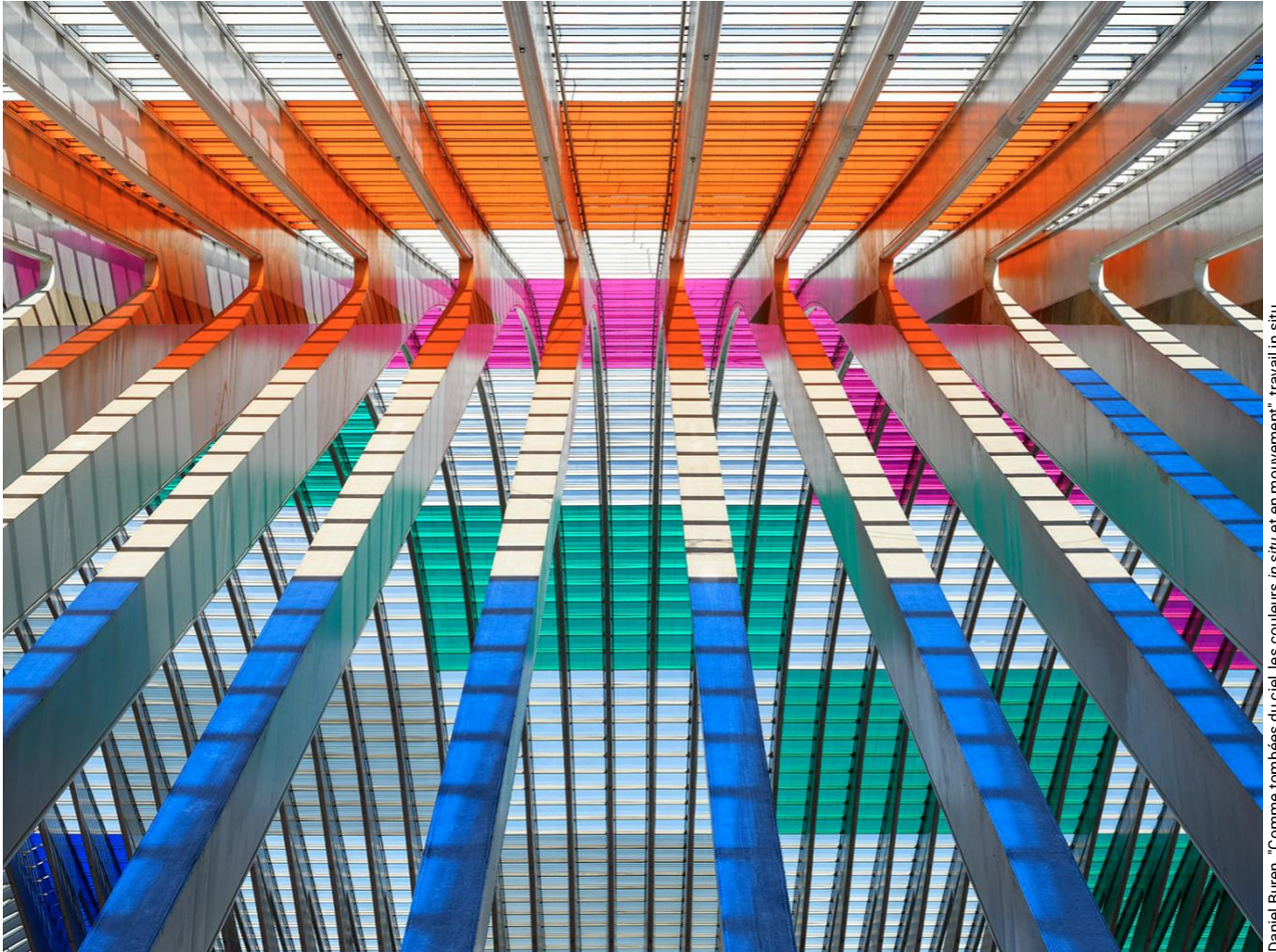


PRESS PACK



Daniel Buren, "Comme tombées du ciel, les couleurs *in situ* et en mouvement", travail *in situ* (détail) - Gare de Liège-Guillemins - 2022-2023. © Photo: J-L Deru © Daniel Buren, ADAGP, Paris.

# « Comme tombées du ciel, les couleurs *in situ* et en mouvement »

An exhibition of Daniel Buren; production: Uhoda Group; artistic coordination: Joël Benzakin

15 October 2022 – June 2024

From 15 October 2022 to June 2024, on the initiative of the Uhoda Group, which made this project happen, Liège-Guillemins station is the backdrop of a major art exhibit: a monumental and temporary work by Daniel Buren, one of France's best known artists worldwide.

Designed to be in accord with the architecture of Santiago Calatrava, this work entitled *Comme tombées du ciel, les couleurs in situ et en mouvement* is deployed across all the glass panels of the station canopy to create an interplay of colour. This is a monumental work that will be constantly in movement, depending on the light of the day, the time of day and the seasons.

With this work, the artist has metamorphosed the station. It is an invitation to the public to look at this architecture afresh, to experience the poetic potential of daily life and discover the unexpected.

*I am a fan of breaking down the barriers to contemporary art. One of my main motivations in developing this project was to use a public space to make the work of an internationally recognised artist accessible to as many people as possible and to promote our city on the international cultural scene.*

Stéphan Uhoda

## **THE BUDGET**

### ***80% private-sector funded***

It has cost close to EUR 600 000 to bring this work to fruition. The Uhoda Group is assuming the financial risk and has concluded partnerships with private sector players to cover the whole of the operation's budget.

Public sector funding from the Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles, the Ville de Liège and the Province de Liège has covered only a small part of the total amount, i.e. less than 20%. The public sector paid for the preparatory study which drew up the initial plan and checked whether the project was technically and legally feasible.

The main private sector partners are the Ardent Group, the Eiffage Group, Matexi, the National Lottery, Sud Info and Vranken-Pommery Monopole. Altura Access, Liège Airport, Mosal, O.C.O Technical, Point Chaud and Van der Valk Hotels & Restaurants have also supported the project.

## THE OPERATORS

*Involvement of local firms; social inclusion*

### Putting the work in place

The work was put in place by Belgian companies. It was a priority for Stéphan Uhoda, the project's backer, to use as many local firms as possible. Visual Impact cut the coloured vinyl; O.C.O Technical and Altura Access were responsible for cleaning the glass panels and placing the coloured film.

### Flanking support

Consistent with its belief in the value of social inclusion, the Uhoda Group worked with the Liège CPAS (social services) to implement a collaboration which has resulted in jobseekers who are receiving social benefits under Belgium's 'Article 60' scheme being hired to work on this project.

A plan of the 'best views' was drawn up and made available free of charge. This plan will enable visitors to get the most out of this work.

## THE INTENT

Doing justice to the quality of Santiago Calatrava's architectural achievement required an artistic concept of equivalent standing. That is how the idea came about of associating the work of Daniel Buren with that of Santiago Calatrava, two great international figures in contemporary creation.

They agreed immediately on the interest that a dialogue between art and architecture could have for the public, the more so in an eminently public space like a station. Santiago Calatrava gave Daniel Buren a free hand without even knowing what he had in mind.

*"It is essential to keep in mind that more than one hundred thousand people go through this station each week and that they are not there to look either at a work of art or anything in particular. We must not lose sight of this: there needs to be something unexpected for them to discover."*

Daniel Buren

The imposing glass surfaces, which through Santiago Calatrava's architecture mean convey an omnipresent externality, lightness and transparency, have become the privileged setting for Daniel Buren's work.

By using transparent coloured filters to superimpose large rectangles on half the glass panels, Daniel Buren's work has enhanced the spatial dimension of this

architecture, endowed it with a more accessible visual presence and decorated the building with blocks of colour which will create chromatic projections that will spread throughout the station depending on the movement of natural light.

As a result, the public will be able to observe and absorb the variations in colour of a work which offers a new perspective on a building which was already remarkable in many ways.

*"It is the sun and the sky that will make these entirely coloured rectangles come to life with their projections onto the platforms, people, trains, objects, the stairs.... These projections will unleash the colour to meander freely."*

Daniel Buren

## THE ARTISTIC CONCEPT

*Comme tombées du ciel, les couleurs in situ et en mouvement* makes use of the main arched canopy and the two side awnings of the station. Daniel Buren's starting point was a very precise analysis of the 'as-is', taking a minimalist approach to what was there already and then making a proposal for transforming it.

Daniel Buren likes to see his work as "borrowing a landscape", a term taken from the Japanese expression 'Shakkei'. For a predetermined period, the work of the artist and the architect are one: borrowing from that on which and through which the work exists.

The work covers part of the station roof with self-adhesive and transparent filters. Seven colours have been selected in all, which cover 10 000 sq.m. of the building's roof.

Five colours (pink, green, blue, white and orange) form a checkerboard pattern on the glass panels and two others (yellow and red) have been used on the side awnings in a form that is reminiscent of the striped panels, which have been a recurrent feature of the artist's work since 1960.

Apart from the red and yellow on the awnings, which the artist included as an allusion to the flag of the Province of Liège, the selection of the colours and the way they are placed is not the result of a specific request or aesthetic preference on the part of the artist; they are a function of the colours available for the material used and of a recurrent principle in his work, which is to position the colours from left to right in the alphabetical order of the country where the work is located.

*"From the beginning to the end of a massive succession of blocks of colour, parallel lines are left empty so that the colour of the sky can shine through and add all the colours of nature to the colours of this work."*

Daniel Buren

Laying the colours out in a checkerboard design makes it possible for visitors to contemplate the movement of the sky and the projections of colour simultaneously, thus enabling visitors to discover and understand the relationship between light and the projection of colour. According to the artist, the meaning of the work would be lost if there were total immersion in the colour (without the alternating empty space).

The horizontal nature of the work adds visibility to the projection of colour. This is unlike stained glass windows in churches, which only project a minimum amount of colour onto the ground because of their verticality.

The result is an interplay of strong contrasts which is at one and the same time in movement, thanks to the constantly changing projections and reflections, and stable as a result of the effect of the self-adhesive film on the roof.

*“On sunny days, there will be splashes of colour on the ground, both close to the person and far away, depending on where that person is in the station. And that should lead those who see that there is colour at their feet to lift their eyes. At that point, they will see what has been going on above them. At two moments in time.”*

Daniel Buren

The decision to exhibit the work for a full year was deliberate as the work will be in constant motion through the changes of the four seasons. Transforming the building so radically engenders a fresh look at the architecture and provides the impetus for a new approach.

## **THE TECHNICAL CHALLENGES**

Once a study on the technical feasibility of this work was ready, installation could begin on 1 August 2022. It took more than two months.

One of the major technical challenges of the project was access to the station roof canopy. Only specialist teams of rope access technicians could be used to place the vinyl film in seven colours on the structure (five colours for the glass and two for the side awnings). On each glass panel there is a film which adheres to the surface of the glass.

The surface size was also a determining factor, i.e. more than 10 000 sq.m. of colour transparencies across the glass panels and the two side awnings, both of which are vertical.

## THE SITE

Liège-Guillemins international station, which is a veritable cathedral of light, was designed by Spanish architect, Santiago Calatrava, and inaugurated in September 2009.

Creation of the station was the cornerstone of the renaissance of the approach Liège takes to mobility.

With its vaulted roof of glass and metal, this station is considered an architectural jewel.

This is also one of the most frequented stations in the Belgian federal region of Wallonia. France, Germany, Luxembourg and the Netherlands are within easy reach by Thalys, ICE and InterCity train.

*"I was immediately overwhelmed: from afar by the immense vaulting roof, which almost gives the impression of enveloping the whole of the city centre, and then as I came closer, by the beauty of the building. Of all the stations I know, it is among those – of those built recently – which carry on the tradition of the early days of the railways of sumptuous stations, like Antwerp and the main Paris stations. The site is completely amazing and unique."*

Daniel Buren

## A CLOSE PARTNERSHIP WITH THE SNCB

Belgium's national railways, the SNCB (Société nationale des Chemins de fer belges) has partnered with and facilitated the project. As host of the work, the SNCB has worked closely with the Uhoda Group to bring this project about.

SNCB stations are characterised by being traversed by large numbers of passengers. They are part of the urban fabric, and as such they are as much locations where exchanges and culture have their place as they are mobility hubs. As transit sites which welcome visitors from every walk of life, today's stations are becoming lively sites for interchange and social cohesion.

Liège-Guillemins station is frequently the scene of many cultural and sporting events. The station and the esplanade regularly host concerts and exhibitions and are becoming places of interest as a result – to the benefit both of the SNCB's passengers, who are using a living station, and of the surrounding area.

Liège-Guillemins is an important national and international railway hub. It is among the Belgian stations with the most traffic, handling more than one hundred thousand passengers a week. This artwork will not only provide these visitors with a special

experience but also those who pass through, who will be able to admire the poetry of the light reflections in the station through the window of their train.

## **ABOUT DANIEL BUREN**

Born in 1938 in Boulogne-Billancourt, Daniel Buren began developing a radical form of painting from the early 1960's. It is a form which creates an interplay between economical use of materials and the relationships between substance and form. In 1965, at a time when he was painting works which allied round shapes and different sizes and coloured stripes, he decided to use an industrial textile with vertical alternating coloured and white stripes, each 8.7 cm wide. In his work, Daniel Buren generates a reflection on painting, on how it is presented and, more broadly, on the physical and social environment within which the artist works.

Daniel Buren's works systematically lead to a rethinking of their location, locations for which they are specifically designed. As a result, he invented the term of a work *in situ*, which has since then characterised most of his work.

Daniel Buren is known for his many works and in particular *Les Deux Plateaux* in the main courtyard of the Palais Royal in Paris in 1985-86.

His *in situ* installations play with viewpoints, space, colour, light, movement, the environment, perspective or projection, deploying their decorative power by radically transforming their location.

For more than 45 years, Daniel Buren has been using transparent barriers (windows, glass panels, façades...) and changing their appearance and their colour. These works are incorporated in architecture so that they become privileged supporting structures for *in situ* works, works which are generally ephemeral and vary as the natural lights evolves.

Examples have been *L'observatoire de la lumière*, which utilised the glass panels of the International Pavillion at the Louis Vuitton Foundation during the 1976 Venice Biennale, an installation at the KAFD Conference Center in Riyadh in 2020, and *Pavoiser* in the Winter Garden of the Elysée Palace in 2020.

With more than three thousand exhibitions, Daniel Buren is one of the international art scene's most active and best known artists. His work has been shown by major institutions and in a wide range of locations around the world. In 1965 he won the Paris Biennale Prize and in 1986 he won the Golden Lion for the French pavilion at the Venice Biennale.

In 2007, Daniel Buren received the Praemium Impériale for painting. This honour is awarded by the Emperor of Japan and is regarded as the Nobel prize for the visual arts.

Daniel Buren has been represented in Liège's public spaces since 1980 with *Lambris*, an *in situ* work carried out at the Sart-Tilman University Hospital at the invitation of the architect Charles Vandenhove.

## **ABOUT THE UHODA GROUP**

Stéphan Uhoda is a Liège entrepreneur strongly attached to his city. He has been at the head of the Uhoda Group since 1983.

The Uhoda Group, which is a service provider in Belgium and other countries, sets store by contributing to Liège's social and cultural life.

The Uhoda Group also has a collection of modern art which attaches importance to young artists while nevertheless including major names from the world of Belgian and international contemporary art.

This project at Liège-Guillemins station is part of the group's broader ambition to share its collection and break down the barriers to contemporary art. Through this work by Daniel Buren and by siting the work in a such a public location as a station, the Uhoda Group is seeking to make a work by an internationally recognised artist accessible to as many people as possible.



## PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Daniel Buren  
Comme tombées du ciel, les couleurs  
*in situ* et en mouvement  
15 October 2022 to June 2024

Inauguration open to the public  
without registration: Saturday 15  
October at 4 p.m.

Info & reservations  
[www.colorexperience.be](http://www.colorexperience.be)

## CONTACTS

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# THE PARTNERS

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