

For Elsbeth Plumiers

At the opening of Golden Spike

26 April 2013

Up until four days ago, I had never met or heard of Elsbeth, but now, having browsed through 'Golden Spike', her work has come to life. It is all about the Earth and that is a subject close to my heart.

The Earth – nothing is underestimated more. We tend to accept everything as normal in our day-to-day lives, but that is an illusion. Nothing is normal; everything is astonishing, bewildering and absurd, so much so that our poor brains cannot even process it. Sometimes, in a flash, we manage to process a little of it and such moments are invaluable.

To understand what I mean, I would ask you to take a look at this planet of ours from a great distance sometime. We survey the whole Earth and view its development over the full 45 million centuries of its existence. It is only from that astronomical viewpoint that something completely extraordinary is revealed, something we cannot usually see. This planet is continually turning itself inside out, and has been for all these millions of centuries. Everything that belongs to the Earth – mountains, water, air, livestock, all that is beautiful but also all its inconveniences – everything disappears into its depths where it is ground up and melted down. The Earth is therefore a place of death and destruction. It has always been so and will remain as such forever.

Looking further on, we see the overturned waste reappear on the surface. And now something extraordinary occurs: before our very eyes, the building blocks start to fuse together again and a new world emerges spontaneously: a world that looks exactly like the old one that has just disintegrated. There is one difference: the new world glows with the joy of living, with expectation and longing. The Earth must have a gigantic memory to be able to retrieve this lost reality in its new form.

And now we notice something else: after every cycle, the new world is not in fact an exact copy of the old one. A long, long time ago, when the Earth had just come into existence, it was little more than a glowing sphere. And now we see people, trees, birds, buildings, works of art, mobile phones and everything else under the sun. We hear sounds and have thoughts that could not have existed a little while ago. This cycle is not a cycle at all, but rather a spiral. While the Earth is turning itself inside out it is enriching itself and becoming ever more amazing. Apparently, all the things that reinforce this enrichment return as far as possible and the real junk is eventually completely cleared out. The Earth is not just a place of death and destruction after all, but rather one of hope and renewal. These two aspects are inextricably intertwined in everything we know, but enrichment has the upper hand.

I did not invent this breath-taking insight myself, nor is it New Age or simply an opinion. No, it has conclusively emerged from careful research by millions of dedicated scientists. It is crucial that we allow ourselves to be persuaded of this, because these findings form the heart of a brand new world view. And we need that world view to keep the future open: for ourselves, our descendants and for the whole world.

The world view that currently sets the tone is anthropocentric: it assumes that we humans are in charge on Earth and that we can organise the planet to make us comfortable. That idea was once a sign of liberation and progress, but that has now faded. The new world view was born when we saw the Earth from deep space for the first time. What it comes down to is that we humans must comply with the planet's dynamics, as in symbiosis. Anyone with eyes in their head can see the seeds of this new realisation germinating far and wide. I consider Elsbeth Pluimers' work to be one of these seeds.

Elsbeth must have extraordinary intuition. Time and again, she is able to remind us of the unfathomably deep roots of our existence. Surrounded by the suffocating abundance of normality, she plants creations here and there that remind us of the absurdity of everything. She does so innocently, and with great modesty. She calls them 'golden spikes', the spear orientation marks geologists punch into the surface of rocks to mark geologic sections of the Earth's history. We use them to print these episodes in our minds and assign them a place in our lives. We discover mysterious *sun flowers* in uninteresting grassland

between blocks of flats, a rusty, half-open *philosophers' box* lingers in the gravel, and a little further along a *globus* peeps out from between the thicket. And there is a helix swinging over the cobblestones.

*Copernicus* maps out the sun and the planets and we discover a *secret stone* with the face of a god on the Brittany coast.

Elsbeth never rushes things, but her being grows like a spiral, just as the Earth does. Her life is layered and these layers form the archive she uses to penetrate reality. She relies on science and refers everything to that new world view of symbiosis that may eventually become reality. That makes her work a symbol of hope.