ARTS
MAGAZINE

By STEPHEN WESTFALL

VALERIE JAUDON

Valerie Jaudon may be the only painter bridging the gap between post-minimalist abstraction and Pattern and Decoration. Other painters have approached the orientalism of Pattern painting through a constructivist or neoplastic vocabulary (Peter Young, for one), but none have retained Jaudon's allegiance to the physicality of paint and the almost impersonal simplicity of her basic pictorial unit: flat colored bands of varying width woven into a pictorial scaffolding that reinforces the proportions of her rectangular format.

Jaudon's development has been marked by a slowly increasing asymmetry and spatial expansion in her compositions. A few years ago she wove her bands into structures as dense and balanced as basket weaves. Her paintings were mandalas with no obvious top or bottom. Though more playful, they possessed some of the blunt, programmatic power of Stella's black paintings. Lately, she has opened her compositions to outline an architecture that is a combination of Moorish, Gothic, Deco, and positively airy where larger areas of background color are exposed.

Her compositions still reinforce the rectangle but the movements are now attenuated arabesques that carry the eye through canvas-length sequences of diagonals, arcs, verticals, and stairsteps. It's like an aesthetically heightened game of "Chutes and Ladders." The paint is lusciously troweled on in rhythmic gestures that break up and reshape light across the surface. Her color remains didactic as opposed to atmospherically descriptive, but the range has widened considerably.

All these changes were under way in her last show, yet the paintings here seem just a little more consolidated. Her programmatic manner of working could be a trap but right now the paintings look terrific. And it was encouraging to see a group of comparatively loosely worked charcoals in which her structures seemed to rise out of mists like the utopian architecture envisioned in the 1930s. (Sidney Janis, *April 11-May 4*)

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