



Annotated Listing of Permanent Public and Architectural Projects

by Jane Necol

As interested in cultural debate as in shaping our experience of space through her distinct mode of abstraction, Valerie Jaudon melds utility and ornament, feminist collaborative practice, and architecture in her site specific projects, sympathetically combining simply fabricated materials with their environment to narrate symbolically the sites' function. Having received a tutorial in the history and theory of architecture while working on projects for the Philadelphia firm of Mitchell/Giurgola, she applied her intuitive, orderly process of painting to real materials in real space. By going outside art, she found the same language of form and structure in abstract painting and modern architecture. This lucid approach, in its turn, equipped Jaudon to tackle the enormous demands of public commissions in a confidently visionary but non-confrontational manner that asserted that human needs and design belonged on equal footing and complemented her commitment to rethinking the relationship of art and craft.

1977

*Untitled ceiling mural,
oil on plaster, 90' x 22'.
Philadelphia INA building,
Pennsylvania; Romaldo
Giurgola, architect.*

Jaudon's fresco-like ceiling, painted *in situ* in an interlace of matte robin's egg blue and glossy white tinted flesh-pink, is formally related to the lobby's design of built-in geometric shapes and "lines the eye doesn't even see." Her modular drawing unfolds into a four-part painting, insinuating itself into the lobby's architectonics and altering the vast space.

1988

*Long Division,
fence, painted steel, 12' x 60'.
MTA Lexington Avenue and
23rd Street subway station
New York, New York.*

Among the first artists commissioned to create architectural projects for New York's mass transit system, Jaudon transformed the little cavelike subway station—a space without architecture—into a knowable place. Based on patterns in her architectural paintings, a security fence was built in the MTA's requisite one-inch steel bars welded in a matrix of 2 x 2 steel posts; in the fence's lateral extension and angled corner, the symmetry of the paintings was broken open. Guided by the structural "bones" of the station, she designed the fence to divide the paid and unpaid zones of the station, bringing a logical structure as well as a psychological dimension of seeing into the unknown to the space. Permeable by the eye, the fence functions as a "transparent lens through which the people can see where they are going and where they have been."

*Detail of Blue Pools Court-
yard (left). Birmingham
Museum of Art, Alabama.*

1988

*Untitled fence,
wrought iron, 10' x 21'.
Philadelphia Planned Parenthood
Headquarters, Pennsylvania;
George Yu, architect.*

Contextually part of the historic site through its size and method of fabrication, the fence, located along the building's discreet side entrance, is delicately proportioned to the scale of the 19th century row house, forming a secure but airy gateway between public and private space through which a small garden is visible. Hand-forged of one-half inch iron bars, the modular sections in Jaudon's signature curvilinear patterns were wrought into sculptural form by traditional blacksmithing.

1988-1989

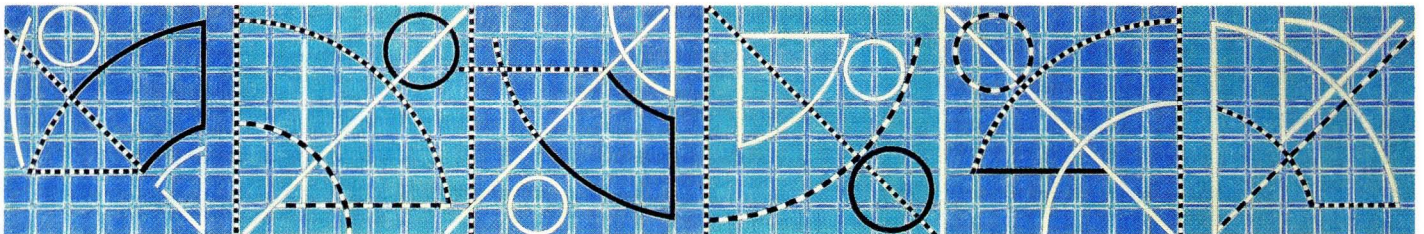
*Pilot, wall mural,
oil on canvas, 8' x 16'.
Atlanta City Hall, Georgia.*

Satisfying the artist's desire to make a large, architecturally-scaled work, this double-square painting in three shades of cadmium red, essentially the next work after *Constant* (page 64), was created at long distance, information about the lobby space learned from the architect's drawings.

1989

*Freestyle, wall mural,
ceramic tile, 12' x 72'.
Equitable building, New York,
New York.*

Luxurious but simple, the pool-sized mural is perfectly suited to its site—the pool room of a private health club designed by Edward Larrabee Barnes—in its architecturally-referenced design and maintenance-free material. Mirroring the pool from the wall, the mural is composed of custom-made ceramic tiles cut to fit the design in cool blue, turquoise, black and white, reflecting not only the color harmonies of Moorish ornamental art but also the colors of the water and details of the pool. The animated horizontal composition of diagonal lines, arcs and circles in “dashes” of black and white over a gridded field of blue and turquoise, builds on the spare linearity of the space, whose crossed diagonals of the cove ceiling and the curve of the archway are repeated across the mural, creating a swinging rhythm that keeps time with the strokes of a swimmer cutting through water. An aqueous light suffuses the space, magically the palest green, like the lapping water and the hazy translucency serendipitously acquired by the turquoise tiles during firing.



1989

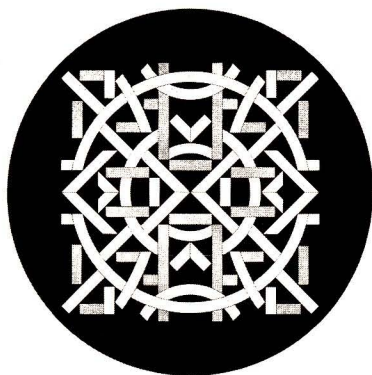
*Untitled windows,
stained glass, 7' x 24'.
Private residence, Malibu,
California.*

Skied at clerestory level in a two-storied room facing the Pacific Ocean, the three round-arched windows were fashioned of leaded glass with the techniques used to create the stained glass windows of medieval cathedrals. The thick ribbon interlace of white on a blue field is translucent enough to glimpse a bird's silhouette yet mysteriously opaque, the blue the very color of the sky on a cloudless day, and the faintly pinkish white equal in brightness to pure light on an overcast day at the beach.

1989

*Reunion, paving plan,
brick and granite with inlaid
granite floor, 3.5 acres, 34'
diameter, respectively. Police
Plaza/Municipal Building,
New York, New York.*

Inspired by the area's palimpsest of historical architecture, Jaudon has worked to bring enduring order to the sprawling 3.5 acre urban space bounded by the venerable Municipal Building (designed by McKim, Mead and White) and Police Plaza. By subtly organizing the spatial and architectural environment through her unobtrusive design of sturdy brick pavements spread like geometric blankets of rectilinear patterns in pink, dark red and dark gray brick over the multi-leveled area to demark eight plazas and emphasize the axial vista west to the Hudson River down the central promenade, she offers a measured dignity to the pedestrian navigating the eccentrically-shaped terrain. Drawing the visual field together is a 34' wide medallion in an interlace of red, white and black granite set into the bricks at the arched entrance to the Municipal Building, its diameter and scale of design corresponding to the archway's coffered barrel vault. Overall, in spite of delays inevitable in public commissions of this scope and politicization, Jaudon's considered design for the needs of 20,000 human beings who stream through the area daily is a triumph of feminist collaborative practice.



1991

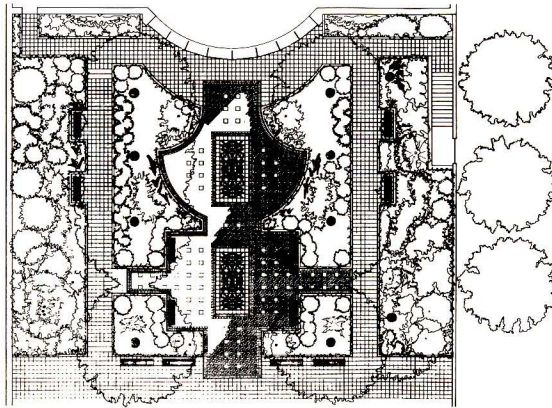
*Eastern Standard, wall mural,
oil on canvas, 16' x 13'.
1675 Broadway, New York,
New York.*

The mural-like painting, visible from the street, summons one's gaze while structuring and warming the tenebrous lobby paneled in green granite through the artist's eloquent use of three intense cadmium reds, the one synthetic paint adding a neon zest to the already saturated color. Her largest painting, its dynamic composition is similar to smaller works of the same date (*Azimuth*, page 67).

1993

Blue Pools Courtyard,
garden, pool and bench design,
plantings, bluestone, brick, tile,
cast iron, 70' x 80'. Birmingham
Museum of Art, Alabama;
Edward Larrabee Barnes, architect.

Jaudon has fused knowledge of art, architecture and landscape architecture with a gift for social discourse to create a garden of delights. Like Persian carpets, the shield-shaped and rectilinear-shaped pavements of locally mold-made red bricks and bluestone accents, spreading out from the glass-walled museum beneath a grove of oak trees, frame a physical and visual field to wander through. Set into the longitudinal axis are two rectangular reflecting pools, lined in ceramic tile in black, white, blue and turquoise curvilinear patterns, each geometric shape set to fit in opus sectile, the technique used by Jaudon in all her tile projects. The water's movement in the shallow pools was precisely calibrated so that the drawings are clearly visible from above. Adding an organic variable to the fabricated precision of the pavings and pools are the surrounding plantings that flower white in season which Jaudon selected in collaboration with local horticulturists. Modular cast iron park benches made locally in the disappearing art of sand casting invite tête-à-têtes. It is apparent that Jaudon's upbringing in the Deep South instantly reconnected her with native interests to create an oasis where geometric order converses with everchanging nature, stimulating and reposing human response.



1994

Refraction, wall mural,
ceramic tile, 15' x 15'.
Laboratory Science Building,
Staten Island College, New York;
Mitchell / Giurgola Architects.

Fitted within the functional lines of a glass-walled stairwell, the square mural, designed like a painting in a checkerboard pattern of alternating white and colored blocks arranged in a color progression based on the spectrum (*Social Contract*, page 68), is made of vitreous glazed square tiles and smaller pieces laser-cut to fit the shape of the sharply-contoured overlaid black geometric figures. Natural light plays over the grid, breaking up the geometry and emphasizing the source of all color. Jaudon's figural chains sway over the field hardly begging the question, as if aesthetic distinctions must still be made between decorative art and fine art.