

Ghada Amer, "Rainbow Girls"

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Cheim & Read, through May 10
(see Chelsea)

Since she first emerged as an artist in 1990, Ghada Amer has filtered her work through her experiences as an Egyptian woman brought up by observant Muslim parents in France. This background accounts, perhaps, for her particular take on feminism: a fearless mix of politics and pornography, Arabic tradition and Western liberalism, most notable in her signature stitched-canvas "paintings." Her show at Cheim & Read includes the latest incarnations of these, as well as metal sculptures.

An example of the latter, *Blue Bra Girls*, interconnects the figures of eight women within an egg-shaped form as a tribute to female protesters beaten by soldiers in Cairo's Tahrir Square during the Arab Spring. Similarly, the rape and imprisonment of Amina Sboui, a Tunisian activist known for her topless protests, is recalled in *Amina*, an embroidered painting of a reclining nude overlaid with Arabic texts.

As powerful as the sculptures



Blue Bra Girls

are, the paintings command your attention because of the way Amer leaves the end of each basted thread long and loose, creating an effect that recalls painterly drips. The irony underscoring these compositions, of course, is that Amer employs a medium associated with women to explore

the line between oppression and empowerment. But it is also this combination of visual allure and political message that makes her work so compelling. —Paul Laster

THE BOTTOM LINE Embroidery replaces paint in the work of this feminist artist.