

**FOR
IMMEDIATE
RELEASE**



GHADA AMER
Encyclopedia of Pleasure

November 10 – December 22, 2001

Ghada Amer returned to her native Egypt earlier this year to create her most ambitious work to date, the Encyclopedia of Pleasure. It is a large sculptural installation that incorporates painting and literary expression. The artist wrote the following text to describe the work:

"Gawami al Lada" or "Encyclopedia of Pleasure" was written by Ali Ibn Nasr Al Katib around the late 11th/early12th century. I was interested in this book because it was written by a Muslim centuries ago, and is forbidden today, according to Muslim law. This shows how open-minded literature was at that time and how centuries later, we are living in a much more conservative time. It is very sad to see that this voice has now been silenced. Why has speaking and reading about sexuality become so taboo in today's Muslim society?

I have chosen to trace and then embroider parts of the Encyclopedia on a grid of fifty-seven boxes. I have used a rough cotton duck for the boxes and golden thread for the embroideries. For the first time, I will be using machine embroidery which is in vogue for inscribing important "sacred" text. Specifically, I am choosing to illustrate parts of the Encyclopedia that speak of women's pleasure.

CONTINUED ON REVERSE

This remarkable book was written by a man, and I was fascinated to read of women's intimate pleasure from the perspective and analysis of a man. We do not know how women might have written about and analyzed their own sexual experiences at that time. I liked this book because it attempts to explicate in a scientific and very precise way both women and men's sense of sexuality, yet still grapples with trying to comprehend the feelings of desire humans, inevitably, face. This is why the book is almost comical. I am embroidering my work as an homage to women - asking them (and myself included) whether we really have a different "voice" from that of a man's to describe the world. I have chosen to illustrate passages from this forbidden book as a protest against the loss of great freedom.

Ghada Amer

A survey exhibition of Ghada Amer's work is currently on view at the Henie Onstad Kunstsenter in Norway. The exhibition will travel to the Museum Kunst Palast, Dusseldorf and the Bildmuseet, Umea Sweden. The Contemporary Art Museum, Houston, presented *Ghada Amer: Pleasure* this past summer. An exhibition of her recent work, *Ghada Amer: Intimate Confessions*, was organized by the Tel Aviv Museum in 2000 and traveled to Kunstwerke Berlin. In 1999 she was awarded the Unesco prize at the Venice Biennale.

**GALLERY HOURS 12 – 6, TUESDAY – SATURDAY
FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION CONTACT
ELIZABETH SCHWARTZ AT 343-7300**