



Riki Mijling

Reduction!

■ The smallest object created by Riki Mijling, sculptress from Amsterdam, probably contains everything to allow access to her oeuvre – like a key to something vast and immeasurable. After all, observers are always looking for clues to enter the artist's world of thought. However, there is more to this medal than meets the eye. The outspoken avant-garde 2004 object of the Vereniging voor Penningkunst (Association for Medal Art) is a coveted rectangle of 69 x 54 x 9 millimeters. One can vaguely detect the lines of a smaller square. Pick it up and the meaning of the title 'The Gateless Gate' reveals itself. A trap door pops out and offers a step up to an imaginary space. Put down the medal and the door offers entry into a deep space. The symbolism of hinging to another world is as discrete as it is suggestive.

Mijling refers to the lyrics of Van Morrison's 'Dweller on The Threshold'. Standing on the threshold, with the breath of the present in his neck, someone hesitates, not sure whether he wants to step into the unknown. In the end he dares to take the step because the wait threatens to overwhelm him. The image is as intriguing as the question whether emptiness can contain something.

Her language of expression evidences Riki Mijling's fascination with building and as a logical consequence thereof the phenomenon of space. It is her intention to conquer that space, in its physical, philosophical and functional meaning. In doing so she limits herself to essential, mostly geometric shapes. Her sculptures are created systematically, but at the same time through a design process guided by intuition. In the process she applies mathematical concepts, like the golden section. That approach results in a series of sculptures, born out of a logical sequence of reinterpretation and reduction. One form calls out for the other.

A recent series of mural sculptures, consisting of constructions with rectangles and squares originated from drawings. Mijling drew them by starting with an earlier series of separable volumes. She stripped them of their third dimension and thus schematized them to essential, spatial line drawings. These two-dimensional exercises ultimately led to minimalist mural sculptures, seemingly monotonous rhythmic studies.

Here we observe the simplicity of hidden virtuosity and imagination, similarly found in artists like Donald Judd, Richard Serra and Carl Andre. Unmistakably and irrefutably they handle their own grammar in forms.

Remarkable in Mijling's work is the lack of a visible 'hand writing'. It does have its reason. Mijling mistrusts the effect of a seductive gesture, or an artistic but essentially meaningless technique. She therefore consciously

banishes it, drawing from a source which just happens to be there and to which only she has access. Not to search, but solely to make her selection. Stripped from personal volatility, her work still bears a recognizable signature. This self imposed limitation is rooted in her final exam project of the Royal Academy of Art and Design in Den Bosch in 1980. She graduated as a monumental artist. In the spirit of the times, she chose herself as starting point using her body and hair to paint, thus conquering space. Conceptual and performing art in its purest form.

After graduation she became an artist without visible work. A period of spiritual deepening followed. During the course of time she further refined her sculpting techniques resulting in an oeuvre controlled by the constant of inviting the observer to participate in the contemplative process which forms the foundation of her own quest.

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