

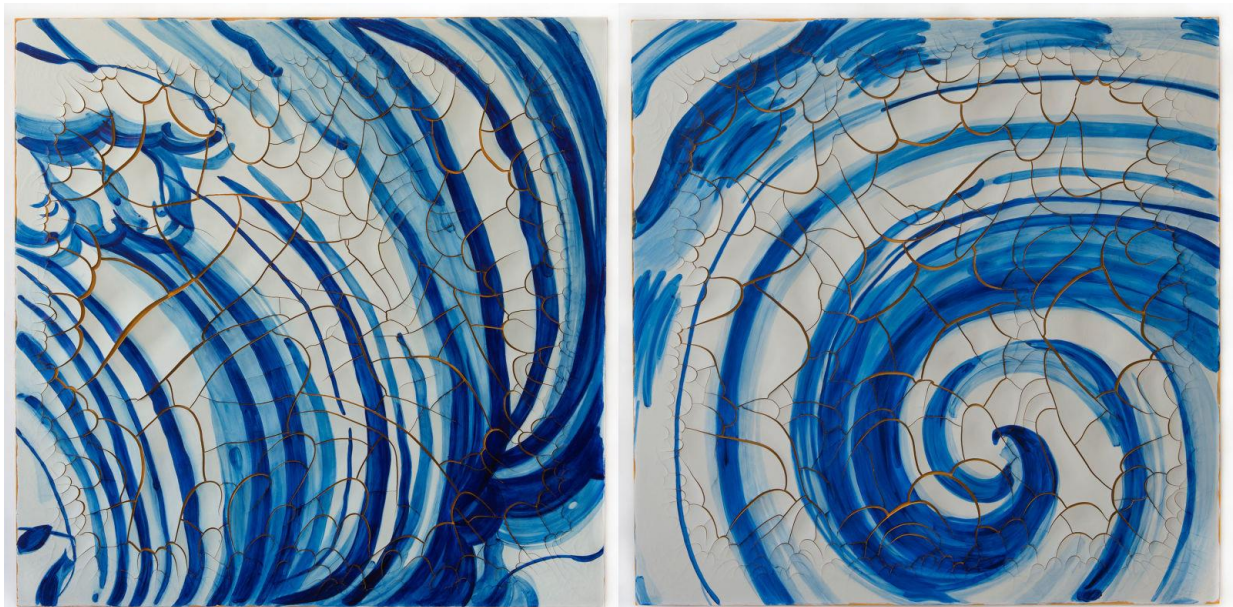
GAGOSIAN

BAZAAR

SPOTLIGHT ON... ADRIANA VAREJAO

The Brazilian artist's tile paintings contribute to a centuries-old tradition of cultural commingling

Francis Hedges



Left to right: 'Azulejão (Hand and Curves)', 2016, and 'Azulejão (Volute)', 2016. © Adriana Varejão. Photo by Vicente de Mello. Courtesy Gagolian Gallery

‘As a Brazilian artist working in the international context, I reflect constantly on the rich yet conflicted history of Brazil,’ says the Rio de Janeiro-based painter and sculptor Adriana Varejao. ‘The mixing of cultures, whether by force or by desire, is a topic that affects us all.’

Varejao's signature azulejo paintings, which are modelled on the square terracotta tiles used widely in Portuguese and Brazilian architecture, serve as metaphors for this coming together of cultural influences. The azulejo design has evolved continuously over the centuries, inspired variously by Moorish craftsmanship, Spanish ceramics, Italian ornamentalism, Oriental exoticism and Dutch storytelling. Paying homage to this history, Varejao creates her 'tiles' by applying plaster and oil paint to canvases. Her largest-ever single-tile paintings, which are currently on show at the Gagolian Gallery in Rome, are a brilliant blend of the traditional and the contemporary, featuring motifs including an angel head, a Doric column, a rose and a shell.

'Azulejao' is at Gagolian Gallery, 16 Via Francesco Crispi, Rome, from 1 October to 10 December. Visit gagolian.com