

Sculptures as jewels, captured in photographs

Marliz Frencken's sculptures look festive, fragile and powerful all at once. Their exterior reflects not only the looks of the women they portray, but also their inner selves. Frencken's women could have stepped right out of a fairy tale if they hadn't sprouted from the artist's imagination first. They embody the ultimate imagination as well as an everyday reality in which we all feel the need to get away from our routines and celebrate life. That's why these women wear their party frocks exuberantly, pose elegantly or even dance. They would be stereotypes if it weren't for their unusual proportions and their utterly human expression. With their arms like streamers, their round, undulating hips and either voluptuous or slim bodies they would never feature on the cover of Elle. Contrary to Barbie dolls, a phenomenon often used by Frencken in her paintings, that convey a predictable perfection, these women are extraordinary in an ordinary way.

Marliz Frencken's work doesn't only portray the concept of rising above reality, she actually proves it is possible. She uses clay, paint and resin, and transforms these materials into sculptures that make dreams visible and ideas come to life. Physical reality coincides with the depicted desire. No matter how different they look from what women would expect to see in a mirror, they're still recognizable to everyone as they touch upon something that's hidden inside all of us. Surprise and recognition mingle when we see a woman sitting in a teacup. The sculpture refers to a figurative hot, relaxing bath that stimulates the zest for life. You can imagine how the woman might have drifted off over a cup of tea or coffee, and is mentally immersed in a hot bath. Another woman has golden skin. I see her on a bright summer's day, warmed by a sun with which she feels as one, as if she herself has become a sun.

Some of Marliz Frencken's sculptures have pins stuck in them. Is this a reference to the magic of voodoo rituals? Yet here, a blessing rather than a curse is invoked. Or is it a Christian tradition seeping through and do the pins refer to images in which Christian martyrs are killed by arrows? In this light Marliz Frencken's sculptures can be regarded as symbols attacked by an angry outside world. However, these women have the strength to resist the pain, much as the old saints did, and they seem unper- turbed. If you are true to yourself, no one can hurt you. The pins also remind me of acupuncture needles. Their application is very successful here, and bring out the best in these women.

It is precisely these interwoven references that make Marliz Frencken's sculptures so intriguing. Lately she has been providing them with drawings: bodies, heads, animals. They might be thoughts, memories, influences, signs of the bearer's personal history. Their skin is decorated with images from their lives, offering an

insight into who they really are. In this way, Marliz Frencken adds an extra layer of meaning to her women, bringing the depth and complexity of life to the surface.

Another aspect of these sculptures is their incredibly shiny surfaces, making them resemble glass. It enhances the fairytale atmosphere and makes the figurines impalpable, as if they could dissolve into light at any moment, like Cinderella who lost her mule in an instant. You can interpret that aspect in different ways too. It might symbolise the notion that these women don't really exist. But as I pointed out earlier, they do exist: after all, you can see them and even touch them. So in my interpretation, the transparency and the lustre refer to jewellery. When you wear jewellery you feel like a different person, even though all it really does is emphasize your own beauty. This could also apply to Marliz Frencken's work: when you see the sculptures, you become aware of your own strength and beauty and that of others.

Some of Marliz Frencken's sculptures are captured in photographs. What makes these photos extraordinary is the tension between the two and three-dimensional nature of the depictions. When you try to reach out and touch the figures, you miss. The sculptures' lustre is striking, attracts and seduces, but at the same time makes them even more intangible. The material and use of material reflect the nature of the characters that Marliz Frencken evokes. They are creatures that are unattainable in their own dream worlds. They manifest themselves as fairy princesses, or wear fancy ball gowns. They are made of gold, wearing nothing but a hat and a necklace, and one or two 'gemstones' in place of their private parts. Sometimes they consist of shapes that, apart from a head, have no bearing to a body. They taunt every anatomic law: arms that reach down to the ground or are missing altogether, and there is even a dancer with one leg, who, despite this, looks intensely happy.

Marliz Frencken's creations lead their own lives that take place in the imagination where there's never a dull moment. Like their creator, we can experience this with fascination and admiration. The characters are depicted lovingly. However, Marliz Frencken also adds a touch of irony. The women she demonstrates are playing a role and might even know that it is 'only' a role. This applies less to the men in the company. With their incredible erections made of materials such as Swarovsky crystal, they seem to simply want to impress their competitors and desired lovers. It seems unlikely that the ladies in question will let themselves be carried away by these 'gems'.

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