

Speech award ceremony Françoise van den Bosch Award to Karl Fritsch 21-01-2007

Guilt

Sometimes you feel a bit guilty as a representative of an organisation who stirs up a lot of trouble, a lot of business and fuss. I have seen this happening many times. I'm afraid, getting an award is a heavy burden. The moment I rang you up to tell you about the awarding of the Fran. Award 2006 a process started which couldn't be stopped. As if you thought you had to do something, make a point before actually deserving the Award. It started with a book and it ended with two books and an exhibition. These books are both so ambitious, so spectacular that there is nothing to compare it with – at least in the field of jewellery. Everything concerning these books seems to be in plural and in superlatives:

The first book *Metrosideros Robusta* counts

444 pages

6 sorts of luxurious paper

the weight is 1,5 kilo

there are almost 1100 photographs in it

and 26 essays in 13 languages (including Japanese, and Bengali)

And then there is this second book, *The Baby Brick*

Another proof of an obsessed publisher.

Because we have to be honest: those books wouldn't have happened in this form and appearance if you didn't know Andy Lim, a lover of beauty, and a publisher of exceptional art books.

What can we say about the *Baby Brick*? Perhaps Andy will tell us more later, but I would like to make a start:

It is smaller than the first book, but fatter (864 pages)

It is introduced as a book about a German goldsmith also known as "Lord of the Rings".

It is about the collection of 360 early rings from 1988-1998, acquired by Andy Lim.

The weight of this brick is again 1,5 kilo

In a limited edition of only 250 books, with different covers, materials and colours.

The exhibition here in the museum and the books are the proof of two maniacs at work. No doubt, the match of Karl Fritsch and Andy Lim is a perfect one.

When I observe the jewellery of Karl I see movement, I see lively materials that otherwise have a cold and frozen appearance. In the work of Karl Fritsch you can follow the movement of the fingers. Working with old discarded jewels, Karl often feels like a parasite, growing rampant on that what nourishes him: jewellery in all sorts and sizes, in all styles and materials. The title of his exhibition "Metrosideros Robusta" refers to a special kind of parasite growing in New Zealand, the country where Lisa Walker his wife comes from.

Karl Fritsch challenged his teachers at the academy in Munich, not with the aim to provoke but because for him, there was no other way to make jewellery. His jewellery is the result of trial and error. He doesn't work with clear outlined concepts or with sketches and models. He is a worker, a doer, not a designer. And no matter how big and sculptural some jewels will be, or have developed, his main concern is to make things that people can wear. His jewellery is not made for the showcase, they have a strong three dimensional character, they can differ from side to side, whenever the viewpoint changes the image changes. You should wear them proudly.

The excellent exhibition design is made by Sofie Lachaert and Luc d'Hanis from Belgium who unfortunately couldn't be here. Inside the showcases Karl Fritsch made his own little 'landscapes' of plasticine.