

“Peep”, “ Baseboard”

From the “High heels in the sand” catalog, Curator: Revital Ben- Asher Peretz

In the work *Peep*, **Hilla Ben Ari** lays out an image of a large woman (Big Mama) on the floor, like a crime- scene outline, a dead body that has left behind only a vesting of a memory of a perforated, flat, two- dimensional body, composed of thousands of swarming, assaulting white mice. The mice devour the disappearing dead body, while also creating and sustaining it- it seems to be wearing a delicate, beautiful white lace dress. Her slightly spread legs welcome those who approach, and her wide- open arms bring to mind animal furs hung on walls, indicating male hunting skills, conquest, surrender and death.

Like *Peep*, the multiplicity of modular craftsmanship in Ben Ari’s *Baseboard* bring to mind carpets from eastern Europe: plenty of ornamentation and Uzbek coloring. The baseboard is a low, negligible architectonic element, only slightly raised from the floor, touching bottom. Its role is to absorb the dirt, so it doesn’t spread to the decent white wall. But baseboards are also contours, marking the room’s familiar, safe borderlines. The chain of existence is reversed in Ben Ari’s work. It is the mice, parasitic animals, that rule- if only by sheer strength of numbers- and they suck on secretions from the women’s bodies (blood, milk), feeding on the very essence of vitality and femininity. The mice tails penetrate them through every possible orifice. Are they suffering, or giving themselves to the pleasures of the flesh? Is it the scene of a mass rape or a wild orgy?