

REVIEWS

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New York

VALERIE JAUDON, Sidney Janis Gallery; JOHN DUFF, ROBERT MANGOLD, BRUCE NAUMAN, Blum Helman Gallery; JOHN TORREANO, in the artist's studio:

VALERIE JAUDON

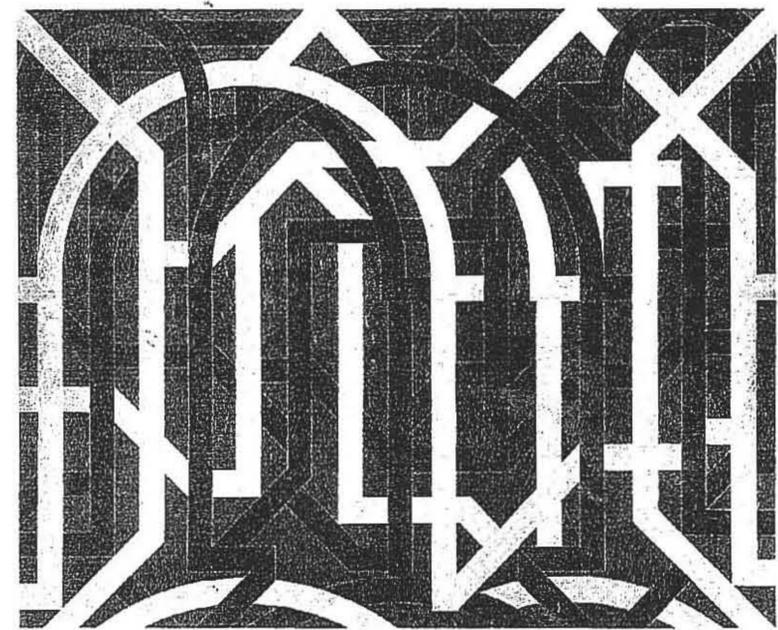
Valerie Jaudon's paintings have long been rationalist anomalies amid the sensualist extravaganzas of the so-called "pattern and decoration" group. Like her peers Robert Kushner and Kim MacConnel, Jaudon was a protégé of the late Amy Goldin, the American critic who almost single-handedly posited a theoretical alternative to the ideological stranglehold reductivism had over advanced art in the late '60s. Radically unlike the other two painters, however, Jaudon has been an abstractionist in all her work. Her affinities seem to have been more for certain aspects of Frank Stella's early-to-middle-period paintings—especially his treatment of form in a geometry-based, all-over drawing style—than anything else.

From the first, her paintings have shared a structural order: bands of unmodulated, troweled-on color are separated from one another by thin stripes of uncolored canvas and arranged so as to establish inviolate patterns. These patterns have consistently seemed to have a three-dimensional reality about them, combining as they do the arching loftiness of Islamic and/or Gothic architecture with the physical intricacies of manuscript illuminations.

Two significant complications mark Jaudon's most recent paintings. Most

noticeable is the introduction of a third color in her previously bichrome schemes. These third colors are not the complementary hues that might have been expected; metallic paints glow from several of the pictures, and strident contrasts distinguish them all. Jaudon's palette continues to strike me as unusual, as much because of her penchant for combining unlikely colors as for her rigorous exploration of each single tone within the drawn element it occupies. And this determination to push these single colors to their load-bearing limits is as often as not the key to success in one of her paintings. The inviolable patterns offer no structural relief in reading a work, so that if the colors constituting it (and their integration into the pattern) are less than perfectly legible, all is lost.

Thus the less immediately evident but potentially more valuable alteration in Jaudon's new work, her move away from the strictly frontal, symmetrical order of her previous paintings, takes on added importance. Abstract conceits, at first glance very much like their forebears, continue to be the paintings' contents. But the relatively shallow figure-ground space of the past has given way to a more substantive, more penetrable space. With this move Jaudon has almost literally opened a door into her work. In the large painting *Montrose*, 1983, the eye is obliquely led from left to right through the architectural allusions of the drawing in a way that at the same time reveals and enriches its spatial constructs. In such paintings as *Caledonia*, 1982, the logic of the intersecting bands is no longer evident, even while their "reality" is underscored by their bright coloration on a black ground.



Valerie Jaudon, *Montrose*, 1983, oil on canvas, 94 x 116".

Four small pictures, each 22 inches square, share the same fragment of a larger pattern. Through this standardized course Jaudon has run divergent three-color schemes in a kind of experiment in chromatic and structural values. From the deluxe associations of the pink and white bands over gold in *Friars Point*, 1983, to the neoplastic connotations of the yellow and white on black of *Fruitland Park*, 1983, Jaudon is exploring her new freedoms with aplomb.