



Anoka Faruqee, *Pink Gerber Daisy Paintings (Twins)*, 1999,
flashe on canvas, 48 x 40" each.

something reminiscent of an exercise from Painting 101: Faruqee observed a banana over time, transcribing its tone each day as accurately as possible. The resulting color studies, out of sequence, became source material for a painting, a field of very narrow vertical stripes. Her interest was not to chronicle the temporal journey of a banana from green to black; instead, she used her recovery of seemingly infinite shades of chartreuse and gold to create a compelling abstract image that is still somehow inexorably rooted in the seen. For Faruqee, color is an alphabet, a set of characters to be processed as she desires—yet it still retains a genetic link to its organic source.

Highly inventive pattern painting provides Faruqee with an arena for infinite calibration and permutation. She often employs smallish snowflake- or asterisk-shaped marks that fit fairly snugly with each other, laboriously but systematically weaving a kind of painted carpet out of thousands of uniform elements differentiated only by shade. Faruqee's work recalls other efforts that atomize color, from endlessly complex Islamic tiling to the chromatic pixelation of computer technology. All this introduces a new kind of neo-pointillism to the ambiguous relations of color to itself as well as form and substance, a remapping of the world into what seems an infinity of discrete tonal impulses. Faruqee assembles her little six-pronged pixels into dreamy images, often pillowy and vaguely atmospheric, detailed right down to each minute flange but subsumed within the larger pictorial flow. Sometimes she presents these in groups of two or three, as twins or triplets,

with subtle, almost imperceptible differences between them. Sometimes she will change the color of just one asterisk out of many, maybe shifting a pink in one panel to a rose in the other, as in the two-canvas *Pink Gerber Daisy Paintings (Twins)*, 1999. Composed of a narrower range of grays, *Inverse Twins*, 2000, presents a more obvious difference: One panel is the “reverse” of the other, with dark asterisks where its partner had light, and vice versa. And in several two-canvas works, such as *Evil Twin*, 2000, Faruqee presents precisely the same image at different scales, questioning what “larger” and “smaller” mean when they describe identical visual experiences. (And can they be called “identical” when the scale is clearly shifted? Is there a hierarchy of difference, with scale falling somewhere below tone?) These projects become tests, exercises in fastidious procedures that somehow constantly shift their parameters, creating mesmerizing paintings that unmask the illusion of stability and introduce equal amounts of doubt and pleasure into the always complex activity of looking.

—James Yood

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As this recent show demonstrates, painting can still serve as color's laboratory, with pattern one of its most powerful investigative tools. Anoka Faruqee breaks down painstakingly observed hues according to specificity and difference and combines the captured colors in sequences rich with optical intrigue. Take, for example, *Banana Painting*, 1999. It originates with