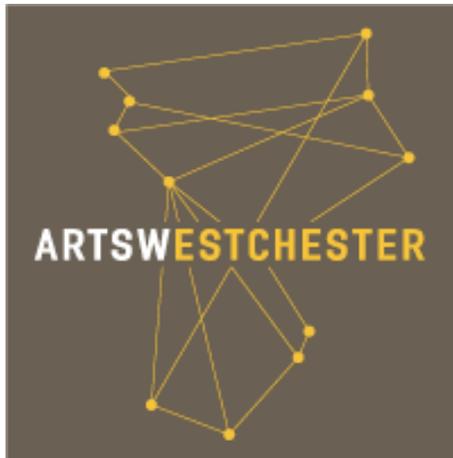


The Arts Muse blog is a partnership between long time arts writer Georgette Gouveia and ArtsWestchester, your connection to the arts.



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Dutch masters

Continue your Dutch exploration at the Hudson Valley Center for Contemporary Art in Peekskill, where "Double Dutch" is on view through July 26. The show spotlights 16 artists from the Netherlands — many of whom have never exhibited here before.

"This has been for us the most exciting show we've ever done," says Livia Straus, who founded HVCCA with her husband, Marc.

That's because it's the center's first exhibit made up of works from entirely outside the collection. Though the Strauses are well-known collectors, Livia Straus says it was never their intention to feature only their works.

The great appeal of "Double Dutch" is that it reveals its artists to be the true

heirs of Vermeer and other Dutch masters. The passion for design and architecture; the love of homeland balanced by a global perspective; the ideal of religious tolerance (which does not mitigate the Dutch role in the slave trade) — they're evidenced here in Alon Levin's totemic constructions, Dylan Graham's ravishing astrological cutouts and Erik van Lieshout's humorous videos.

Among the most wholly satisfying works, shown at right, is "Human Behaviour," an installation by Armenian-born Karen Sargsyan, one of three artists in the show who was also an HVCCA artist-in-residence. Sargsyan does these life-size paper figures that

capture the shamanistic aspect of theater. Here the figures and some smaller models illustrate the bewitching "Queen of the Night" aria from Mozart's "The Magic Flute," whose demonic coloratura runs play on a loop. (photo by Dale Leifeste courtesy of Hudson Valley Center for Contemporary Art)

Equally thrilling are Fendry Ekel's shimmering views of The Millennium Hilton and Century 21, in the shadow of Ground Zero, which link the Dutch gift for architecture with the cosmopolis that grew out

of one of the Netherlands' colonies.

Other works require a great deal of explanation, too much to be successful as contained objects. (In a sense, art is like a joke: If you have to explain it, it doesn't work.)

Still other works need more critical thinking to go along with their superb craftsmanship. (It doesn't help that one of the



themes of the show and of European artists — American imperialism — seems old-hat in the Age of Obama.)

Other easy targets prove just as slippery. One of Erik van Lieshout's videos — which finds him on an amusing tour of the stars' homes, or rather, the gates of the stars' homes, in Hollywood — contains a line about Marilyn Monroe being the Paris Hilton of her time. But surely Monroe — who read widely and studied at the Actors' Studio — was more aspirational than Hilton. Surely Hilton, whatever her

limitations as a performer, has marketed herself brilliantly.

And surely, an artist of all people should realize that human beings are more complex than their images.

Then, too, Job Koelewijn's "Sanctuary" — a 46-foot gas station made out of 3,000 of the artist's own art books — is a terrific construction that will evoke for the viewer everything from Pop Art to family trips. Still, it's made out of real books with screws driven into them. (It reminds me of Martha Stewart's advice that you should rip out the pages of botanical books and frame them for your kitchen.) To a writer, you might as well be driving screws into a human being.

To be a great artist, it's not enough to plump the construction of a gas station. You must also plumb the construction of the mind. 914.788.0100 or www.hvcca.org.

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