

# GAGOSIAN GALLERY

20 April 2002

## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **GAGOSIAN GALLERY**

8 HEDDON STREET

LONDON W1R 7LH

GALLERY HOURS:

T. 020.7292.8222

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Tuesday – Saturday: 10am–6pm

## **GHADA AMER**

Thursday, May 2 – Saturday, June 8, 2002

Reception: May 2, 6 – 8 pm

"I deconstruct the traditional Abstract Expressionist vocabulary and reconstruct painting." – Ghada Amer, (from an interview with Marilu Knode in the New Art Examiner, Dec/Jan 1999/2000)

Gagosian Gallery is pleased to announce an exhibition of new work by Egyptian-born artist Ghada Amer. Born 1963 in Cairo, Amer grew up in the politically charged period that followed the Six-Day War, and in 1974 moved to France with her family. Amer now lives and works in New York. This is the first exhibition of her work in the UK.

During annual trips to Egypt, Amer discovered Venus, a fashion magazine that appropriated images of western models and crudely superimposed short hair, hats or veils, and sleeves to depict modern Muslim women. This strange combination of French fashion and Islamic morality inspired Amer's early works based on sewing. Her work now includes paintings and drawings with embroidered erotic imagery and sculpture with embroidered text as well as outdoor installations.

From a distance Amer's paintings may resemble those of Abstract Expressionism as the canvases are often painted with bold blocks and drips of colour, but upon closer inspection, the delicate embroidery reveals itself. Images of women in autoerotic poses are taken from pornographic magazines, sketched onto the canvas and then meticulously and repeatedly embroidered. The loose threads dangle like paint drips down the canvas or are secured by gel medium to form intricate veils of colour. This relationship between paint and thread and pornographic subject-matter has become more adventurous in Amer's new work.

Amer's women are sensual and provocative, never submissive, engaged in sex acts alone or with one another, they are often hidden behind a tangled veil of thread as if to hint at naughtiness but not reveal all. The viewer must work to visually unravel the image, experiencing a combined sense of pleasure and frustration. The aptly titled Blanc/Noir/Dianne's Revenge shows a repetition of images alternating between a woman's head tilted back in ecstasy and a masturbatory hand, in black embroidery on a white ground. Grey/Iman layers glamour shots of a woman in different poses one over the other with sketchy black thread dripping down the canvas creating an unravelling, op-art effect. The colourful Pink Strokes depicts a woman reclining, repeated in rainbow embroidery so that it is unclear where one figure ends and another begins, on a ground of small fleshy pink rectangular brush strokes.

Amer has shown extensively throughout the world, including the 2000 Whitney Biennial, Greater New York at PS1, 2000; Tel Aviv Museum of Art, 2000; Kwangju Biennale, Korea, 2000; Biennale de Lyon, 2000; Venice Biennale, 1999; Johannesburg Biennial, 1997.

A fully illustrated catalogue will accompany the exhibition. Please contact the gallery for further information.

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