



Sheffy Bleier, Garden of Organs, 2007, pigment inkjet print, 70x100cm

STEAKHOUSE

In *Body of Love*, Sheffy Bleier turns internal organs found in slaughterhouses into things of beauty

Vardit Gross, *Yediot Ahronoth* – January 21, 2010

The enormous oval image hanging at the entrance of Sheffy Bleier's exhibition at the Tel Hai Museum looks from afar like piles of pink ice cream, soft and beckoning. Only when one gets close and dares to look carefully, does one discover that these are cow's innards. Spleen, intestine, stomach—all life-size, pink and delicate. Veins still stand out; it's not hard to imagine the blood that pulsed through them not long ago. Huge slabs of meat, almost repulsive, moments before they're butchered lose their identity, are wrapped in styrofoam and plastic wrap and are laid before you in the supermarket fridge.

Bleier began photographing animal parts after coming across a cow's stomach in Shouk HaCarmel [open-air market-trans.] In order to obtain whole parts she started to visit slaughterhouses on a regular basis, to purchase and bring them, bloody, to her studio. There, she turns them into still lifes—testicles hanging from a string. A uterus hanging on a hook. A gall bladder, a spleen and a liver, suspended like flowers, inviting as a bunch of grapes. Ordered and disciplined, repulsive and alluring, familiar and alien, all at once.

Among the butchered beasts is also the image of Jonathan, Bleier's son, enveloped in a white sheet hung from a hook. He too reads in myriad ways—from a punching bag to the result of butchering, from the desire of the mother to wholly safeguard and defend her

child, to her desire to consume him anew, reabsorb and contain him. Either way, the dangled son looks to be an almost organic part of the exhibition. Almost like Bleier herself-- pictured from the back, naked, suspended upside down-- looks; like one of the slabs of meat around her, belonging and not belonging, not different by much from the organs of the animals exhibited about her.

But the most surprising thing about Body of Love is its beauty. The fact is that the enormous images are clean and hypnotizing, and despite the disgust involved in making them and at the thought of them, they grant us, ultimately, a visual experience that is pleasant and enticing. Their aesthetics recall classical still lifes; the organs detached from their context look like fine sculptural elements.

How and where does the gap between thought and what we see and what we experience visually occur? Does curiosity win out here? And how similar is the cow's spleen to mine? There is something fascinating in the process of detachment and engagement of the eye and mind and something strong in the works which everyone viewing the organs can enjoy. Truly as if attached to a string in the middle of a photo studio.

Sheffy Bleier, Body of Love, The Open Museum of Photography, Industrial Park, Tel Hai

Translated from the Hebrew by Frances Barrow