

Mechanized Flow

'Over Craft – Obsession, Decoration and Biting Beauty' – Haifa University Gallery, Haifa; Beit Haomnim, Tel Aviv. Curator: Tami Katz-Freiman

From a distance, **Hilla Ben - Ari's** decorations on the red wall (*Mechanized Flow*) seem to be pretty Sukkah decorations. From close up, they are revealed to be a fence or lattice pattern, something that is both a defense and a barrier: hundreds of duplicated identity-less female figures cut out from wallpaper are organized in crowded uniform lines. The figures are connected to each other by their blond braids, by the milk spraying from their nipples, and by the blood flowing from their vaginas. The sexual organs and secretions are made from three dimensional plastic paint used in clothing. Sharp red hooks protruding from the smooth surface trap the threads stretched from their vaginas. Row upon row of anonymous girls dance as if crucified or bound on the wall and splatter their body fluids in all directions. The body's borders are breached, as internal and external, pure and impure are merged, and the seemingly innocent decorative pattern turns into a sharp metaphor for the tangled relations linking nutrition, reproduction, fertility, barrenness, identity, and sexuality.

Damningly decorative By David Rapp

...She [Tami Katz-Freiman] deals, for example, with the perceived dichotomy whereby the man represents high culture, intellectualism and stability, whereas the woman is represented as connected to "nature," breast-feeding, and the impulsive and physical sides of creativity.

"Mechanized Flow" by **Hilla Ben Ari**, represents this well. A tapestry is hung over an entire wall. On a bright red background appear hundreds of images of naked women. They are linked in places and with materials that represent clear female stereotypes: in their blonde braids, in the milk that sprays from their breasts and in the blood that flows from between their legs. The synthetic colors that Ben Ari has used make looking at this work difficult. The panel gleams and creates the illusion of a throbbing screen. From up close, it is possible to discern the fine details: the sharp hooks to which the duplicated figures of women are attached.