

## INFO ABOUT FLORENTIJN HOFMAN

In the village of Nieuwerkerk aan den IJssel, the lowest point in the lowlands, Dutch artist Florentijn Hofman designed and coordinated the building of a giant muskrat out of a wooden frame thatched with hay. Partly a satirical response to the muskrat being labelled a 'big problem' in that part of the Netherlands - their natural digging instincts destroy the infrastructure of the dykes and waterworks - it proved to be another trippy addition to Hofman's growing sculptural menagerie.

Imagine an episode of Sesame Street made by Gordon Matta-Clark in collaboration with Jim Henson and you might begin to understand the semi-collaborative performances with local communities that are central to Hofman's work. In a glasshouse in Amsterdam's Botanical Gardens he glued 210 paper sparrows onto what he describes as 'the most non-natural place of the hortus, its heating pipes, the 'blood vessels' for the greenhouse'. The birds were made from 'cloned' photocopies of a sparrow model kit sent to friends and acquaintances all over the world for them to build and return. As Hofman puts it, 'thus, the birds travelled without flying'. In the NDSM yard in Amsterdam North he stencilled more than a hundred koi carp onto the vast dry dock. In Vlaardingingen he designed and helped local people construct a massive rabbit sculpture out of salvaged wood as if to document his own presence in that sculptural orgy where site and structure and landscape and architecture fuck like rabbits in an expanded field.

Asked by the borough of Delfshaven in Rotterdam to work on the site of a derelict block awaiting demolition Hofman painted the entire exterior of the property with a 2 micron layer of blue paint that transformed it into the most photographed section of the city. The application of the paint was intended to slow further deterioration. Such urban dereliction is usually a material reminder of the alienating power of urban planners and developers to disperse communities and erase local history. By amplifying the memory and meaning of the space for those people living and passing through the neighbourhood the surreal energy of Hofman's work temporarily reclaims that alienation while the building awaits reconstruction via the wrecking ball.

Hofman used to drive a van sprayed with the exact colour and logo of the DHL fleet. An everyday 'performance' which allowed him to escape parking tickets (a tribute to the mercy of Dutch traffic wardens) and wave at other DHL couriers as if part of some Pynchonesque cabal of delivery workers.

During the fifth anniversary of Schiermonnikoog's International Chamber Music Festival the beach of the Dutch Island in the Wadden Sea was marked with three grand pianos. The visitors could be spotted peacefully on the timber-clad structures, eating sandwiches, snugly sheltered from the wind. The majestic instruments looked as they had been tossed by the rough waves before landing upside down on the sand, were they waited to be salvaged or to float back to the sea on the outgoing tide.

The fact that Florentijn Hofman is not an average gallery-exhibited artist should be obvious. The world is a huge playground and he can choose just about any spot or material in which to display his installations. The Loire river in France was the starting point of a project that ultimately became a giant rubber duck. Measuring 26 m in height, it may look like the favourite toy of Sesame Street's Ernie, but it's too big to fit into anyone's bath- and impossible to ignore. According to Florentijn Hofman, the Canard de bain crosses all boundaries and does not discriminate and does not have a political connotation. The friendly, floating Rubber Duck has healing properties, it can relieve mondial tensions as well as define them.

The work of Hofman is known for integrating, intriguing and interactive installations into public space. Obviously he changes with great joy between performative (public) art and the domain of the sculpture (only to mention a few of his used media) and has a strong wish to amaze and making life a little much more fun.

For more information and a overview of the work see: [www.florentijnhofman.nl](http://www.florentijnhofman.nl)