

HUDSON VALLEY CENTER for CONTEMPORARY ART

1701 Main Street PO Box 209 Peekskill, New York 10566
Tel. 914.788.0100 Fax 914.788.4531 www.hvcca.com

For immediate release

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Folkert de Jong: Mount Maslow

A site-specific installation

Opening October 21, 2007

with an Artist Talk at 4 pm and reception to follow



Folkert de Jong, studio view (detail) of Mount Maslow (2007), Styrofoam, polyurethane foam and pigment, dimensions variable.

(Peekskill, NY) On Sunday, October 21st, Dutch artist Folkert de Jong returns to the HVCCA with a massive site-specific installation entitled Mount Maslow. De Jong is one of the most innovative young sculptors working today whose first museum exposure in the US occurred at the HVCCA in two seminal exhibitions: Figure It Out, and Reverence.

In his work, De Jong stages chaotic figurative scenes using Styrofoam and pigmented polyurethane foam. His works are often concerned with historical issues as well as issues of the moment such as wars and the abuse of power. He works convey an uncanny and dream-like quality where the perverse often collides with the familiar. Commenting on De Jong's use of materials, HVCCA founder Marc Straus writes, "He has made these materials his in the same way (if not more than any other artist) as Yves Klein is identified by a specific blue or Jeff Wall by a specific light box."

The concept behind Mount Maslow originated in De Jong's interest in the work of psychologist/philosopher Abraham Maslow, who proposed 'a pyramid of needs' in his 1943 paper 'A Theory of Human Motivation'. Maslow's theory, based upon his observations of humans' innate curiosity, contended that as humans meet 'basic needs', they seek to satisfy successively 'higher needs' that occupy a set hierarchy. For De Jong, it seems inevitable that humans will always seek more through whatever means necessary, yet the peak of the 'pyramid of needs' is something elusive and intangible: spiritual fulfillment.

From the platform of the lower exhibition level at HVCCA a Styrofoam structure reaches up to the ceiling. The visitor, moving up the stairs to the second level, is almost literally climbing the installation Mount Maslow. So are two bearded figures in full mountain climbing gear, which De Jong equipped with backpacks, rope, an ice axe and sleeping bags. They appear to have halted their climb to stare at a prophecy from up above. Carved as it were in the endless ice of the glacier in giant letters are the words 'Hamburger Hill'.

Set in May 1969 during the Vietnam War, 'Hamburger Hill' is a movie based on an account of the strategic assault by the U.S. Army on a well-fortified position of the North Vietnamese Army. Writing about De Jong's choice to reference this film, Straus observes, "'Hamburger Hill' is a favorite of some on the political right, with its bombastic macho posturing. Here the struggle is seen as noble. De Jong once again acknowledges that the retelling of history requires many voices; all renditions of war are relevant."

Layering references to spiritual aspiration, war, popular culture, and philosophical propositions, De Jong performs a signature remixing of complex contemporary social and political issues. Mount Maslow functions ambiguously as both a monument to the human quest for progress and a stark memorial to the waste that results when egotism is confused for transcendentalism.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Folkert de Jong was born in Egmond aan Zee, the Netherlands in 1972. He attended the Rijksakademie for Visual Arts, Amsterdam. He was co-founder of the foundation Space For Artists, Amsterdam. In 2003 De Jong was a finalist for the Prix de Rome for sculpture. Recent solo exhibitions include: Der Falsche Prophet, Peres Projects, Berlin (2007), Gott Mit Uns, Lever House, New York (2007), Medusa's First Move: The Council, Chisenhale Gallery, London (2005); recent and upcoming exhibitions include Destroy Athens, Athens Biennial (2007) and Chronic, Museum Dhondt Dhaenens, Deurle, Belgium (2007). Folkert de Jong lives and works in Amsterdam.

A fully-illustrated catalogue, published by James Cohan Gallery and Black Cat Publishing Amsterdam, with essays by HVCCA founder Marc Straus and art critic Gregory Volk, will be available for sale at the museum during the exhibition.

Folkert de Jong's exhibition has been realized through the generous financial support of the Mondriaan Foundation, Amsterdam and the Consulate General of the Netherlands in New York.

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The Hudson Valley Center for Contemporary Art opened to the public in June 2004. Founded by the Marc and Livia Straus family, the not-for-profit center is dedicated to the development and presentation of new art, exhibits and interdisciplinary programs that enrich our understanding of contemporary art, its contexts, and its relationships to societal issues. The Center is committed to the enrichment of Peekskill, a multicultural community that has recreated itself as a major center for art and culture. HVCCA operates a 12,000 square foot exhibition space in Peekskill and is the primary sponsor of the Peekskill Project, an annual, city-wide exhibition of site-specific artwork. Hours: Saturdays and Sundays from 12 noon - 6pm and by appointment. Group tours are available by appointment throughout the year. Admission: \$5.00 adult; \$1.00 student; Members free. For more information on exhibits and programs, please visit www.hvcca.com, e-mail info@hvcca.com or call 914-788-0100.

Contact:

Paul Brewer, Executive Director, Hudson Valley Center for Contemporary Art
914 788-0100, paulbrewer@hvcca.com