

# Dutch Treat

by [Jeff Crane](#), September 28, 2009



Karen Sargsyan's *Human Behaviour*, Paper, iron, clay, wood, stirring system, sound system, 85"x115"x105", 2007. part of the "double dutch" exhibit at HVCCA in Peekskill. Courtesy of Private Collection, New York.

The Hudson Valley Center for Contemporary Art is located in Peekskill, which was founded by the Dutch in the mid-1600s and gets its name from a resident of New Amsterdam (New York City), Jan Peeck. Curated by the founders of the HVCAA, Mark and Livia Strauss, *Double Dutch*, an exhibition of 16 young Dutch artists, celebrates the Quadricentennial of the Dutch discovery and settlement of the Hudson River and its environs.

As a major port city, Amsterdam has long been known for its multiculturalism. Indeed, the cultural diversity of contemporary "New Amsterdam" can be viewed in part as a legacy of our country's Dutch heritage. Most of the 16 artists whose work is on view at the HVCCA were born in the Netherlands, but many come from a wide spectrum of cultural backgrounds, from Armenia to Indonesia, France, New Zealand, and the United States. Daan Padmos, whose work *Time Share*—a monumental "house" of Cor-Ten steel propped up under one corner by a steel cylinder—is installed at Riverfront Green Park, was born in Rotterdam but now lives in Westchester. What unites these artists is a Dutchness that, far from being monolithic, is open, diverse, curious, and tolerant.

The majority of the work in this exhibition can be described as “installation”—neither painting nor sculpture nor architecture (nor theater, cinema, or music)—but incorporating and mixing conventions from these disciplines. Installation itself is characterized by diversity and openness, and the works here, many of which were created specifically for this exhibition, are as varied as its participants.

The centerpiece of the show has to be Job Koelewijn’s *Sanctuary*, a 47-foot long, full-scale model of a gas station made entirely of over 3,000 art books from the artist’s library. The “roof” of the work looms elegantly overhead, supported centrally by a single tapered column. At 47, Koelewijn—a kind of eminence grise in relation to the younger generation in Amsterdam—is the oldest in this show of rather young artists.

An interest in architecture is reflected in many of the works: Rob Voerman’s meticulously painted works on paper depict a sort of sci-fi vision of urban utopia—or is it dystopia? It remains open to interpretation. Dylan Graham’s *A Geocentric Model* is a multimedia installation that tackles astrology, burial rites, and the cosmos. Painting meets architecture in Alon Levin’s *On Eagles and Empire*, in which multiple panels recording the artist’s strivings to paint the imperial bird ascend a broken tower that impotently projects power.

Maartje Korstanje and Lara Schnitger each address sexuality and eroticism. Korstanje’s sculptures, which delight in the vulgarity of their materials and colors and in the surrealistic suggestiveness of their bulbous biomorphic forms, offer a welcome change in tone from the ponderousness of some of the other works in the show.

Also noteworthy is Martha Colburn’s seven-minute animated video *Myth Labs*. Colburn uses hand-painted cut-out figures and imagery, including Dutch settlers, Jesus, machine gun-toting soldiers, and crystal meth users, to create this animated short film that seems to want to deconstruct the machinations of myth-making by conflating historical imagery. It’s not clear what the film is trying to say—one suspects the medium is the message here. Great fun to watch, it is richly visual and the soundtrack has a wonderfully low-tech, DIY aesthetic that suits it perfectly.

Dutch artists have traditionally enjoyed an extraordinary level of state funding. This means that their work doesn’t always depend on the vicissitudes of the marketplace, which tends to produce more “projects” that are funded and fewer “objects” for sale. The prevalence of an “installational” mode of working among these artists may owe something to these economics. One can only imagine the spectacular “tea-parties” that the right wing in this country would organize in opposition to implementing “socialized art” here.

“Double Dutch” will be exhibited through July 26, 2010, at the Hudson Valley Center for Contemporary Art in Peekskill. (914) 788-0100; [www.hvcca.org](http://www.hvcca.org).