

1 Hanneke Giezen / My Little Unicorn, porcelain, 2008, H35cm 2 Pegasus, porcelain, 2010, H37cm 3 Hermes, porcelain, 2010, H30cm 4 Ganssch/Goesel, porcelain, 2010, H36cm

# Pomp and Circumstances

Frits Achten reveals the anachronisms arising within Hanneke Giezen's Sèvres works.

*Pronkstuk* (Showpiece) stands vulnerably, on four fragile points. The column on which the large form rests begins from them. That form looks most like an egg, lavishly decorated with angels, gold, and limbs. Although the egg attracts the most attention, it cannot do without the base, which lifts the mass to the heavens and makes the object solemn and vaguely sacred. That is why *Pronkstuk* suggests a chalice, or the football World Cup. Those objects too need a base that exalts the object of worship. But enough for the similarities; the differences are at least as great. A chalice culminates in a perfect bowl; the World Cup grows into a golden globe. The climax of *Pronkstuk* looks completely different. It is comprised of a tangle of legs and feet, desperately seeking solid ground. *Pronkstuk* would be absolutely unacceptable as a World Cup. The hopeless lack of coordination is quite foreign to football. *Pronkstuk* would also be unsuitable for a worship service. The thrashing legs could perhaps belong to the sort of putti found in baroque or rococo churches, but they aren't doing what they should be doing. In a church the plump cherubs pilot martyrs into the hereafter. In this showpiece all that upward striving is reversed into its opposite. It is directed downwards, as if the cup offers a place of refuge.

**RITUALS AND METAPHORS** *Pronkstuk* is unfit for sport, worship, or any other ritual. It is as if the cup is poking fun at everything that is accompanied by hymns, parades, and flag-waving. It also ridicules apotheoses, allegories, eternal flames, and laurel wreaths. At the same time *Pronkstuk* is a serious investigation of the formal language

that accompanies any act of glorification. Although Hanneke Giezen views expressions of collective adoration as absurd, at the same time she is fascinated by them. She knows that hiding somewhere in the squidgy estuary of our collective underbelly there is a proclivity towards worship and exaltation. *Pronkstuk* is intended to appeal to that craving. The same is true for *Triumph*. That piece too is comprised of a sensuous arrangement of forms that develops into something that seems to be important. The base is a body of fruit with bulges that grow outward like sugar-coated teats. At the top, horses rear in a wild choreography of hoofs and manes. They are the observation post for a little angel, who sits enthroned peacefully among the flying hooves. The cup is made to celebrate a triumph, but it remains a riddle what sort of victory has been achieved. Because of that, *Triumph* is the epitome of empty pomp and circumstance, the meaning of which has been forgotten, but in which we continue to believe for obscure reasons.

*Pronkstuk* and *Triumph* share more than a theme. They are also made in the same way. Their genesis lies in two porcelain dish shapes. These are overrun with leaves, flames, scales, arms, legs, putti, swans, horses, and wings. All these ornaments are mixed together. Yet there is nothing random about their placement. Almost every ornament is part of a larger pattern. The use of casting moulds has a lot to do with this. Thanks to the moulds, identical forms can be created that couple the extravagant proliferation with a mechanical regularity. It is precisely that strict ordering of the profusion that makes the sculptures stately.



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