

# Marjan Doom

## Collecting – collection

Humans have always been prone to collecting. The reasons for this are various and mutable.

Building a collection can have diverse purposes, from assembling knowledge or establishing and broadcasting power to the pure fascination for form or the unknown. There lies an intimate beauty in the act and motivation of collecting, but equally so in sharing what you have collected, whether with a few privileged individuals or with the world.

Some prefer privacy, to keep their assemblages locked up behind closed doors. It is not difficult to imagine why, as collections reveal a great deal about their collectors. In contrast, museums are public institutions and are therefore obliged to reveal themselves no matter the consequences. This is right and proper even if the result can induce shame, as exemplified by the exhibiting of colonial artefacts.

Observing Nick Ervinck's work as a collection and through the eyes of a collector, one could perceive an artist who, while compelled by his attraction to organic forms, is triggered by their potential to be reinterpreted and even recreated by the human mind and hands. His collection is research-built and part of an ongoing study. As a curator, he places his work in dialogue and juxtaposition with art history but also squarely within the ecosystem of a museum, which implies that the public voice is welcome.

A museum's display allows a collection to interact with the viewer: to provoke wonder or to educate, to inspire reflection or to activate. The covid pandemic has accelerated the digitalization processes of museum collections, making them more accessible to a worldwide audience. One could assume that museums—as safe keepers of world heritage—would be only too pleased to embrace this initiative, especially as public fora that seek to support a contemporary and polyphonic interpretation of collections. However, concerns have been raised about a potential shift in our dialogue experience with objects. The digital conversions catalyse certain questions: can a virtual object and museum serve the objectives in the same way as the real thing? What is authenticity? And is physical proximity necessary if one is to relate to authenticity? In a post-truth era, these questions do not ring hollow: rather they are integral to the concept of museums as institutions of the real, institutions that are intended to be nonpartisan and above political, religious or other influences, while at the same time being part of the society in which they are embedded.

Nick Ervinck's love of the colour yellow is a clear departure from what we find in nature, but MOUSEION is less easy to define. The virtual space leaves room to experiment with what is real and what is not. I'm convinced that as a sculptor, Nick struggles with the lack of tangibility yet at the same time enjoys playing with the boundaries of reality. There is no way to know as a viewer whether these futuristic artefacts are representations of the truth or whether they sprouted from the artist's imagination.

Throughout human history, technical innovations have always preceded a change in worldview. And when first introduced, raised difficult questions about genuineness. The first scientists to gaze through a microscope or telescope had a struggle to convince their fellow beings that magic was not involved. I wonder where concepts like MOUSEION will lead us?