

MARIANNE BOESKY GALLERY

NEW YORK | ASPEN

GHADA AMER *DISOBEDIENT THOUGHTS*

On View: May 1 – June 14, 2025

Opening Reception: May 1, 6–8 PM

507 West 24th Street, New York, NY 10011

"Across each transposition of mediums, the through line of Amer's work remains a love of painting, however deferred and redirected. The problematic of how to paint outside the field of capital 'P' painting has followed her throughout her career."

—curator Susan Thompson

New York, NY – Marianne Boesky Gallery is pleased to present *Disobedient Thoughts*, an exhibition of new work by Ghada Amer (b. 1963; Cairo, Egypt). For her third solo exhibition with the gallery, Amer presents a suite of new embroidered paintings alongside experimental sculptures in ceramic, bronze, and steel.

Amer's expansive, ambitious practice is a perpetual pursuit of new forms and methods of expression. Working across painting, sculpture, ceramic, and garden installation, Amer appropriates and reinterprets the predominantly masculine tropes of Western art history. Stridently, straightforwardly political in her approach, Amer reimagines the feminized materials and subjects of such histories in order to insert herself into the canon.

In 1984, Amer entered art school in France intent on pursuing the study of painting—only to find herself routinely denied admittance to painting classes reserved for men. Vexed, she turned to history books determined to locate her own aspirations within a lineage of women painters—her efforts were in vain: the canon of western painting at the time was completely dominated by men. A few years later, on a trip to visit family in Cairo, Amer encountered a sewing pattern in a women's magazine—and it sparked an idea: she could use embroidery thread on canvas as if it were paint. It presented both a practical and conceptual solution to the problem she had encountered in school: Amer knew how to sew—and by incorporating a traditionally feminine technique, she could also slyly take aim at the masculinist history of painting.

By the early 1990s, Amer had established a material and formal language for painting with embroidery that she has continued to hone for the past 35 years. Onto the surface of the canvas, Amer embroiders spare images—often borrowed from pornography—of women in moments of ecstasy, pleasure, and tenderness. With the excess thread from these drawings, Amer creates abstract compositions that frequently allude to the work of famous male painters whose work she has long admired.

Amer presents her most ambitious embroidered paintings—in both scale and process—to date in *Disobedient Thoughts*. With *The Lilly Puddle* (2025) and *The Ladies of Giverny* (2025)—both more than seven feet tall—Amer refers to Claude Monet's light-infused water lilies and sheaves of grain. With *The Grid of 2025* (2025)—similar in scale—Amer alludes to the sharp geometries of Piet Mondrian, Kazimir Malevich, or a litany of modernist painters committed to investigating the grid.

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TELEPHONE 212.680.9889

FAX 347.296.3667

And at eight feet square each, *My Homage to the Square 1* (2025) and *My Homage to the Square 2* (2025) quote Josef Albers' series of more than a thousand *Homage to the Square* paintings. In all of these works, the referential compositions of excess threads—which are attached to the surface of the painting with a gel medium—obscure the drawings of women beneath, a subtle but intentional nod by Amer to the ways in which women have been obscured from art's histories.

In 2014—following forays into garden installations and metal sculpture—Amer became interested in ceramic. Experimenting with the medium under the tutelage of Adam Welch at Greenwich House Pottery in New York, Amer created a new body of work—the *Thoughts*—from the scraps created in the process of making her painted ceramic slab works. With her left hand—her nondominant hand—Amer sculpts the clay scraps according to instinct and intuition, a process akin to the processes of automatic writing and drawing favored by the Surrealists. The resulting sculptures are twisting, contorting forms—which the artist finishes in brilliant chromatic hues, continuing her endless pursuit of painting.

For *Disobedient Thoughts*, Amer has translated these thoughts into cast bronze and steel—a process that has sent her to Mexico, China, and upstate New York to consult with expert metal founders to achieve the form, colors, and textures she sought. The resulting *Thoughts*—far grander in scale than those made in ceramic—embody Amer's latest foray into expanding her vocabulary of expression.

Throughout her career, Amer has constantly sought subversion: an underlying, simmering rage about the place of women in history, in art, and in society has driven her to persistent, perpetual investigation and creation. For more than 35 years, Amer's practice has followed a constant thread of disobedient thoughts, one following the next, all in pursuit of painting—even, as curator Susan Thompson notes, she has been deferred and redirected. Amer has mastered this subversion—drawing women into the fold of all manner of artmaking through imagery, through material, through form, through message. Yet, while Amer's work is stridently political and doggedly disobedient, it also revels in hope, beauty, and freedom—and a deep, abiding love for the history of painting itself.

ABOUT GHADA AMER

Amer's work is in public collections around the world including The Arab Museum of Modern Art, Doha; the Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, IL; the Barjeel Art Foundation, Sharjah; the Brooklyn Museum of Art, New York, NY; Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris; Chrysler Museum of Art, Norfolk, VA; Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville, AR; the Guggenheim Museum, Abu Dhabi; the Israel Museum, Jerusalem; the Samsung Museum, Seoul; among others. She was recognized with a mid-career retrospective at the Brooklyn Museum of Art in New York in 2008 and a larger, more extensive one at the MUCEM and across other venues in Marseille, France in 2022. A solo exhibition, the first to focus on Amer's sculptural work, is set to open in the fall of 2026 at the Es Baluard Museu d'Art Contemporani in Palma de Mallorca, Spain. She is regularly invited to prestigious group shows and biennials—such as the Whitney Biennial in 2000 and the Venice Biennales of 1999 (where she won the UNESCO Prize), 2005 and 2007. In 2024, the French Ministry of Culture awarded Amer the rank of Officer in the Order of Arts and Letters. Amer studied at the Villa Arson École Nationale Supérieure in Nice, France, at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, MA, and at the Institut des Hautes Études en Arts Plastiques in Paris. She lives and works in New York.

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For more information about the artist, please contact Savannah Downs at savannah@boeskygallery.com or 212-680-9889. For press inquiries, please contact Molly Krause, krause co., at molly@molly.nyc.

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TELEPHONE 212.680.9889

FAX 347.296.3667