

# Message pattern

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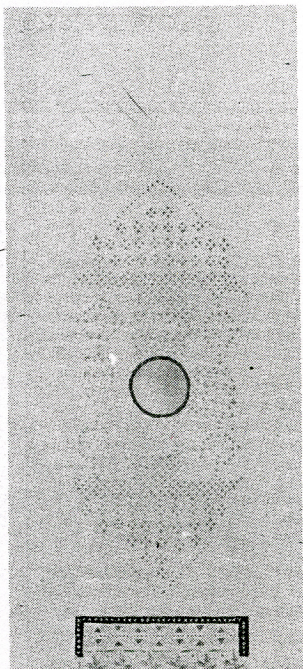
**LABELLING** A painter's style decorative is not usually the ultimate compliment. Decorative works are often facile surfaces that neglect the working through of basic ideas related to colour, space and composition. Yet throughout the history of art many artists have used decorative elements to great advantage and have produced works that rise way above the merely ornamental.

Paintings by two artists (whose age, family background and historical references are in total contrast) currently on view contain marked differences in all ways except one: the distinct decorative infrastructure of their compositions.

**Asad Azi** is a young Druse painter from Shfar'am who creates pictures born of an involvement in ethnography, social interaction and local politics. Azi's current series of decorative mixed-media and collage panels has moved away from his Coptic style self-portraits of the past two years. Strangely, however, his new elongated vertical formats, coupled with rich chromatic pigments and tactile relief objects, convey a message related to people and place. In a way, Azi paints the skeletal essence of a collective being without actually showing its pictorial likeness.

Painted or applied running borders (floral fabrics or graphic design) mask either deeply toned red and orange fields or cut-out filigree patterns emulating mass-produced plastic table-cloths, here stretched several centimetres in front of their backings. The table-cloth motif, with its shadowy inner layer, also para-phrases detailing found in Islamic architectural interiors.

These elegant orientalist works are, despite their independent aesthetic appeal, clever critical assessments of our lives today. Even the



*Asad Azi: mixed media on canvas (Artifact Gallery, Tel Aviv).*

razor-sharp slits decorating the lacy white surfaces imply schism, sect and the rupture of fundamental fibre. (Artifact Gallery, 43 Nachmani, Tel Aviv). Till March 23.