

Marianne Boesky Gallery Now Represents Ghada Amer

Works by the Artist will be Featured in the 2020 Edition of Independent And a Solo Presentation is Slated for Spring 2021 at the Gallery's New York Location

Marianne Boesky Gallery is pleased to announce representation of artist Ghada Amer, whose wide-ranging practice spans painting, sculpture, works on paper, and garden and mixed-media installations. To mark the new collaboration, the gallery will present Amer's work at the 2020 edition of Independent art fair, focusing in particular on the artist's ceramic sculptures. This will be followed, in spring 2021, with a solo exhibition of Amer's garden installations at the gallery's Chelsea locations. In addition to her work with Marianne Boesky Gallery, Amer will present new garden works at the Rabat Biennale in Morocco, in September 2019, and at the Museo de Arte Zapopan in Guadalajara, Mexico, opening on March 8, 2020 in conjunction with International Women's Day. She is also participating in residencies at the Jose Noe Suro Factory in Guadalajara and the Workhorse Bronze Foundry in Johannesburg, South Africa. Amer will also continue working with Tina Kim Gallery / Kukje Gallery; Kewenig, Berlin and Palma; and Goodman Gallery, South Africa.

"Ghada's work is visionary, in its formal depth and intricacy as well as in its intellectual acuity. It is with great respect and excitement that we are bringing her into the gallery program," said Marianne Boesky. "We very much look forward to supporting Ghada in realizing new ambitious projects and to fostering broader global awareness and understanding of the full range of her oeuvre. We likewise look forward to collaborating with the other galleries that support Ghada's work toward these efforts."

Over the course of her multi-decade career, Amer has created an aesthetic and conceptual language that confronts the systemic subjugation of the female voice and body. Recognizing the ways in which women are taught, almost from birth, to model behaviors and traits shaped by others, Amer's work actively subverts these frameworks, creating a space that recognizes and celebrates female autonomy, sexuality, and liberation. This artistic and ideological vision is realized through a vast array of media, from embroidery, to clay and bronze, to plant life, resulting in a richly layered and complex body of work. Together, her paintings, sculptures, and garden projects explore the complicated nature of identity, developed through cultural and religious norms as well as personal longings and understandings of the self. Amer's examinations of the female experience have also extended into wider social dialogues about individual violence and war, and the frivolousness and naivete of both.

In 1991, Amer had a critical breakthrough in her formal approach, producing her first embroidered work, *Cinq Femmes au Travail*. The four-panel work depicted women performing traditional domestic tasks—the fifth panel was represented conceptually by Amer's own sewing of the canvases. Here, Amer made a bold and determined choice: to eschew the paint brush for needle and thread. In this, she acknowledged that painting, as a discipline, was established by and for men at the historic and ongoing exclusion of women—an exclusion that Amer, herself, experienced in art school. At the same time, she moved to transform needlework, a genre often relegated as "women's work," into a pointed and powerful tool, infiltrating the realm of fine art painting through a new formal vocabulary. *Cinq Femmes au Travail* marked, for the first time, Amer's innate ability to merge subject and form to powerful effect.

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Throughout her career, Amer has found inspiration from a diversity of sources, from fashion magazines to fairy tales, from pornography to religious texts, and from art history to current events. In the early 1990s, she began exploring the undercurrents in such classic stories as *Alice in Wonderland*, *Majnun Leila*, *Sinbad*, *Sleeping Beauty*, *Snow White*, and *Cinderella*. Fascinated by how the female protagonists—or in the case of *Majnun Leila* the lack thereof—communicated societal ideals about female beauty, purity, and submission, they became the subjects of her drawings, paintings, and sculptures. In *Cendrillon* (1992), an embroidered line drawing, Amer captures the moment that *Cinderella* prepares for the ball, looking at herself in the mirror—the picture of traditional femininity. A yellow “X” appears in the corner of the drawing, signifying a desired unlearning of this view of female worth. In the installation, *La Belle au Bois Dormant* (1995), a chair is draped with a red dress, while a white gown, embroidered with the full narrative of *Sleeping Beauty*, spins idly to Johann Strauss’s *On the Beautiful Blue Danube*. The scene is haunting and empty, an encapsulation of the stereotype that a woman’s greatest achievement is marriage—her voice and personal imperatives unimportant in the face of quiet submission to the acts of others.

In 1992, Amer produced her first embroidered canvas depicting a pornographic image. Pornographic motifs offered a new and fertile ground for experimentation, allowing Amer to probe at the external pressure women feel to serve at once as *Madonna* and *Whore*. More importantly, though, Amer saw an opportunity to subvert this duality, embracing the existence of female sexuality and exposing women’s autonomous desires for seduction and gratification. From here, Amer’s vision and purpose were guided by the reclamation of the female body, communicated through both image and text-based works; through embroidery, pencil, and watercolor; in two and three dimensions; and also in collaborative works produced with artist Reza Farkhondeh, whom she has known since art school. Amer and Farkhondeh’s collaborations began developing organically in the studio in 2000, through freeform verbal and formal dialogues. In 2005, as their engagement began emerging as a new kind of expression, their joint endeavors began appearing with the combined signature, “RFGA”—a practice they continue today.

While Amer is most widely recognized for her embroidered, abstract canvases, she has produced a deeply varied body of work. In 2014, she began experimenting with ceramics, following an initial interest in learning how to create prototypes for her large-scale bronze sculptures. Ceramics gave Amer a newfound freedom, allowing her to separate from the context and history that led to her embroidered works and providing a new platform through which to examine color, line, shape, and texture. Her ceramic wall hangings and large-scale free-standing sculptures feature portraits of women, produced through bright colors and thick, contouring lines, extending some of the aesthetic approaches of her paintings into the third dimension. In both formats, the clay appears rough and crumpled—the edges curving inward. The works exude a spontaneity, a quick but deliberate hand—the edges and bumps giving the works an added sense of tactility and dimension.

In the late 1990s, Amer also began considering how to translate her vision into an outdoor context, leading her to examine the garden as a new medium and platform. Among her many garden installations is *Love Park*, which she produced for SITE Santa Fe in 1999 and which explored contradictory descriptions of love throughout history. The installation featured 10 “anti-love seats” designed by Amer that forced couples to sit facing in opposite directions, while reading contradictory quotes placed on sign posts. In 2000, Amer produced *Women’s Qualities* for the Metropolitan Art Museum in Pusan, South Korea. For the installation, Amer asked men and women to identify words and phrases that they associated with women. She then reproduced the terms, which included “virgin,” “submissive,” and “sexy,” into eight flowerbeds, using a red bloom that only appears two

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months of the year. Other of Amer's garden installations have taken a more pointed approach, featuring phrases such as "Today 70% of the poor in the World are Women." As with her embroidered canvases, the often delicate and lovely nature of gardens collides with the harsh realities faced by women.

Today, Amer continues to employ the full spectrum of approaches and media that she has cultivated since the start of her career in the late 1980s, finding new links and opportunities to examine the female voice, body, and experience. Her upcoming presentations capture the incredible diversity and range of her practice and the vitality of her vision and work.

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Ghada Amer was born in Cairo in 1963. In 1974, her parents relocated to France to attend school, exposing Amer to a new culture and context. After both her mother and father obtained their Ph.Ds., they moved back to Egypt in 1980. Amer, who obtained her artistic training at Villa Arson, Nice, France, was influenced by her experiences in Europe and in her home country, as well as in the U.S. Since the late 1980s, Amer's work has been included in a wide range of solo and group exhibitions. In 2008, the Brooklyn Museum hosted the first U.S. survey of Amer's work, titled *Ghada Amer: Love Has No End*. Amer has been featured in the Venice Biennale (2007, 2005, 1999), Sydney Biennale (2006), and Whitney Biennale (2000). Her work is held in the public collections of the Art Institute of Chicago (Chicago); Centre Georges Pompidou (Paris); Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art (Bentonville, Arkansas); Guggenheim Museum (Abu Dhabi); and the Minneapolis Institute of Art (Minneapolis); among many others. She currently lives and works in New York.

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