

GAGOSIAN
ARTFORUM

Adriana Varejão

Marta Silvi



Adriana Varejão, *Azulejão (voluta)* [Big Tile (volute)], 2016, oil and plaster on canvas, 70 7/8 × 70 7/8".

GAGOSIAN GALLERY | ROME
Via Francesco Crispi 16
October 1–December 10

For “*Azulejão*” (Big Tile), Adriana Varejão has covered the gallery’s curved walls with enormous pieces inspired by traditional Portuguese tilework. Square tiles of enameled terra-cotta have served a dual function since the Middle Ages—they’re ornamental but also practical for cladding and waterproofing buildings. Here, Varejão, who is interested in the history and culture of Brazil, employs the highly recognizable material to represent her native land’s ties to Portugal, ties established through the vicissitudes of trade and colonialism. She allowed a layer of plaster on each of her large canvases to dry until it yielded cracks and rifts. She then applied blue and white oil paint, creating resolutely enlarged details (an angel’s head, a Doric column, a rose, a shell) that approach a gestural abstraction evoking the works of Franz Kline or Emilio Vedova. The show opens with *Monocromo Roma II* (Rome Monochrome II), 2016. With a paucity of color that seemingly pays homage to Alberto Burri’s “Cretti” series, it serves as a tabula rasa that launches the rest of the work conceived specifically for the show.

A single totemic sculpture destabilizes the viewer’s gaze. It, too, is clad in majolica tiles, but tangles of bloody viscera emerge, like a trompe l’oeil that verges on splatter. The show concludes with *Transbarroco*, 2014, a unique multichannel video installation. Wide-angled shots present the spectacular interiors of Baroque churches in the Brazilian states of Minas Gerais and Bahia, and a captivating recording of a Candomblé ritual is interspersed with readings of texts that examine Brazilian identity.

Translated from Italian by Marguerite Shore.