

*From the "Sweet 16" catalog, Curator: Neta Gal Azmon.*

Hilla Ben Ari's large-scale work extends across the space's main wall which is covered with floral wallpaper, forming a backdrop for two-dimensional bodies. A jumble comprising scores of similar yet downsized adolescent girl figures is placed on a small table standing in the space. Due to the small tab-like straps attached to their bodies, these figures call to mind two-dimensional paper dolls which young girls like to dress up in a variety of costumes. The original naive children's game is metamorphosed in Hilla Ben Ari's work into a sexual game underlain by implied violence, as each girl inserts a finger into the body of the adjacent figure, and the latter reacts by secreting a viscid yellow fluid from the penetration area. The jumble of figures on the table generates an intricate erotic entity with a developed self-gratifying mechanism. The finger's penetration alludes to phallic penetration, yet emerges in a more refined female version and is not directed to the genitalia, thus rendering various parts of the youthful body penetrable. Like Doubting Thomas in the New Testament, who is said to have doubted Christ's resurrection, and therefore inserted his finger into Christ's bleeding wound, Ben Ari similarly marks a doubtful territory of a flesh-less emptied body, exploring the boundaries of the female body and their breaching.