

MARIANNE BOESKY GALLERY

NEW YORK | ASPEN

GHADA AMER

The Women I Know Part II

On View September 9 – October 23, 2021 | 507 West 24th Street, New York



Ghada Amer, *Portrait of Noha*, 2021. Acrylic, embroidery and gel medium on canvas. 50 x 48 in.

Courtesy of the artist and Marianne Boesky Gallery, New York and Aspen. © Ghada Amer. Photo credit: Christopher Burke Studios.

Marianne Boesky Gallery is pleased to present *The Women I Know Part II*, Ghada Amer's inaugural solo exhibition with the gallery. The exhibition highlights new works from Amer's most recent series of paintings, *The Women I Know*. In this series, the artist creates intimate painted and embroidered portraits of the women she knows personally to explore the dynamics of the gaze and female identity that are exchanged between artist, subject, and viewer. The exhibition also includes new cast sculptures, highlighting the artist's diverse practice that delves into varying mediums. *The Women I Know Part II* will be on view September 9 – October 23, 2021, at the gallery's 507 West 24th Street location in New York.

Amer's work is inherently feminist—during her artistic studies, she was routinely turned away from painting classes that were reserved for male students. In an interrogation of these gendered power structures, Amer developed her own visual language distinct from the male-dominated tradition of painting by embroidering canvases with needle and thread—a practice that has been historically considered women's work. Explicitly engaging with the vocabulary of painting, the artist even refers to the hanging threads as her "drips." Her works have featured a range of female subjects, including her well-known embroidered canvases that use eroticized imagery of women sourced from pornography and popular media. When Amer began her *The Women I Know* series in 2013, it marked a departure in her practice, now expanding her iconic artistic language to focus on the women in the artist's personal life. Amer presented the first part of *The Women I Know* at Kewenig gallery in Berlin, Germany, from November 21, 2020 – January 23, 2021.

BOESKYGALLERY.COM

TELEPHONE 212.680.9889

FAX 347.296.3667

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For the new works in *The Women I Know*, Amer began by photographing her subjects, which are comprised of her friends, family, and close collaborators. Before painting and embroidering the canvas, she draws the portrait of the subject from her photographs, further deepening the care that goes into creating the image of the individual's identity. The silhouettes of her subjects are partially exposed and concealed by repeating text that comprises an additional layer to the painting. Amer selects phrases or quotes focused on feminist and social issues, including lines such as "Men are taught to apologize for their weaknesses, women for their strengths" that weave in and out of view as the viewer scans the brightly colored and textured surfaces of the works. In the creation of portraits of women Amer is closely associated with, the works are inherently intertwined with the notion of the female gaze, heightened by the fact that women were once often only able to enter the field of art making through portrait painting.

"Painting *The Women I Know* has been a very liberating turn in my practice. I believe this liberation stems from my work with ceramics which was a new medium for me. My lack of familiarity with its artistic language turned out to be an asset as it liberated me from the theoretical and historical debates specific to this field. I felt uninhibited and thus entirely free to experiment and create. It is this same freedom I feel with the new series of *The Women I Know, Part II* (and *Part I* in fact). I now feel liberated from the canon of art history and from the father figures of painting. The only reference now in my work is the subject matter, that is painting itself," said Ghada Amer.

In addition to the artist's paintings, new cast sculptures will be on view by Amer. Distinct from *The Women I Know* series, the sculptures depict silhouettes of women from pornography magazines—subjects that have reappeared in her work over the decades. Thus, despite their anonymity, Amer also likens these women to her friends who make good company among the painted portraits.

While Amer has worked in cast sculpture since 2010, the exhibition marks the first time she will show bronze forms that mount on the wall. Other sculptural silhouettes will be freestanding and viewed in the round. Amer's continued engagement with media beyond painting has presented a form of liberation in her artistic practice that was once so enchained due to her gender.

Shown together, the works in *The Women I Know Part II* invite reflections on the perceptions of women in the viewer's own lives, and how this fundamentally intersects with the presentation of women in popular media and culture. In this expansion of Amer's visual language, the artist continues to examine the role of the gazer and the gazed, centering the female experience in her ongoing questioning of the history of art.

Lastly, in an annex of the gallery's space at 509 West 24th Street, Amer will present an overview of her outdoor garden installations. A documentary meditation on an important component of her artistic practice, the presentation makes for an even deeper understanding of Amer's persistence to claim space for women not only inside gallery walls but also beyond into the public sphere.

In addition to her show with Marianne Boesky Gallery, Amer will unveil a new monograph, *Ghada Amer: Painting in Revolt* with text by Susan Thompson and published by Skira Paris.

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Ghada Amer was born in Cairo, Egypt in 1963 and moved to Nice, France when she was eleven years old. She remained in France to further her education and completed both of her undergraduate requirements and MFA at Villa Arson École Nationale Supérieure in Nice (1989), during which she also studied abroad at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, Massachusetts in 1987. In 1991 she moved to Paris to complete a post-diploma at the Institut des Hautes Études en Arts Plastiques.

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Following early recognition in France, she was invited to the United States in 1996 for a residency at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. She has since then been based in New York. To learn more, visit ghadaamer.com

About Marianne Boesky Gallery

Since its inception in 1996, Marianne Boesky Gallery has represented and supported the work of emerging and established contemporary international artists of all media. In its first decade, the gallery was instrumental in launching the careers of major artists through an innovative exhibition program; and in 2016, the gallery expanded its flagship location to its adjacent space on West 24th Street. The gallery's newest location, Boesky West, opened in 2017 in Aspen, CO, and presents rotating exhibitions by both gallery artists and artists invited to present special projects. Now, the gallery continues to actively represent many significant artists such as Ghada Amer, Donald Moffett, Sanford Biggers and Frank Stella, among others. To learn more, visit marianneboeskygallery.com.

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For more information about Ghada Amer, please contact Gallery Director Mary Mitsch at mary@boeskygallery.com or 212-680-9889. For press inquiries, please contact Thomas Dewey Davis, THIRD EYE, at thomas@hellothirdeye.com

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