

By Sarah Bay Williams

The hot lava is coming, heading for you. Sparks of impossible heat dripping, red hissing, black stone made viscous and moving, covering all in its path. There's no getting away from it. Lava is going to get you—and, look! See my nails, look at my nails. I made them into hot lava. My nails are as hot as lava—and just as badass. See this silver fleck and this purple-bead lacquer. Bubbles. (Growths?) Purple pimples on my nails that are like hot lava that's going to get you. Too much. So much. You will eat metal that looks like candy...

I'm looking at images from her inspiration wall. Maartje Folkeringa is in Eindhoven, working on a new series of aluminum sculptures at her residency at artists' metal workplace Beeldenstorm, and recently wrapped up her installation, *Trick or Trait: Gestures on Social Status*, an exhibition of sculpture, video, and the collected images that make up this inspiration wall, at the Onomatopoe project-space. There are trinkets and baubles, flashes of teeth, gold and more gold, statuary, heraldry, 1st-place ribbons, and in the middle of it all—the inspiration wall—the Dutch word *Nieuw*, in a white rounded font. It slaps me in the face from the middle of a big blue starburst made of corrugated plastic. In English: *new, young, fresh, recent, modern, incoming, pioneer*, it's a huge explicit brute-force signage-as-didactic that informs me explicitly. (Where did she get this *nieuw* sign? Perhaps ripped it off the side of a car dealership? Looking closer I see it is cracked and smudged with—what?—Mud? Dried blood?) Hot-pink and red tape spaghetti-ties off from the sides of the blue burst, like mealworms... coming or going, I don't know.

This same hot-pink and red tape holds up all the pictures, trinkets, and ads from fashion magazines, torn as if by a madwoman. Strips, chunks, tears, economical and random at the same time, maybe. Loops of tape hold a gold chain, a necklace,

a mouse—a computer mouse like you don't see anymore; one with a tail—or, cord (like how the computer mouse got its name). This mouse is encrusted with golden diamonds, and a small reproduction of the Virgin Mary (from Simone Martini's *Annunciation*, 1333) hangs next to it, squinting her eyes at this 20th-century angel Gabriel-mouse.

But I'm not making associations. I get lost in each image—very much sucked in. The inspiration wall assaults me with sweet and shiny. It's a multiplication table for the train wreck of taking things just beyond—no, way beyond, in fact, the *opposite* of—diffidence. These images and trinkets compete with each other and it's a competition to the rhinestone-laden death. I'm stuck on two women with perms on a blue background—very 1980s—are they twins?—smiling over ice cream sodas, wearing matching salmon cardigans, white visors, and high-top tennies (have they just finished a match of tennis?). They're under the text, "Always and ever" and "Crackers." (*crackers to eat...?*) A small font at the bottom right, reads, "Styling: Ron Sports/Le Coq Sport." Then there are gold and silver watches—several—advertisements for diamond-, emerald-, and sapphire-encrusted watches. And a creased postcard from Denmark's Thorvaldsens Museum, showing the gallery in which the 19th-century Polish leader, Prince Józef Poniatowski (his sword in the air), leads an army of staid marble busts, eternally lined up against the walls surrounding his equestrian statue. Other flashes catch my eye: a chunky gold chain that looks like it's made of Play-Doh, medals, blazons, and heraldry. I see super balls, cotton candy, trophies, and stars.

These images and trinkets don't associate with each other, but they associate directly back to Folkeringa's body of work as a whole. "The themes have always been the same," she writes to me in an e-mail. Through

her early work in photography, tion, drawing, action-based a sculpture, the themes that have in Folkeringa's practice involve communication, seeing others seen—transmissions from the things. I see it happening in her her attention to the small, unique of physicality and her ability to quirks with a surreal but effort

Her early figural sculpture *Stoel (Man on Chair)* (2007), is a Plasticine modeling clay, wax, centimeters high, leaning back, his arms outstretched as if to a *more do you want from me? Give got....* The details come through his sneakers, lined with a barely strip of red, the messy impression in his shirt collar, and the fine b his eyebrows. In 2008, Folkering with *Zonder Titel 2 (Untitled 2)* two female figures that became part exhibition of art and music along Amsterdam's *Museumplein* to the Red Light district. These figures Disappointed. The sentiment is such a large scale. Their skin, ca dual-liquid expanding polyureth rough and layered. Sometimes, plies a blue or green color between foam, so that when she carves in to find her shape, these thin layers appearance of varicose veins—i that can be worked, covered, un reworked until they feel right. Or she applies wax, Plasticine, glitt to incredible detail—the standing wears fish-net leggings, and at t one of her ankles, are an inexplic fact line of black dots—just one you will see if you look closely at

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 her attention to the small, unique aspects
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 quirks with a surreal but effortless effect.

Her early figural sculpture, *Man op
 Stoel (Man on Chair)* (2007), is a small figure of
 Plasticine modeling clay, wax, and fabric, 50
 centimeters high, leaning back on a chair with
 his arms outstretched as if to ask, *What? What
 more do you want from me? Give me what you
 got....* The details come through in the soles of
 his sneakers, lined with a barely perceptible
 strip of red, the messy impression of plaid
 in his shirt collar, and the fine brown hairs of
 his eyebrows. In 2008, Folkeringa went big
 with *Zonder Titel 2 (Untitled 2)* two gigantic
 female figures that became part of a walking
 exhibition of art and music along a route from
 Amsterdam's *Museumplein* to the heart of the
 Red Light district. These figures look angry.
 Disappointed. The sentiment is unsettling on
 such a large scale. Their skin, carved from
 dual-liquid expanding polyurethane foam, is
 rough and layered. Sometimes, Folkeringa ap-
 plies a blue or green color between layers of
 foam, so that when she carves into the foam
 to find her shape, these thin layers take on the
 appearance of varicose veins—imperfections
 that can be worked, covered, uncovered, and
 reworked until they feel right. On top of this
 she applies wax, Plasticine, glitter and fabrics
 to incredible detail—the standing figure
 wears fish-net leggings, and at the base, on
 one of her ankles, are an inexplicable but per-
 fect line of black dots—just one of the details
 you will see if you look closely at these giants.

*Dame I en Leguaanhond (Lady I and
 Iguana Watchdog)* (2010), is a product of

her residency at the Instituto Buena Vista,
 Curaçao Center for Contemporary Art, and
 is inspired by the ostentation she found so
 prevalent on Curaçao—a form of personal
 spectacle rarely seen in her native Nether-
 lands—flash and surface decoration made to
 the body through jewels, nail art, and dress
 (or lack of it). *Special Guest* (2010) is the ab-
 straction of a figurative thought: the neo-co-
 lonialist as separatist, dividing the herd from
 himself, making cliques and clubs. The piece
 takes on the form of an enormous Maltese
 cross of sorts, bigger than human, hanging in
 mid-air. It's the type of insignia received when
 one achieves a level of distinction, the kind of
 medal that, through it's obscene and cut-
 ting details—gold chain, flower-like center,
 splayed out patonce—references livery col-
 lars, or the heraldry of chivalric orders; secret
 societies that have endured for centuries as
 exclusionary groups, hidden, and somehow
 so powerful. Shortly after *Dame I* and *Special
 Guest*, Folkeringa begins working primarily
 with ideas—the abstract representation
 of ostentation. She focuses in on symbolic
 objects, such as the diamond-cut shapes,
 expensive purses, turbans, and pants that
 bulge with some strange goop in the series
Faux Pas (2011), the rough gold nuggets of
Goudklompjes (2011), and a gigantism of jew-
 elry in *Showroom* (2011–2012). She also works
 in figurations of abstract ideas, such as the

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SARAH BAY WILLIAMS