

Translation from the Hebrew catalog BEGED GUF Body Clothing

A vulnerable protective suit

In her current exhibition, Orit Hasson-Walder presents a series of hanging objects – finished suits or alternatively, sewing patterns from aluminum netting used for window screens. The work with the aluminum mesh creates objects with complex options for vision: they are perhaps transparent or maybe opaque, visible or they may be camouflaged. In this exhibition, Hasson-Walder conserves the range of these options by means of the principle of doubling: in almost each object there is an additional, reduced net object, which is visible beyond the large object. The viewer's choice moves between observation of the interior and between observation of what is translated on the exterior.

At first glance, the exterior seems protected, as if it is in a giant womb gently enveloping what is within it. This interpretation receives somewhat of a confirmation from the look of the objects, some of which look like medieval knights' armor. The silvery color of the objects resonates the metallic nature of the armor, but these are actually protective suits which are absolutely exposed, full of holes, vulnerable. The envelope is only an outer shell, proposing an abstract model of protection, a refined model of a sewing design lacking individual characteristics of a concrete body, a model marking borders of a missing figure.

[Photo] The tension between vulnerability and resilience and between protection and opacity has always characterized Hasson-Walder's previous works. In her solo exhibition "Spoon-Fed" (Limbus, 1993), she created chrome paper inside of which she hung violent objects: pins, scissors, and needles. The paper, which camouflaged the objects yet enabled them to be seen through it "swallowed" them into itself in an act which could be seen either as self-protectiveness or a total attempt to contain even what is hostile to its sensitive surface. In her show "Household jobs," exhibited at the Herzliya Museum of Art (1994), 3-D objects were wrapped in paper: jugs, plates, stones, and knives. The act of wrapping was perceived as protective but at the same time it also neutralized the functionality of the objects and the meanings attributed to them. From live "breathing" objects they became consecrated items, prohibited from being touched or seen, kind of archaeological finds, perhaps ritual objects. From these artworks as well a sensation arises that these are personal objects, relics of a figure that is no longer in existence, of a ghost.

In both bodies of work, the act of preparing the paper and sewing the suits take on the status of a repair, healing, craft linked to women's work in western civilization. In this way, we may locate the work conceptually, as well as the tension between potential violence (knights' violence, needles and knives) and between potential vulnerability (paper envelopes, reduced size objects, and penetrable armor) – tension translated in western culture as "men's" and "women's" elements, into the heaviness of the stones when faced with the covering of weightless objects in the air. The tension between the "feminine" and "masculine" becomes enriched in the present exhibition in additional dimensions as the direct result of some degree of distinguishability in the hanging objects which can be catalogued and the system of associations that they raise on both the cultural and personal level.

The exhibition comprises two major groups of objects organized mostly in threes: objects that can be precisely identified, and suggestive objects "open" to different meanings. In the group of the distinguishable objects what are visible among others are long and short dresses within which are miniaturized dresses or pantsuits; panties within which are smaller panties; binoculars and trumpet and undershirts within which (as relevant) are a smaller undershirt and pipe.

The inner objects that are not clothing, such as the trumpet and pipe, are identified as wondrous, especially when seen through the men's underpants – but they are also objects functioning as filters since they facilitate the passage of air, such as the object that are really hollow, like the ones through which they are visible. This step taken in the exhibition deconstructs the aggressive presence of the objects to expose their built-in "vulnerability." On another interpretive level – the linguistic level – the word "trumpet" in Hebrew is the same word used for internal organs of the female body; since one of the cultural contexts of this exhibition is the Middle Ages, let us remember that the medieval perception of anatomy held that men and women had identical organs, the only difference being that men's organs were external and women's internal. The tension between exterior and interior, visible and invisible, operates on several levels in the exhibition: the visual, formal, and linguistic.

In the group of "open," non-distinct objects, the tension continues on a more suggestive level, and is also expanded from what is perceived as the engagement in sexual organs – the senses. In this group are a Victorian hat or perhaps a protective mask; a system of pipes which may be a wild formation of circulatory organs within which is a paper object opening up in its center into a slit looking like a mouth or vagina; a rounded horn inside of which are glasses wrapped in paper. These objects can be listened to (as a continuation of the trumpet, horn, and pipe), can be seen (as a continuation of the binoculars, glasses, and observation slit), and take on a sexual significance when taking into consideration other objects and how they are contained within the larger objects. In this context, the senses are also the filters or mediators forming the connection between internal and external stimuli. The semantic movement between the different definitions which becomes possible as a result of the formal and visual tension places the exhibition in a conceptual context within which the objects function like a system of statements.

Similar to Rene Magritte's famous painting, *The treachery of images* (1928-1929) in which a pipe is seen and next to it the sentence "This is not a pipe," the current exhibition also make sit clearer what the object is not than what it is. The binary system of masculine/feminine, visible/invisible is characterized by instability and dynamism since it is dependent on context and interpretation – a system lacking absolute, stable values, organizing differences that are not reduced to "natural" predetermined essences. What comes to mind are areas of overlap, blind spots, but mainly intermediate areas. In this exhibition, such sensations are translated sculpturally and formally into floating, weightless objects, almost as abstract drawings in space. Hasson-Walder's objects move between abstract sewn objects and protective suits, and even human limbs. After all, in the final analysis, vulnerability is embodied in the body, in that very some "other" missing figure.

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