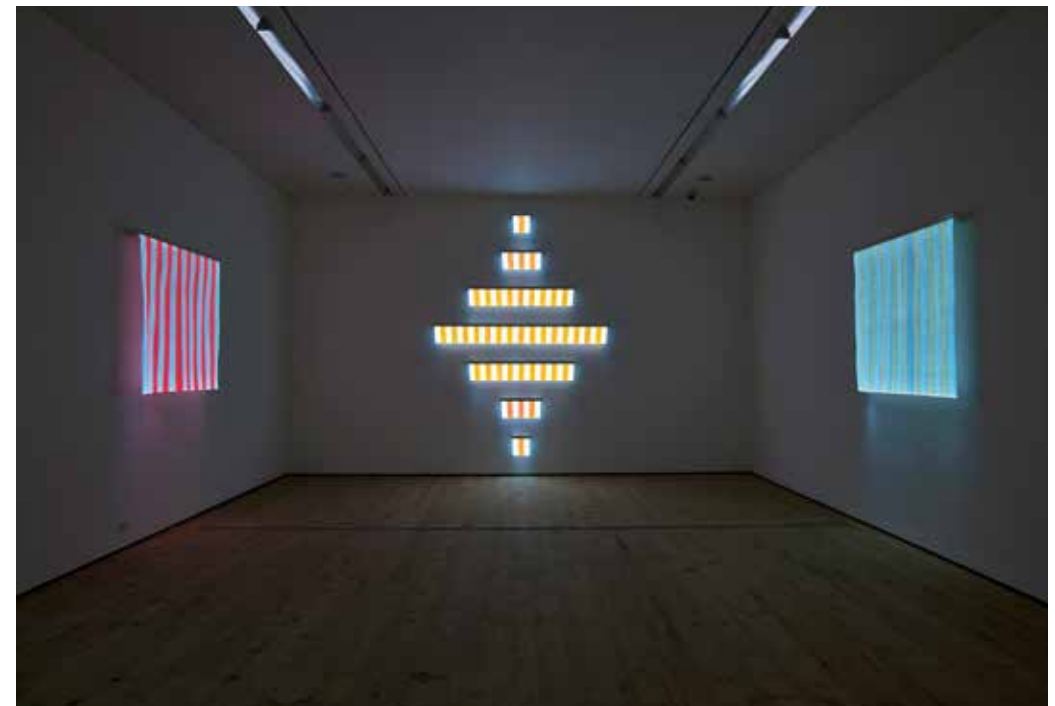
Buren's series of luminous works from 2011 in BALTIC's Level 3 gallery, results from a collaboration with French textile company *Brochier Soieries* and uses their innovative fibre optic technology to create alternating white and coloured, luminescent textiles.

Appearing as plain white fabric until they are lit, the pieces are woven with optical fibres. These thin plastic fibres carry light from one end to another and, unlike a traditional light bulb where light is radiated outwards, do not allow light to leak out as it travels. As a result, the artworks glow brightest at their edges.

Buren's 'visual tool', the alternating white and coloured stripe exactly 8.7cm wide, is derived from a fabric the artist used as canvas in 1965. Since then, this stripe has been used in his work as a standard measure of sizing and proportion. It serves as a constant; crossing exhibitions, locations and commissions.

The stripe in general can be both utilitarian and decorative.

- Make a list of instances where stripes are used. Think about fashion, business, branding, safety, law enforcement and patriotism. Review your list and share it with a friend.
- How does the associated meaning of stripes change depending on where they are located? How can the same motif have so many different meanings?
- Collect or document as many patterns as you can find whilst on your travels. Think about natural and human-made patterns. Remember to use all of your senses. Record each pattern using a method of documentation; photography, film, sound recording, drawing, rubbing or written description. Afterwards,



reflect on your favourite. What do you like about it? Why do you favour it over the others?

- Create your own 'visual tool'. Think about the rules, restrictions and opportunities that surround it. Create a set of guidelines to communicate this to others.

IN MY OPINION

Buren explores ideas of depth and architectural surface in the Zigzag for Two Colours *Haut-relief* series 2007. Spend time looking at these works.

- How does Buren use colour, shape, line and 3-dimensions in this series?
- How do his choices affect how you, as a viewer, interact with the work?
- Recreate this series by folding coloured card. Think about alternating the colours and how this changes your work. Consider how you might exhibit your own series; reflect on the placement, installation, suspension, whether folded or un-folded, set the parameters.

In the series Rising Cubes *Bas-relief* 2007-2014, square panels made of paint, fibreboard and tape are tilted and angled to create deceptive 'checker-board' pieces that continue to explore similar concerns.

Buren chooses to distinguish between these pieces by referencing their colours in each title; *yellow, blue, green and white* and *paprika*.

- How do these 4 titles interact with each other? Are they of equal value and/or consideration?
- How emotive do you think they are? What images do they conjure in your mind?

Made from grinding dried, sweet red bell peppers, paprika is used to add a dark red-orange colour and pungent flavour to a variety of dishes. Paprika powder can also be used with henna, a natural hair dye made from the powdered leaves of a tropical shrub, to add a reddish tint on application and was used as a natural pigment to create paint. Painting and decorating brand, Dulux, even have a colour scheme titled *hot paprika*.

- Explore the idea of natural paints by finding as many things as possible to use as pigment. Add water where necessary. Document your experience through coloured stains.



THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

Commissioned especially for BALTIC, *Catch as catch can: work in situ* 2014, responds and reacts to the architecture of BALTIC's Level 4 gallery space.

9 large, titled easel-like mirrors reflect and refract light from the coloured windows above temporarily bathing the gallery's walls, floors and visitors in colour.

Buren's mirrors 'catch' the light.

Explore Level 4's *Catch as catch can: work in situ*.

Think about how you move around this space.

Consider where to place yourself.

Reconsider your position. Move. What does this change?

Try to visit Level 4 at different times of the day.

Do you see a difference?

Imagine how the space might look at sunrise; and at sunset.

How do the changing light conditions affect your experience of the work?

Find your favourite spot.

Draw the movement of other visitors; track their paths

Fold your arms in front of a mirror. Consider your body language

Stop and look around, up, down, behind, and through. Enjoy the reflection.

Make a selfie #burenbaltic

Start to think about fleeting moments. How can you capture them?

- Become an observer of time. Devise a method, or multiple methods, for documenting the passage of time. Think about short-term and longer term strategies. Think about methods that are visual and those that aren't.
- Study the changes in your results. How do these changes make you feel?
- Do you think of yourself as somebody who enjoys change or somebody who prefers things to stay the same?

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

The mirrors in Level 4's *Catch as catch can: work in situ* are 2001 millimetres square which, in common with all of Buren's works, is a number divisible by the 8.7 centimetre width of his stripes.

Installed on frames, the mirrors tilt to allow the artist to manipulate the reflection of their surroundings. They also allow visitors to interact with the space, see alternate views of the artwork, admire themselves and other people and provide a scene that is different for each visitor.

*"I don't believe in the existence of work that has no audience. Only once it is viewed can a work be said to exist."*⁴

Like *Catch as catch can: work in situ*, much of Buren's work is ephemeral; created to be experienced for a limited amount of time. By producing ephemeral experiences, Buren challenges the expectation that in order to be important, a work of art must endure.

- Do you think that art needs to be lasting to be important?
- How important can transitory work be?

Because many of Buren's works are temporary, he documents them with photographs. The artist acknowledges that looking at a photograph is not the same as experiencing; he calls these captures 'photo-souvenirs'.

- How does this attitude compare with yours? How is looking at the photograph of an experience different to actually experiencing it? How is it the same?
- Think about how you capture experiences.
- Do you take photographs and if so what do you do with them?



- Who do you share your photographs with?
- How does your experience of an event change when you look at it through a photograph?
- How about when the photograph is then seen by someone who has no experience of what it shows? What might they see and feel? What might they miss?

HERE'S ONE I MADE EARLIER

*"Colour is not transmissible through text. . . .
Colour is absolutely, fundamentally inexpressible"*⁵

- Record the colours that Buren uses in his work.
- Describe each colour; give it an association; a simile; a metaphor; what does it remind you of?
- Contradict the artist; transmit your ideas through text.
- Colours are often associated with feelings. Give your own colours to the following feelings:
 - hopeful
 - worried
 - confident
 - jealous
 - indifferent
 - excited
 - happy
 - safe
 - misunderstood
- Create an artwork that expresses how you feel. Use your code to record your feelings hourly throughout the day. Add new feelings and code them with a colour as you go along. Remember to make colours lighter or darker if you start to run out. Think about extending this to visually colour-code your feelings over a week; a month; even a year?

Many of Buren's *in situ* works employ an abundance of colour in both opaque and translucent forms.

Transparent, translucent and *opaque* are terms used to describe a material's ability to conduct light.

Transparent materials conduct light and images clearly and without noticeable distortion.

Translucent materials allow light to pass through but diffuse it so that objects on the other side cannot be clearly distinguished.

Opaque materials do not let light pass through.

- Find examples of materials with each property and describe how their degree of transparency, translucency, or opacity determines how they are best used.
- Just as paints will mix together to form new colours, light will mix layers of translucent colour to create new effects. Using a light source; a window, electric light, torch or projector for example, experiment with creating new shades by shining a light through two or more layers of translucent material.
- Collect a set of objects based on how they respond to light. Think about their different qualities; are they reflective, refracting, translucent, shiny, mottled etc.
- Think about how you document your collection; you could use notebooks, sketches, descriptive logs, a camera or a video recorder. How might you display this collection for an audience?

HERE'S ONE I MADE EARLIER

A Daniel Buren artwork is site-specific.

Like any art intervention, his work interacts with a previously existing artwork, audience, venue, space or situation.

Embark on your own series of interventions.

- Consider a space, a place or an environment
 - alter it somehow
 - inhabit it
 - rearrange something
 - put something in it
 - fill it
 - take something out
 - empty it
 - leave something behind
- Create badges; wear them and distribute them.
- Make peel-able stickers and mark where you've been.
- Leave magnets behind on magnetic surfaces.
- Produce posters of your own 'visual tool' and adorn lacklustre poster sites.
- Walk through a puddle and leave behind wet footprints on the pavement.

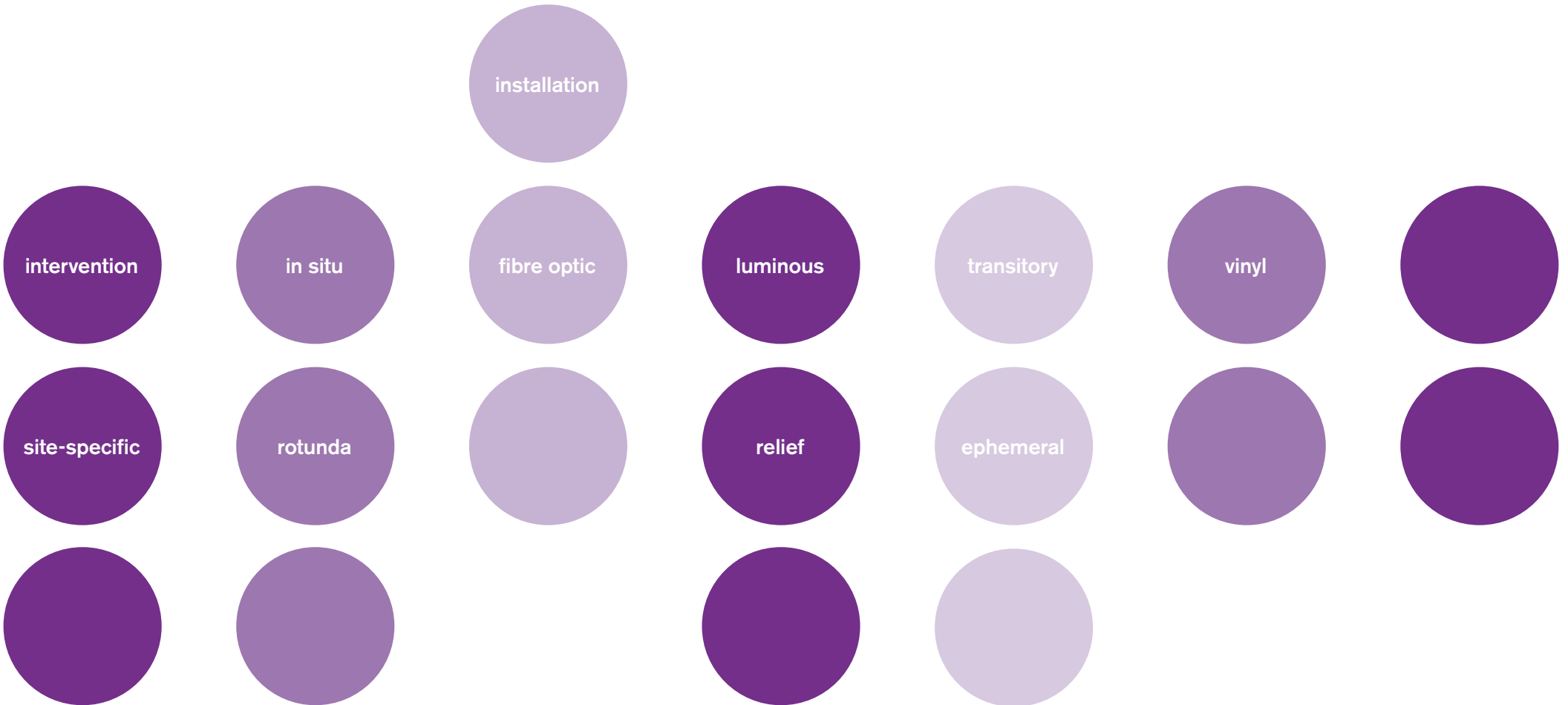
- Project silhouettes onto paths and walls using card templates and a torch.
- Leave positive post-it notes for others to find.
- Leave words of encouragement next to the crossword puzzle in the free paper and pass it on to someone else.
- Smile at a someone.



FURTHER RESEARCH

OP ART / BMPT GROUP / MARCEL
DUCHAMP / OLAFUR ELIASSON /
DAN FLAVIN / LIAM GILLICK /
DONALD JUDD / STEPHEN PRINA /
JAMES TURRELL / LAWRENCE WEINER

LITERACY KEY WORDS



NOTES FOR TEACHERS

Contemporary art is incredibly diverse and wide ranging and can be used to support teaching and learning as part of an entire learning experience.

Contemporary art challenges, exposes and explores cultural and social issues and identities, investigating their meaning through a wide range of practices. BALTIC's programme aims to build pupils' confidence and encourage aspirations, develop their visual language and creative thinking as well as furthering their artistic skills, encouraging students to offer opinions and take risks in response to such visual, cultural and creative stimuli, safe in the knowledge that art has no 'wrong answer'. Contemporary art can be used to generate creative thinking in all subject areas, supporting and offering transferable learning across the curriculum.

BALTIC offers a variety of workshops, talks, artist sessions and research opportunities for primary, secondary and post-16 students. Many are free!

To book a session, arrange a visit or chat about an opportunity, please contact our Schools and Colleges Programmer, Vicki Sturrs on 0191 440 4929 or vickys@balticmill.com

DANIEL BUREN GALLERY WORKSHOP

SUITABLE FOR EYFS, KS1&2 AND SEND, FREE

Working in the gallery space, pupils will respond directly to Daniel Buren's work through a combination of questioning, word-matching, drawing and making. Working individually, in pairs and as a group, pupils will discuss and debate the key themes in Buren's colourful, luminescent and site specific work and respond practically.

This session is tailored to the needs of your group, making it age appropriate, for EYFS up to the top of Key Stage 2. It lasts 1 hour and is suitable for up to 35 pupils.

INTRODUCTION TO... DANIEL BUREN

SUITABLE FOR KS3, 4, POST-16 AND SEND GROUPS, FREE

This half an hour session includes an introduction to key works and themes in Daniel Buren's Level 3 and 4 exhibition. His site specific practice explores colour theory, audience interaction, signature precision and architectural concerns offering an opportunity for discussion and debate. Students will respond to key artworks, offering thoughts and opinions, asking and answering questions and making judgments designed to stimulate thoughtful reflection.

This session is tailored to the needs of your group, making it age appropriate, and lasts 30 minutes. Introduction to... tours are suitable for a maximum of 30 pupils.

ARTIST STUDIO SESSION

SUITABLE FOR EYFS, KS1,2,3&4, POST-16 AND SEND, £100 HALF DAY, £200 FULL DAY + VAT

Practical art workshops delivered by one of BALTIC's experienced artist facilitators develop your pupils' creative inspiration, influences, skills and techniques. Artist Studio Sessions give your pupils the opportunity to get initial inspiration for projects, develop new artistic practices, work closely with a practicing artist and take creative risks.

Use the exhibitions as a focus, come with a ready-designed project, or leave it to BALTIC to create a bespoke session from your ideas and desired outcomes.

BALTIC's artist team have diverse interests and workshop skills can include sculpture, printing, textiles, installation, photography, drawing, animation and sound work to name only a few.

Artist Studio Session's can take place at BALTIC or at your school and include all materials.

USEFUL LINKS AND ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

BALTIC

balticmill.com

BALTIC Multimedia Database

archive.balticmill.com

BALTIC Primary School Resources Bank

balticmill.com/primaryresources

BALTIC Secondary School Resources Bank

balticmill.com/secondaryresources

Daniel Buren website

danielburen.com/map?type=exhibits_current

REFERENCES

1. lissongallery.com/exhibitions/daniel-buren-one-thing-to-another-situated-works
2. BALTIC exhibition guide Daniel Buren Catch as catch can: works *in situ* 11 July – 12 October 2014, July 2014
3. Bernard Blistène, 'On the Power and Authority of Painting in the Work of Daniel Buren: 1964–1966: Reflections on a Brief Period of Time,' in *The Eye of the Storm: Works in situ* by Daniel Buren, exh. cat. [New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, 2005], section 2).
4. artcritical.com/2005/04/01/daniel-buren-the-eye-of-the-storm/#sthash.03Qha6cT.dpuf {accessed 12/08/2014}
5. Bernard Blistène, 'On the Power and Authority of Painting in the Work of Daniel Buren: 1964–1966: Reflections on a Brief Period of Time,' in *The Eye of the Storm: Works in situ* by Daniel Buren, exh. cat. [New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, 2005], section 2).

IMAGE CREDITS

Page 1

Image courtesy NCJ Media

Page 2

Photo-souvenir: Daniel Buren

14 Rising Cubes *Bas-relief* (yellow): situated work 2007-2014

paint, plywood and black tape

BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art

Photo: John McKenzie. © DB-ADAGP Paris

Page 3

Photo-souvenir: Daniel Buren

20 Diamonds for the Façade: work *in situ* 2014

BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art

Transparent vinyl, white opaque (blue, green, red, yellow)

Photo: John McKenzie. © DB-ADAGP Paris

Page 4

Photo-souvenir: Daniel Buren

Catch as catch can: work *in situ* 2014

BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art

10 mirrors framed with white opaque vinyl, transparent vinyl (7 colours) on skylights

Photo: John McKenzie. © DB-ADAGP Paris

Page 5

Photo-souvenir: Daniel Buren

7 Lines of Electric Light for a Diamond: situated work 2011 woven fibre optic, LED (white, orange), metal boxes

/ A Square of Electric Light # 1 situated work 2011

woven fibre optic, LED (white, blue), metal box / A

Square of Electric Light # 4 situated work 2011 woven

fibre optic, LED (white, red), metal box

BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art

Photo: John McKenzie. © DB-ADAGP Paris

Page 6

Photo-souvenir: Daniel Buren

Zigzag for 2 Colours *Haut-relief* (paprika and violet):

situated work, Zigzag for 2 Colours *Haut-relief* (blue and green): situated work, Zigzag for 2 Colours *Haut-relief*

(green and pink): situated work, Zigzag for 2 Colours

Haut-relief (orange and yellow): situated work 2007

paint, fibreboard and tape

BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art

Photo: John McKenzie. © DB-ADAGP Paris

Page 7

Photo-souvenir: Daniel Buren

Catch as catch can: work *in situ* 2014

BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art

10 mirrors framed with white opaque vinyl, transparent vinyl (7 colours) on skylights

Photo: John McKenzie. © DB-ADAGP Paris

Page 8

Photo-souvenir: Daniel Buren

Catch as catch can: work *in situ* 2014

BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art

10 mirrors framed with white opaque vinyl, transparent vinyl (7 colours) on skylights

Photo: John McKenzie. © DB-ADAGP Paris

Page 10

Photo-souvenir: Daniel Buren

Excentrique(s), travail *in situ*, Monumenta 2012, Grand Palais, Paris, mai-juin 2012. Détail.

© DB-ADAGP Paris