

5 Prankstuk (Showpiece), porcelain, 2007, H73cm 6 Triumph, porcelain, 2008, H69cm  
 7 Doele Gansch (Dead Goose), porcelain, 2010, H33cm 8 Dansende Blauwe Kroon, porcelain, 2008, H40cm 9 Haast (Hurry), porcelain, 2006, H37cm 10 Zwanenmeer (Swan Lake), porcelain, 2008, H47cm

Hanneke Giezen makes some of the moulds herself; others are bought at a ceramics supplier. Actually, such moulds are most often associated with those amateur potters who are happy with the sweet, stylised images of angels, horses, and swans, immortalised in the most beautiful attitudes. Hanneke Giezen thinks the horses and swans are beautiful too – but in a way that defies conventions. In her constellations the porcelain animals lose their elegant calm. They somersault, flounder around, or lie dead on their backs, victims of the caprices of the ceramist.

**SÈVRES MOULDS** The selection of moulds in hobby shops is limited. The real riches are to be found elsewhere, for instance, at the Manufacture Nationale de Sèvres, the famous porcelain factory on the outskirts of Paris. A large part of the factory consists of depots. Stored in them are the moulds for all objects that have been made since 1740. In the racks lie the negatives for tureens, shepherdesses, vases as tall as a man, tiny thimbles. All were made with the greatest care, by the best artists and craftsmen. Earlier, this porcelain beauty was destined for the royal court. Now most of the porcelain goes to the Elysée for presidential receptions and state banquets. The rest is sold to oil sheiks and the other plutocrats of the world. For the buyers, Sèvres porcelain is more than just expensive dinner services. They have bought Sèvres to show off tradition and power. Sèvres is proud of its status; the company takes exclusivity and conservatism with the utmost seriousness. It is for that reason that Sèvres is, above all, an institution that stands guard over the noble ideals of the eighteenth century.

**EXTRAVAGANT PERFORMANCE** Sèvres, steeped in this anachronism from the time of noblemen and palaces, has invited Hanneke Giezen to work from time to time. In doing so, the firm is taking under its roof an artist who flouts, mangles, and ravages its cherished tradition. Worse yet, she uses the depot as a grab bag, sticking together heads, bodies, and limbs, piling ornament on ornament for the hell of it, without preconceived plans. She does everything that is just not done, and yet Hanneke Giezen is esteemed by Sèvres. A part of this appreciation arises from their shared regard for professional skill and expertise. Hanneke is therefore recognised as a member of the guild; she belongs to the same fellowship. In addition, the formal language is familiar. The craftsmen at Sèvres have never been averse to extravagant performances, and deer, parrots, and fauns are part of the familiar menagerie. Only the daring is unknown. Sèvres always remains at the service of the taste and wishes of its clients. Hanneke Giezen does things differently; she takes into account only the boundaries of her own taste. For her, beauty must be foolish, balancing idiosyncratically on the edge of the acceptable. Only then can she fall in love with it, and can she ask what we think of it: do we dare to think that what she makes is beautiful? If we try to answer that question, we are immediately in the territory of what we call 'taste', the sum total of conventions, tied to time, place, and cultural caste.

Hanneke Giezen's works are about taste, good and bad, and therefore also about culture as an instrument of inclusion and exclusion. At the same time, she wants to transcend that discourse. Ultimately, 'taste' is too relative to make too much of a fuss about. She would rather that we approach her objects light-heartedly, and discover that they are comic, tragic, and touching. These are ceramics to love. If you dare. ■



5



6



7



8



9



10

Exhibitions ATH Galerie, Uiverhout, the Netherlands, 28 December 2010-18 January 2011, Object Rotterdam, Los Palmas, Rotterdam, the Netherlands, 9-13 February 2011, Brandpunt Terra, Terra Delft Gallery, Delft, the Netherlands, 23 April-4 June 2011

Email giez.hanneke@hetnet.nl  
 Web www.hannekegiezen.nl  
 Fris Achten studied ceramics, sculpture, and art education in Tilburg, the Netherlands. He teaches art history and art appreciation and is involved in community art projects in Eindhoven.

Do we dare to think that what she makes is beautiful?