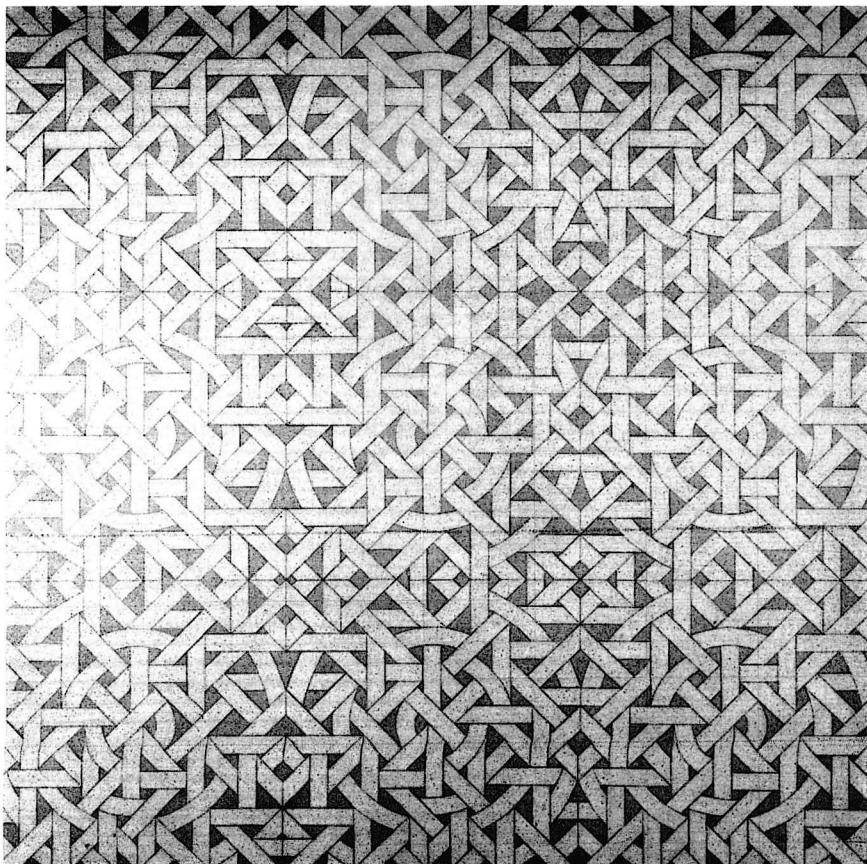


VALERIE JAUDON'S paintings brought something to my attention which is difficult to explain. (This difficulty is not what interests me, however.) The best way of putting it is that they do not seem to be abstract as much as representational of the abstract. They do not "represent" other abstract paintings or objects, nor do they parody them. They do not turn abstraction into a cartoon of itself. I don't mean that her paintings relate to abstraction as realist painting does to its ostensible subject matter. The paintings do not represent an instance of the abstract, of abstraction. They present a process of arriving at abstraction, as if abstraction were being reinvented. I am not sure what it is in the paintings themselves that creates this distinction.

The nonrelational formats are not derived from the edge, nor do they necessarily radiate from the center. Unlike Stella's one-color paintings and protractor works, which Jaudon's paintings superficially resemble, these have "spokes" which criss-cross the surface, without really starting or stopping anywhere. The whole effect is like the chicken-and-egg problem. Each of the ribbonlike sections is free although we read them as connected. They never touch. What is actually "under" or "over" is unclear. The paintings are generated from every point, so to speak, and the individual sections seem woven like baskets. To move with their making, we can read over and under, following the creation of pattern. The secret is not hidden in some primitive, pre-verbal response. It is there in the making. Jaudon's patterns are highly complex and detailed, and could be mistaken for those of the Middle East, but she makes them herself, builds them from scratch. Perhaps this information is part of my response. Let us say that her process unravels as we retrace the steps of her craft. Intricacies of craft are reintroduced as the primary condition of art. The rings of the concentric weavings are growth marks of a living thing, a tree cut through to reveal its age.

Jaudon uses metallic paints, and in-

troduces strange fleshes and beiges into a limited repertoire. Again, they are reminiscent of early Stella. Although her paintings look "simple"—what you see is what you see—they are not; they are not a "reduction" from something previous and they are not a beginning at zero. Quite the opposite, they start out in complexity. What seems unfortunate at this point is not what is expressed, but what is repressed. Like early Stella, there is a suppression of the painterly. (This goes hand-in-hand with suppressed color.) Jaudon's immediate sources are Islamic—and what better example of great expressive and decorative color? Her next move would seem to be toward even more complexity if she intends to tackle the color problem.



Valerie Jaudon, *Neshoba*, 1975, oil on canvas, 72 x 72".