

Wendelien van Oldenborgh
**Forged
Alternative**

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In the early 1990s, one of my wonderful brothers worked on an alternative cultural program on Amsterdam public television called *de Hoeksteen*. This program, a monthly talk show on current cultural affairs with prominent guests from both the art and political fields, was initiated by the artist Raoul Marroquin and is still going strong today with an informal and reflective flair. Another regular collaborator on the show early on was a provocative character named Martin Bosma, who had studied sociology at the University of Amsterdam in the 1980s and later earned his master's degree at The New School for Social Research in New York – both places where leftist thinking flourished at the time.

When I came across Martin Bosma's recent publication *De schijn-élite van de valse munters* (The Pseudo-Elite of the Counterfeiters), it was not immediately clear to me what it was that I was looking at.¹ Martin Bosma is now a member of parliament for the Dutch nationalist-populist party, the PVV – the *Partij Voor de Vrijheid* (Party for Freedom), as well as the right arm and intellectual voice of Geert Wilders, the party's leader. Published by an independent publishing house renowned for its nonfiction titles in the fields of history and sociology, the cover of the book ensures that you will recognize its appearance following that of the protest pamphlets inspired by left-wing movements of the 1960s, 70s, or 80s. At first I was not certain whether this was a bitter use of irony or the author's conscious appropriation of the tactics and terminology of these protest movements for the sake of his quite different convictions. He seems to know very well what they looked like, and how effective certain techniques can be, and this could very well be due to his own proximity to these same leftist movements.

Without going too much into the meaning of the title or the content of the book – in which he analyzes the (so despised) emergence of Dutch multicultural society and argues against all the ideals stemming from '68, against a left-wing elite blind to the imbalance these ideals brought to Dutch society, and against the dangers of Islam – I would like to simply consider the significance of its aesthetics. A clear opposition to the establishment – the “elite” – and a willingness to fight them head-on has been a primary characteristic of left-wing grassroots movements, which we recognize in the use of this rough black and white print style. And the new populists, represented by Martin Bosma, fashion themselves as similarly anti-establishment, anti-elite, standing for an oppressed voice that now finally speaks through a heroic willingness to fight. As with their claim to freedom of speech, they model themselves on



Martin Bosma



De schijn-
élite van de
valse munters

Drees, extreem rechts, de
sixties, nuttige idioten,
Groep Wilders en ik

VERIJ BERT BAKKER



In De schijn-élite van de valse munten zet PVV-Kamerlid Martin Bosma zijn gedachtegoed uiteen, maar werpt hij ook een persoonlijke blik op de jaren van zijn politieke carrière, de jaren waarin Pim Fortuyn en Theo van Gogh werden vermoord en Geert Wilders uitgroeide tot de spraakmakendste politicus van Nederland.

De afgelopen decennia veranderde de samenleving drastisch, met als voornaamste ontwikkeling: de multiculturele samenleving. De bevolking is echter altijd tegenstander geweest van de toestroom. Waarom vond die dan toch plaats?

Als zich zo veel krachten verzamelen die alles op alles zetten om de massa-immigratie steeds maar weer op te voeren, zijn er kennelijk doorslaggevendere redenen de stabiliteit van Nederland daaraan op te offeren.

De schijn-élite van de valse munten legt de schuld bij de geest van mei 1968 en de elites die toen een klap van de mallemolens kregen waarvan ze nooit hersteld zijn. De linkse elites zijn net zo blind voor de islam als ze destijds waren voor het communisme.

Over de auteur:

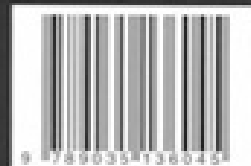
'Xenofob' met 'racistische uitlatingen' (Alexander Pechtold)

'Zaait nervositeit in de Kamer' (Tweede Kamervoorzitter Gerdi Verbeet)

'Het politieke genie achter Wilders, zijn fractiegenoot en tektschrijver' (Bart Jan Spruyt, BINNENLANDS BESTUUR)

'De intellectuele kracht achter Wilders' (VRIJ NEDERLAND)

Martin Bosma is Tweede Kamerlid, fractiesecretaris, viervoudig campagneleider van de PVV, en man van het eerste uur van de Groep Wilders.



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– or hijack – a tradition whose ideals and players they ridicule. Blaming these very movements for the mess they now claim to clear up, they simplify and banalize all arguments.

In the current debates around cultural policies, this same group has given us the common label of the “left-wing hobby” for every role one could possibly play in relation to art – from audience to producer. As a result of their pressure and power in the current government, disproportional cuts have been made in the national cultural budget, which have been defended by many others in the political sphere, resulting in the very disconcerting terms in which culture and art are now being discussed. For example, a liberal politician has suggested watching a DVD at home to be a much more satisfying experience than going out to an experimental theatre. It has become clear enough that the aggressive tone of right-wing populists is now resounding on all sides of the fence, and this has been their real success. Even if many museum directors, critics, and editors ridicule the idea of the “left-wing hobby,” and distance themselves from the “enemy” of culture they recognize in PVV, the tendency to follow this populist logic seems widely accepted by those who produce ideas and arguments in the public sphere. There are plenty of players within the intellectual sphere, and in the art world itself, who allow art to act as a form of entertainment – one that needs to be user-friendly, and also paid for by this user. Similarly, questions over what is and isn’t part of a national canon, what the role of art could be in the discussion of national identity, and so forth, have already been debated far too seriously to be dismissed as part of the same sliding of values to meet the populists’ views.

The defense of art and culture as something with quite another vital role for society seems to be left to a small group far from the power center, that by now may be something like an “elite.” Since Bosma and his friends are fighting this “elite” head-on, those who over the last three decades would have called themselves the alternative voice to the establishment – with their own distaste for the “elites” – must revalue the term, as they can no longer rely on the *look* of the “critical” or the “alternative.”

To conclude with a final look at the slippery nature of the aesthetics with which populist ideology packages itself, while thinking at the same time about how such moves implicate an intellectual leftist tradition, I would like to point once more to Martin Bosma’s book. As is common with this kind of publication, four comments on the author’s persona are listed on the back cover to promote the book. However, here we notice an unusual technique: the first is

from a member of parliament who accuses the author of being a xenophobic racist. In the second, the chairman of the Second Chamber warns of the kind of disturbance he can cause, followed by the statement by Bosma’s party that he is a political genius, and concluding with a remark that he is the intellectual power behind Geert Wilders. This final remark is quoted from the traditionally left-wing critical weekly *Vrij Nederland* (Free Netherlands). Straightforwardly appropriated here, the comment may stand for the need to rethink critical intellectual and aesthetic practices.

Rotterdam, December 2010

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Wendelien van Oldenborgh is an artist based in Rotterdam whose practice explores social relations through investigation in the public sphere. Van Oldenborgh often uses the format of an open film shoot, collaborating with participants in different scenarios, to co-produce a script and orient the work towards its final outcome, which can be film or other forms of projection. Recent works include: *Pertinho de Alphaville* (co-produced by 29th Bienal de Sao Paulo, 2010); *Lina Bo Bardi: The Didactic Room* (Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, 2010); *Après la reprise, la prise* (Contour Mechelen, 2009); *Instruction*, 2009; *Lecture/Audience/Camera*, 2008; *No False Echoes*, 2008; and *Maurits Script*, 2006. Her work has been exhibited, among other spaces, at the Generali Foundation, Vienna; Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam; Muhka, Antwerp; A Space Gallery Toronto; Art Sheffield; ICA London; International Short Film Festival, Oberhausen, and at the Istanbul Biennial 2009. For the academic year 2009/2010 she has been guest professor for Kunst und Kommunikatieve Praxis in the Universität für Angewandte Kunst in Vienna.

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The book was published just two months ago, but the title, *De schijn-élite van de valse munters* has already undergone an interesting transformation. The odd misspellings in the Dutch (“elite” is not normally written with an accent, “valsemunters” in the sense of counterfeiters or forgers is written as one word) were remarked upon by several critics, but also accepted as a deliberate and perhaps mischievous use of “wrong” language to tease the elites. The sentence turned out to be a direct quote from the publication by Jacques de Kadt, *Het fascisme en de nieuwe vrijheid* (Fascism and New Freedom) from 1939. It seems that the publishing house – or the author – had some second thoughts on the effectiveness of this play on language and quotation, because the publisher’s website now lists the book, correctly spelled, as *De schijn-élite van de valsemunters*, while the cover as illustrated on that same site now seems to opt for *De schijn-élite van de valsemunters*.