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Art in Review

Valerie Jaudon

*Sidney Janis Gallery
110 West 57th Street
Manhattan
Through March 23*

Since her last show at Janis, three years ago, Valerie Jaudon has virtually reinvented herself as a painter. She still deploys curving linear designs on a rectilinear field, but the overall effect is dramatically different. The thick black bands of her new pictures are twisted into calligraphic spikes and flourishes, simultaneously bolder and more elegant than the curves in her earlier work. The background grids and color fields of the earlier pictures have been replaced by rows of narrow vertical stripes. Despite the monochrome palette, there's a powerful visual contrast between the razor-sharp outlines of the foreground curves and the flickering soft edges of the background stripes.

Ms. Jaudon's curves are now arranged in strict symmetry around a central axis that seems to have been deliberately left vacant. The viewer's eye, traversing the writhing lines at right and left, is pulled irresistibly back toward this vacancy, like an errant asteroid drawn into a black hole. The ominous quality of the black, white and gray compositions is intensified by the glossy glaze sealing off the canvases, as if they were designed to resist industrial-strength solvents. Ms. Jaudon's calligraphic forms recall the work of painters like Philip Taaffe or Elliott Puckette, but the elegant brutality of her new paintings is distinctly personal.

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