



Anoka Faruqee: Substance and Accident

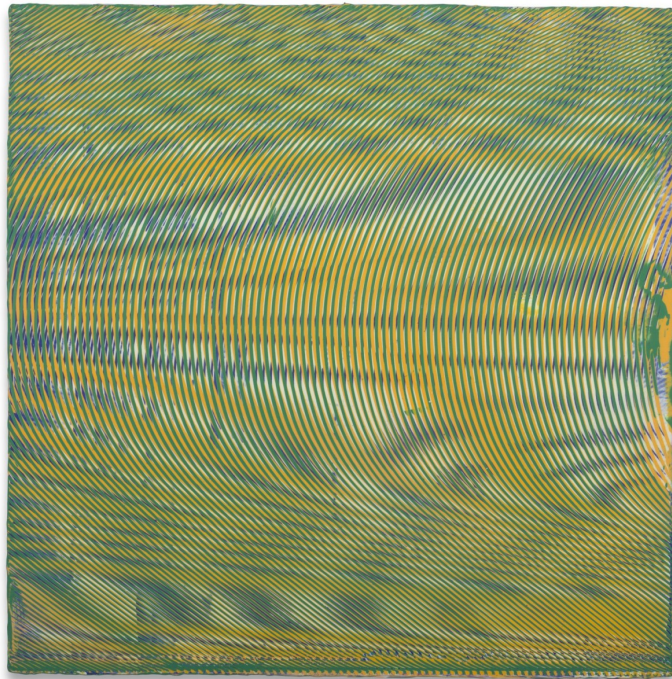
By Rob Marks

December 2, 2013

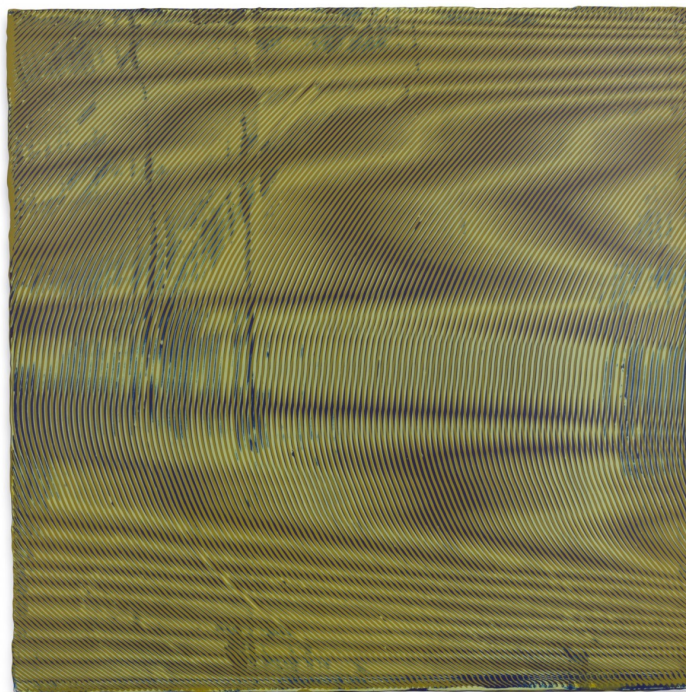
Anoka Faruqee's abstract artworks are demanding, not because they defy associations—as a Pollock drip painting does—but because the immediate associations they invite seem unproductive. If this sounds like a condemnation of the show, it is not.

There is a persistent critical tradition that dismisses abstract artwork whose conceptual content seems overshadowed by its form. Art critic and curator Lucy Lippard's 1965 denunciation of optical art sums up the feeling: "an art of little substance with less to it than meets the eye."¹ Lippard's evaluation comes to mind because Faruqee's thirteen paintings currently on view at the Hosfelt Gallery depict moiré patterns, one of the effects that Op artists explored.

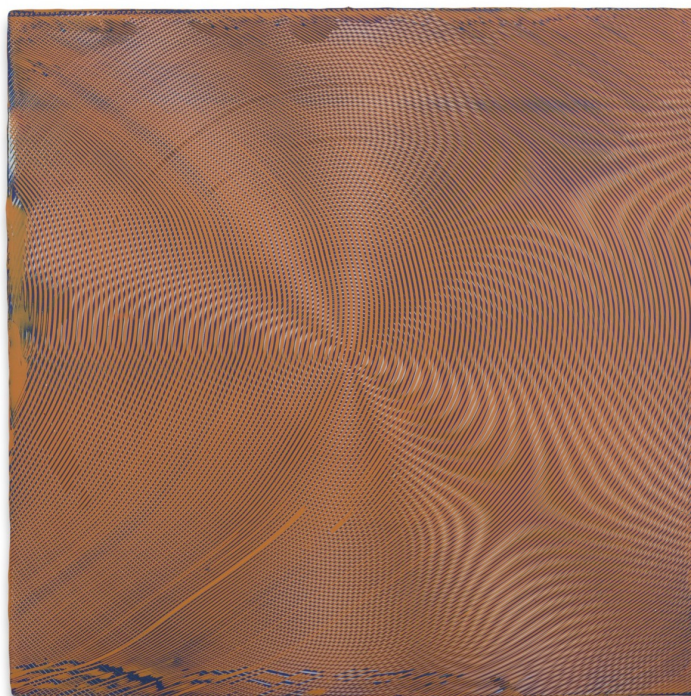
For some visitors, this criticism will resonate. Faruqee's *2013P-29*, *2013P-32*, and *2013P-34* (all 2013), for example, could appear as little more than decoration, gimmickry, or novelty. (Be forewarned that online viewing, which obscures the painterly qualities essential to these works, may seem to support these judgments.) But such easily drawn conclusions—the perception that Faruqee's patterns are self-evident—arise only because the conventional idea of moiré-ness, like an insidious stereotype, may distract viewers from the particular conditions that characterize Faruqee's expression of the pattern, and from the nature of her painted surfaces.



Anoka Faruqee. *2013P-34*, 2013; acrylic on linen on panel; 33.75 x 33.75 in. Courtesy of the Artist and Hosfelt Gallery



Anoka Faruqee. *2013P-32*, 2013; acrylic on linen on panel; 22.5 x 22.5 in. Courtesy of the Artist and Hosfelt Gallery



Anoka Faruqee. *2013P-29*, 2013; acrylic on linen on panel; 33.75 x 33.75 in. Courtesy of the Artist and Hosfelt Gallery

Survey *2013P-34* from afar and it resolves as moiré. Dissect it up close and it dissolves into painted lines and arcs. Experience it from the middle distance and pattern and paint coexist: green over yellow over purple—fading at times to blue—over white. The combination of green and yellow arcs on the right side of the painting, which form the top layer of

the moiré pattern, at the same time insist on their independence from it, gathering strength halfway up the canvas before escaping its top edge. Green and yellow lines form what appears to be a scrim overlaying a background—horizontal bands of yellow and vertically inclining ones of green—that recedes into the distance like sunlight and shadow on water. Purple, its bluish shadow, and white sound grace notes throughout the painting, subtly enhancing these perceptual experiences. Other Faruqee paintings act differently, but all produce this dynamic of depth, breadth, and layering that reads as both moiré and not-moiré. The canvas is barely able to contain these multiple activities.

In this light, Faruqee’s moiré paintings are not paintings of moiré patterns at all. They are paintings of a world in which moiré infiltrates the landscape, configurations in which a two-dimensional pattern—which, as the Hosfelt website puts it, “refer[s] to a common and unwanted effect of digital and print imagery”—discloses itself as three-dimensional. It’s as if the paintings documented Faruqee’s discovery that moiré was the world’s underlying principle. All of this might still leave Lippard less than compelled. However, if the pioneering Op artist Bridget Riley is right that “viewers experience at one and the same time something known and something unknown,” then Faruqee’s paintings acquire the substance that Lippard prescribes by exposing the danger of superficial observation and revealing form as much more than it appears to be.

Anoka Faruqee, Hosfelt Gallery is on view at [Hosfelt Gallery](#), in San Francisco, through December 7, 2013.

Notes

1. Cited in Joe Houston, “1965: The Year of Op/2007,” in *Abstraction*, ed. Maria Lind (London: Whitechapel Gallery; and Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2013), 83.
2. Hosfelt Gallery Exhibitions, “Anoka Faruqee: Substance and Accident,” Hosfelt Gallery <http://www.hosfeltgallery.com/index.php?p=exhibitions&id=284> (accessed November 2, 2013).
3. Bridget Riley, “Perception Is Medium/1965,” in *Abstraction*, 87.

