

The Spider's Strategy.

Artist Ruthi Helbitz Cohen created a site-specific installation for the adjacent space, whose particular characteristics have become an integral part of her art work. A hall boasting unique physical features and a historical background, it is buried under ground, with only limited sunlight. On the walls, below the layers of paint, one may discern the moisture which preserves the coolness. Due to all these qualities, the space served as cellar in the summer abode of the Dutch royal family in the distant past.

The theme and title of the exhibition were conceived following a visit to the artist's studio in a village north of Tel Aviv. Works were suspended from the ceiling, placed on the floor, spread over pieces of furniture, hung on the wall, with thin black tear cords stretched between them. Several more steps into the room and I felt as though I have been trapped in a spider's web. Here at the museum, Helbitz Cohen combined these materials with others to spawn *The Spider's Strategy*.

Images of internal organs ostensibly emptied of content and now reduced to mere casings or shells: heart, lungs, kidneys, an embryo hanging by a thread at the end of the placenta; organs linked to one another, nourishing and being nourished at the same time, and in-between them—the tear threads spun with a guiding hand. Together they form the web's interior. They were created from layers of paper glued to one another, topped by layers of fabric softener, paint, leftover coffee, and ink. The paper strata constitute both the mantle and the bodies.

Helbitz Cohen's installation is, as aforesaid, tantamount to a cobweb. In contradistinction to the shell-like layer remaining on a spider's web, which consists of the body remains of hunted insects whose vitality had been sucked out, however, in Helbitz Cohen's work the mantles of internal organs hanging bare and exposed *are* the bodies. They are not the trace of death, but rather life itself.

Ruthi Helbitz Cohen (1969), born, lives and works in Israel, holds an MA in art, teaches in several art schools, and heads the Art Department at Oranim Academic College of Education, Kiryat Tivon, Israel. As an artist she has developed a distinctive language in her works. She began exhibiting as a student, and has since staged numerous solo exhibitions and participated in many group exhibitions in Israel and abroad. Her works are kept in various collections in Israel and Europe.

Ronit Eden, Curator