

Caetano de Almeida

The abstract paintings of this São Paulo artist are inspired by the colors and rhythms of his native country. By Anthony Barzilay Freund



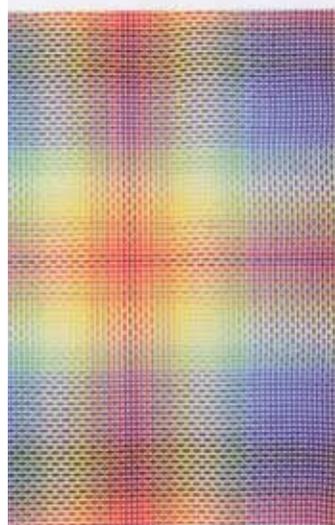
Cabos, 2009.

The brightly colored, bold canvases of the São Paulo-based artist Caetano de Almeida vibrate with an energy and light that is undeniably Brazilian. In one work, *3825 Cores*, a painstakingly executed grid seems to sway and swell, suggesting seductive undulating hips. In *Retábulo*, one can see the rambunctious weave of Bahian textiles: motley, mismatched, marvelous. And the tangled tendrils of *Fenda* replicate the topsy-turvy traffic patterns of São Paulo itself. Indeed, many of de Almeida's creations look as if cold, cerebral Piet Mondrian had detoured his Boogie Woogie off Broadway and onto the blazing, bustling Avenida Paulista.

While Brazil is ever-present in the paintings and drawings of de Almeida, whose work is shown in many top Latin American museums, he cites myriad influences. These include geometric abstraction as rendered by aesthetic descendants of Mondrian such as Hélio Oiticica and Lygia Clark, as well as Paul Klee, Gerhard Richter, and "cheap prints, book illustrations, and the millions of images that populate the contemporary repertoire," he says.

His palette is similarly expansive. After nearly 20 years in the studio using paint and ink, lately he's begun creating canvases covered in strips of tape and then exposed over several months to the ambient pollution of São Paulo. When the tape is removed, they appear "almost like psychedelic Op paintings," according to Allan Schwartzman, a New York City art adviser who has purchased de Almeida's pictures for clients and himself. "The crazy irrationality of the motifs reflects the chaos of contemporary life in a way that's beautiful and sly and funny and profound."

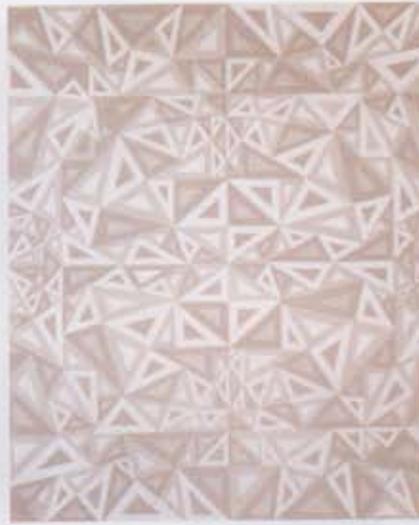
The images may be profound, but de Almeida, who is a professor at Armando Alvares Penteado Foundation, São Paulo's premier school of the visual arts, is quick to point out, "It's not intellectual or academic. It's just a sensitivity. It's a bit tacky to say, but mostly I'm inspired by life." ■



Ocaso, 2009.



Fenda, 2009.



Rara Estampa - Excêntrico, 2009.



3825 Cores, 2009.