

Elske Kampen

Of Glass the Breaking

Solid and powerful, yet also elegant and melodious poetry

With this impressive collection of poetry, Elske Kampen proves once again that sound and rhythm constitute the foundations of language. The measured lines and subtle rhythms, the alliteration and assonances draw the reader into the poems and the world they evoke.

Sometimes it is the bold parallels and unusual sentences that build a world out of nothing, while the understated use of sound and the irresistible rhythm invite further investigation. In other poems familiar situations acquire new dimen-

sions. A confused elderly lady somehow preserves the memory of herself as a young woman: 'Your grey picture lies threadbare in her shadow / like a story made of single sounds.' Girls, mothers, fathers and lovers come alive in the poems, but so do old and new forms and things.

The poet seems to embrace everything she loves with sound and rhythm, yet she keeps her distance by means of the solid, robust form of her poems. There is an unusual wariness in these verses, something guarded, although it leaves just enough space for the poems to live and breathe.



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'Of Glass the Breaking is bang on target. It is a joy to read and most of the poems have the added value of not stopping after you have read them.'
– www.ensafh.nl

'This debut is far more than a promise; it is an immediate classic.' –
Cornelis van der Wal,
Friesch Dagblad

Photo: Haye Bijlstra

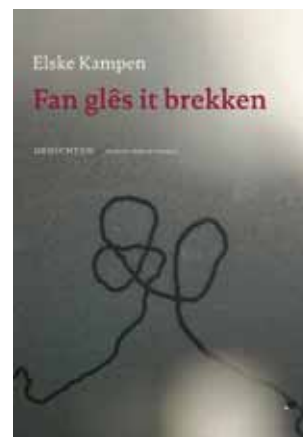
Iron Girl

See how the girl Ivanhoe walks in the distance alone.
In green boots she strides like a knight along the path.
Stiff-legged and straight-backed, she is the iron girl.
Sharp stalks cut secret codes into her hand.
Then, like a small grey heron, she dives down suddenly.

Along the enchanted path she steals towards the empty farm.
She loves the secret that lies beneath the wooden floor
and the wind-stretched sky above the creaky roof.
She loves the doors there, that open with a moan
and the animals lurking in the dark.

Friendly and patient the dead await her there.
They whisper softly of what was and what is yet to come.
They gently sing the closed iron girl open
and rock her in their supple arms beyond the reach of time.
Then twilight points her towards the long road back.

Translated by Judith Wilkinson



Elske Kampen (b. 1955) went to teacher training college and studied to become an art teacher, but poetry writing became increasingly important to her. She was taught by Tsjêbbe Hettinga, although she developed a very different style. The critics praised the collection *Of Glass the Breaking* as an extremely strong debut. It won her both the jury prize and the readers' prize for the best debut of the past three years, which ensured it a place on the shortlist for the most important literary prize for Frisian literature in 2013.