

Deze kunstenaar verzamelt (bijna) alles. 'Het is nu echt té vol' - NRC

Nathalie Wouters

In Madelon Vriesendorp's house, things fall over more and more often. 'This is the result of fifty years of collecting.'

The London home of artist Madelon Vriesendorp (81) is now truly too full.

Madelon Vriesendorp doesn't know exactly how many collections she has. In her house, thousands of figurines and toys are arranged by theme: skyscrapers, aliens, Chinese buildings, foodstuffs, body parts, babies, nuns ("if you wind this one up, she runs screaming across the room"). But also suitcases full of postcards, thousands of books, homemade sculptures made from plastic packaging, and Soviet propaganda. A large part of it stands by theme in three glass wall cabinets, but a great deal is also displayed on side tables, shelves, and cupboards. "Really, the only space still free is on the dining table."

The Dutch artist has lived in her house in London for exactly fifty years. "This is the result of fifty years of collecting."

As a child, she was already fascinated by the collections of her two older sisters. "I got their little porcelain rabbits once they'd grown tired of them." She began collecting when she moved to New York in the 1970s with her then-husband Rem Koolhaas, with whom she founded the architecture firm OMA. At the time she was making a lot of work about skyscrapers (such as her famous drawing *Flagrant délit* (1975), in which the Chrysler Building and the Empire State Building are caught in bed together by the Rockefeller Center), and so she began collecting miniature skyscrapers.

After that, she kept buying things in souvenir and toy shops. "Things that make me think: what the hell were they thinking?! And things with something wrong with them. At a souvenir stall in Venice, I saw a bell tower that was leaning. The seller wanted to fetch me a straight one, but I said no, I want *this one*." She's also given a lot as presents. "People often say: here's something really ugly, you'll probably like it."

One of her favourite collections is themed around the Day of the Dead, the Mexican holiday. It includes a figurine of a skeleton with a little white wig and a white dress you can blow upwards: Marilyn Monroe. "And I have Frida Kahlo with her parrots, all skeletons too. They make me very happy."

"Minimalists come by here regularly, and they don't get it at all," she says. "Many architects live in houses that look like showrooms. I can't bear the thought. Always the same chairs by Mies van der Rohe and Le Corbusier. I don't want anything designed in my home."

She's doing her best to thin out the collection. "It really is too full now. Things fall over more and more often." She shows dozens of swans she's made from plastic milk bottles. "When I have visitors these days, I say: for God's sake, take a swan with you." Her friends are no longer allowed to buy her anything bigger than their thumb. Drawings by Madelon Vriesendorp are currently on show in the 1950–2000 collection display at the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam. On 15 July, her exhibition 'Mind Games' opens at the Sir John Soane's Museum in London.