



Valerie Jaudon, *Accomplice*, 1991, oil on canvas, 54x54 in. Sidney Janis Gallery, New York.

## Figuring Abstraction

In painting today there is a growing recognition that the use of the terms “figurative” and “representational” as the defining opposites of “abstract” and “non-representational” is not only inadequate but misleading. These exclusionary opposites have been useful in maintaining circumscribed prescriptions for and interpretations of abstract painting. The terms “non-representational” and “non-referential” refer to a practice that is in fact representational and referential. Abstraction has advertised its self-determination, self-containment, self-sufficiency, self-consciousness, and self-criticality. A closed and mandatory system of self-reference is no longer credible. Regardless of the intentions or skill of an artist, or the rigor of a critical methodology, meanings and values in art, being multiple and cumulative, cannot be fixed in any essential or absolute way. Abstract thinking is a part of daily life. It operates spontaneously and independently of specific systems or disciplines. Abstraction in this larger sense becomes a link to the world rather than a perpetual elaboration of the self.

VALERIE JAUDON