

DANIEL
BUREN
C'ÉTAIT,
C'EST,
CE SÉRA
Situated works *in situ*

6 november 2007 - 19 january 2008

For the inaugural exhibition at galerie kamel mennour's new premises, Daniel Buren demonstrates yet again his incredible talent for inventing new pathways for his art – a talent he has been displaying for over forty years now. Although used to creating projects for new places, this is the first time he has found himself building something for a space which is itself still under construction. Hence his conception has had to come from examining the plans and, above all, from his foresight, informed by experience: "the space of a particular place indicates certain paths for me to follow, certain visions. Here, I had the feeling that what could exist afterwards in a different place would always remain partly attached to this place. It is, it will be."¹

When one thinks of Daniel Buren's work, one is struck, above all, by the inseparability/interdependence between the work and the space. Instantly recognisable due to his use of vertical stripes, whose width is always 8.7cm, Daniel Buren had already made a name for himself by the end of 1967, having created the notion of a work *in situ*: "a work that takes into consideration the place in which it is being shown/exposed, which cannot be transported elsewhere, and which must disappear at the end of the exhibition"². Intrinsicly linked to the space, the work has no capacity for mobility and cannot, therefore, spread outside the place that gave birth to it: for example, *Les Deux Plateaux* in the courtyard of the *Palais Royal* in Paris (1986).

In 1975, following his solo exhibition at the Mönchengladbach museum, Daniel Buren was faced with a problem that arose when his *in situ* intervention was moved to the museum's permanent collection. This experience, and the solutions he found, formed the basis for "cabanes éclatées" ("exploded cabins"), and then for his works known as "situées" ("situated works"). Thus, in 1984, came the second turning-point in his artistic life, with the perfecting of the second "cabane éclatée". It consists of a cube formed by a wooden framework (the "cabin"), covered with stretched fabric, with openings made in it to create free elements (doors, windows, etc) which will explode and become fixed on the first walls parallel to the original cube. With the "cabanes éclatées", Buren's work has been evolving towards the production of objects that can be reconstituted in various places and surroundings, taking their dimensions into account, and provided that certain rules (of presentation and installation) are respected. The "cabins" are "mobile, and what is more, their mobility is one of their most important characteristics, compared to most of my other works"³, explains Buren. The effect of this is that the notion of *repetition*, so essential to his work (the constancy of his stripe pattern for example), is opened up to the notion of *regeneration*.

¹
Interview with the artist, 3 November 2007

²
Daniel Buren, from *catalogue raisonné thématique*, volume 2, *cabanes éclatées 1975/2000* - "Notes on his work concerning places where he is exhibiting, written between 1967 and 1975, some of which have been summed up here specially". *Studio international*, 190, spring 1975

³
Daniel Buren, from Béatrice Salmon, « *Entretien avec Daniel Buren* » (1998) quoted in *catalogue raisonné thématique*, volume 2, *cabanes éclatées 1975*

For his exhibition at 47 rue Saint-André des Arts, Buren will inaugurate another historic turning-point: for the first time, he has formulated the notion of a “situated work *in situ*” (it is worth noting, however, that this qualification could also apply to his earlier works). As he explains, “one can imagine that all the elements to be found in this exhibition could be found elsewhere, but truncated, enlarged...with certain elements added or taken away”. In effect, these works are “situated” because they obey a rule (their definition is relative to the space), but they are also *in situ* they adjust themselves in order to adapt to the new place. In order to achieve this – and this is a first for Buren – elements can be either added or removed...provided, of course, that the identity of the work is preserved. In such a way, “they can be changed drastically by their new home”, which provides a complete departure from the “*cabanes éclatées*”, where the number of parts never changes. With this in mind, the intervention in Room 1 combines elements *in situ*, which will be destroyed at the end of the exhibition (the adhesive pieces attached directly to the walls); parts that can be transported, multiplied and arranged in a different way (the wooden cases); and other elements that will have to be remade, such as the one that has been adapted for the reception desk and which will be part of the room for the duration of the exhibition.

With the notion of the “situated work *in situ*”, the title of the exhibition (*C’était, C’est, Ce sera* – “It was, It is, It will be”) takes on its full significance. “*C’était*” (“It was”) refers to Buren’s belief that “exhibitions are sequels to previous works”⁴ – they are linked by continuities, the resumption of works created a long time ago, or more recently. When they no longer exist, the only trace to be found of them is in the “*photo-souvenir*”. The “*memento-souvenir*” aims to prevent any substitution of the photograph for the work itself. “*C’est*” (“It is”) refers to the exhibition as it currently appears, while the “*Ce sera*” (“It will be”) contains the seed of other visual propositions that the work could generate in different contexts, assuming that it finds a new home. Buren’s desire to see his pieces evolve in this way and be transformed from an initial, definite “pedestal” (the principle of the work and its units) is driven by the natural pleasure of the parent to see his family grow up and prosper. Furthermore, the artist often talks of “families of works” or “families of preoccupations”. With the “situated works *in situ*”, he has put in place a new system of artworks that develop “organically” or “programmatically”. Defined and conceived both in and for an initial space, when the context changes, the work is adapted (by additions or subtractions) to this new situation, all the while respecting the guiding principle and function. We can imagine, therefore, that a work could be remade without the artist being present, but only by following the fundamental programme on which it is based. It is thus possible to see how far the artist has come since bringing us the notion of a work *in situ* it is only then that we grasp his full intelligence, as he seeks to give his art the capacity to grow beyond him. In a new context, the “situated work *in situ*” will effectively make a lie of Verlaine’s famous phrase. We shall not be able to say that it is “Neither exactly the same/Nor exactly different”⁵; rather, as Daniel Buren affirms, “the work will be the same, and entirely different”.

Daniel Buren « *C’était, C’est, Ce sera* » will be presented at the galerie kamel mennour from tuesday to saturday, from 11am to 7pm.

Marie-Cécile Burnichon, November 2007

(Translation: James Curwen)

⁴
Interview with the artist, 3 November 2007

⁵
Interview with the artist, 3 November 2007

⁶
Mon rêve familier, Verlaine, from *Poèmes saturniens*, 1866



For further information, please contact Marie-Sophie Eiché and Emma-Charlotte Gobry-Laurencin.