

Naked Machismo: Uncovered Masculinity in an Israeli Home Design Campaign

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Abstract : This research centers on an unexpected Israeli advertising campaign for Elemento, a local furniture company, which eroticizes male nudity. The discussed campaign includes a series of printed ads that depict naked male models in effeminate positions. This campaign included a series of ads published in Haaretz, a small-scaled yet highly prestigious daily newspaper which is typically read by urban middle-upper-class left-winged Israelis. Apparently, this campaign embodies an alternative masculinity that challenges the prevalent machismo in Israeli society and advertising. Although some of the ads focus on young men in effeminate positions, they never expose their genitals and anuses, and their bodies are never permeable. The 2010s Elemento male models are seemingly contrasted to conventional representation of manhood in contemporary mainstream advertising. They display a somewhat inactive, passive and self-indulgent masculinity which involves 'conspicuous leisure'. In the process of commodity fetishism, the advertised furniture are emptied of the original meaning of their production, and then filled with new meanings in ways that both mystify the product and turn it into a fetish object. Yet, our research critically reconsiders this sensational campaign as sophisticated patriarchal parody that does not subvert but rather reconfirms and even fetishizes patriarchal premises; it parodizes effeminacy rather than the prevalent (Israeli) machismo. Following Pierre Bourdieu's politics of cultural taste, our research reconsiders and criticizes the male models' domesticated masculinity in a fantasized and cosmopolitan hedonistic habitus. Notwithstanding, we suggest that the Elemento campaign, despite its conformity, does question some Israeli and global axioms about gender roles, corporeal ideologies, idealized bodies, and domesticated phalluses and anuses. Although the naked truth is uncovered by this campaign, it does erect a vibrant discussion of contemporary masculinities and their exploitation in current mass consumption.

Keywords : male body, campaign, advertising, gender studies, men's studies, Israeli culture, masculinity, parody, effeminacy

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