

Exhibition of a Scarf—Daniel Buren,  
Hermès Éditeur: Photos-souvenirs  
au carré  
**Valérie Knoll and Hannes Loichinger**



Daniel Buren, *Photo-souvenir au carré*, Coucher de soleil (détail), Salvador de Bahia, Brésil 08.04.01, Hermès Éditeur—Pièce unique, Orange/Blanc 2010 © Daniel Buren © Hermès, Paris 2015, Courtesy of Hermès

The article “L’art n’est-il qu’un produit de luxe?”, signed by a group of renowned intellectuals including Pierre Alferi, Giorgio Agamben, Jérôme Bel, Christian Bernard, Georges Didi-Huberman, Xavier LeRoy, Jean-Luc Nancy, and Catherine Perret, was published in October 2014.<sup>1</sup> This expression of discontent, which raised questions as to the political function of intellectuals and the state of contemporary art, was prompted by the opening in late October 2014 of the Vuitton Foundation for Contemporary Art, whose architect, Frank Gehry, had simultaneously been honored with a retrospective at the Centre national d’art et de culture Georges-Pompidou. For the authors of the manifesto-like statement, this event and the decisions made behind the scenes amounted to an impermissible mingling of public and private commercial interests. That same month, the art magazine *Flash Art International* featured an approximately 40-page fashion special, in which the potentially conflictual relationship between two very different fields of cultural production—fashion and art—was made just as little explicit as the debate surrounding the opening of the Vuitton Foundation for Contemporary Art. Instead, the art magazine adopted the style and the conversational tone of a fashion magazine.<sup>2</sup>

Against the backdrop of these flustered reactions that accompany the recently much-debated heteronomization of individual subfields of the art field, and which tend to ignore the segmentary character of the absolutized art market, on the one

<sup>1</sup> Georges Didi-Huberman, Giorgio Agamben, Pierre Alferi, Jérôme Bel, Christian Bernard, Xavier LeRoy, Jean-Luc Nancy et al., “Is Art a Mere Luxury Good?”, *Kunstkritikk*, November 2014, [www.kunstkritikk.com/kommentar/is-art-a-mere-luxury-good/](http://www.kunstkritikk.com/kommentar/is-art-a-mere-luxury-good/). The French version of the article was already published on October 20, 2014, by the Internet magazine *Mediapart*, [blogs.mediapart.fr/edition/les-invites-de-mediapart/article/201014/lart-nest-il-quun-produit-de-luxe](http://blogs.mediapart.fr/edition/les-invites-de-mediapart/article/201014/lart-nest-il-quun-produit-de-luxe).

<sup>2</sup> See *Flash Art International* 298 (October 2014): 57–96.



Daniel Buren, Hermès Éditeur, *Photos-souvenirs au carré*, working with the artist 2010 © Tadzio 2015, Courtesy of Hermès

hand, and a reciprocal interest of artistic and vestimentary production, as reflected in the mentioned issue of *Flash Art*, on the other, the collaboration between artist Daniel Buren and the fashion house Hermès should be examined in more detail. For it was Buren who in the early 1970s had already discerned a connection between the alleged autonomy of an artwork and its exploitation by “financial interests and the dominant ideology,”<sup>3</sup> and in a targeted way worked within and on the frames and borders that determined the visibility and circulation of his works.

In 2010, the French fashion house, via Hermès Éditeur, launched a collection of “carrés Hermès” designed by Daniel Buren, square silk scarves that count as the company’s signature.<sup>4</sup> The scarves are printed with twenty-two groups of motifs drawn from Buren’s collection of “Photos-souvenirs.”<sup>5</sup> These “souvenir photos,” which Buren has been taking since the 1950s, but have to date only appeared in publications, depict his own works—some of which today belong to the canon of institutional critique—alongside a variety of motifs including detailed views of plants

3 Daniel Buren, “The Function of the Studio” (1971), *October* 10 (Autumn 1979): 51–58, here 53.

4 This is the third collaboration between Buren and Hermès. In 2000, the artist presented the intervention *De la couleur de la couleur* on the occasion of the opening of the Fondation d’Entreprise Hermès in La Verrière, Brussels, and in 2006 the *in-situ* installation *Filtres colorés* in the newly opened store La Maison Hermès Dosan Park in Seoul, South Korea. See Fondation d’Entreprise Hermès, “10 Years of Exhibitions at La Verrière,” press portfolio, accessed February 15, 2015, [en.fondationentreprisehermes.org/content/download/1553/19232/file/10YearsLaVerriere-GB.pdf](http://en.fondationentreprisehermes.org/content/download/1553/19232/file/10YearsLaVerriere-GB.pdf).

5 In 2008, Hermès brought six motifs from the series of works *Homage to the Square* by the artist Josef Albers (1888–1976) on the market. Two hundred of each scarf were offered for sale in Hermès stores worldwide. In 2012, the fashion house launched an edition of 140 silk scarves in a series designed by the artist Hiroshi Sugimoto. The collaborations with the Josef Albers Foundation and the artists Buren and Sugimoto were carried out under the aegis of artistic director Pierre-Alexis Dumas, see Hermès International, “Hiroshi Sugimoto. Couleurs de l’ombre,” accessed February 15, 2015, [editeur-en.hermes.com/editions/h3-hiroshi-sugimoto.html](http://editeur-en.hermes.com/editions/h3-hiroshi-sugimoto.html).



Daniel Buren, *Photo-souvenir au carré*, Lys (détail 2), Île-de-France, France 12.03.08, Hermès Éditeur—Pièce unique, Noir/Blanc 2010 © Daniel Buren © Hermès, Paris 2015, Courtesy of Hermès

or building facades shot during his travels.<sup>6</sup> For the scarves, Buren mainly selected the latter, but one can also find five views of his *in-situ* work *Filtres colorés*, dated November 11, 2006, which he created at the time for the newly opened Hermès boutique, La Maison Hermès Dosan Park, in Seoul, South Korea. The selected “Photos-souvenirs” are framed by Buren’s artistic signature, the 8.7-cm-wide stripes in altering colors, which the artist has been using since 1965. Their color spectrum in combination with variously framed individual motifs generates a total of 365 unique scarves—a number suggesting everyday luxuriousness.

On a formal level, the collection triggers associations with numerous earlier works by Buren, for example, the 1977 piece *Dominoes* at the Waldorf Athaeneum, Hartford, Connecticut, USA, for which he worked with a system geared to the museum’s architecture and used frames for the selected exhibits. Another example is *Les formes: peintures* (1976–1978) at the Centre Georges Pompidou, in which Buren’s stripe frames, visible only from the side, were placed behind the actual frames of the paintings.<sup>7</sup> Despite these correspondences inherent to his oeuvre, the collaboration with the luxury house Hermès has been documented almost only on websites

6 Domitille d’Orgeval, “The Framed Image,” in Daniel Buren, *Photos-souvenirs au carré* (Paris: Éditions Xavier Barral, in association with Hermès, 2010), 27–31; Daniel Buren, *Photos-souvenirs 1965–1988* (Villeurbanne: Art Edition, 1988).

7 Dorothea von Hantelmann, “Die Realität des Kunstwerks. Zur Seins- und Funktionsweise der Arbeiten von Daniel Buren,” in *How to Do Things With Art. Bedeutsamkeit der Performativität von Kunst* (Zurich: diaphanes, 2007), 79–143, here 81. On the work of Daniel Buren see the artist’s website, accessed February 15, 2015, [www.danielburen.com](http://www.danielburen.com).



Daniel Buren, *Photo-souvenir au carré, Filtres colorés 3, travail in situ (détail 3)*, Séoul, Corée 11.11.06, Hermès Éditeur—Pièce unique, Vert/Blanc 2010  
© Daniel Buren © Hermès, Paris 2015, Courtesy of Hermès

and blogs in the field of fashion and lifestyle.<sup>8</sup> In the art field, the project remained just as un-commented as Buren's subsequent collaboration with Louis Vuitton, a label well-known for its cooperation with artists, for which he designed the catwalk, the seating for the fashion show's guests, and the boutique display windows for the 2013 spring and summer collection. The collaboration took place under the aegis of Marc Jacobs, who was still the head designer of Louis Vuitton at the time.<sup>9</sup> This ignorance is surprising, since the label's other collaborations with artists were indeed acknowledged, for example Takashi Murakami, whose projects with Louis Vuitton were dealt with from both an art-historical and sociological perspective.<sup>10</sup> But how can the Hermès scarves designed by Daniel Buren be discussed in this context?

Rather than evading institutions and their actors, Daniel Buren had cooperated early on and already during his career as a painter—in the narrow sense of the word—with numerous clients who, strictly speaking, did not only belong to

the art field.<sup>11</sup> They included galleries, museums and art societies, but also insurers, private individuals, and fashion companies, whose vast and widespread number finds a common denominator not only in Buren's unmistakable signature, but also in his guiding principle, which permeates his biography and today appears a bit overused: *Daniel Buren lives and works in situ*. As Andrea Fraser remarked, Buren's working method of the 1970s distinguishes itself from other site-specific and conceptual methods, e.g. those of artists practicing Land art, in that the rejection of object production through the temporalization of artworks in site-specific interventions, or their alleged dematerialization alone, does not imply a rejection of economic dependency, but merely promotes veiled models of at times private economic patronage.<sup>12</sup> Fraser states that in the case of Buren, the difference is made by the method linked to his "visual tool," the stripes, since they contribute to displaying the involvement of artistic production in social and economic processes:<sup>13</sup> "The visual tool no longer concentrates convergent looks on itself alone (like the painting), but on what allows it to be there."<sup>14</sup> While the comparison with and distinction from Land art, mentioned by both Buren and Fraser in a somewhat generalizing manner, appear pretty much obsolete, what does remain is the question as to the constitution of the frame determining the work, inside—or outside—of which artistic production takes place, commonly known as the analytical or critical examination of the "production and use" of art.<sup>15</sup>

Texts that have consistently included Buren in the canon of institutional critique and art history usually argue that Buren deals precisely with these framings and borders at which his work is placed and with which it engages. The focus is on differences between inside and outside, figure and background, painting and sculpture, artwork and architecture, work and frame, ergon and parergon, art and non-art, as well as on the necessarily connected question of the possibilities and limits of "critical work," elaborated by Daniel Buren in his text "Critical Limits," which exposes

8 Marta Casadei, "Hermès, 365 Foulards Become Objects of Art," *Vogue Italia*, October 2010, [www.vogue.it/en/magazine/daily-news/2010/10/hermes-365-foulard-d-arte](http://www.vogue.it/en/magazine/daily-news/2010/10/hermes-365-foulard-d-arte); Malaika Byng, "Hermès Scarves by Daniel Buren," *Wallpaper*, October 2010, [www.wallpaper.com/fashion/hermes-scarves-by-daniel-buren/4914](http://www.wallpaper.com/fashion/hermes-scarves-by-daniel-buren/4914), or Sara Conde, "Hermès Unveils 'Photos-souvenirs au carré Daniel Buren,'" *Fashion Windows*, September 2010, [www.fashionwindows.net/2010/09/hermes-unveils-photos-souvenirs-au-carre-daniel-buren/](http://www.fashionwindows.net/2010/09/hermes-unveils-photos-souvenirs-au-carre-daniel-buren/).

9 Numerous collaborations took place between the Louis Vuitton label and artists under the aegis of Marc Jacobs: Stephen Sprouse (2001), Takashi Murakami (2003, 2008), Richard Prince (2007), Yayoi Kusama (2012). See Hettie Judah, "Inside an Artist Collaboration," *Business of Fashion*, December 2013, [www.businessoffashion.com/2013/12/inside-an-artist-collaboration.html](http://www.businessoffashion.com/2013/12/inside-an-artist-collaboration.html). See also "Art and Fashion: The Many Collaborations for Louis Vuitton by Marc Jacobs," *Spotted Fashion*, September 2013, [www.spottedfashion.com/2013/10/09/art-and-fashion-the-many-collaborations-for-louis-vuitton-by-marc-jacobs](http://www.spottedfashion.com/2013/10/09/art-and-fashion-the-many-collaborations-for-louis-vuitton-by-marc-jacobs).

10 See e.g. Pamela Lee, "The World is Flat / The End of the World: Takashi Murakami and the Aesthetics of Post Fordism," in *Forgetting the Artworld*, ed. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2012), 39–68 and Diana Crane, "Reflections on the Global Art Market," *Sociedade e Estado* 24, no. 2 (May 2009): 331–362.

11 For a brief description of the development of the stripe pictures from a "cleansed" painting see Daniel Buren and Dorothea von Hantelmann, "Daniel Buren. Interview mit Daniel Buren," in *Die Ausstellung. Politik eines Rituals*, ed. Dorothea von Hantelmann and Carolin Meister (Zurich: diaphanes, 2010), 99–114, here 99ff.

12 Andrea Fraser, "What's Intangible, Transitory, Mediating, Participatory, and Rendered in the Public Sphere?" (1997), in *Museum Highlights: The Writings of Andrea Fraser*, ed. Alexander Alberro (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007), 55–80, here 67. See Daniel Buren, "Critical Limits" (1970), in *Five Texts*, ed. John Weber Gallery (New York: John Weber Gallery, 1973), 43–57, here 47f. On the dematerialization of Conceptual art and the fantasy of its objectlessness see Pamela Lee, "Das konzeptuelle Objekt der Kunstgeschichte," *Texte zur Kunst* 21 (March 1996): 120–129.

13 Fraser, "What's Intangible," 78, mentions a number of other artists alongside Daniel Buren who have dealt with artistic autonomy including Louise Lawler, the Art Workers Coalition, Hans Haacke, and many more: "Far from functioning only as ideology critique, they have aimed to construct a less ideological form of autonomy, conditioned not by the abstraction of relations of consumption in the commodity form, but by the conscious and critical determination, in each particular and immediate instance, of the uses to which artistic activity is put and the interests it serves."

14 Daniel Buren, "Terminology," in *Metamorphoses—Works in situ*, exhibition catalog, University Gallery, Amherst, MA; Zilkha Gallery, Middletown, CT; Knight Gallery, Charlotte, NC; Columbus Museum of Art, OH; Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia, PA (Amherst, MA: University Gallery, 1987), 3–13, here 9f.

15 See Johannes Meinhardt, "Institutionskritik," in *DuMonts Begrifflexikon zur zeitgenössischen Kunst*, ed. Hubertus Butin (Cologne: Dumont, 2006), 126–130. Citation trans. Karl Hoffmann. Buren's writings usually mentioned in this context are "Function of the Museum" from 1970 and "Function of the Studio" from 1971, reprinted in *Institutional Critique: An Anthology of Artists' Writings*, ed. Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2009), 102–106 and 110–117.

the often contradictory conditions of its relatively autonomous production, reception, and distribution.<sup>16</sup>

Based on the installation *Within and Beyond the Frame* (1973) produced for the John Weber Gallery in New York—consisting of an uninterrupted series of striped banners installed within, between and outside of the gallery's indoor and outdoor space and thus marking it as permeable—Craig Owens in 1985 argued in favor of unveiling these limits and ties, because the dominant ideology defines their concealment as the actual function of the artwork.<sup>17</sup> Hence, what is at the center of an artistic work such as Buren's is not the work as an object of aesthetic contemplation, but the respective situation in which the work is installed and which determines it in aesthetic, social and economic terms—something which Buren in turn termed the “cultural limits” of an artwork in “Critical Limits.”<sup>18</sup> For Owens, the connection to urban space, in which the lengths of fabric could also be identified as flags, advertising banners, or laundry, is crucial, as opposed to identifying it as a piece by Buren at an artistically defined cultural site. However, this is not to be conceived of as an end in itself, but as a reference to the involvement of art-specific economies in e.g. urban development processes. Anne Rorimer also saw the specificity of the works in their explicit transitions from artistic to non-artistic contexts, particularly in *Watch the Doors Please* (1980–1982), for which the doors of commuter trains were literally used as *Bilderfahrzeuge*, a “vehicle for a work of art” conjoining the museum to the “commercial, quotidian world surrounding it.”<sup>19</sup> For Rorimer, it was Buren who in 1985 expanded the definition of the context of the space or the museum to include “historical, political, social and economic systems of support that surround exhibited works of art” and made visible, beyond his work on borders or frames, the differences that they are based on.<sup>20</sup> A comparable, albeit much more specific argumentation, can be found in Benjamin H. D. Buchloh's text on Buren from 1981,<sup>21</sup> which discusses his *Les couleurs: sculptures from 1977* and the aforementioned project *Les formes: peintures from 1976-1978*, both realized for the Centre Pompidou. For *Les couleurs: sculptures*, Buren installed striped flags on the roofs of various buildings in the city, which could be seen through telescopes from the Centre Pompidou. As a complementary piece, Buchloh mentions *Les formes: peintures*, for which the curators of the Centre Pompidou selected works from their permanent collection. Behind the

paintings, Buren installed barely perceptible, equally sized, rectangular frames with the familiar stripe pattern, to which an additional label made reference. Buchloh concludes: “Buren's installation, concealing itself as the dimension of history, reveals the secretive practices of the museum, its installation modes, its institutional power as those of historicizing actuality and actualizing history in a seemingly neutral space.”<sup>22</sup> In contrast to a widespread mode of artistic production in what is called “late capitalism,” whose defining feature Buchloh makes out as the appropriation of actual artistic intentions and their reduction to a decoration of the “status quo,” he emphasizes the “double nature” of Buren's *Les couleurs: sculptures*: “Its permanent shift between being an aesthetic sign and an element of everyday perceptual reality.”<sup>23</sup> He sees Buren's significance precisely in this inclusion of contradictions in his artistic production. Whereas *Les couleurs: sculptures* remains intangible due to its ambiguity, *Les formes: peintures* disappears from the visible space of the museum and exposes its function. With his 1990 text, “Conceptual Art 1962–1969: From the Aesthetic of Administration to the Critique of Institutions,” Buchloh sealed Buren's incorporation into the canon of institution-critical artists.<sup>24</sup>

While Buren's early works were mostly of a temporary nature, from the 1980s onward he also produced factual objects shaped by atemporality and a “relative permanence,”<sup>25</sup> as Dorothea von Hantelmann termed it. Monumental commissioned pieces, for example the well-known sculpture project *Les Deux Plateaux* (1985/1986) in the Cour d'Honneur of the Palais Royal in Paris, made the artist tremendously popular. With comparable and partially even colorful works such as the French pavilion at the forty-second Venice Biennale (1986), Buren became France's national artist and a crowd favorite, which brought him recognition in the art sections of newspapers, but let him increasingly fall out of favor with the subfield of art criticism defined by specialized art magazines. Buchloh, a critic writing in the tradition of the Frankfurt School's critical theory, disliked the opulent works that revealed a wealth of colors and forms, rating them as an aberration oriented toward the spectacular and sensationalism, as decoration without contradiction.<sup>26</sup> Buren's contribution to the Skulptur Projekte Münster show in 1997 is even described as “another fun-fair decoration.”<sup>27</sup> While in 1982 Buchloh had still called the decorative element

16 Buren, “Critical Limits.”

17 Craig Owens, “From Work to Frame, or, Is There Life After ‘The Death of the Author?’” (1985), in *Beyond Recognition. Representation, Power, and Culture*, ed. Scott Bryson, Barbara Kruger, Lynne Tillman, and Jane Weinstock (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1992), 122–139, here 129f.

18 Buren, “Critical Limits,” 53.

19 Anne Rorimer, “Up and Down, In and Out, Step by Step, a Sculpture, a Work by Daniel Buren,” in *Art Institute of Chicago Museum Studies* 11, no. 2 (Spring 1985): 140–155, here 146.

20 Ibid., 153. Rorimer distinguishes Buren from artists such as Carl Andre, Dan Flavin, Donald Judd, Sol LeWitt, Roy Lichtenstein, Blinky Palermo, and Frank Stella.

21 Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, “The Museum and the Monument: Daniel Buren's *Les Couleurs/Les Formes*” (1981), in *Neo-Avantgarde and Culture Industry: Essays on European and American Art From 1955 to 1975*, id. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000), 119–139.

22 Ibid., 134.

23 Ibid., 126.

24 See Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, “Conceptual Art 1962–1969: From the Aesthetic of Administration to the Critique of Institutions,” *October* 55 (Winter 1990): 105–143. The criticality attributed to Buren can be partially explained by his extensive text production, but it probably also has to do with the exclusion of his work *Peinture-Sculpture* (1971) from the Guggenheim International Exhibition. On the latter see Alexander Alberro, “The Turn of the Screw: Daniel Buren, Dan Flavin, and the Sixth Guggenheim International Exhibition,” *October* 80 (Spring 1997): 57–84.

25 von Hantelmann, *How to Do Things With Art*, 94. Citation trans. Karl Hoffmann.

26 Ibid., 124. See Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, “Buren. Skulptur. Projekte Münster,” in *Artforum* 36, no. 1 (September 1997): 115–117.

27 The contributions by Daniel Buren and Fabrice Hybert are rejected in the same breath here: “The Warholian dilemma of wishing to comply with (culture) industry standards and yet maintain the avant-garde gesture of refusal to deliver meaning to the apparatus of domination with which culture is inextricably intertwined seems—with a certain delay—to have caught up with France. Its most exemplary exponents in Münster were Daniel Buren and Fabrice Hybert.” Buchloh, “Buren,” 116.

in Buren's works a resigned-critical commentary on the state of artistic production characterized by contradictions, he entirely gave up interest in these types of projects in the article "Critical Reflections," published in *Artforum* in 1997, and thus revised his earlier assessments. A period once characterized by the differences of art to the commercial fields of cultural production, and in which resistance against the culture industry was still possible, had come to an end: "Cultural production becomes absolutely equivalent to fashion production *at the core*."<sup>28</sup> Buren's works thus possess a certain ambivalence—a double bind between decoration and commentary—that is also reflected in the judgments of art criticism, which can only be partially explained by altered historical circumstances.

Instead of declaring the complete corruption of art due to the imperative of economic logic a given, and—like Fredric Jameson in a neo-Marxist frame of reference—presuming "that aesthetic production today has become integrated into commodity production generally,"<sup>29</sup> the exhibition series "Demanding Supplies" at the Kunstraum of Leuphana University of Lüneburg made recourse to contemporary and historical positions that set themselves in relation to the complex entanglements of art and economy.<sup>30</sup> At the show "Besides Reproduction," which was part of the series "Demanding Supplies," the Hermès and Buren scarves as well as the elements planned for the sale were presented on racks of transparent perspex (see page 602). They included the luxuriously designed, orange box typical of Hermès that represents the brand's corporate identity and was produced for the collaboration with Buren as a custom-made article. Each box contained a silk scarf folded to a square. A drawer integrated on the side served to store the comprehensive illustrated catalog produced for the cooperation between Hermès and Buren, which featured all twenty-two groups of motifs in the various color frame variants of the "Photos-souvenirs au carré" as color photographs along with numerous black-and-white pictures taken of the artist at work.

In the exhibition, the publication "Photos-souvenirs au carré" was on display next to the box for the visitors to browse through.<sup>31</sup> The certificate authenticating the respective silk scarf as a piece by Daniel Buren was also displayed. Furthermore, the installation included a silk scarf spanned on a wall and a video interview between Buren and Hermès' artistic director, Pierre-Alexis Dumas, on a monitor.<sup>32</sup> As a condition of the scarves' presentation, the artist had requested that the staff involved in

28 Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, "Critical Reflections," in *Artforum* 35, no. 5 (January 1997): 68–70, here 69. See also Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, "The Group That Was (Not) One: Daniel Buren and BMPT," in *Artforum* 46, no. 9 (May 2008): 310–313, here 313: "It will be one of the questions for our decade to ponder why the spaces and practices of contestation and critique that Buren (and Hans Haacke, Michael Asher, Marcel Broodthaers, et al.) opened at the end of the '60s were—or so it seems now, at least—irredeemably hijacked by corporate clowns designing handbags."

29 Fredric Jameson, "Postmodernism, or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism," *New Left Review* 146 (July 1984): 53–92, here 56.

30 The exhibition series "Demanding Supplies" (2011) at the Kunstraum of the Leuphana University of Lüneburg was curated by Julia Moritz. For further information see p. 542–617 in this volume.

31 Buren, *Photos-souvenirs*.

32 The video interview "Dialogue au carré. Daniel Buren – Pierre-Alexis Dumas" between Daniel Buren and Pierre-Alexis Dumas was enclosed as a DVD (2010, by Gilles Coudert) with the catalog *Photos-souvenirs aux carré* (2010).

the project wear some of them at the opening and during opening hours, which further confused the question of the relationship between artwork and luxury good: "They are unique objects like paintings but rather than fixed on a wall are made to be worn."<sup>33</sup>

Realizing commissioned works for luxury labels and watering down some of the hitherto relatively consistent rules of his practice, e.g. by integrating figurative motifs in his otherwise abstract works, raises interesting questions, especially against the background of Buren's reception to date. Nevertheless, a number of authors have long called into question Buren's commitment to a critical agenda, not only by establishing a break within his practice, as Buchloh did. Alison M. Gingeras, for instance, spoke of a misuse of his work as a vehicle of an ideological agenda,<sup>34</sup> while von Hantelmann pointed out a misled reception of his early works, as well.<sup>35</sup> Besides, Buren already decorated display windows for the fashion label Nina Ricci and conceived the layout of a Dior catalog in the 1990s.<sup>36</sup>

Buren was not repudiated by the art world on account of his changing clients; in 1996 he designed an edition for the art magazine *Texte zur Kunst*, consisting of a packaging for the magazine to whose financing his edition contributed.<sup>37</sup> Buren's interest in designing clothes continued in 2008, when he, nota bene as an artist, had vests with white and colored stripes tailored for and worn by the guards for the duration of the group exhibition *Color Chart: Reinventing Color, 1950 to Today* at the Museum of Modern Art in New York.<sup>38</sup> In 2011, Buren was honored by the Kunsthalle Baden Baden with the solo show *Allegro Vivace* and the lauding press found that his method was incredibly up to date: a "revelation," "red-hot," and "more necessary than ever."<sup>39</sup>

Buren himself points to the fact that ambiguities, such as those evoked by the silk scarves that abolish the difference between artwork and luxury article, are intended in his works: "If one can not escape the decorative, then one should address it. [...] I often play with the ambiguity between functionality and artistic works and I would like to sustain these ambiguities, these borders are blurred and mobile in almost all the works that I make. [...] And there, (the viewer) loses all points of reference

33 Daniel Buren, cited in Conde, "Hermès Unveils."

34 See Alison M. Gingeras, "The Decorative as Strategy," in *Parkett* 66 (December 2002): 84–92.

35 von Hantelmann, *How to Do Things With Art*, especially 129–143.

36 Kin Woo, "The Joy of Sets: Daniel Buren on Building Louis Vuitton," *Dazed*, accessed February 15, 2015, [www.dazeddigital.com/fashion/article/15568/1/the-joy-of-sets-daniel-buren-on-building-louis-vuitton](http://www.dazeddigital.com/fashion/article/15568/1/the-joy-of-sets-daniel-buren-on-building-louis-vuitton); "Nina Ricci," accessed January 15, 2015, [www.myfavoritefashiondesigners.com/nina-ricci.php](http://www.myfavoritefashiondesigners.com/nina-ricci.php).

37 Daniel Buren, *Untitled*, 1996, *Texte zur Kunst* 23 (August 1996), "Ausstellungspolitik," Edition, [www.textezurkunst.de/artist-editions/daniel-buren/](http://www.textezurkunst.de/artist-editions/daniel-buren/). This edition by Buren was repackaged in 2009, this time by Christian Philipp Müller, who showed it in his edition for the same magazine in a photograph with the telling title "Critical Collection, 1990–2009" (2009).

38 Daniel Buren, *Allegro Vivace*, exhibition catalog, Staatliche Kunsthalle Baden-Baden, ed. Karola Kraus (Cologne: Walther König, 2011), 81. Already in 1981 the artists had designed striped textile vests worn by the guards for his show at the Stedelijk Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven (*Essai hétéroclite: les gilets*). Cora von Pape, "Auf Tuchfühlung mit der Kunst," *DU: Die Zeitschrift der Kultur* 70, no. 810 (October 2010): 66–73, here 70.

39 Swantje Karich, "Die Enthüllung," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, April 21, 2011, [www.faz.net/aktuell/feuilleton/daniel-buren-in-baden-baden-die-enthuellung-1624693.html?printPageArticle=true#pageIndex\\_2](http://www.faz.net/aktuell/feuilleton/daniel-buren-in-baden-baden-die-enthuellung-1624693.html?printPageArticle=true#pageIndex_2). Citations trans. Karl Hoffmann.

and the questions starts to be interesting.<sup>40</sup> What is also worth considering is the fact that the scarves were exhibited in the museum La Monnaie de Paris in 2010, before being released for sale in selected Hermès boutiques for €5,000 each.<sup>41</sup> In the museum, the scarves hung like flags from suspended struts across the palatial hall. Even if the museum is not an art museum but a museum of cultural history housing a numismatic collection, the exhibition situation makes the double role of the scarves as a functional, luxurious fashion item and a work of art evident.

A solution to this dilemma, namely, to appear as a designer of the status quo on the one hand and enjoy the continuing—and perhaps justified—reputation of being a critical artist on the other, is provided by Tom Holert in a text on the ambiguity of contemporary art.<sup>42</sup> Based on Buren's contribution to Harald Szeemann's documenta 5 in 1972 and his statement in the accompanying catalog, in which he describes the “structural change of exhibitions towards the exhibition as a work of art”<sup>43</sup> through which the organizer appears as an “author-actor,” Holert elaborates his considerations on ambiguation: “The explicit intention of Buren's wallpapers is to at once elucidate and obscure functional and genre attributions by criticizing them as classifications that have been revealed as ideological.”<sup>44</sup> This reflexive turn of existing classifications that transforms unambiguousness into ambiguity and that works on the “constitutive character of hegemonic articulations” (Ernesto Laclau/Chantal Mouffe) is the task of institution-critical art, according to Holert.<sup>45</sup>

These considerations can easily be applied to Buren's collaborations with fashion companies and to the work with the Hermès scarves. While Buren's contribution to documenta 5 and the text “Exhibition of an Exhibition” marked a structural change implying the new function of the curator, altered exhibition formats and the attendant question as to the illustrative-decorative function of artworks, the use of the Hermès scarves could reflect another kind of transformation: The increasing influence of companies from the luxury segment and the dwindling distinctiveness of field-specific attributions in some segments of the art field.<sup>46</sup>

It is by no means certain whether Buren's collaborations seek to revert these processes in a reflective way or simply depict them, something that can be illus-



One edition of Daniel Buren's *Photos-souvenirs au carré* on a Stockman display bust  
2010 © Tadzio, 2015, Courtesy of Hermès

trated by two articles published in 2014. In his system-theoretical text “In Defense of Styling,” Philipp Ekardt refers to a function that is reserved for art.<sup>47</sup> Based on two picture series’ by Bernadette Corporation, a picture spread published in issue 2 of the Parisian fashion magazine *Purple* in 1998 and the artwork *The Complete Poem* from 2009, Ekardt points to the in his view crucial difference between fashion and art. While fashion can only work on the look and modify pictorial types by means of “conceptual styling,” art treats styles and looks on the level of subject matter. The fact that this treatment is a critical operation—not meaning judgment or intervention in the sense of institutional critique, but a difference that is threatening to disappear—is made evident in an exhibition review by Sam Pulitzer. In his article for *Artforum* on the show *TOBIAS KASPAR* at Midway Contemporary Art in Minneapolis, featuring, among other exhibits, a limited edition line of jeans and an associated picture spread, Pulitzer regards the artistic adaptation of image types of the fashion industry and of fashion items as nothing but mimetic repetition that lacks difference.<sup>48</sup> The same year he created the Hermès scarves, Daniel Buren in a conversation with Dorothea von Hantelmann announced a text on the “specific ideology” of art that he has been engaged with for quite a while. “There is a certain type of belief with certain rules and habits that is specific to art and that I would like to delve into.”<sup>49</sup> Perhaps this text will resolve the dilemma—more positively described as an ambiguous situation—outlined above.

40 Daniel Buren, quoted in Gingeras, “The Decorative,” 88f.

41 Anon., “Expositions personnelles–2010. ‘Photos-souvenirs au carré. Daniel Buren,’” accessed January 15, 2015, [www.danielburen.com/images/xhibit/18457&ref=personnelle&year=2010](http://www.danielburen.com/images/xhibit/18457&ref=personnelle&year=2010). The presentation took place at the same time as the fair Foire Internationale d’Art Contemporain (FIAC) in Paris.

42 See Tom Holert, “Resonanzen, Streifen, Scherenschnitte,” in *Ambiguität in der Kunst—Typen und Funktionen eines ästhetischen Paradigmas*, ed. Verena Krieger and Rachel Mader (Cologne: Boehrlau, 2010), 24–259.

43 Ibid., 252. See also Daniel Buren, “Exhibition of an Exhibition” (1972), in *The Biennial Reader: An Anthology on Large-Scale Perennial Exhibitions of Contemporary Art*, ed. Elena Filipovic, Marieke van Hal, and Solveig Øvstebo (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2010), 210f.

44 Holert, “Resonanzen, Streifen, Scherenschnitte,” 254. Citation trans. Karl Hoffmann. The project was discussed in a more sceptical way by Beatrice von Bismarck, “Der Meister der Werke. Daniel Burens Beitrag zur ‘documenta 5’ in Kassel 1972,” in *Jenseits der Grenzen: Französische und deutsche Kunst vom Ancien Régime bis zur Gegenwart: Thomas W. Gaethgens zum 60. Geburtstag, Vol. 3, Dialog der Avantgarden*, ed. Uwe Fleckner, Martin Schiede, and Michael Zimmermann (Cologne: Dumont, 2000), 215–229.

45 Holert, “Resonanzen, Streifen, Scherenschnitte,” 256.

46 See Crane, “Reflections on the Global Art Market.”

47 See Philipp Ekardt, “In Defense of Styling,” in *Texte zur Kunst* 95 (September 2014): 79–91.

48 Sam Pulitzer, “Tobias Kaspar, Midway Contemporary Art, Minneapolis,” in *Artforum* 52, no. 5 (January 2014): 218.

49 Buren and von Hantelmann, “Daniel Buren. Interview,” 114. Citation trans. Karl Hoffmann.





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PHOTO-SOUVENIR AU CARRÉ (DÉTAIL 2)  
FLEUR DE CACTUS  
PROCIÀ, ITALIE 01.08.04  
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