

## Françoise van den Prize 2004 for ROBERT SMIT

The jury met long ago, in April 2003 and consensus about Robert Smit came easily. In fact, everyone was surprised that he had not yet been awarded the Françoise van den Bosch Prize. For many years, Robert Smit has been making high quality jewellery and yet his work keeps surprising us; one can continuously find new aspects. In addition to his work, the jury wants to stress the importance of his books. All of the publications about his work, whether published by himself or by others, are also unique projects of exceptional quality.

Jewellery seems to be in his blood and yet for about 15 years, dissatisfied and needing to work in a different way, he didn't make a jewel. Around 1971, the act of drawing and structuring was so prevalent in his jewellery that it seemed logical to make a move to the autonomous arts. Drawing became his métier. When he began making jewellery again in 1985, he conceived of a collection that left people flabbergasted. The Dutch audience had never seen so much gold, imagination and intuition before. His jewellery had a non-Dutch character; the pieces were too big, too gold, too narrative and too expensive for the polder. They stirred things up.

Gold is his material; a material which he bends, wraps, cuts, scratches and rivets in an unparalleled way, and which he hides under layers of silver, steel, zinc, lead and paint. Gold sometimes glows vaguely through the thick layers of paint, and sometimes is shining like the sun. Gold in his own alloys and in his own colours – everything is fused together with a sublime technical perfection. His work results from a fruitful cross-pollination between the expressive and applied aspects, which he unites harmoniously.

We remember the debate in 1985 and 1986 as a result of his jewellery. At that moment, Robert Smit turned against the Dutch jewellery design current. In his view it was too impersonal, superficial and synthetic. In this way he made room for a different approach and his own jewellery, with its magical and evocative power, bears witness to that. It is the right time to award the Françoise van den Bosch Prize to Robert Smit, as a recognition for his important contribution to jewellery in The Netherlands and abroad.

The jury of the Françoise van den Bosch Prize 2004,  
Warwick Freeman, Prof.Dr. Florian Hufnagl, Renny Ramakers, Ward  
Schrijver and Drs. Liesbeth den Besten (chairwoman).

Liesbeth den Besten

