



PHOTOGRAPHS BY DALE LEIFESTE

Dutch Modern Art For a Historic Occasion

ART HISTORY

Clockwise from Top left: “Sanctuary,” by Job Koelewijn; “Time Sharing,” by Daan Padmos; a three-piece installation by Marc Bijl; and “On Eagles and Empire” by Alon Levin.

“Double Dutch,” at the Hudson Valley Center for Contemporary Art, is one of the more pleasant surprises among the cultural events celebrating the 400th anniversary of the European discovery of the Hudson Valley and its ensuing settlement. Not only is this a worthy show, presenting lively, energetic work by 16 contemporary Dutch-born or Dutch-based artists, but it also includes the installation of sculptures by two of them on the Peekskill waterfront.

ART REVIEW

**BENJAMIN
GENOCCHIO**

Like so many towns along the Hudson, Peekskill was founded by Dutch settlers. The town, as students of American history (and many residents) know, was named for Jan Peck, a 17th-century tavern keeper from New Amsterdam who spent his spare time bartering with the Indians at a trading post on the Hudson located on the site of modern Peekskill.

The changing use and occupation of the land is the subject of the more spectacular and more beautiful of the two outdoor public works, “Time Sharing” (2009), by Daan Padmos. “Double Dutch,” Hudson Valley Center for Contemporary Art, 1701 Main Street, Peekskill, through July 26, 2010. Information: (914) 788-0100 or hvcca.org.



— a house fabricated in steel in the style of early Dutch dwellings along the Hudson. It is propped up on a cylinder, close to the water, as if it had rolled right off a ship and onto shore. The title suggests that none of us own the land, this place; we are just passing through.

Close to the boat launch, on the other side of Riverfront Green Park, is Serge Onnen’s “Planetarium-moneterium” (2009), an ambiguous sculpture in the shape of a massive helmet with tubes radiating from the exterior. Inside are pennies from around the world, glued down, and more tubes. One of the tubes doubles as a telescope, trained on the nearby

Indian Point nuclear power plant. The view inserts human needs into a bucolic natural setting.

There is more quirky art up at the Hudson Valley Center for Contemporary Art, where visitors will discover a stimulating and nicely arranged show of installation art and some video by 14 artists, most of them young. Much of the work involves craftsmanship, with the artists forging charming and sometimes quaint tableaux that combine social and political narratives and visual poetry. Not only are these works interesting to look at, but they also make the viewer think.

The show begins on a richly vi-



sual note with Dylan Graham’s “Dis-sent in the Colonial Pacific” (2009), an indoor installation created for the space that incorporates all manner of symbolic odds and ends — including a carved wooden tombstone — that together serve as an epitaph to Dutch colonial rule in the Pacific. Curiously enough, Mr. Graham is one of the few artists in the show who looks directly to the pageant of history for inspiration.

There will be criticism, perhaps, that too much of the work in this show looks the same, and that it is sometimes hard to distinguish one artist’s work from another’s. Improvised constructions employing bits and pieces of everyday materials are everywhere, ranging from Maartje Korstanje’s whimsical and untitled treelike mixed-media sculpture to Karen Sargsyan’s sculptural installation, “Human Behavior” (2007), recreating a scene from Mozart’s “Magic Flute” out of paper, iron, clay, wood and other materials.

But the show contains exceptional works, among them Job Koelewijn’s “Sanctuary” (2007), a life-size gas station (pumps and roof) constructed out of more than 3,000 books from his personal library. It towers over the rest of the show, anchoring the selection while simultaneously inviting us to reflect on what it is that fuels the world: Is

it oil, or is it ideas, specifically the distilled wisdom that books have historically possessed?

Some of the videos are also pretty entertaining, though you need to give them a little time to understand what is going on. Erik van Lieshout’s “Sex is Sentimental” (2009) offers an account of how he fell in love with his assistant and discusses the problems of being in love with someone you work closely with every day. Martha Colburn, meanwhile, uses paper collage and digital animation in her fanciful retelling of the history of the Hudson Valley, from the treatment of the Indians to modern urban problems like drug abuse.

The quadricentennial has brought all kinds of beautiful and fascinating art into regional museums, but this exhibition, the product of tremendous research and effort by the organizers, is one of the most stimulating. The show’s energy is intoxicating, even if installation and video art is not one’s cup of tea. The irony is that it took a historical anniversary to introduce us to the liveliness of this contemporary art.

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