

## THE GESTURES ON SOCIAL STATUS BY MAARTJE FOLKERINGA

By **Freek Lomme**, director **Onomatopee**,  
curator and chief-editor of the project.

*“Reveal your character or die”*, curator and writer Renske Janssen explicated the act underneath the title I gave to this project, revealing true faces hidden behind the social image. While exploring the particular gestures of Maartje Folkeringa in this first published survey of her work, we became increasingly aware of their qualities: what they express, what they catalyse and how they mediate in the process. Indeed she fosters a withering sentiment about the never-ending search for satisfaction through material wealth and consumption. ‘Folkeringa lassoes in this search, tapes it up with hot pink and red tape to the inspiration wall and creates sculptural objects that make for a fascinating dialog of excess’, as LA based writer, curator and piñata maker Sarah Bay Williams states, ‘In her chaos of visual attack, it’s very easy to surrender’.

Maartje Folkeringa’s work plays the non-verbal forms of communication in our social interaction, our behaviour and the symbols we use to express our worth. It plays with power relationships and discusses the status in which we postulate our social hierarchy, often unconsciously. The work entices us with familiar images of this interaction and with the totems people use to furnish their value.

This sculptural reality, however, does not identify or point a finger at anyone in particular but quietly strips away all decoration, thus exposing and neutralising the façade of human interaction. As Janssen observes, the works still do not bear any personified titles and no names are being used as if to say “this could be anyone, including you”. It reveals how our private allurements can transform us into *wannabees*, jerks or cowards, or how we fall prey to temptation:

man in his trivial megalomania. By articulating and acting upon these symbols, she touches upon the whole unconscious kit and caboodle of social interaction. Her poking around allows us to laugh at ourselves.

*Maartje: ‘During the making process, I never try to bend the work to my original intentions but rather enter into ‘negotiation’ with it. In this contra-intuitive game I gradually act more associatively; one turn in a certain direction leads to another. I strive for “air” in my work: playfulness and humour; a balance between sketchiness and accuracy, dark and light, and figuration and abstraction.’*

In her games with non-verbal communication as manifested in our behaviour and in the objects we dress and surround ourselves with, we can sense what is going on without words. These are the unwritten rules that colour the spectacle of life itself. We use them to accentuate our power relationships. They provide colour because they form a grey area within our social interaction. Exactly because they are being applied unconsciously, they reveal more than we like them to.

As we familiarise ourselves with our demeanour, social relationships are ingrained only deeper. Non-verbal communication disciplines our interaction and covers our social fabric with a fine hue of repression. Civilisation is rooted in traditions, and conditions our behaviour: it can be understood as the forms and codes of conduct pertaining to a conservative Cultural Capital; a status that is historic and sticks to our unconscious behaviour for a long time. Decency here is moving between the façade that evolved from following tradition and the dynamics of our heart as it tries to adapt to social changes. Enough reason to put this on the map of our cultural horizon. The material façade of the immaterial surren-

der is played out here: processing into immaterial and familiar become explicit through their material symbolism. ‘There is a in these sculptures but ing underneath’, critic in this book, ‘these pre from scratch, beg for in couldn’t be further rem ostentation’.

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der is played out here: through material pro-  
cessing into immaterial subversion. The cheap  
and familiar become extrovertly layered  
through their material closeness, as a worn  
symbolism. 'There is a lot of outward display  
in these sculptures but decay is always lurk-  
ing underneath', critic Lucette ter Borg argues  
in this book, 'these precious objects, made  
from scratch, beg for introspection. They  
couldn't be further removed from extrovert  
ostentation'.

Each of the writers here addressed  
the result of her work as a step 'beyond'.  
Both beyond a mere pop-extravaganza  
response to high culture, with highlights,  
exclamation marks and other elements famil-  
iar from pop-art, and beyond the postmodern  
art that brought pop culture into art in the  
first place and made us wonder about the  
artistic quality of the works. This oeuvre goes  
beyond those positions, they claim, by em-  
bedding the material foundation of our status  
tactilely in our environment. We feel it; it is  
close to our body. It is personal and tactilely  
sensual while it remains conceptually sensible.  
Strong statements are made about this body  
of work and they suggest that more people  
should enjoy its fruits.

In sum, this book presents the work of  
Folkeringa as an act of doubt about the social  
status of our living selves as well as that of art-  
works. It is conceptual and expressive at the  
same time. It has a humanising effect through  
the over-materialisation of the material. It  
plays consumption, status and hunger. And it  
is joyful indeed.

Tactility is an identifier whose material exis-  
tence is fundamental. We would not be able  
to produce such a vocabulary without the  
support of Lecturis Printers. This book and its  
distribution of living energy would not have  
been possible without the generous support  
of the Prins Bernhard Cultuurfonds (Josine de

**MAARTJE FOLKERINGA'S  
WORK PLAYS THE  
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EXPRESS OUR WORTH.**

FREEK LOMME

Bruyn Kops Fonds) and Stokroos Foundation.  
Our contribution is a quality of life, but mate-  
rials still have their price.

It has been great to process this proj-  
ect with all writers involved, the amazing text  
editor and translator Nanne op 't Ende, intern  
Nolwenn Salaun and Christoph and Daniera,  
my friends from design bureau Raw Color who  
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for having had the opportunity to work with  
Maartje, whom I know as an outspoken and  
recalcitrant person since birth, to love and  
to be bothered by, and whom I followed while  
she became an artist carrying her voice with  
strength and dignity. It is amazing when  
someone sticks to her love for people through  
a continued intelligent processing of their  
lives. Please draw from the inspiration we  
present here!