

# WIDEWALLS

## Daniel Buren and Pierre Huyghe Join Artistic Forces at Nahmad Contemporary



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**Balasz Takac**

Balasz Takac is alias of Vladimir Bjelic who is actively engaged in art criticism, curatorial and artistic practice.

As an art movement, Minimalism triggered numerous artists outside the US who felt empowered by the ability to explore abstraction differently and more boldly. At the same time in Europe, Op Art appeared as a **dominating avant-garde tendency** centered on the exploration of movement within the painterly field. Various aspects of the two mentioned phenomena were overlapping, and in some cases, they are the constitutional elements of a certain practice such as the case with the one formed by **Daniel Buren**. This renowned French artist is **best known for his vibrant spatial installations** characterized by the artist's signature contrasting colored stripes. Throughout the years, Buren's domains expanded to other media making his approach even more sharpened.

Now, the current exhibition at **Nahmad Contemporary** places **the work of Daniel Buren in a dialog with Pierre Huyghe**, another established French artist known for his multidisciplinary oeuvre centered on the relationship between reality and fiction in regards to mass media. For this occasion, Buren's famous striped paintings from 1966 are contrasted with one of Huyghe's dynamic aquarium

ecosystems from 2013, with an aim to **underlined the interest of both artists to deconstruct the conventional relationship between authorship and presentation.**

## The Works



Namely, a striped motif that still inhabits Daniel Buren's practice today **appeared in 1965 when he encountered striped awning fabric** lining the storefronts of a textile market in Paris. The artist started using the fabric as a prime inspiration for his paintings and referred to it directly in the titles such as *White acrylic paint on red and white canvas* (1966).

With these series, Buren wanted **to dismantle traditional painterly canons of figuration and depth to underline the surrounding social context** of the time when artists engaged themselves in critiquing the institutional power structures.

Similarly, Pierre Huyghe's work *Cambrian Explosion* (2013) undermines **the notion of traditional artistic media and authorship.** It belongs to his aquarium series conceived in 2010 that consists of live ecosystems with aquatic plants and organisms. In the featured work, a 280-pound **rock is floating in water over crabs and anemones.** The title refers to the sudden biological explosion which happened over five hundred million years and enabled the emergence of almost all animal species.

Although the work at first hand accentuates a sense of emergence and ephemerality, in the contemporary context *Cambrian Explosion* **doesn't just operate as a metaphor; rather, it stands as a direct comment on the dying sea ecosystem.**

## Buren and Huyghe at Nahmad Contemporary



The current dialog between the two artists **summarizes the similarities their distinct artistic approaches share,** also rooted in the fact Buren acted as Huyghe's mentor. Regardless of the differences in approaches (one being focused on the machine and the other on biological processes), both artists insist on the distance between themselves and their works, while interrogating **the complexities caused by the relationships between artist, artwork, method and the spectator.**

*Daniel Buren | Pierre Huyghe* will be on display at Nahmad Contemporary in New York until **4 April 2020.**

Featured image:

Daniel Buren-Photo-souvenir White acrylic paint on red and white canvas,[November – December] 1966. Paint on red and white striped cotton canvas, 41.5 x 38 inches (105.4 x 96.5 cm). Photo-souvenir Variable Forms Painting, [June] 1966. Paint on orange and white striped cotton canvas, 84.65 x 76.77 inches (215 x 195 cm). Photo-souvenir Variable Forms Painting, [January-May], 1966. Paint on red and white striped cotton canvas, 88.25 x 74.75 inches (224 x 190 cm).

Courtesy of the artist and Bortolami, New York; Photo-souvenir: Daniel Buren – Indefinite Forms Painting, [January-May], 1966. Paint on black and white striped cotton canvas, 57.5 x 44.9 inches (146 x 114 cm). Courtesy of the artist and Bortolami, New York;

Pierre Huyghe – Cambrian Explosion, 2013 Aquarium, live marine ecosystem, volcanic rock, sand. Base: 50.8 x 46.4 x 29.5 inches (129 x 118 x 75 cm); Tank: 47.6 x 43.3 x 29.5 inches (121 x 110 x 75 cm); Pierre Huyghe – Cambrian Explosion, 2013. Aquarium, live marine ecosystem, volcanic rock, sand. Base: 50.8 x 46.4 x 29.5 inches (129 x 118 x 75 cm). Tank:

47.6 x 43.3 x 29.5 inches (121 x 110 x 75 cm). Images courtesy of the artist; Marian Goodman Gallery, New York; Esther Schipper, Berlin; Hauser & Wirth, London; Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris.

<https://www.widewalls.ch/daniel-buren-pierre-huyghe-nahmad-contemporary/>