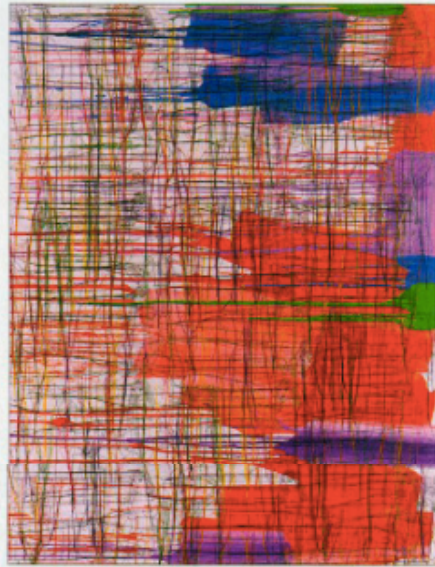


LEILA HELLER GALLERY.

“Ghada Amer.” *Artnews*. (Summer, 2010).



Ghada Amer, *One Night in London*, 2010, acrylic, embroidery, and gel medium on canvas, 65" x 50". Cheim & Read.

Ghada Amer

Cheim & Read

Through her embroidered canvases, Ghada Amer has long sought to upend two very nearly universal female stereotypes—the domestic goddess and the fiendish whore. She has done so by employing a traditionally feminine craft to strip her pornographic subjects of their smut-magazine context, to give them a thin veil of privacy, and to present them as emblems of ecstasy and not necessarily lust.

In her first solo show at this gallery, Amer focuses on her usual subject matter (i.e., women in various states of self-pleasure), yet her handling of it has evolved. Obscured by dense blobs and streaks of entangled thread, Amer's women are treated, largely, as formal tools, cropped and repeated beyond recognition, barely discernable at a distance, and used predominantly to create patterns, lines, and wholly abstract shapes. Her thread treatment has evolved as well, reaching frenetic, Action Painting-like territory. This is particularly true in works like *Das in Drips* (2010), in which legs, breasts, and thread conflate to form orderly rows of abstract, Twombly-like blossoms, and *One Night in London* (2010), in which painstakingly layered

thin horizontal strands create remarkably gestural effects.

A series of stark and sexually explicit nudes, which Amer has never before shown, hung in a back gallery. The women in these stitchings and watercolors are the same sort of women the artist presents on canvas, but without an overlay of thread they feel voyeuristic and crude. They are a fittingly uncomfortable reminder of what lurks below the artist's expressionistic threads—and of what we've been looking at all along.

—Rachel Wolff