

**Speech to Robert Smit on the occasion of the ceremony for the Françoise van den Bosch Award 2004 in the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam.**

Dear Robert, first I would like to congratulate you with this important recognition for your work. Although, as you have experienced, you don't get a prize like this for nothing. It starts with a museum (the Stedelijk Museum) showing interest in making an exhibition of your work, and it ends with a whole new collection of fifteen works, jewellery, which will be presented to the public for the first time in the exhibition "Yellow Metallic – Gold for Robert Smit", in this museum from today till the end of January 2005. You have worked very hard the last year. You have gone deeply into your archive where you found drawings, sketches and pictures that you made in 1978 during a three weeks stay in Wales making walks in the surroundings of the village of Crwt. These walks can be characterized as outflanking movements in the surroundings of Crwt, without ever reaching it, and this was just your intention. Crwt was a fiction, a place of expectations. In a local pub, somewhere around in Wales, you exposed copies of your sketches and drawings. You told me how people came to see it, in festive dresses, proud to have something like that in their pub. You were very busy with drawing in this period, you worked like one possessed: ten exhibitions in one year, entitled "Towards the Liberation of Drawings", all realized at Gallery Orez Mobil in The Hague. Crwt and Wales were the subject of the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> exhibition, but you couldn't help feeling that you never really brought it to an end. Well, now you did it, in gold, silver, lead, tantalium and paint, with an emphasis on gold. Since 1985 you choose this material in a natural way. Your choice for gold is entirely logical because of its beauty, connotations and especially because of its colour.

And now, after all those years, the circle seems to be round again. The jewellery which you made after studying in Pforzheim (Germany) were characterized by structuring. They became larger and therefore, around 1971, the step towards drawing was well-considered. The structures continued autonomously on paper. Now the sketches, structures and divisions from years ago have gained a second life in your new jewellery. I think we should be very happy with that.

Liesbeth den Besten, 04/11/2004