



# PLANT MUTATION

NICK ERVINCK

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## 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 to be static but to have movement, as though it were 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 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.



**Plant Mutation, 2016**  
expo concept



detail **NEBKATROBS, 2017**  
3D print, plexi and wood  
15 x 17 x 92 cm  
5,9 x 6,7 x 36,2 inches

detail **NEBLOAK, 2017**  
3D print, plexi and wood  
15 x 17 x 34 cm  
5,9 x 6,7 x 13,4 inches



**NEBLOAK, 2017**  
 3D print, plexi and wood  
 15 x 17 x 34 cm  
 5,9 x 6,7 x 13,4 inches



**NEBKATROBS, 2017**  
 3D print, plexi and wood  
 15 x 17 x 92 cm  
 5,9 x 6,7 x 36,2 inches



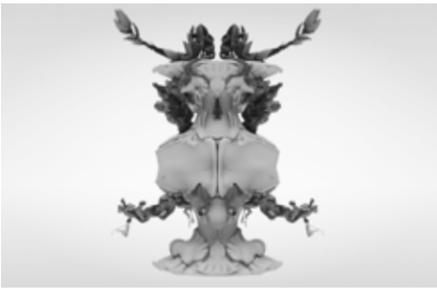
**ONIEPARG**, 2018  
print  
51 x 51 cm , framed 53 x 53 cm  
20 x 20 inches, framed 20.9 x20.9 inches



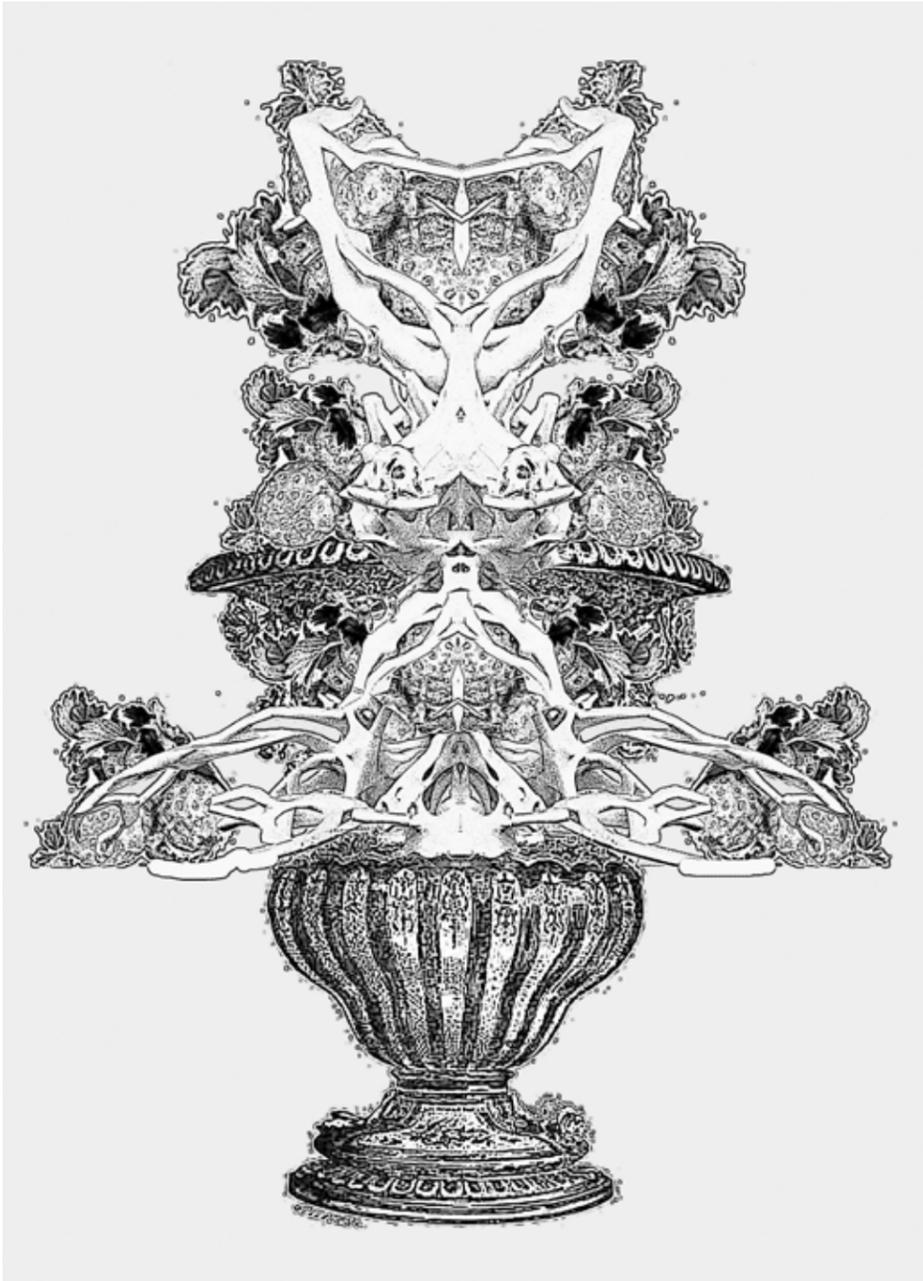
detail **NEBLOAK**, 2017  
3D print, plexi and wood  
15 x 17 x 34 cm  
5,9 x 6,7 x 13,4 inches



**DOLGONOAK**, 2017  
ceramics



DIULOCOR, 2013 - 2016  
study



NABEKIESAV, 2013 - 2014  
study



NABEKIESAV, 2013 - 2014  
3D print  
58 x 29 x 52 cm  
22.8 x 11.4 x 20.5 inch



## SEVALIS

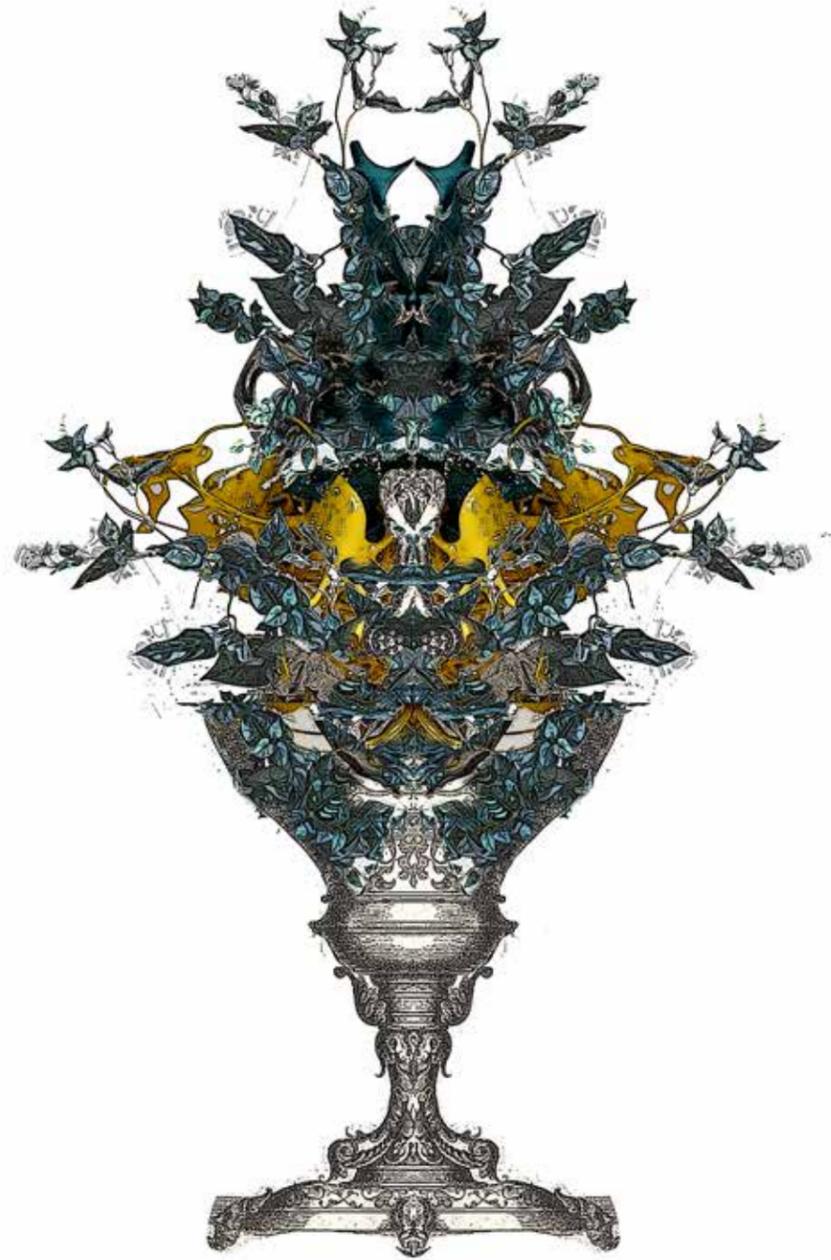
- SEVALIS is derived from vegetable structures and coated with a glossy varnish which in turn refers to the virtual genesis of this form. This sculpture seems rooted in the vase. At the same time its 'branches' lead the eye of the beholder upwards with a dynamic force. This complex form has an organic 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  
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  
3D print  
60 x 36 x 28 cm  
23.6 x 14.2 x 11 inches



**NABEKIESAV**, 2013 - 2014  
3D print  
58 x 29 x 52 cm  
22.8 x 11.4 x 20.5 inches

exhibition view: 2017 Between earth and heaven, PAK - Brugge, BE



studio view: 2013 Studio Nick Ervinck - Lichtervelde, BE



**DIULOCOR**, 2013 - 2016  
3D print  
63 x 25 x 37 cm  
24.8 x 9.8 x 14.6 inches

exhibition view: 2017 Between earth and heaven, PAK - Brugge, BE



**DIULOCOR**, 2013 - 2016  
3D print  
63 x 25 x 37 cm  
24.8 x 9.8 x 14.6 inches



**NABEKIARTS, 2013 - 2014**  
3D print  
61 x 48.5 x 60 cm  
24 x 19.1 x 23.6 inches



studio view: 2014 Studio Nick Ervinck - Lichtervelde, BE



30



31



exhibition view: 2014 GNI-RI jun2014, Museum Dr. Guislain - Gent, BE

**NABEKIARTS**, 2013 - 2014  
3D print  
61 x 48.5 x 60 cm  
24 x 19.1 x 23.6 inches

exhibition view: 2015 Sweet 18, Kasteel d'Ursel - Ursel, BE



studio view: 2014 Studio Nick Ervinck - Lichtervelde, BE



## 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.**

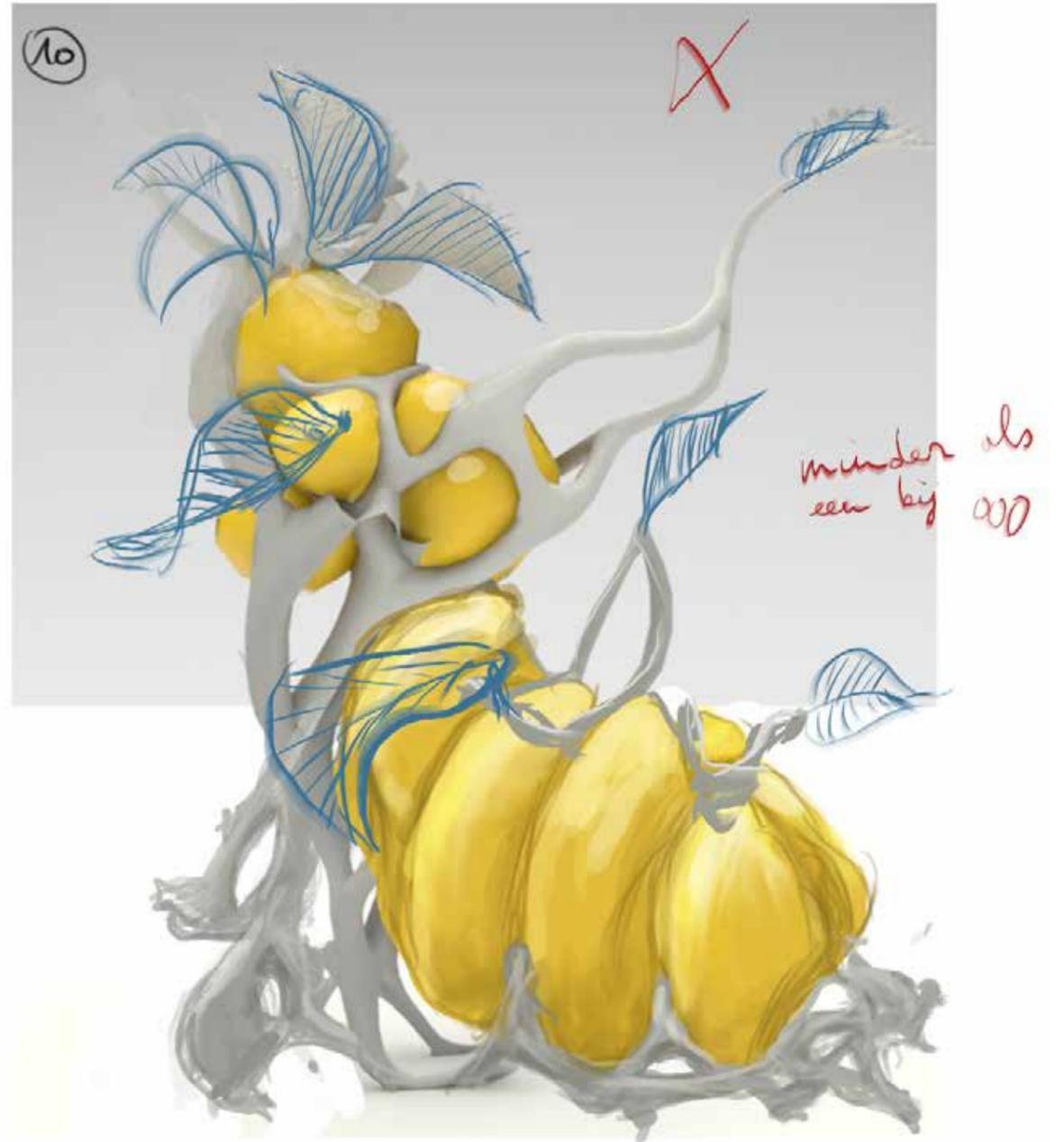
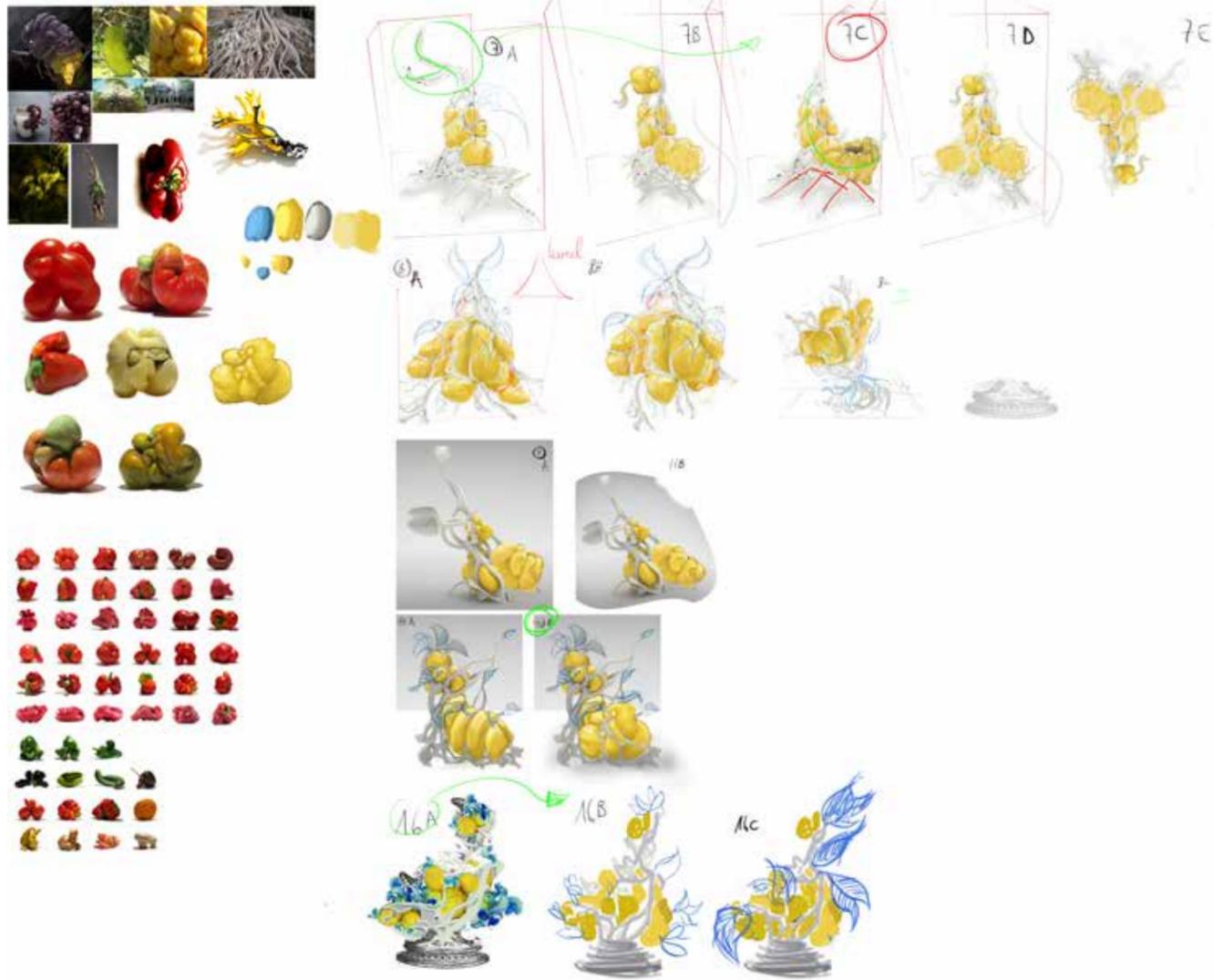
Proud it reaches for the sky combining the elegance of the leaves with the heavy blob form of the strawberry. This sculpture questions the status of the organic in the 21st century. Fruit and plants are being manipulated to better meet our standards or just to experiment. At universities people are investigating 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 en push the strawberry in it's 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 done completely by hand.

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





**AELBARTS, 2013**  
3D print  
28 x 23 x 25 cm  
11 x 9.1 x 9.8 inches



**AELBARTS, 2017**  
print  
36 x 52 cm, framed 50 x 66 cm  
14.2 x 20.5 inches, framed 19.7 x 26 inches



**AELBEJARK, 2017**  
3D print  
33 x 21 x 20 cm  
13 x 8.3 x 7.9 inches



**AELBWIESARTS, 2017**  
3D print  
22 x 27 x 26 cm  
8.7 x 10.6 x 10.2 inches



**MANOWTID**, 2016  
ceramics  
50 x 35 x 30 cm  
19.7 x 13.8 x 11.8 inches



**TSAEBTID**, 2016  
ceramics  
22.5 x 25.5 x 20.5 cm  
8.9 x 10 x 8.1 inches



## 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  
3D print  
58 x 31 x 35 cm  
22.8 x 12.2 x 13.8 inches



EMOBCOR, 2013 - 2014  
3D print  
58 x 35 x 31 cm  
22.8 x 13.8 x 12.2 inches



## 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 - 2014  
3D print  
20 x 25 x 26 cm  
7.9 x 9.8 x 10.2 inches



**EZORNIL**, 2013 - 2014  
3D print  
54 x 27 x 29 cm  
21.2 x 10.6 x 11.4 inches



**EZORNILA**, 2013 - 2014  
3D print  
20 x 26 x 25 cm  
7.9 x 10.2 x 9.8 inches



**EZORNILI**, 2013 - 2014  
3D print  
20 x 21 x 24 cm  
7.8 x 8.3 x 9.4 inches



**GENESRA, 2013**  
 3D print and wood  
 26 x 14 x 12 cm  
 10.2 x 5.5 x 4.7 inches



**ENOPIH, 2016**  
 ceramics  
 53 x 32 x 26 cm  
 20.9 x 12.6 x 10.2 inches



## EITAZOR

**EITAZOR is based on a 19th century baroque wallpaper, which has been digitally converted into a wall drawing.**

After that, the drawing was interpreted as a spatial sculpture. EITAZOR balances between the real and the virtual, between future and history, between design and sculpture, and between handwork and computer design. The observer has the impression that he walks in a virtual world, as Nick Ervinck not only digitally designed this piece, but transformed the exhibition space into a digital black box as well. The room is made black and reminds of the black background used in 3D-software programs. With EITAZOR, Nick Ervinck found a language to translate his fictional world into a material object which seems to float in space. This work is thus a perfect and seamless synthesis of the virtual and physical aspects of contemporary sculpture.

**EITAZOR, 2009**  
iron, paint, polyester, polyurethane and wood  
550 x 1970 x 315 cm  
216.5 x 775.6 x 124 inches

exhibition view: 2009 GNI-RI sep2009, EITAZOR, SMAK – Gent, BE

**EITAZOR, 2009**  
print mounted on plexiglas and covered with plexiglas  
150 x 200 cm  
59.1 x 78.7 inches



52

**EITZO**, 2009 - 2014  
iron, polyester and polyurethane  
304 x 285 x 285 cm  
119.7 x 112.2 x 112.2 inches

location: Provinciaal Erfgoedcentrum - Ename, BE

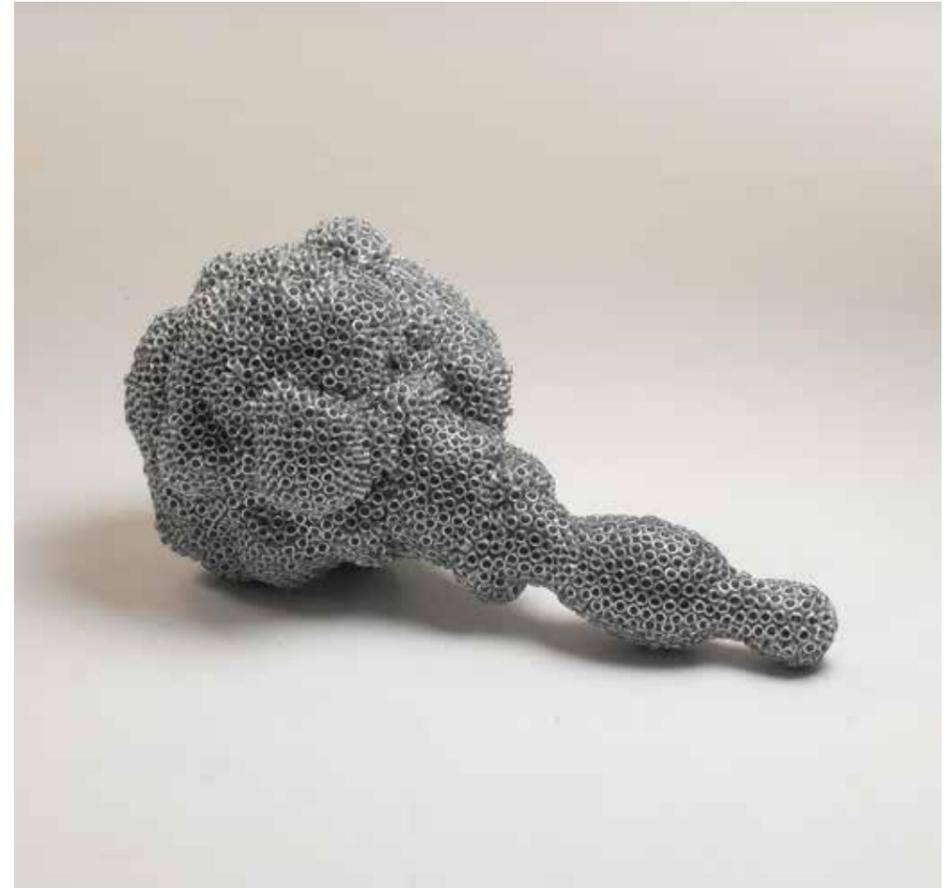


53

**EITZO**, 2009  
print  
36 x 50 cm, framed 52 x 66 cm  
14.2 x 19.7 inches, framed 20.5 x 26 inches



54



55

**NOTATUM, 2003**  
chalk, gauze, plaster, silicone and wood  
25 x 30 x 32 cm  
9.8 x 11.8 x 12.6 inches

**HARAPPA, 2004**  
chalk, gauze, mirror ball, plastic and polyurethane  
52 x 80 x 52 cm and 25 x 25 x 25 cm  
20.5 x 32.5 x 20.5 and 9.8 x 9.8 x 9.8 inches



**LABORAGNI, 2003 - 2005**  
ceramics, chalk, gauze, plaster and styrofoam  
22 x 22 x 22 cm and 33 x 20 x 5 cm  
8,7 x 8,7 x 8,7 inches and 13 x 7,9 x 2 inches



**YAROPRA, 2009 - 2011**  
study



58



59

## YAROPRA

**YAROPRA is a furniture-sculpture, designed for a waiting room, an entrance hall, a terrace or a meeting place.**

This sculpture fully leans against contemporary design and architecture. Similar to Peter Cook's Plug-in City (1964), YAROPRA is a construction kit with standardized construction elements, which can take on different shapes. YAROPRA looks like an arbitrary shape, but is in fact the result of structured ranging of all components of the network. Moreover, YAROPRA is a metaphor for the invisible network or connections between people. That is why this artwork understands the social dimension both in a functional and a conceptual way. With YAROPRA, Nick Ervinck thus combines a flexible structure, a social functionality with an explicit aesthetic design.

**YAROPRA, 2009 - 2011**  
iron, polyester, polyurethane and wood  
165 x 588 x 435 cm and 165 x 588 x 435 cm  
65.3 x 227 x 174 inches and 65.3 x 227 x 174 inches

location: AZ Damiaan - Oostende, BE

**YAROPRA, 2009 - 2011**  
iron, polyester, polyurethane and wood  
165 x 588 x 435 cm and 165 x 588 x 435 cm  
65.3 x 227 x 174 inches and 65.3 x 227 x 174 inches

location: AZ Damiaan - Oostende, BE



60

## YAROTUBER

**YAROTUBER is the result of Ervinck's wish to reproduce corals or complex networks by human hand.**

The corals in his oeuvre refer to various complex networks and prefabrications. According to Nick Ervinck, corals are also a kind of blobs, because they can grow endlessly in every direction (which, by the way, is something they have in common with his image archive) and because their complex shapes can only be imitated perfectly with the help of digital technology.

A few years ago, during a stay in Berlin, Ervinck realized that the city is permeated by conduit pipes, which form a huge, invisible coral structure. That gave him the idea of building his coral sculptures out of standardized PVC pipe segments from the DIY shop. This is not a final work, but a nearly life-sized model. The aim is to eventually make this in metal. Ervinck's sculptures often emerge from the observation of reality. As he translates virtual images in tangible objects, for YAROTUBER, he breathes life in industrial materials and creates an organic form out of them. YAROTUBER thus is an organic blob-version of a clean, almost virtual coral.

YAROTUBER, 2007 - 2008  
study



61

studio view: 2007 Studio Nick Ervinck - Kortemark, BE



**YAROTOBS\_M**, 2007  
polyester and polyurethane  
85 x 190 x 190 cm  
33.5 x 74.8 x 74.8 inches

exhibition view: 2008 GNI-RI may2008, Koraalberg - Antwerpen, BE



**YAROTOBS**, 2006  
print  
80 x 120 cm, framed 84 x 144 cm  
31.5 x 47.2 inches, framed 33.1 x 56.7 inches



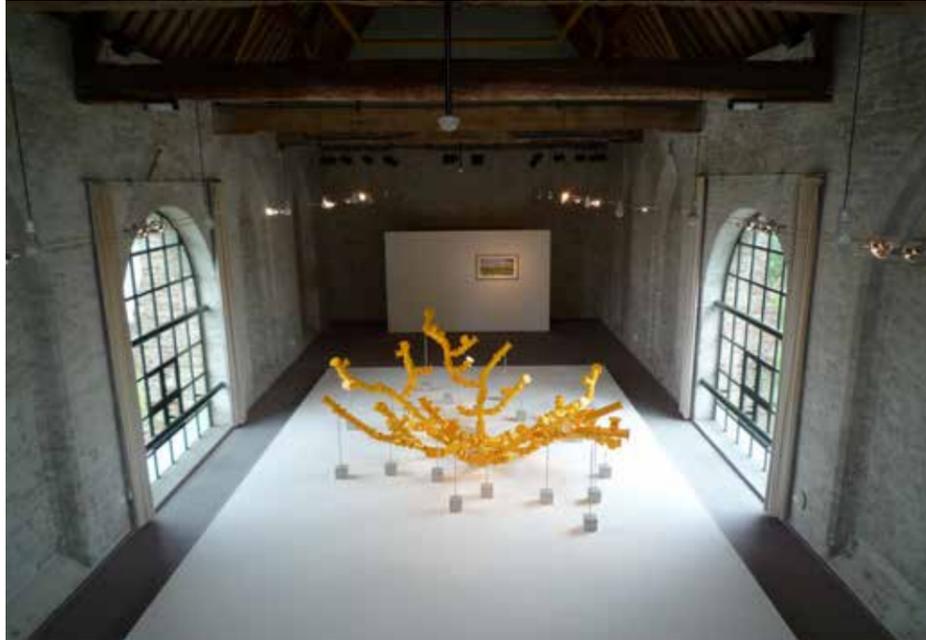
**YAROTOBS\_S1**, 2006 - 2007  
polyester and polyurethane  
27 x 65 x 45 cm  
10.6 x 26.4 x 17.7 inches



**YAROTBSY, 2007 - 2008**  
iron, mirror balls, print and pvc  
67 x 76 x 76 cm  
26.4 x 29.9 x 29.9 inches



exhibition view: 2009 GNI-RI jan2009, Kunstverein Ahlen – Ahlen, D



66

exhibition view: 2010 Sun-Light 01, Abdijhoeve Ten Bogaerde - Koksijde, BE

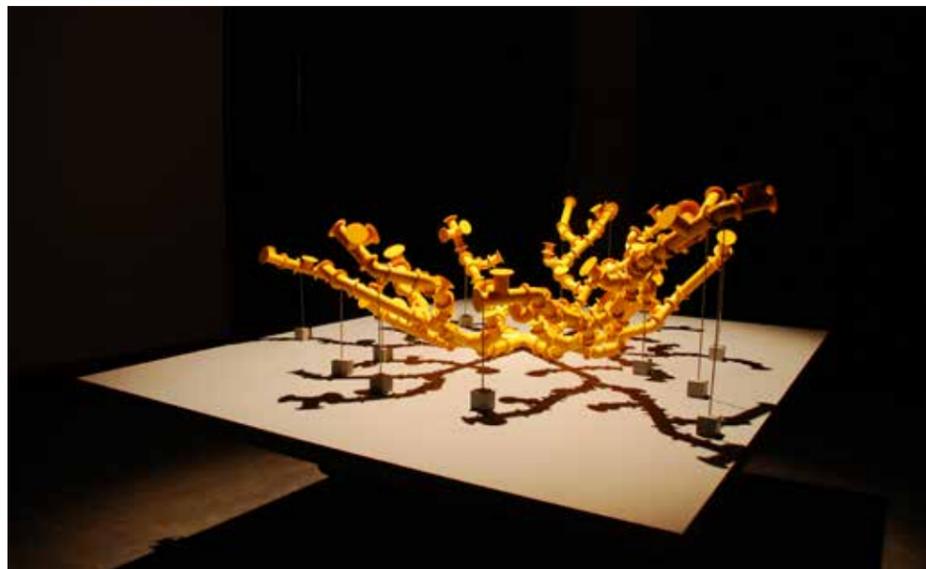


67

**YAROTUBE**, 2007  
print  
36 x 48 cm, framed 52 x 64 cm  
14.2 x 18.9 inches, framed 20.5 x 25.2 inches

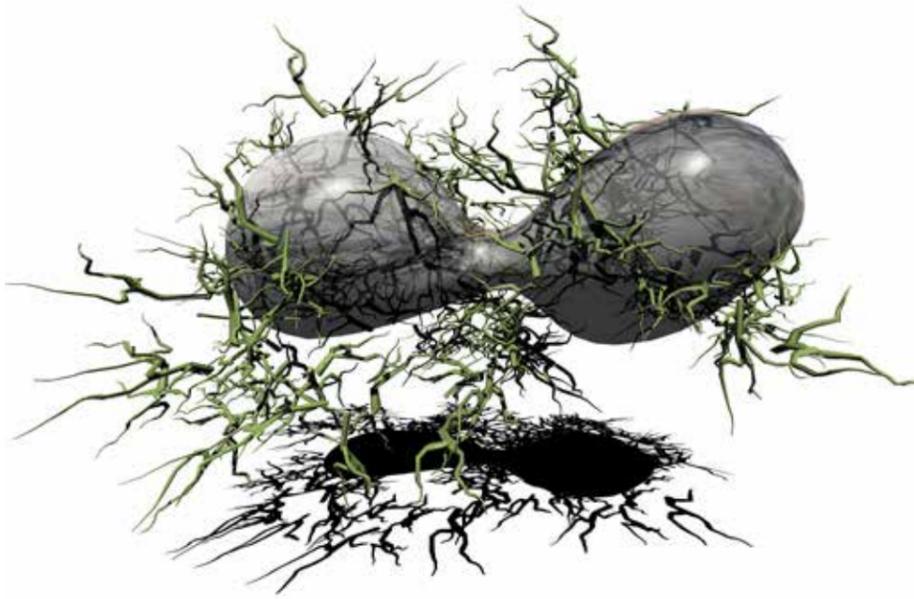


**YAROTUBE**, 2007  
concrete, iron and pvc  
170 x 700 x 800 cm  
47.2 x 61.4 x 39.4 inches



**YAROTUBE\_M**, 2007  
iron, pvc and wood  
65 x 215 x 180 cm  
25.6 x 84.6 x 70.9 inches

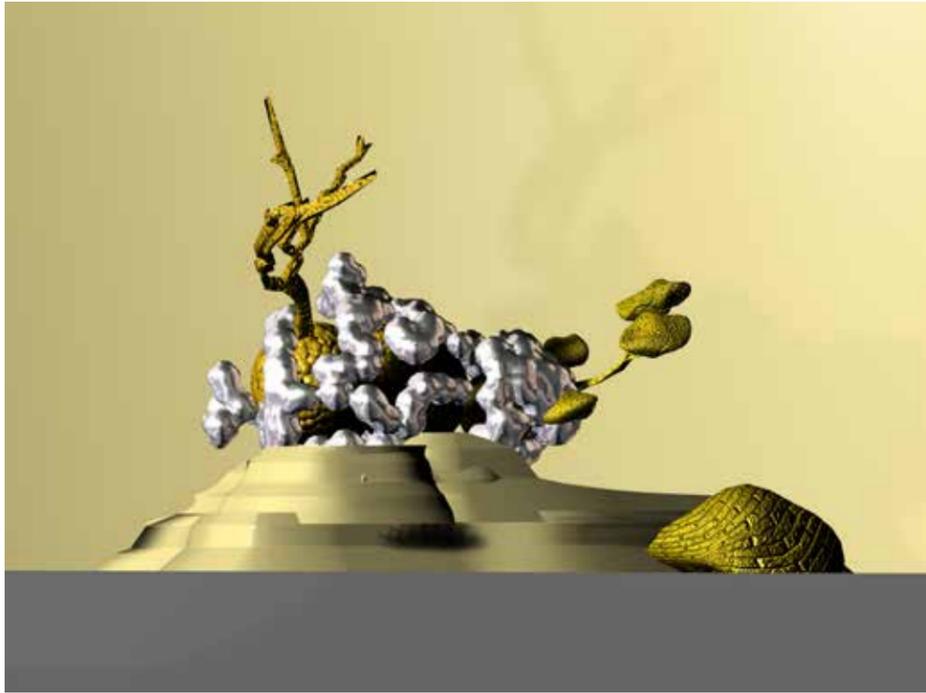
**YAROTUBE**, 2007  
iron, mirror ball and pvs  
25 x 82 x 59 cm and 20 x 20 x 20 cm  
9.8 x 23.3 x 23.2 inches and 7.9 x 7.9 x 7.9 inches



**GNI\_D\_GH\_181\_feb2006**, 2006  
print  
50 x 75 cm, framed 74 x 99 cm  
19.7 x 29.5 inches, framed 29.1 x 39 inches

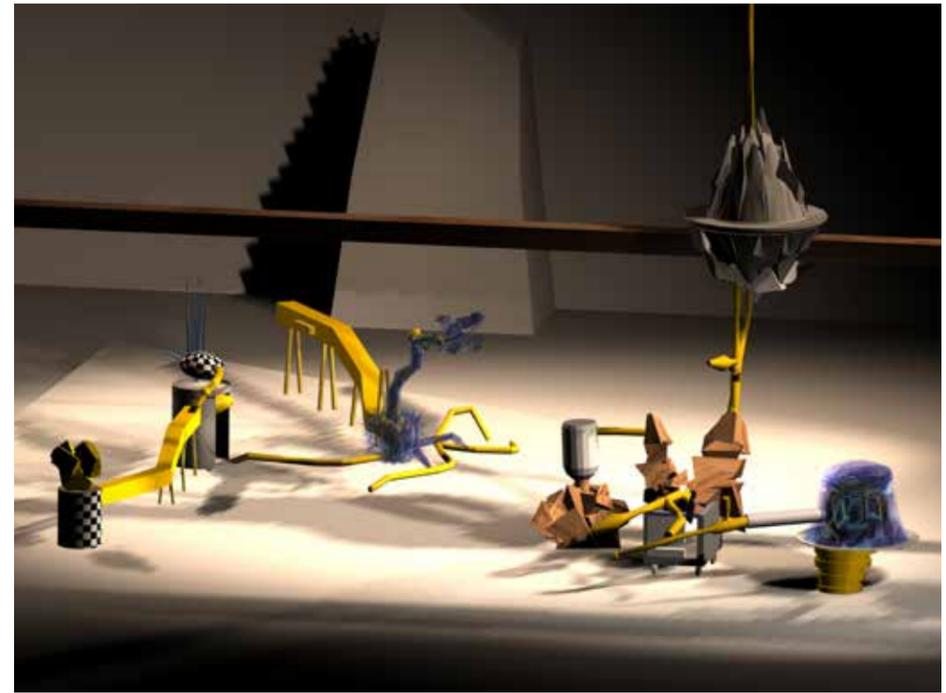


**GNI\_D\_GH\_14\_apr2004**, 2004  
print  
80 x 117 cm, framed 104 x 141 cm  
31.5 x 46.1 inches, framed 40.9 x 55.5 inches



72

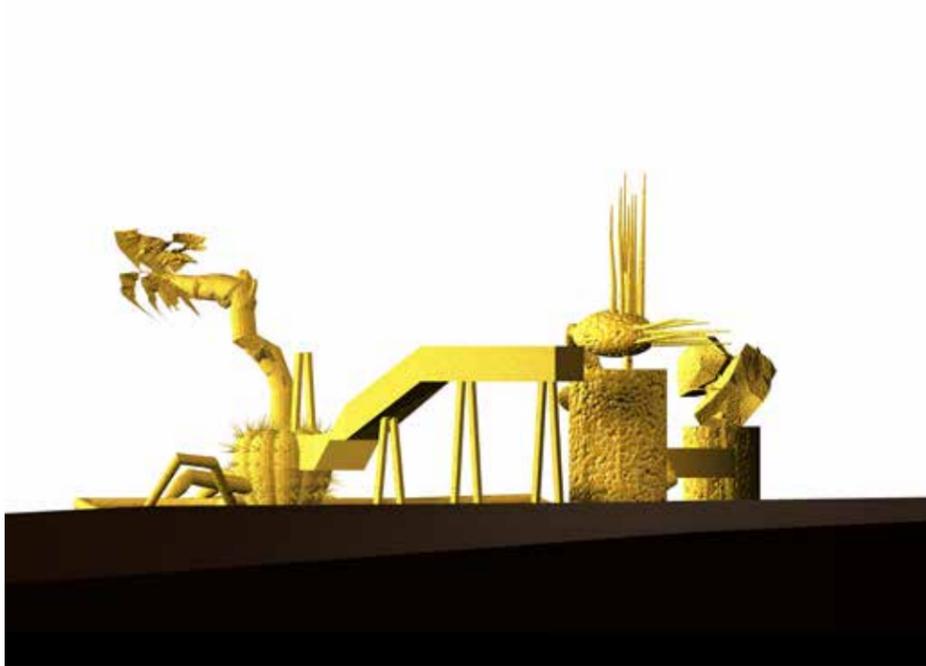
**GNI\_D\_GH\_320\_sept2003**, 2003  
print  
60 x 80 cm, framed 84 x 104 cm  
23.6 x 31.5 inches, framed 33.1 x 40.9 inches



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**GNI\_D\_GH\_149\_apr2003**, 2003  
print M  
85 x 116 cm, framed 109 x 140 cm  
33.5 x 45.7 inches, framed 42.9 x 55.1 inches

print S  
60 x 80 cm, framed 84 x 104 cm  
23.6 x 31.5 inches, framed 33.1 x 40.9 inches



**GNI\_D\_GH\_157\_apr2003**, 2003  
print  
60 x 80 cm, framed 84 x 104 cm  
23.6 x 31.5 inches, framed 33.1 x 40.9 inches



**GNI\_D\_GH\_67\_aug2003**, 2003  
print  
80 x 60 cm, framed 104 x 84 cm  
31.5 x 23.6 inches, framed 40.9 x 33.1 inches



**GNI\_D\_GH\_81\_aug2003**, 2003  
 print  
 60 x 80 cm, framed 84 x 104 cm  
 23.6 x 31.5 inches, framed 33.1 x 40.9 inches



**GNI\_D\_GH\_54\_aug2003**, 2003  
 print  
 60 x 80 cm, framed 84 x 104 cm  
 23.6 x 31.5 inches, framed 33.1 x 40.9 inches

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