

GAGOSIAN MUSE

Adriana Varejão
The Art of Azulejão
An intense reflection on culture and history



[Proposal for a Catechesis – Part I Diptych: Death and Dismemberment], 1993 © Adriana Varejão. Photo by Eduardo Ortega. Courtesy Gagosian Gallery

Gagosian Gallery presents **Adriana Varejão**, perhaps best known for her incisive reflections on the rich yet conflicted history and culture of Brazil, embodied in her “azulejão” or “big tile”. Highly inventive paintings and painted tiles whose complex provenance connects Brazil with Portugal, as azulejo, a square glazed terracotta tile, is the most widely used form of decoration in Portuguese national art.

The azulejo constantly renewed its vigor, reflecting the organic eclecticism of a culture that was both expansive and open to dialogue. Varejão’s “big tiles” are rendered on canvas in plaster and oil paint. The plaster is applied thickly to canvases laid on the ground and then left to dry. During the drying process, cracks begin to appear, as if by some natural geological phenomenon, so that every surface is unique and unrepeatable.

The works in the current exhibition on view until December 10 2016, conceived specifically with the Rome gallery in mind, are the artist’s largest single tile paintings to date, measuring 180

centimeters squared. Motifs painted in subtle variations of blue and white according to their specific historical referents, are enlarged to the point where they begin dissolving into opulent abstract gestures.

“IN THE BAROQUE, BEAUTY AND THE GROTESQUE ARE ALWAYS LIKE OPPOSITE — IT’S AN AESTHETIC THAT DEALS WITH CONTRASTS.” —ADRIANA VAREJÃO