

## **Madelon Vriesendorp's magic toyshop**

Kester Rattenbury steps into the weird and wonderful world of Madelon Vriesendorp, whose first solo show opens next week

Madelon Vriesendorp is a genius of hospitality. All visitors to the Dutch artist's flat-cum-studio in one of the mansion blocks behind Finchley Road tube, north London, are given a tiny item which she has made for them. In return, they have to play her Mind Game, arranging tiny models in a model space, from which she analyses their character. It's addictive and now available to a wider audience as part of Vriesendorp's new exhibition at the AA, which opens the door into her very particular world.

It is the flat she and Rem Koolhaas moved into when they left New York in the 1970s, and where the seminal Delirious New York was completed, with her paintings — including the famous Flagrant Delit — forming part of the book's ambiguous, visual conclusion.

She got together with Koolhaas when they were both 19, and was a member of the Office for Metropolitan Architecture in its formative years, along with Elia and Zoe Zenghelis. Her, and their, distinctive imagery is synonymous with OMA's early projects — she and Zoe made paintings to sell in the lean early years, she says. Since then, she has spent 10 years teaching at the AA, as well as painting, drawing, recycling, collecting and making sculpture, and collaborating with friends, including work with Charles Jencks on his gardens and Maggie's centres, and with her daughter Charlie, whose photo-essay of her mother's studio is in the show.

Vriesendorp is, though, the opposite of easy to pin down. Trying to label her — surrealist artist sculptor, collaborator, mother, householder, host, collector and curator — suggests a boxed-up, product-based view of a creative life which is actually the opposite of the extraordinary critical, hilarious and productive work and environment she generates. Does it even feel like work? “No. It feels like playing around,” she says.

Visiting her flat is something special — a short immersion in her world. The flat is filled with hundreds upon hundreds of tiny items, carefully and critically found, bought, made, received, added together, arranged, grouped, perhaps reincorporated into paintings, stories or other objects.