

Anoka Faruqee, Rebecca Shore

Gahlberg Gallery

College of DuPage

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At the critical junctures during the last 30 years that have defined the relevance of painting in contemporary art, pattern has continually resurfaced as a potent metaphorical serum to fight off the medium's officially declared "demise." Capable of evoking both irony and the sublime, or simultaneously being object and image, pattern continues to serve painters because of its slippery dualities that elude critical pigeonholing, yet which have the ability to foster some of the most intense perceptual and psychological interactions between the viewer and painting.

Anoka Faruqee and Rebecca Shore are two of Chicago's more hypnotic alchemists working with pattern-influenced painting. Their paintings, though different in scale, technique, and materials, replace the rigidity implied by the preconceptions of repetitive designs with a fluid, yet eerie visual dynamism. The resulting abstractions subvert the order and stability one has been culturally and perceptually conditioned to receive from pattern and its symbols.

Instead, Faruqee's and Shore's paintings replace the clarity of repetition with an aura of hallucinatory indeterminateness. Within these artists' compositions, individual elements—shapes, lines, negative spaces, colors—resist the sublimation that it is implied will occur if they conform to an image's larger visual structure. What appear to be amusing formal incongruities become subtle symbols of broader social disenfranchisement.

Shore's delicate use of egg tempera on panel would seem an odd choice for creating veiled references to cultural alienation. Her thin glazes of pale colors and rudimentary organic and geometric shapes, which appear appropriated from domestic wallpaper and tiled floors, initially appear innocuous. However this tranquillity is deceptive in compositions where minimal sets of elements never quite achieve the harmonious unity promised by her Shaker-like refinement. Shore's paintings quietly ask us to look over and over again at what we think we see, and to reevaluate the relationships we take for granted.

In their use of saturated flashe paint, dense designs, and large scales, Faruqee's canvases elevate the pixelated language of the computer to Rococo excess. Where Shore hides the individual inconsistencies of her designs in plain sight, Faruqee most often submerges her incongruities in the undulating fields created by the ever-shifting

tonal and color changes of a single, banal design element. When Faruqee uses the repeated rigid geometry of an asterisk shape to create a quivering, out-of-focus, amorphous red field, as in *Crimson Gerber Daisy Painting*, she perpetually suspends a sense of resolution by negating the implication that a larger image or pattern will come into focus. Each asterisk optically pulls itself toward the painting's surface seeking to momentarily break free from its anonymity, disrupting the group dynamic.

Faruqee's and Shore's subversive accomplishments as painters may be difficult to discern. However, taking their cues from the multiple high and low sources of pattern that have laid the ground-work for their paintings, these artists recognize that our desire to order the world is also one of the strongest means to revealing the one constant factor of existence—change.

John Brunetti is a critic and the Illinois editor of dialogue.

Anoka Faruqee

Asterisks, 1999. Flashe on canvas, 48" x 40".

Courtesy of Gahlberg Gallery.

