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ADRIANA VAREJÃO INTERIORS

Opening reception:
Thursday, September 14, 6–8PM
September 14–October 25, 2017

456 North Camden Drive
Beverly Hills, CA 90210

The Baroque always connects two extremes, like light and shadow, in one body, one painting. History outside against a wild body inside, cultured and uncultured, cooked and uncooked, greed and expressionism, rationalism and irrationalism, cold and hot.
—Adriana Varejão

Gagosian is pleased to present “Interiors,” an exhibition by Adriana Varejão, one of Brazil’s most renowned contemporary artists. A collateral project of Pacific Standard Time: LA/LA, this is Varejão’s first-ever West Coast exhibition and includes important loans from Brazil and Europe in a selected survey from the last twenty years.

Embodying the fraught pluralism of Brazilian identity and the diverse implications of social, cultural, and aesthetic exchange, Varejão’s unprecedented artistic forms—which encompass painting, sculpture, and video installation—reach across time and place, exposing the multivalent nature of history, memory, and cultural representation.

In “Interiors,” the spatial drama of the Baroque assumes many forms: from the guise of Minimalism’s cool geometries; to the uncertainty that disrupts the seamless logic of the painted

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surface; to the ruins of Euclidean architecture, thick with flesh, blood, and fat. In the Sauna paintings, Varejão invents chambers tiled in intricately painted monochromatic gradations, recalling the perspectival grids underlying Renaissance masterpieces, as well as the geometries of the modern digital realm. In *O iluminado* [*The Shining*] (2009), yellow vibrates across the entire color spectrum, its bright energy underscored by seemingly infinite variations in hue. The abstracted spaces depicted in these paintings are at once familiar and strange, recalling bathhouses, swimming pools, slaughterhouses, and hospitals—places of routine and leisure, life and death. Light beams from an undetectable source; with no visible exits, the environments appear as psychologically charged labyrinths, seductive thresholds for the viewer's gaze. In the intimately scaled singular painting, *The Guest* (2004), blood pools on white tiles, a forensic trace of the body and its vulnerability.

Parede com incisões á la Fontana [*Wall with Incisions in the Style of Fontana*] (2000) depicts a light blue tiled wall slashed vertically, like the canvases of Lucio Fontana. However, instead of revealing empty voids, Varejão's canvas bleeds from its deep gashes, creating an equivalence with the human body by drawing on the Baroque tradition of painting livid flesh. For Varejão, flesh is a symbolic tool, infusing the ordinary with an inherent eroticism to stir both attraction and repulsion. It sits beneath and between the tiled surfaces of her *ruínas de charque* (jerked beef ruins), wall and floor sculptures whose titles refer to real locations in Portugal, Brazil, and Italy. In *Rome Meat Ruin* (2016), sections of pale yellow, blue, and white tiles meet along a straight, towering corner fragment, only to erupt into masses of deep red viscera. And in *Açougue Song* (2000), chunks of meat are strung across the canvas, entirely coated in a crackled white monochrome effect inspired by the morphologies of Song dynasty glazed ceramics.

These surface fractures become deeper, verging on geological, in Varejão's *Azulejão* ("big tile") paintings, made by applying a thick layer of viscous plaster to canvas and allowing it to dry naturally over a long period of time. Ongoing since the first iteration in 1988, the paintings are based on the traditional square, glazed terracotta tiles (*azulejos*) that have been the most widely used form of decoration in Portuguese national art since the Middle Ages. Absorbing influences from Moorish artisans, Italian Renaissance painting, Chinese porcelain, and Dutch décor, the *azulejo* is a metaphor for the mixing of cultures, whether by force or by desire. Previously, Varejão has arranged her paintings in vast grids, echoing the traditional use of the *azulejo* in architecture, but with visible disruptions to the narrative schemes; or created large individual works whose images—whether a geometric pattern, a sinuous flourish, or a figurative motif—move towards abstraction. The most recent monochromes—each a variation of porcelain "white"—with their open cracked surfaces, are as seismic as they are sublime.

During Pacific Standard Time: LA/LA, *Transbarroco*, Varejão's only multi-channel video installation to date, will also be on view for the first time in the U.S., following recent presentations in Brazil, Portugal, and Italy. This compelling work, shot on location in Brazil, captures in sweeping takes specific details of noted Baroque church interiors that relate the story of cultural exchange and assimilation, underscored by an ambient sound collage intercut with recitations of key writings on Brazilian identity.

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Adriana Varejão was born in 1964 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, where she lives and works. Collections include Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; Inhotim Centro de Arte Contemporânea, Brumadinho, Minas Gerais, Brazil; Museu de Arte Moderna de São Paulo; Museu de Arte do Rio, Rio de Janeiro; Coleção Gilberto Chateaubriand, Rio de Janeiro; Tate Modern, London; Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain, Paris; Fundación "la Caixa," Barcelona; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; and Hara Museum, Tokyo. Major institutional exhibitions include "Azulejões," Centro Cultural Banco do Brasil, Rio de Janeiro and Brasília, Brazil (2001); "Chambre d'échos / Câmara de ecos," Fondation Cartier pour l'art Contemporain, Paris (2005, traveled to Centro Cultural de Belém, Lisbon; and DA2, Salamanca, Spain); Hara Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo (2007); "Adriana Varejão - Histórias às Margens," Museu de Arte Moderna de São Paulo, Brazil (2012, traveled to Museu de Arte Moderna do Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; and Museo de Arte Latinoamericano de Buenos Aires (MALBA), Argentina in 2013); "Adriana Varejão," The Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston (2014); and "Adriana Varejão: Kindred Spirits," Dallas Contemporary (2015). She participated in the Bienal de São Paulo (1994, 1998); the 12th Biennale of Sydney (2000); the International Biennial Exhibition, SITE Santa Fe (2004); Liverpool Biennial (1999, 2006); Bucharest Biennale (2008); Istanbul Biennial (2011); "30x Bienal," Fundação Bienal de São Paulo (2013); Bienal do Mercosul, Brazil (1997, 2005, 2015); and the first Bienal de Arte Contemporânea de Coimbra, Portugal (2015).

In 2008, a permanent pavilion dedicated to Varejão's art was inaugurated at Inhotim Centro de Arte Contemporânea, Brumadinho, Minas Gerais, Brazil. In 2016, she was commissioned to produce a temporary mural based on her epic work *Celacanto provoca maremoto* to cover the entire facade of the Centro Aquático for the 2016 Summer Olympics in Rio de Janeiro; and the video installation *Transbarroco* was presented at the French Academy of Rome - Villa Medici to coincide with her exhibition at Gagosian Rome.

"Adriana Varejão: Interiors" is part of the Participating Gallery Program of Pacific Standard Time: LA/LA, an ambitious and far-reaching series of thematically linked exhibitions and programs of Latin American and Latino art in dialog with Los Angeles. An initiative of The Getty and generously supported by The Getty Foundation, Pacific Standard Time: LA/LA will take place from September 2017 through January 2018 at more than 70 cultural institutions across Southern California. For more information, visit pacificstandardtime.org.

Image: *Monocromo Roma I*, 2016, oil and plaster on canvas, 70 7/8 × 70 7/8 inches (180 × 180 cm) © Adriana Varejão. Photo by Vicente de Mello.

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