

Through the Gaps

Israela Hargil's new sculptures are based on grids – grids providing infrastructures of form, conceptual foundations and imprinted images that leave their mark as a drawing rendered on the sculpture surface.

In its own right, the use of grids is part of an ongoing tradition. The grid-based minimalist sculpture of the sixties (e.g. the sculptures of Carl Andre, Sol LeWitt, and Donald Judd) strictly adhered to the paradigm characterizing minimalist sculpture.

In contrast, the works of Israela Hargil reveal a more flexible treatment of the grid. A marked difference is also present with regard to materials: whereas minimalist sculpture is identified with the industrialized quality of exactly cut metal plates, Israela's materials are found objects – shipping crates, used wooden planks, metal grids of different densities, metal 'lace' from carburetors, cardboard packings, and sacks.

The use of 'ready-mades' is also part of an ongoing tradition, originally identified with Marcel Duchamp. The works in this exhibition, however, correspond more closely with works of Italian, Arte Povera artists, whose work reflects an exacting human touch while using combinations of iron and metal with natural, 'warm' materials.

Israela chooses materials that are second hand, and thus are softened by long term use and natural wear. The blunt corners, the slight variations in manually attached hinges, the rust enhanced tones of iron, the dents delicately changing the shape of the carburetors' lace and the colors on the metal grids all testify to having lived a 'life' rather than having been manufactured to size in a factory. The vulnerable and temporary human dimension is implied through the hazard labels Israela imprints on the frames (Fragile, Hollow, Flammable, Poison, Infectious substance).

The tension between industrialized versus the hand-made aspects is marked in the central work suspended in space: three 'Houses', assembled from four transparent, wooden framed walls, attached to each other by rusty iron clips. A computerized, freehand print of a grid is embedded on the transparent plates. The grid evolves, thickens, and becomes denser and denser from one facet to another and from 'house'

to 'house' until it reaches almost full density.

Israela relates the various chosen grids to the world of feminine concepts and repetitive handcrafts. Thus the networks of the radiators were named 'lace' and the cut out cardboard packings – *vitrail*. Juxtaposing terms from one world to materials from another, accentuates the tension present in her works, regardless of the feminine or masculine association. This is particularly visible when airy nets contrast heavy massive frames or the geometrical rigidity of the original form contrasts the worn-out, softened form into which it has transformed.

The spatial expanse and gaps between the lines and forms are accentuated by the manner in which the works are positioned. The suspended cardboard beehives are a *vitrail* of framed spaces. The works layered with grids of changing density, casts complex shadows on the wall, one lit from the rear and filters light through the fabric sacks and in another lighting is cast from the front. Moreover, spectators are invited to pass among the three 'houses' suspended at eye level, and to look through them – at the other houses, at the surroundings and at other spectators, all which seemingly become contained within this one complex grid.

Brian O'Doherty claims that works of art are perceived through two channels: the eye transmits visual information and the spectator's body experiences and reports physical sensations.¹ The works of Israela Hargil offer a different kind of perceptual experience along both dimensions. On one hand there is a visual experience of airiness and spatial expanse, of looking through transparent planes which contain the surrounding environment within, reminiscent of Duchamp's *The Large Glass* or *To be Looked at (from the Other Side of the Glass)* with *One Eye, Close to, for Almost an Hour*. On the other hand, spectators are presented with a physical, material experience that echoes minimalist sculpture. Israela's three suspended houses, impermanently fastened, bring to mind Richard Serra's 'Prop' works, e.g. *One Ton Prop (House of Cards)* made of metal plates weighing a ton that just lean on each other without additional fastens. The house usually has its foundations in the ground and a form associated with stability and protection, but Hargil's "Houses" float on air, evoking threatening thoughts: the cords might not withhold, the clips might

loosen and the whole apparatus might tumble down on us.

Infectious Substance is another work with a taste of menace. The work is a long narrow case, divided into compartments covered by different types of grid networks, each side labeled with warnings such as "Infectious substance" and "poison" indicating dangerous content – contaminating germs or toxic substances. The threat, however, is not tangible, like that of the houses, but metaphorically embodied in empty spaces, much like a metaphorical imprisonment of the spectators viewed through the grid. The spaces outlined by the grid stimulate a transformation of meaning from the specific form to the general and existential realm.

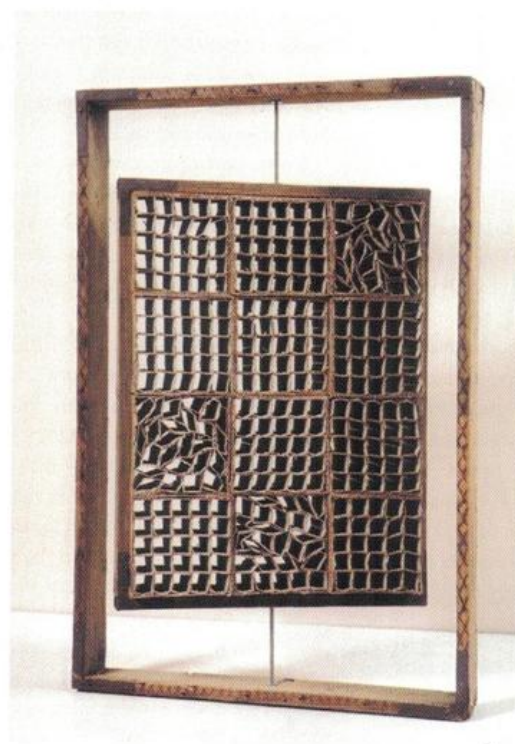
Israella Hargil's artistic preoccupation with grid nets and geometric forms is supported by Rosalind Krauss's interpretation of the grid as a network applicable to the entire world.² The spatial blur between internal and external, the full and the void is parallel to the clouding of the existential difference between secure and threatening. The semi transparent grid signifies the endless space viewed through it, as well as the physical and the metaphorical imprisonment of the environment and the viewers in its range. It is a fence, but not a wall. It is solid but airy. It is a well-defined, seemingly rigid framework, whose flexibility is revealed through its encounters with light, the environment, and the spectator.

Rivka Mayer

¹B. O'Doherthy, "The Eye and the Spectator" (Part 2 of "Inside the White Cube"), *Artforum*, April 1976, pp. 26-34.

²R. Krauss, "The Grid, the True Cross, the Abstract Structure," *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths*, Cambridge (Mass.): MIT Press, 1985, pp. 9-22.

R. Krauss, *The Optical Unconscious*, Cambridge (Mass.): MIT Press 1993.



מסגרת עץ (אובייקט מצוי), מסגרת עץ נעה על ציר, ויטראז' מקרטון מוקשה, 20/120/84
wooden frame (found object), movable wooden frame, cardboard-vitrail

"His field would thus be structured by these signals -... these fragments of an abstract grid that would intend to throw its' net over the whole of the external world in order to enter it into consciousness."

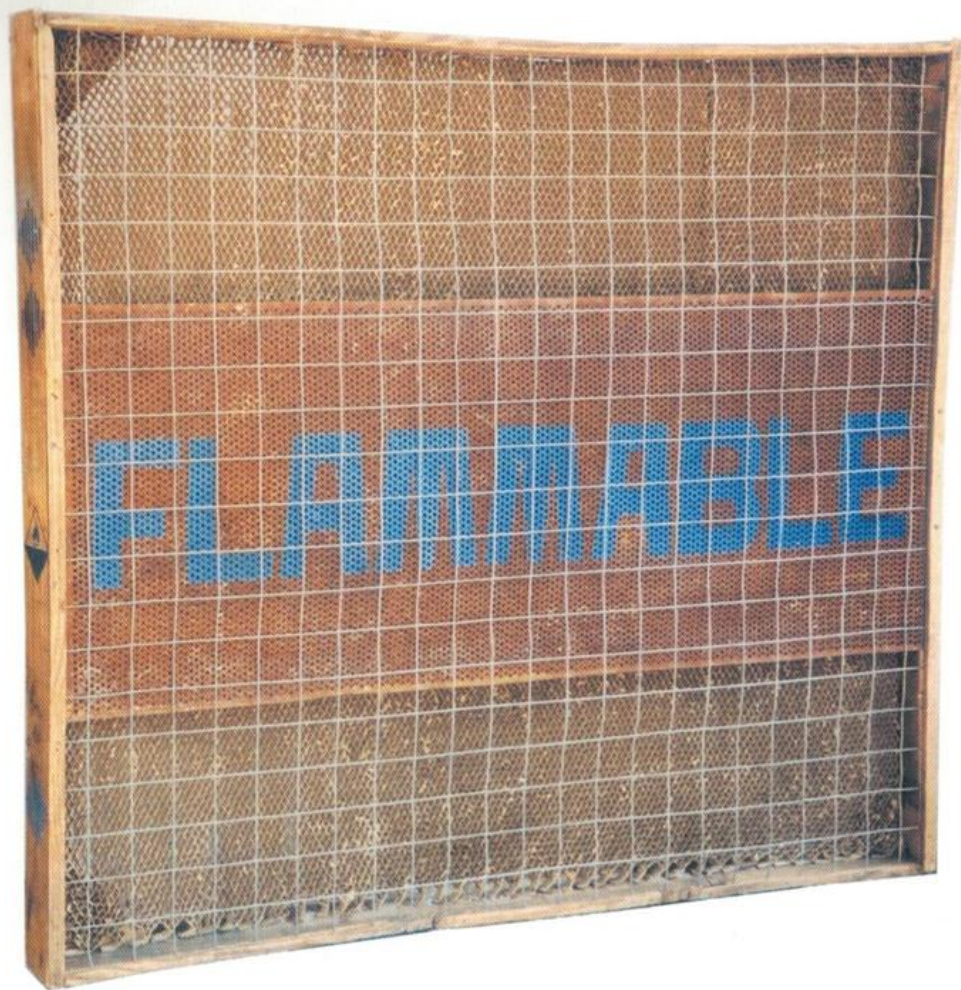
The Optical Unconscious, R. Krauss, in refer. to Mondrian

"השדה שלו יורכב מסימנים... מהבזקים של גריד מופשט שישליכו את רשתם על העולם החיצוני כולו - כדי להחדירו לתודעתנו"

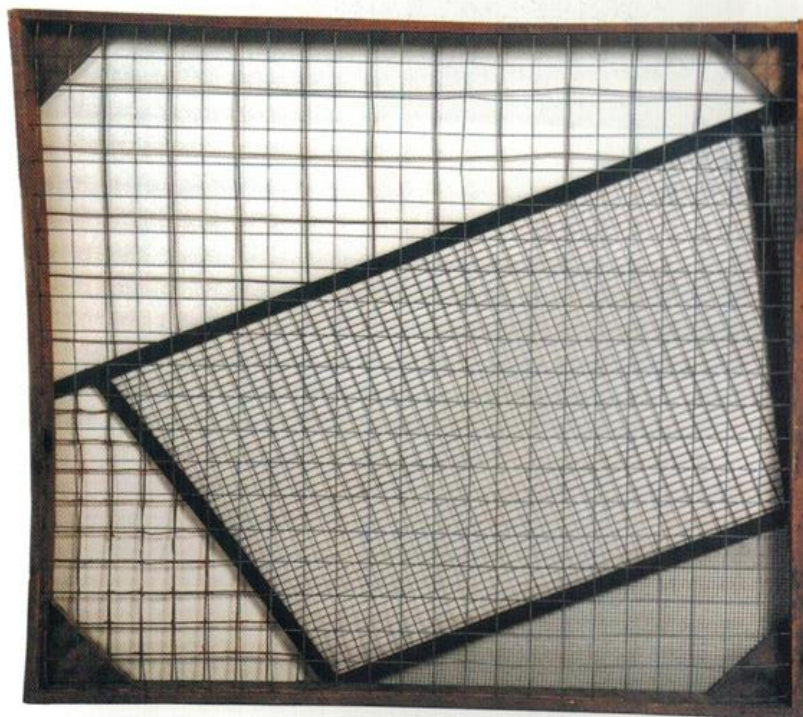
רוזלינד קראוס בדברה על מונדריאן מתוך *The Optical Unconscious*



FRAGILE, transport's wooden frame, text, hinges, cardboard (packing material), 20/120/84, קרטון מוקשה (חומר איזוח), כיתוב, פריז, פרחי, (מתחלה ניסוי), כיתוב, פרחי, קרטון מוקשה (חומר איזוח), 20/120/84



עץ, כיתוב, רשת בדול, קרטון מוקשה רשת, 10/110/105, FLAMMABLE, wood, text, iron net, cardboard packing material, net



עץ, ברזל, רשתות, 10/110/105, wood, iron, metal nets