

# PLANT MUTATION

PORTFOLIO

**\_STUDIO\_NICK\_ERVINCK**



## INTRODUCTION

**Fostering a cross-pollination between the digital and the physical, Nick Ervinck (°1981, Belgium) explores the boundaries between various media. Studio Nick Ervinck applies tools and techniques from new media, in order to explore the aesthetic potential of sculpture, 3D prints installation, architecture and design.**

Through his divergent practice, a strong fascination with the construction of space is noticeable. Not only does Nick Ervinck focus on the autonomous sculptural object, he also questions its spatial positioning and points to the phenomenological experience and embodiment of space. Ervinck's work in short oscillates between the static and the dynamic, prospecting new virtual or utopian territories.

Nick Ervinck's work has been included in numerous group shows, nationally as well as internationally. His work has been exhibited at Ars Electronica Linz, Musée Paul Valéry Sète, CBK Emmen, Beelden aan Zee Den Haag, Bozar Brussels, LABoral Gijón, MOCA Shanghai, MARTa Herford, Kunstverein Ahlen, Koraalberg Antwerp, Zebra-straat Ghent, HISK Ghent, Vrijstaat O./Freestate Ostend, Superstories Hasselt, BrakkeGrond Amsterdam, MAMA Rotterdam, Hermitage Amsterdam, Ron Mandos Amsterdam Creative World Biennale Oklahoma, Highlight San Francisco, Telic Art Exchange Los Angeles/Berlin.

In 2005, he received the Godecharle prize for Sculpture, to be followed by the Mais prize of the City of Brussels and the Prize for Visual Art of West-Flanders in 2006. In 2008, Ervinck was a laureate of the RodenbachFonds Award, and he won the audience award for new media at Foundation Liedts-Meesen.

1. Chinese scholars rock
2. Ikebana
3. Passionflower
4. plant
5. Rose
6. Floral wallpaper
7. Strawberry plant
8. Cacao bean

## STATEMENT

**As a sculptor, I have one foot firmly planted in the digital world. This means that I do not only use the computer as an instrument, but that the digital logic largely determines my artistic thought and method as well. By pushing boundaries and experimenting with the latest (software) techniques, I try to create complex forms that were unthinkable before.**

Both organic, geometrical, fluid and massive, my artworks thus demonstrate the sculpture as a cross-over, as a visual hybrid. Floating between high tech and low tech, they refer to classical sculpture, but also to the language of futurism, sci-fi and high technology. My work is both avant-gardist (in the use of the newest technology, and historicist (in its references to art history and manual sculpting processes). However using 3D technology, I design my objects 'by hand', using no programming or algorithms. I believe that this position is unique, as strictly computer generated art mostly is 'amnesiac'. With this portfolio I want to propose an exhibition project that is based on my latest series of artworks. This 'plant mutation' project consists of 3D-printed sculptures and ceramic artworks. These works are a hybrid of different traditions and methods of art and design. I build on the craftsmanship of the past by combining my background in sculpture and my ability to use modern technology to bring to life true artistic vision. This results in a fascinating interplay between old and new, between tradition and innovation, sculpture and new media.

I sincerely hope this information will enable you to form an opinion of my work, my motivations and my potential.

Nick Ervinck



Studio Nick Ervinck, 2014  
Lichtervelde BE



## PLANT MUTATION PROJECT

**The idea of mutation and manipulation has always appealed to Nick Ervinck's imagination. In the 'plant mutation' series, he uses 3D experiments to explore ideas of both organic and genetically engineered life forms.**

Nick Ervinck created an openness that will attract the viewer to consider his work from different angles. These works have both a poetic and a critical social dimension. On the one hand, the sculptural contradictions, such as inside/outside and rough/smooth, make these works purely poetic. The visual language of these organic sculptures has a surprising impact.

For the design of these excessive and futuristic organic shapes, Nick Ervinck derives inspiration from the 18th century Meissen vases that he saw at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. These vases are lavishly decorated with plants, animals and creatures that can seem more beautiful than their originals in the natural world. While this Rococo-style porcelain is a testament to great craftsmanship, it also has an absurd side, a combination that Ervinck strongly admires. While Rococo and Baroque are not styles that many people enjoy today, these artistic forms of plant mutation are an ode to the aspirations of that generation of sculptors.

On the other hand, these works question how far we can or should go in manipulating food. Research into crop mutation is not new. Following the Second World War, the so-called "Atoms for Peace" programme was established to look into ways to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. In the gardens of national laboratories in Europe and the former Soviet Union, plants were irradiated in such a way that different varieties could be produced. With these disease-resistant mutations scientists hoped to solve the problem of food shortage. It is not known if these genetically manipulated crops effectively meant an improvement to public health, but it did seem that now scientists could play God. Today, teams of researchers continue to look for ways to optimize our crops and food security. Ervinck is fascinated by the idea of an engineered world. The virtual world gives him a



radical tool to control and manipulate things. But there's a downside: the combining of genetic material and the mixing of natural organs with robotics raises ethical issues that are not easy to resolve. What about the rapidly evolving potential of 3D printing? Will we soon be able to print organs and living organisms at will?

The three "strawberry sculptures" AELBWARTS, NABEKIESAV and NABEKIEARTS are the result of an exchange between Nick Ervinck and Dr A.P.M. Ton den Nijs, a scientist at the Plant Breeding Department of Wageningen University. This department holds a patent for the cultivation of a genetically manipulated variety of strawberry. Using the plant's own DNA, the researchers developed a new strawberry variety that is resistant to fruit rot. It requires fewer pesticides and has a longer shelf life than a natural strawberry.

With NABEKIESAV, this hybridization process is carried to the extreme. The leaves of the strawberry plant gradually change colour. A utopian, almost surreal strawberry seems to grow from the vase and be held together by a skeleton. The vase seems about to spring into life. Viewed from the side, the support does not seem static but to have movement, as though it was the legs of a woman in a skirt. Ervinck sets out to create the illusion that his sculptures may suddenly come to life.

The influence of ikebana, the Japanese art of flower arranging, is also very evident. In this traditional art form, the vase, stems and leaves are as much a part of the composition as the flowers. The focus is more on the shape and the lines than on the colours or the flowers themselves. Each arrangement must also include stems that symbolize heaven, earth and humanity.

With these plant mutation sculptures, Nick Ervinck investigates how he can use today's techniques to transcend or continue the craftsmanship of the past. Both his ceramic sculptures as well as the 3D-printed works are also the result of meticulous craftsmanship. Ervinck explores how to create dynamic, complex and detailed organic structures, pushing the boundaries of what we call 'realistic'. His work reinvents classical sculpture through a cross-fertilization between innovation and tradition and does so in a purely contemporary context.



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Studio Nick Ervinck, 2014  
Lichtervelde, BE



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## AELBWARTS

📌 **AELBWARTS is the modern version of the traditional still life with fruit. In the seventeenth century, strawberries stood for humbleness because they grow low at the ground. This futuristic example stands miles away from humbleness.** Proud it reaches for the sky combining the elegance of the leaves with the heavy blob form of the strawberry. This sculpture questions the status of the organic in the 21st century. Fruit and plants are being manipulated to better meet our standards or just to experiment. At universities people are investigating full time on the strawberry.

Thanks to the 3D printer we are even able to print our own designed food. It intrigues me as an artist that we can manipulate and personalize food as if it were our little personal artworks. I am fascinated by the future and the possibility that children might create their toys out of a mix of artificial, biological and robotic elements while their parents prepare their meal with yellow strawberries. I tried to capture a moment of flux. The movement doesn't look purely organic though, the strawberry seems to mutate from the natural leaves to the artificial skeleton. These kind of skeletons I used before in sculptures as SNIBURTAD and ELBEETAD.

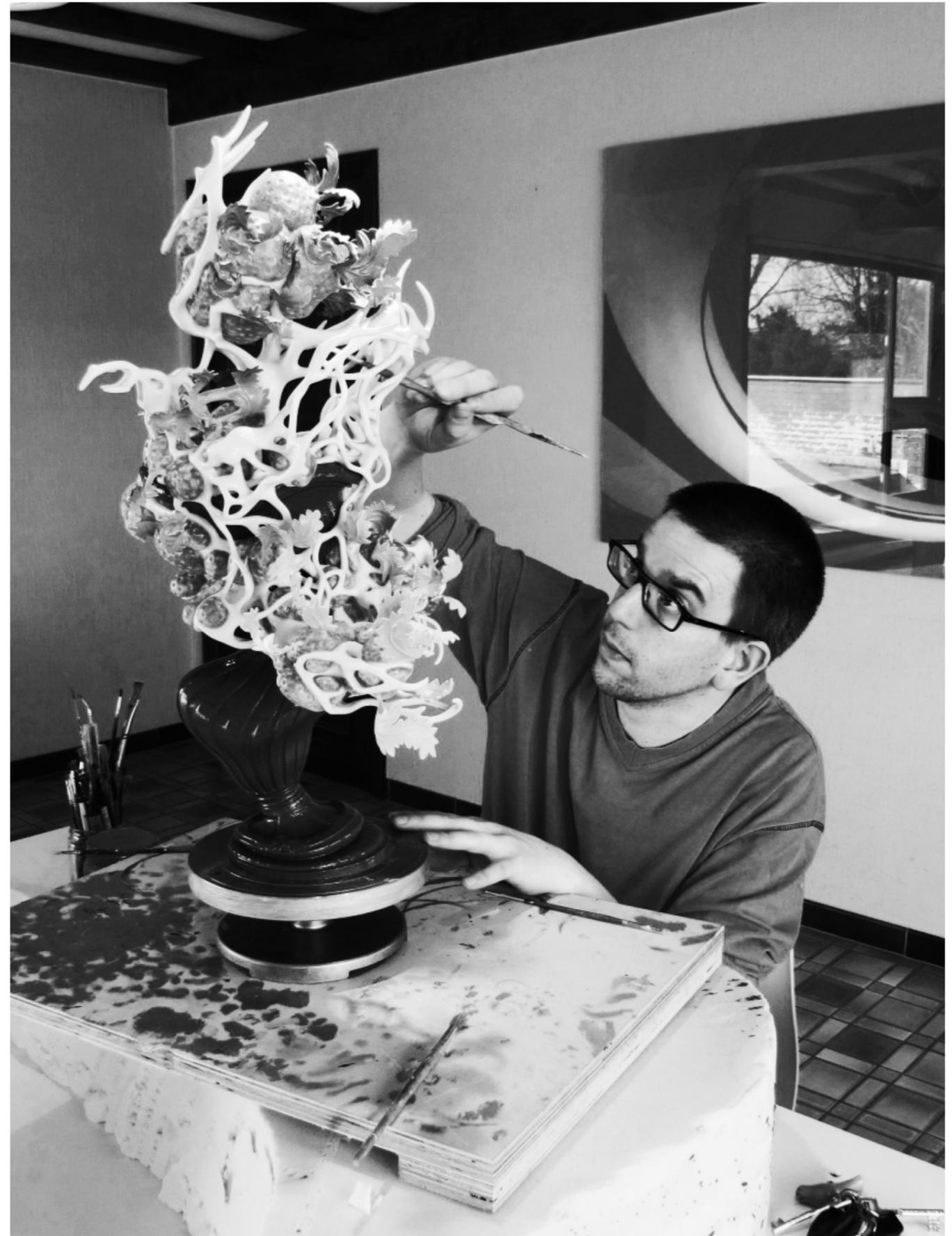
Instead of being the internal support structure (endoskeleton), the skeleton is situated outside of the body tissue (exoskeleton). AELBWARTS combines three different textures. The strawberry refers to the blob architecture, introduced by the architect Greg Lynn in 1995. These blob forms, which look organic and mobile, are the result of a computer-based designing process. This architectural movement pleads for a removal of linear, rigid structures and aims at creating expanding, bulging and growing shapes. The strawberry seems to slowly collapse under his own weight. The roots that seems to come out of the fruit are inspired by whimsical structures of rocks manipulated by water and the sculptures of Henry Moore. The skeleton seems to hold the sculpture together and push the strawberry in its place. The leaves are a traditional element in classic sculpture and architecture.

Most sculptures created with digital technologies seem to emphasize the artificial part of the sculpture. I'm more interested in this tension between the digital and the real. Even as a 3D print AELBWARTS is in the first place a sculpture. The form couldn't be created without 3D printing but the painting process was completely done by hand.

(Re)source, 10th edition of 'Beelden op de berg', 2013  
Aboretum Belmonte - Wageningen, NL



**NABEKIESAV**, 2013 - 2014  
SLS 3D print  
58 x 52 x 29 cm  
22,8 x 20,5 x 11,4 inches



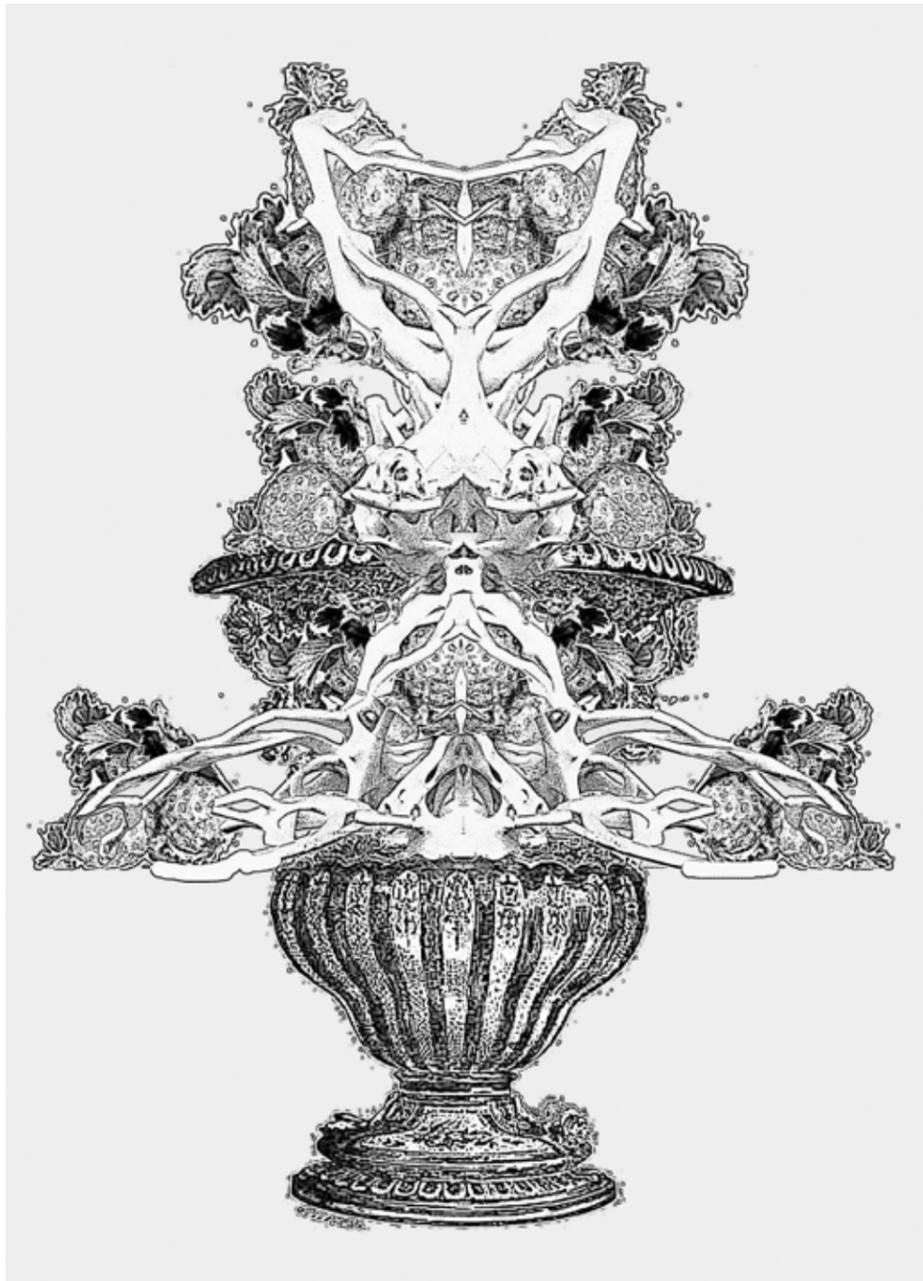
**Studio Nick Ervinck**, 2014  
Lichtervelde BE



**AELBARTS, 2013**  
 SLS 3D print  
 28 x 23 x 52 cm  
 11 x 9,1 x 9,8 inches



**GNI-RI jun2014, 2014**  
 Museum Dr. Guislain - Gent, BE



NABEKIESAV, 2013 - 2014  
Study



## SEVALIS

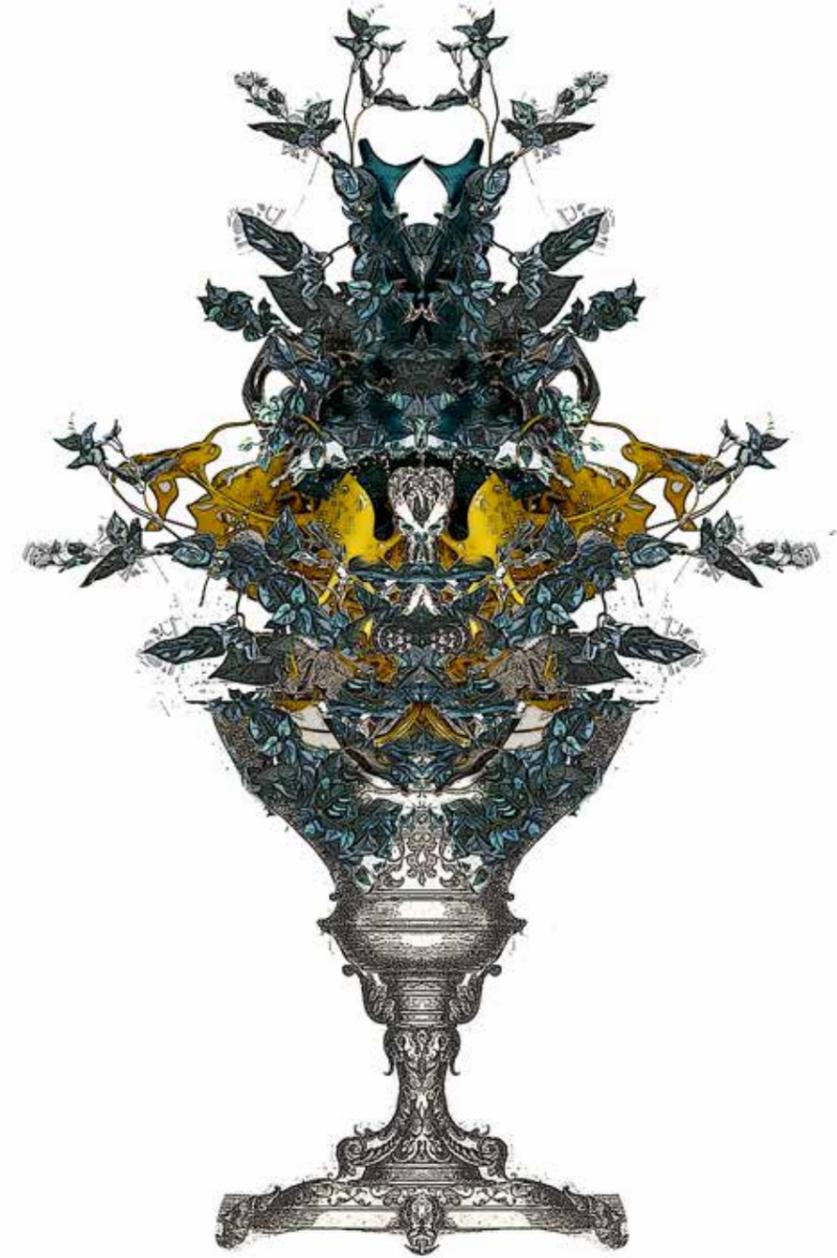
- SEVALIS is derived from vegetable structures and coated with a glossy varnish which in turn refers to the virtual genesis of this form. This sculpture seems rooted in the vase. At the same time its 'branches' lead the eye of the beholder upwards with a dynamic force. This complex form has an organic look but cannot be pinned down to this.

An important source of inspiration for this work was a visit to the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. There, Ervinck saw a display of 18th century Meissen vases that were illustrated with an allegorical depiction of the four seasons. These flamboyant vases are lavishly decorated with plants, animals and creatures that can seem more beautiful than their originals in the natural world. While this porcelain is a testament to great craftsmanship, it also has an absurd side: a combination that Ervinck strongly admires. While Rococo and Baroque are not styles that many people enjoy today, these artistic forms of plant mutation are an ode to the aspirations of that generation of sculptors.

SEVALIS, 2013 - 2014  
SLS 3D print  
60 x 36 x 28 cm  
23,6 x 14,2 x 11 inches



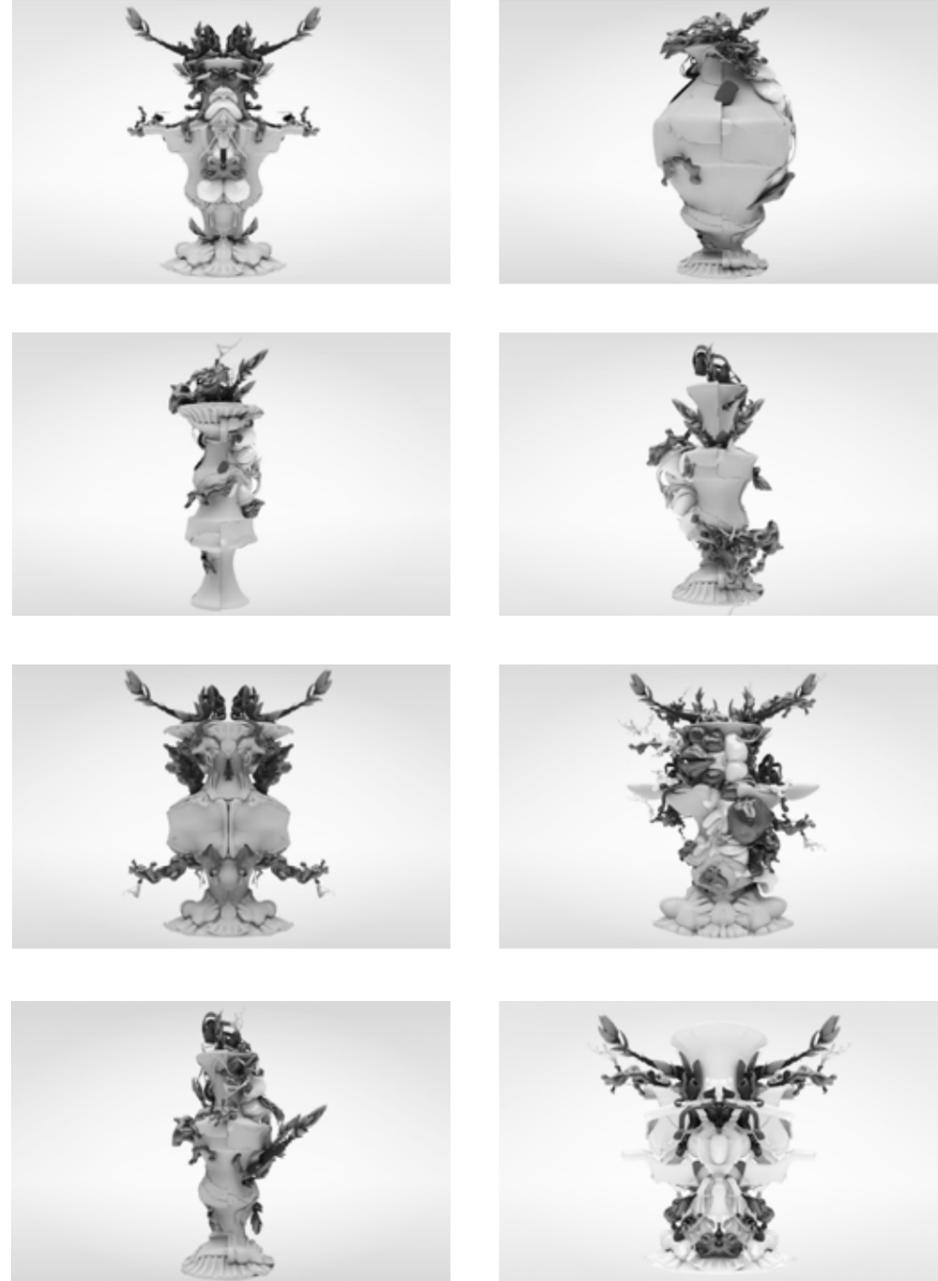
SEVALIS, 2013-2014  
Inspiration



SEVALIS, 2013 - 2014  
Study



**SEVALIS**, 2013 - 2014  
 SLS 3D print  
 60 x 36 x 28 cm  
 23,6 x 14,2 x 11 inches



**DIULOCOR**, 2013 - 2016  
 Study



**DIULOCOR**, 2013 - 2016  
3D print  
63 x 25 x 37 cm  
24,8 x 9,8 x 14,6 inches



**MANOWTAD**, 2016  
Study



**DIULOCOR**, 2013 - 2016  
3D print  
63 x 25 x 37 cm  
24,8 x 9,8 x 14,6 inches



**MANOWTID**, 2016  
Ceramics



## EMOBCOR

With **EMOBCOR** and **VIGAV**, Ervinck's fascination with the mutation and manipulation of natural elements comes to the fore. The sculptures are composed of various bones. Just like Henry Moore, who found inspiration for his work in natural objects such as chicken bones and shells, Ervinck works with elements from nature. He then has at his disposal a virtual world of almost limitless compositional possibility. For **EMOBCOR**, he created a body with an unnatural, eerie core: a skeleton composed of alien bones. One can discern a head but this bone also resembles a scorpion with its tail held high. Deformed human eyeballs and hip bones also make an appearance in the sculpture, for which Ervinck relied on anatomical sketches.

Ervinck continually seeks new ways to breathe life into sculpture using the resources of his own era. Where his previous sculptures were mainly yellow in colour and had a fairly uniform visual language, here the artist is more interested in the interaction and dialogue between different visual languages and identities. The interplay between the contrasting elements is also emphasised by the three colours.

In **EMOBCOR**, we can see a Grand Canyon-like rock formation with a bone emerging from it, as though a fossil. It appears to be a strange sort of chicken sitting in its nest surrounded by ivy with tentacles growing out of it. These tentacles are an expression of Ervinck's fascination with viruses and other small organisms. The detailed foliage refers to kitsch mantelpiece ornaments and the porcelain designs of 18th century Meissen vases.

detail **EMOBCOR**, 2013 - 2014  
SLS 3D print  
58 x 31 x 35 cm  
22,8 x 12,2 x 13,8 inches



**EMOBCOR**, 2013 - 2014  
SLS 3D print  
58 x 31 x 35 cm  
22,8 x 12,2 x 13,8 inches



**ENOPIH, 2015**  
 Ceramics  
 53 x 32 x 26 cm  
 20,9 x 12,6 x 10,2 inches



**ENKANSOR, 2016**  
 Ceramics



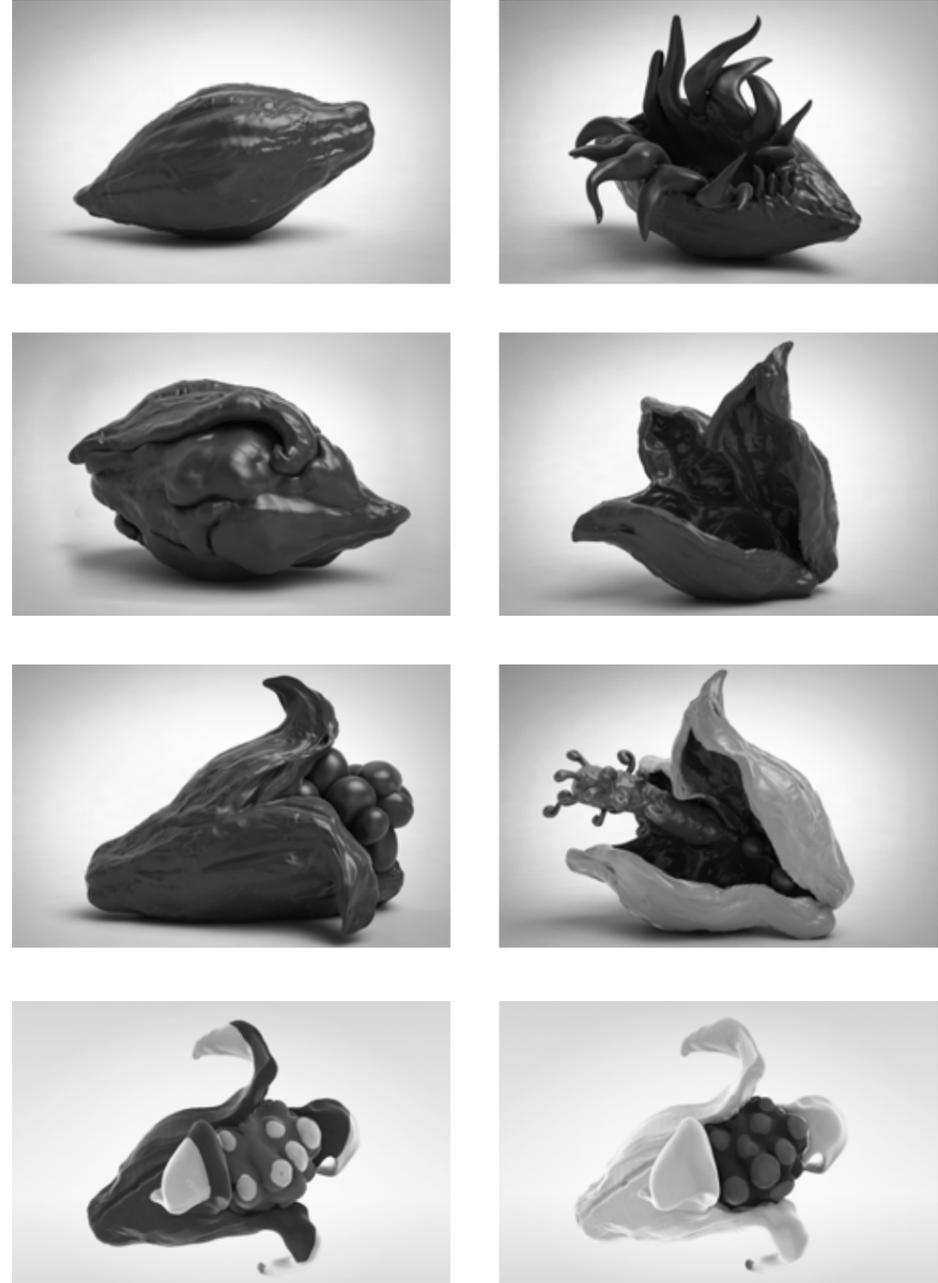
**GNI-RI jun2014**, 2014  
Museum Dr. Guislain - Gent, BE



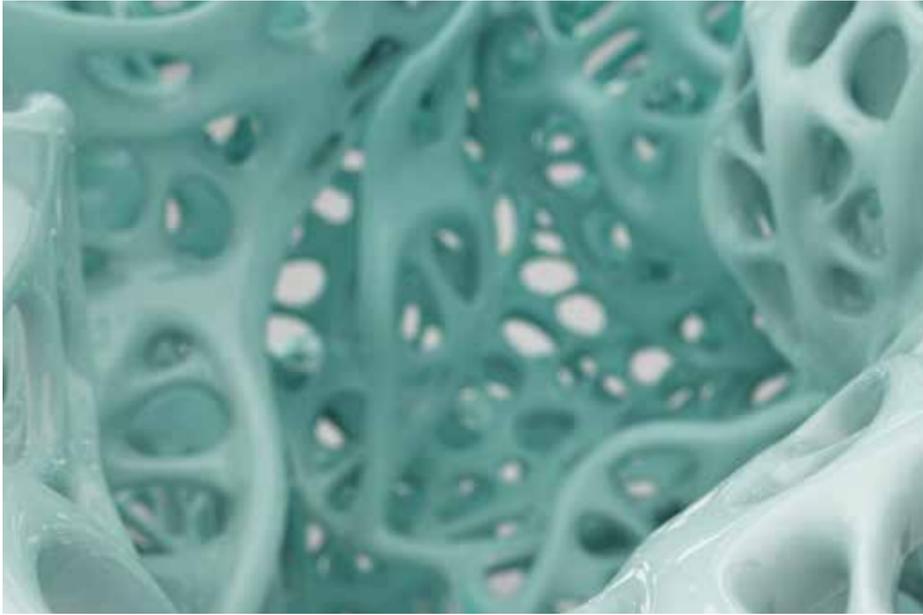
**VIGAV**, 2013  
ABS  
70 x 33 x 46 cm  
27,6 x 13 x 18,1 inches



**MORFREV, 2016**  
 Ceramics  
 Work in progress



**NEBOAC, 2015**  
 Study



### EZORNIL, EZORNILA and EZORNILI

📌 **Nick Ervinck designed a sculpture that is inspired by blooming flowers, like the structure of a rose. Because of the many cut-outs in the organic structure, the design seems to have no volume.** Although the material is solid, it nevertheless seems delicate. The shape of the design keeps changing, keeps evolving, keeps fascinating. Through 3D printing Nick Ervinck is able to capture this movement in a still image.

As always, the artist tries to create an openness that will attract the viewer to consider his work from different angles. The sculptural contradictions, such as inside/outside and rough/smooth, make this work purely poetic. The gradient also contributes to this poetic design language. EZORNIL could be described as a poem manifested in physical form.

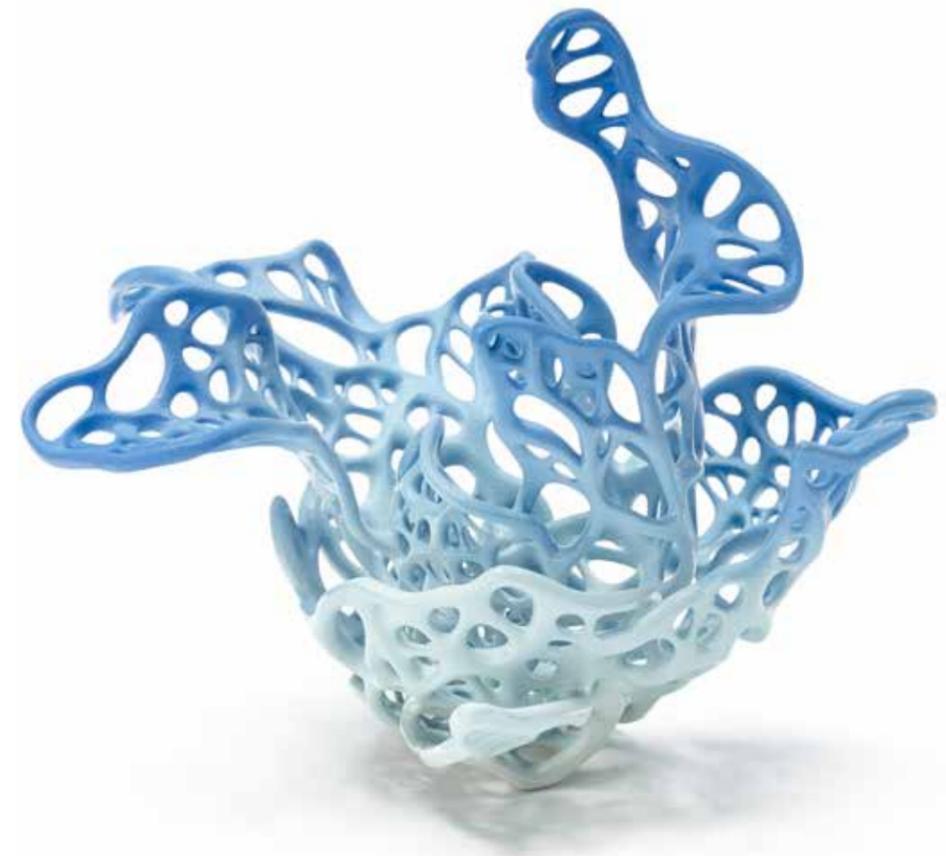
detail **EZORNILA**, 2013  
SLS 3D print  
20 x 25 x 26 cm  
7,9 x 9,8 x 10,2 inches



**EZORNIL**, 2013 - 2014  
SLS 3D print  
54 x 27 x 29 cm  
21,3 x 10,6 x 11,4 inches



**WALUCERUM**, 2016  
ceramics  
31 x 48 x 32 cm  
12,2 x 18,9 x 12,6 inches



**EZORNILI**, 2013  
SLS 3D print  
20 x 21 x 24 cm  
7,9 x 8,3 x 9,4 inches



**EZORNILA, 2013**  
SLS 3D print  
20 x 25 x 26 cm  
7,9 x 9,8 x 10,2 inches



**TIEWCERAM, 2016**  
ceramics  
50 x 50 x 43 cm  
19,7 x 19,7 x 13 inches



GNI-RI jun2016, 2016  
Bogarden Kapel - Brugge, BE



GNI-RI jun2016, 2016  
Bogarden Kapel - Brugge, BE



**REWOLENO, 2015 - 2016**  
Ceramics  
Work in progress



**BOBLARAK, 2015 - 2016**  
Ceramics  
Work in progress



COREWOLA, 2015 - 2016  
Study



COREWOLY, 2015 - 2016  
Ceramics  
Work in progress



**EDGNEM**, 2016  
ceramics,  
20 x 25 x 14 cm  
7,9 x 9,8 x 5,5 inches



**EDGNEM**, 2016  
ceramics,  
20 x 25 x 14 cm  
7,9 x 9,8 x 5,5 inches



**ELCTANET**, 2015 - 2016  
Ceramics  
Work in progress



**Studio Nick Ervinck**, 2014  
Lichtervelde BE



## EXHIBITION DESIGN

- For this project, a careful selection of recent and future works will be presented, with a sharp focus on the plant mutation theme. The underlying idea is to generate a critical reflection on the impact of innovative scientific experiments such as plant mutation and robotics. The plants, mutated yet hybrid and flexible, seem frozen in time. Ervinck exhibits them in newly designed cabinets reminiscent of old museum displays, as though they are a curiosity cabinet of the future.

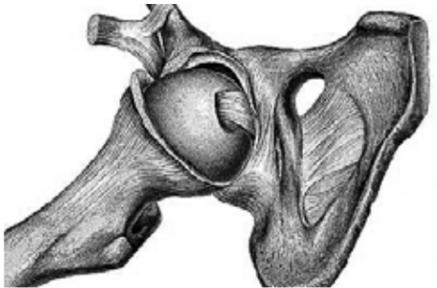
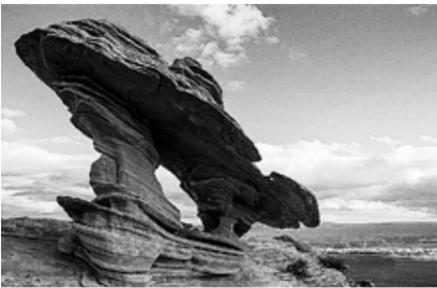
Next to that, the exhibition also reflects on the sculptural medium in contemporary art, which is so much influenced by the language of technology. how does so-called 'media-art' engage with supposedly 'traditional' disciplines, and how is technological evolution capable of revitalizing art history itself?

The exhibition will combine visual appeal with more theoretical issues. the works on display will be able to please the average visitor aesthetically, but will equally raise implicit, conceptual questions about the actual state of sculpture, plasticity, authenticity and the digital medium itself.

To evoke this, a large-scale installation will be constructed, bringing different media into play, more specifically 3D prints and ceramic sculptures. This is a series of both realized and new works that will be presented.

Within this particular setup, the works on show will consciously explore the grey zone between the possible and the impossible, the material and the immaterial, past and future. The same work will be presented in different versions, seemingly as variations on the same theme, while at the same time questioning the notion of the artwork's identity and unicity. are we seeing different works, or is the same work presented in different ways?





- 1. Strawberry plant
- 2. Mutated Strawberries
- 3. Coral
- 4. Fossil of fish
- 5. Driftwood
- 6. Bauhinia flower
- 7. Gran Canyon
- 8. Hip bone



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