

Art in America

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Valerie Jaudon at Von Lintel

As an artist associated with the Pattern and Decoration movement of the late 1970s, Valerie Jaudon remains committed to painting that is at once abstract, geometric and ornamental. She is deeply attached to symmetry, and thus to the repetition and change obtained when images are mirrored. Her pictures allude to a long tradition of abstract and figurative decoration reaching across mediums, geographical boundaries and time. Her art is about the sheer beauty as well as the universality and validity of ornament, condemned by many early 20th-century modernists for being sensual, bourgeois and—supposedly—anti-intellectual. Jaudon's project underscores the lasting relevance of ornament by disassociating it from its traditional contexts and isolating it in painting as an object for esthetic contemplation.

The Joker is Wild is a 36-inch square with a blurred plaid motif in red, white and yellow serving as a backdrop for the flat curvilinear geometric forms painted a solid light yellow. These shapes fill the entire composition, while allowing for plenty of breathing space between the forms. The grid hovers somewhere behind the picture plane; its blurriness suggests that either it or the forms at the surface of the painting were flashing by before being arbitrarily locked into place.

There is something almost authoritarian to the strict order of this arrangement.

In *Sirocco* (72 inches square, oil and alkyd on canvas on board, 2003), the work is twice the size and the situation is reversed, as flat, red geometric shapes hover before a field of yellow vertically streaked with red. The number of shapes at the surface of the painting has increased significantly. Here, as in the previous example, the left half mirrors the right, and the top half mirrors the bottom. The forms are arranged one above the other in discrete vertical columns. A dazzling result is achieved through the intricacy of the whole, the bright colors—whose luminosity is enhanced by a thick coat of varnish—and the play between opaque, knife-sharp forms and the diaphanous scrim behind them.

In these pictures, Jaudon overlays two seemingly antithetical modes of painting, to striking effect. Her work alludes to the intellectual rigor at the root of abstract ornament and how the laws that govern such ornament offer a parallel to the laws governing nature. —*Michaël Amy*



Valerie Jaudon: *Sirocco*, 2003, oil and alkyd on canvas on board, 72 inches square; at Von Lintel.