Catalogue Text
Nick Ervinck
GNI-RI nov2025: plants and alterations

Nick Ervinck explores the dynamic intersections between nature, technology, and human influence, in his *GNI-RI nov2025: Plants and Alterations*, using sculpture as a medium to question our evolving relationship with the environment. Known for merging virtual reality, digital design, 3D printing, and traditional craftsmanship - Ervinck's works exist in a liminal space between virtual imagination and material reality. His sculptures unfold as hybrid organisms - half digital, half material.

Drawing inspiration from art history, science, and emerging technologies, Ervinck challenges the dichotomy between the real and the digital. Rather than emphasising artificiality, his work explores the tension and interplay between natural, constructed forms and creation of co-existing multiple realities. By combining hand-painting, gilding, and glazing with digitally generated forms, he brings texture and imperfection to the algorithm. His sculptures exist between the synthetic and the organic, blurring the boundaries between the two realities. For Ervinck, the question is no longer whether the digital imitates the real, but how both can coexist as equal realities. *It's not about contrasting one 'real' reality with a virtual one*, he notes, *but about simulacra alongside simulacra*.

He explores the connection between new technologies and sculpture, particularly the idea of moving beyond a "polar opposite" view. Ervinck states, *most sculptures created with digital technologies seem to emphasise the artificial part of the sculpture. I'm more interested in this tension between the digital and the real*. He has a long-standing fascination with the interplay between living and virtual reality, drawing significant influence from video games and emerging technologies. He connects these concepts with imagination, our ability to generate ideas, and our capacity to manifest them into tangible objects and spatial experiences.

From his *Plant Mutation Project*, *Aelbejark*, a 3D-printed, hand-painted strawberry, was inspired from a meeting with the plant scientist Dr. A.P.M. Ton den Nijs from the Plant Breeding Department at Wageningen University. The department holds a patent for cultivating a genetically manipulated strawberry that is resistant to fruit rot. Inspired by genetically modified plant research, the sculpture embodies both promise and unease - a speculative object that mirrors the potential and ethical uncertainties of scientific advancement and considers our own impact on nature. The strawberry's unfamiliar colours of blue and yellow and its mutated form provoke reflection on humanity's power to reshape nature and the possible consequences of doing so. Our curiosity creates new realities beyond our current understanding.

The process of digital production and 3D printing allows us to bridge the gap between imagination and physical form. Once printed, these pieces are hand-painted, transforming them into tangible sculptures. Ervinck carefully chooses colours for his sculptures that avoid falling into obvious categories, creating works that are mysterious and poetic - existing in a state of uncanny ambiguity.

Ervinck's *Nebkatrobs*, mutated cacao beans partially gold-glazed surfaces and fleshy texture become a symbol of luxury desires, cultural and biological manipulations. These small, hybrid seed and bean-like sculptures, suggest the birth of a new nature: artefacts of speculative botany that merge craft and technology. They represent fragments of growing forms, symbolising the cross-fertilisation between living species that could lead to a thriving new nature emerging from the shadows of our current environmental destruction and social injustice. They posit adaptation and survival in the face of ecological collapse, hinting at a future that straddles evolution and invention.

Much like scientists striving to bring about change and evolution, Ervinck explores new skills and materials to evolve forms by controlling and manipulating material structures. His sculptures aim to foster new understandings by departing from tradition only to reconnect these new formations to the ongoing chain of sculptural history for future interpretations of the past.

Ervinck's fusion of ceramic and 3D technology is particularly interesting as he explores new contemporary techniques while honouring traditional craftsmanship. His work transcends and continues the artisanal legacy of the past. His ceramic piece, *Akritanot* is a notable example. Its intricate forms echo the excess of the Baroque and is inspired by Meissen porcelain. Its plant-like structures are reminiscent of algae or flowers fused into a chaotic order, and its formation seems like a mutated ornament. Its skeletal membrane, organic curves, and orifices evoke a dreamlike imagination - a sci-fi laboratory of distorted interlinking species. The form and colour glazing is alluring and seductive, as certain plant life uses colour to attract and then poison its prey. *Akritanot*'s illusory nature creates a moment of chaotic uncertainty, prompting both observation and reflection on human integration with nature. These sculptures offer a reflective, sometimes unsettling vision of synthetic life, drawing viewers into a surreal, biomorphic world.

Alongside the material sculptures at MOCA London, Ervinck has created digital sculptures that exist in a parallel virtual reality of the exhibition space. The two realities coexist, creating an uncanny experience for viewers. The act of engaging with the art becomes a disorienting encounter, where the memory of the exhibition lingers between the physical and digital realms - like fragments of a dream that blur the lines between what was seen and what is remembered.

Ervinck's work challenges us to reconsider the boundaries of reality, nature, and artifice, offering both a warning and a wonder-filled vision of the future.

Roberto Ekholm