

Adriana Varejão

Private View 5.30–7.30pm, Saturday 14 July 2018

Exhibition 14 July–8 September 2018

Victoria Miro Venice, Il Capricorno, San Marco 1994, 30124 Venice, Italy



Adriana Varejão, *Budapest III*, 2018
Oil on canvas
40 x 50 cm, 15 3/4 x 19 3/4 in
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Victoria Miro is delighted to announce an exhibition of new *Saunas and Baths* paintings, and *Meat Ruins* by the renowned Brazilian artist Adriana Varejão, her sixth exhibition at the gallery.

Since the mid-1990s, Adriana Varejão has explored two juxtaposing motifs – flesh and tiles (*azulejos*) – drawing on the decorative tradition of her native Brazil to examine the confluence of cultures and underlying tensions: between beauty and violence, geometric order and the visceral body.

For this exhibition at Victoria Miro Venice, the artist will present paintings that refer to details of public baths in Budapest and also an abandoned swimming pool near Rio de Janeiro. While previous *Sauna* paintings represent idealised, near-monochromatic tiled interiors, these new works are painterly evocations of existing places of wellness, leisure and ablation. Relating to ideas such as asepsis, they are equally concerned with traditional painterly concerns and aspirations, such as the desire to capture in oil on canvas the transparency of water and endless modulations of light across its surface. The subtleties of form and atmosphere in these works resonate especially strongly with the historic city of Venice, where liquid and solid are held in fragile balance and perception is subject to the endless interplay of water, light and reflection.

Writing about Varejão's *Sauna* paintings, curator Paulo Herkenhoff has commented that the space depicted in each work is 'made of planar dimensions deformed by perspective – squares become diamond-shaped, bands almost lines.' Amplifying such spatial and chromatic complexities, the new works on display include *Budapest II*, 2013-2018, in which light dances across the surface of a tiled pool, echoing its grid formation in the cool, blue shallows while fracturing into staccato, calligraphic marks where it falls across deeper, darker water. By contrast, *Budapest III*, 2018, whose tones err towards warmer shades of red and yellow, suggests the play of light at a different time of day – perhaps sunrise or sunset. Here, the abutting planes of tiles appear warped and distorted, as if by a person, unseen, moving towards or away from the viewer.

Blurring the boundaries between painting and sculpture, the artist's *Meat Ruins* render visible the absent bodies implied by her *Saunas and Baths* paintings. These fragmentary wall and floor sculptures incorporate sections of trompe-l'oeil tilework that contain masses of material applied and painted to evoke bloodied meat. For Varejão, flesh occupies a symbolic position as a mediator of history, and in its ability to stir both seduction and repulsion. Resembling marble, the veins of fat and flesh in these new *Ruins* make explicit the parallels in Varejão's art between architecture and the body, these fleshy, architectonic ruins laying bare the vulnerability of bodies, buildings and even entire cultures.

Born in 1964, **Adriana Varejão** currently lives and works in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. With a diverse practice comprising mainly painting, but also sculpture, drawing, installation, film and photography, Varejão is one of the most original voices in contemporary Brazilian art. Infused with layers of meaning, her work contains references to both her personal and Brazilian history. Her varied sources range from art history to religious art, from erotic art to decorative art, from colonial iconography to images produced by European travellers, and from natural sciences to cartography. The tile has been a recurring motif in Varejão's work since early in her career. She uses it to draw on the history of Portuguese Azulejo tilework and the disquieting legacy of Brazil's colonial past.

A major retrospective, *Histórias às margens (Histories at the margins)*, was displayed at the Museu de Arte Moderna de São Paulo, São Paulo (2012), travelling subsequently to Museu de Arte Moderna, Rio de Janeiro (2013), and MALBA – Museo de Arte Latinoamericano de Buenos Aires (2013). She has held solo exhibitions at The French Academy in Rome – Villa Medici (2017); Dallas Contemporary, Texas (2015); The Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, USA (2014 – 2015); Hara Museum, Tokyo (2007); Fondation Cartier Pour L'Art Contemporain, Paris (2005); Centro Cultural de Belém, Lisbon (2005); Domus Artium (DA2), Salamanca (2005); Centro Cultural Banco do Brasil, Rio de Janeiro (2001); and Bildmuseet, Umeå, Sweden (2000). The artist's work has been widely exhibited within large-scale group exhibitions at institutions including Museo Reina Sofia, Madrid, Spain (2017); MAC Niterói, Rio de Janeiro (2017, 2016); Fondation Cartier Pour l'Art Contemporain, Paris (2016); Museu de Arte de São Paulo, São Paulo (2016); Kunsthal KAdE in Amersfoort, Netherlands (2016); Museu de Arte do Rio, Rio de Janeiro (2016, 2015, 2014); Coimbra Biennial, Portugal (2015); Kulturhuset Stadsteatern, Stockholm (2014); Wexner Center for the Arts, Ohio (2014); Musée d'art contemporain de Lyon (2014); Astrup Fearnley Museum, Oslo (2013); Fundação Bienal de São Paulo (2013); Centro Cultural Banco do Brasil, Rio de Janeiro (2012); 12th International Istanbul Biennial, Istanbul (2011); Instituto Valenciano de Arte Moderno, Valencia (2011); Fundação de Arte Moderna e Contemporânea, Lisbon (2011); 4th Bucharest Biennale, Bucharest (2008); Nassau County Museum of Art, New York (2007); the Brooklyn Museum of Art, New York (2007); Bildmuseet, Umeå, Sweden (2003); MoMA The Museum of Modern Art, New York (2002) and Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York (2001). A permanent pavilion devoted to Adriana Varejão's work opened in 2008 at Instituto Inhotim in Brazil.

For further press information please contact:

Victoria Miro

Kathy Stephenson | Director of Communications | kathy@victoria-miro.com | +44 (0) 20 7549 0422

Rees & Company

Alice Evans | alice@reesandco.com | + 44 (0) 75 1547 5411 | +44 (0) 20 3137 8776