

*photo copy  
yellow original*

The Gallery of Cardinal Valenti-Gonzaga by Giovanni Paolo Panini, 1695-1768 (Collection of the Wadsworth Atheneum)



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"DOMINOES:  
A MUSEUM EXHIBITION"

a work in situ  
by Daniel Buren/MATRIX 33

A word about the black and white striped frames you will notice scattered throughout the museum. French artist Daniel Buren was invited to do a work in the Wadsworth Atheneum as part of our program MATRIX, a changing exhibition of contemporary art. Buren, who has been using this same striped pattern in different colors (either in linen or paper) for twelve years, has done a work here which intends to alert us to the many different kinds of spaces and methods of installation that are to be found in a museum. He also encourages us to consider how these factors affect the way we experience each individual work of art.

The artist is anxious that his work be clearly understood by the museum visitor. For this reason he has written a statement about the work which is printed in this artistsheet and is posted throughout the museum.

Dominoes: A Museum Exhibition is an unusual museum presentation. I would like to thank the staff of the Wadsworth Atheneum - most particularly the Director and the Curators - for their co-operation in the planning stages. Access to many galleries and spaces not ordinarily used for contemporary art was essential. Even those who have strong disagreement with many of Daniel Buren's ideas saw the intellectual integrity of his inquiry and understood the validity of the artist's presenting a strong demonstration of his views in a museum context.

Dominoes is provoking lively discussion and debate about many questions - from how to hang a painting to the appropriate role of museums in our society. That is the artist's intent. We invite you to join us in considering these many interesting issues.

Andrea Miller-Keller  
Curator of MATRIX

A STATEMENT BY THE ARTIST

Description

Material used. Black and white striped linen. Each stripe is 8.7 cm. wide. This material comes in commercial rolls 140 cm. wide. The two external full white stripes are covered with white acrylic paint. The material is then cut in order to be installed like a frame around the frames or objects. The width of my linen frame is equal to 8.7 cm. and the distance between itself and the piece framed is 8.7 cm. too, all around. The space between the frame which I create and the frame of the painting (or object, or pedestal, or sign, or clock...) makes another frame which is the very support (walls, floors...) of the paintings considered. These supports (walls, floors...) which are often huge and colorful are nevertheless sometimes missed. One will remark, then, how and where the works of art are installed and the variety of colors, textures and sizes of the walls that are on "exhibition" throughout the museum.

My work is on display, as indicated by the map in MATRIX, throughout the entire museum including service areas (offices, elevators, bathrooms, etc.) as well as in the public exhibition spaces. The choice of the "newly framed" pieces is essentially following the already given installations and the already given architectural situation.

For example, in the Morgan Building, each painting (or window) in front of a door or corridor is framed. The selection is based on a system which has nothing to do with personal selection (taste) or the aesthetics of the works of art. Because of their particular placement, my works thrust the viewer into a dialogue with museum spaces, near and distant.

Room 103 (John Baldessari, Car Colors Series: 1968 Volvo, Dirty and Polished), 1977

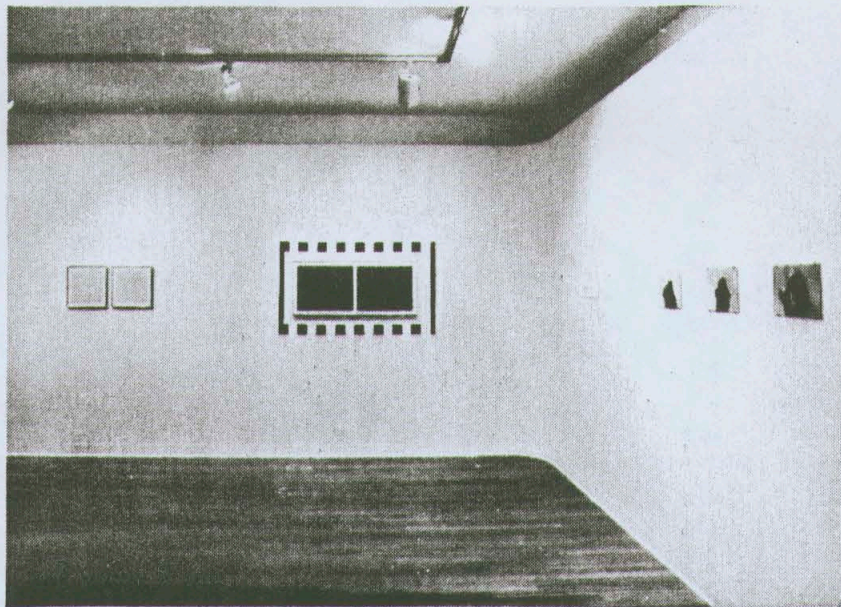


Photo-Souvenir from Dominoes, Avery Court, first floor (Exhibition case, "Art in Seventeenth Century New England"), 1977

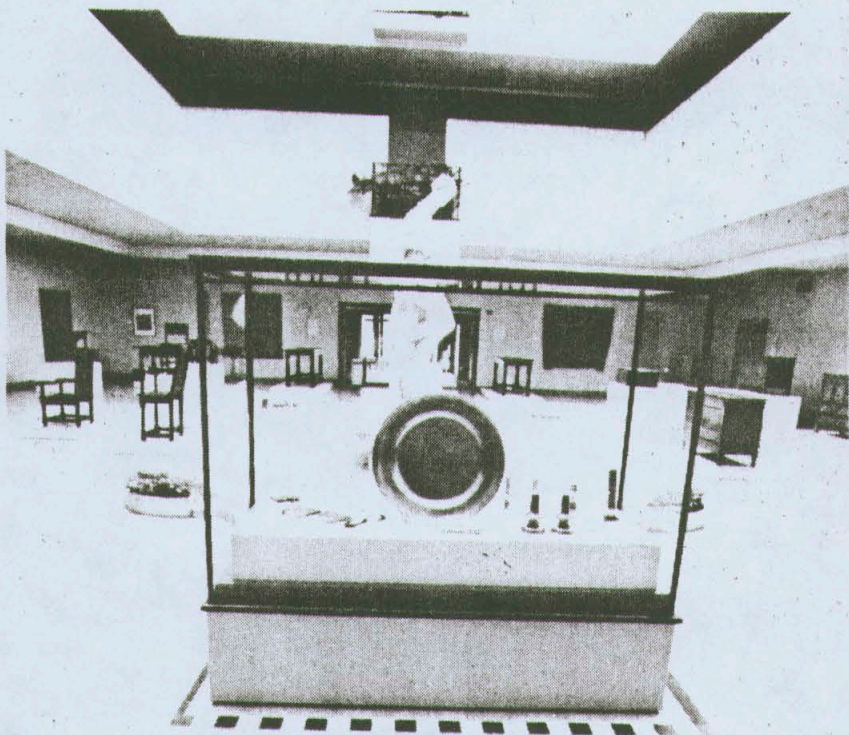
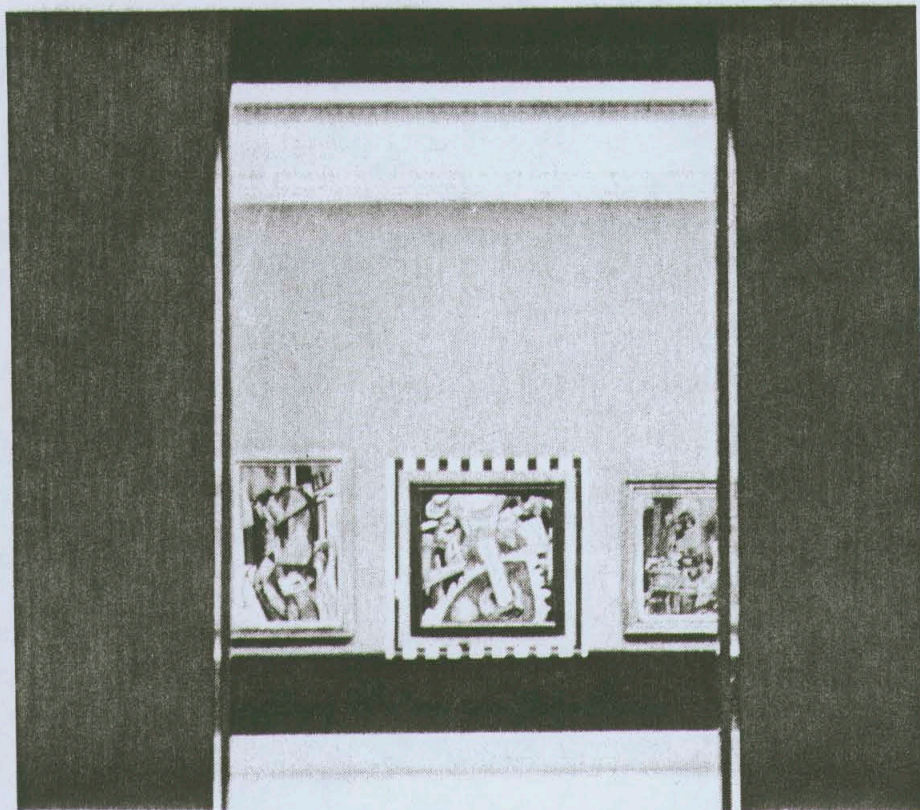


Photo-Souvenir from Dominoes, Corridor Morgan Building, Room 209  
(Artist Unknown, Italian, Eighteenth Century, Summer), 1977



Photo-Souvenir from Dominoes, Morgan Building, Room 216 (Marsden  
Hartley, Military), 1977



A museum is the place where art sustains itself. Each artist adds his/her production to the others and to the precedents. Historians, critics, curators and artists themselves made and still make lines and connections and/or ruptures and disconnections between artists, schools, epochs, etc... Everyone is concerned with the very signification of the object which is produced. Few pay attention to the place where this object is visible, how it is visible, who makes it visible....

In "Dominoes: A Museum Exhibition" placement determines the shape of each element of my work. Conversely all works of art in a museum are "misshaped" by their placement on a wall, in a gallery, in a museum context.

Let me say again that each museum's architecture - whatsoever the architecture - has a strong impact on the works of art which are displayed inside its rooms. One must not forget that the way works are installed on the walls, their distribution, their sequence, etc... are at least as important to what they are "saying" as that which their "content" wishes to express.

In part it is an "architectural" arrangement of the works which determines them strongly and which is completely foreign to the will of the individual works in question. Juxtaposing any two works of art opens many more questions than either work taken separately could ever raise. For example, a suit of sixteenth century German armour placed next to an eighteenth century American portrait. Even a Murillo next to a Zurbaran.

This new framing extends the awareness of framing from the very edge of a painting or object out to the very edges of the museum. In between we

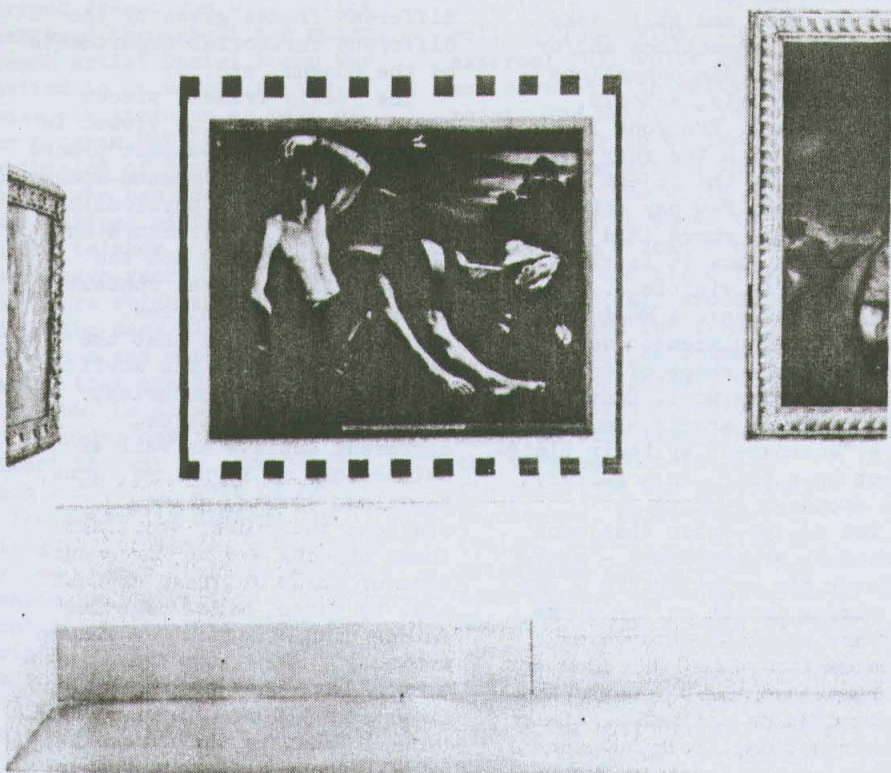
have the frames or paintings, the colored frames given by the walls, the wood and/or plaster molding of the rooms, the frame given by the ceilings as well as the floors and the different frames given by the different curatorial departments of the museum, etc....

The "newly framed" pieces stand for all objects viewed in museum spaces. Any object placed on exhibition in a museum space is framed not only physically by the museum architecture but also (and certainly not the less) by the cultural context which a museum signifies.

It is to be noted that the same museum has in its shell art of different centuries, different sensibilities, different artists as well as collections of furniture, guns, textiles, silver, glass, statues, sculpture, etc... All these objects are by force outside of their original context and, by force, mixed together in one single context, a museum context... Where are the connections? Have they no connections or are they forced into correlations? What is the necessity of all these different frames? Do they trap the works? And then what are the effects to the works? Anyhow, framing is certainly not as banal or neutral as it means to be.

Above everything, who frames what? And why?

Daniel Buren  
Hartford, Connecticut  
June, 1977



NOTE: The usual MATRIX format which includes listings of selected exhibitions and bibliographic references has been altered at the request of the artist. Buren feels that such listings are so abbreviated and so out of context that they are more misleading than they are helpful. On two occasions Buren has had the opportunity to list his exhibitions and bibliographic references with the kind of detail that he considers important. The interested viewer is encouraged to examine Documenta V (Kassel, 1972) and Eight Contemporary Artists (Museum of Modern Art, 1974) for this information, printed with Buren's

approval.

Three books have been placed in the MATRIX space to make available information about the ideas and work of Buren. They are Five Texts by Daniel Buren (John Weber Gallery, NYC and Jack Wendler Gallery, London 1973), Discordance/Coherence by Rudi Fuchs (Van Abbemuseum Eindhoven, 1976), 9 Arbeiten von Daniel Buren: Voile/Toile, Toile/Voile by Daniel Buren, Bernd Mahr und Horst Merten. (Berliner Künstlerprogramm [DAAD] und Galerie Folker Skulima, Berlin 1976.)

Daniel Buren was born in Boulogne-Billancourt, France in 1938. He lives and works "in situ".