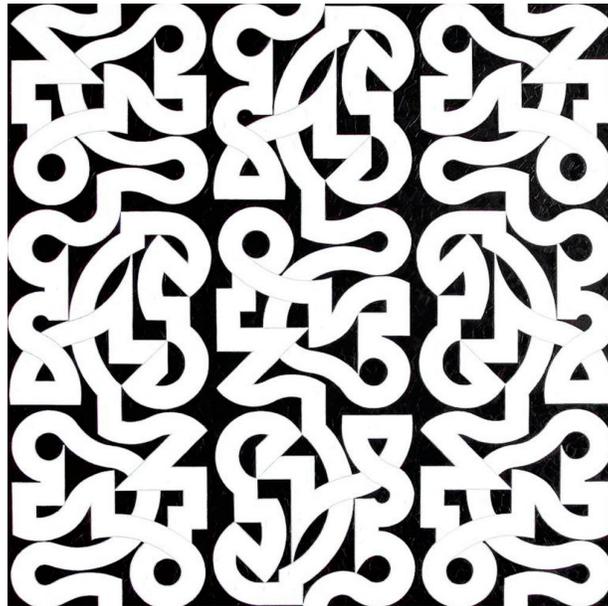


Art in America

Exhibition Reviews

MARCH 2013



Valerie Jaudon:
Glyph, 2012, oil on
canvas, 54 inches
square; at Von Lintel.

VALERIE JAUDON Von Lintel

In 1976, seven years out of art school and already critically recognized, Valerie Jaudon made a painting that established the technique and the focused visual system she has rigorously mined ever since. It would be difficult to name another painter whose developmental pace has been as excruciatingly incremental, yet there is a madness to her method; never stagnant, Jaudon's signature approach continues to offer constant possibility, with the paintings in this recent exhibition being her best yet.

Jaudon usually employs just two or three unmodulated colors to create intricate configurations of wide, interwoven lines. Building up her surfaces with thick paint in short brushstrokes, she imposes these designs on natural or painted linen with such crisp precision that they appear almost carved. Much is made of her association with the short-lived but influential Pattern and Decoration movement of the '70s, yet ironically the ideas that the group was reacting against—those of Minimalism and Conceptualism—are clearly manifested in her paintings. More than anything, her works suggest Frank Stella's iconic black paintings taken to a convoluted extreme, especially when one notices the fine, seemingly incised outlines of her curving bands, which, like Stella's "pinstripes," are not painted but are glimpses of the raw support. Conceptualism's emphasis on systems and repetition is as much a part of Jaudon's work as it is of Sol LeWitt's, while her disciplined practice, with its barely measurable progress, is reminiscent of the way the late German Conceptualist Hanne Darboven used her "daily arithmetic" to try to bring order to an unruly world.

Jaudon's latest work, however, shows an appreciable shift. Previously, her imagery could be easily traced to precedents such as Gothic stonework, Celtic interlace, Islamic ornament and cal-

ligraphy, all of which employ repetition, intertwined or radiating structures, and rhythmic patterns. While these evocations are still evident in the paintings on view (all 2011 or 2012), they are now tightly woven into a language that is more specific to Jaudon, arising from her recent determination to compose her motifs with a single, continuous band. This has the effect of simultaneously unifying and activating the images, as well as making them more labyrinthine and serpentine, like an elaborately stylized scribble.

Circa is comprised of a single ribbon of white whose complex journey from one side of the canvas to the other fills the surface to its edges with an eye-boggling arabesque of razor-sharp corners, sweeping arcs, circles, half moons, zigzags, folds and dagger-sharp points, while the negative space of natural linen contributes its own fractal-like dance. In *Essay* and *Glyph*, the tangles of meandering white bands are clustered together in 3-by-3 arrangements of blocks. Even though the compositions offer the grid's promise of comforting predictability, each of their columns is made up of a single, winding line, imbuing the works with an exciting new energy.

With their ability to engage the eye in movement, Jaudon's paintings mimic the spontaneous and improvisational feel of Abstract Expressionism, while remaining steadfastly hard-edged and geometric. Whether the artist is attempting to bring order to chaos or chaos to order cannot be determined, but whatever she is doing, it works.

—Carol Diehl