

Francois Ruegg is an award winning Swiss ceramist exhibited at Puls for the first time. Ruegg intentionally uses allegory to color the figurative presence of his objects and their complex allusions. He plays with our innermost expectations, our stereotypes, and sends us on strange trains of thought. Ruegg deliberately leads us astray as he challenges our internalized landmarks and creates confusion in our perceptions. This is work that provokes, destabilizes, and opens up only enough to give up a few clues to understanding.

The porcelain sculptures in this series all begin with a carefully selected melon or eggplant, chosen for its highly evocative ambiguity. Ruegg wraps each in a thin plastic sheet which is then stretched to its limit. This covering puts a veil over the still life and creates an often profound disturbance which in turn unveils something seemingly — or perhaps only possibly — unnatural. He then uses the resulting modeling to make a mold in which to cast an object that will corroborate the idea he wishes to declare.

The openings and cuts establish a purely visual relationship between the inner and outer faces of the form while at the same time luring our gaze with their troubling likeness. In fact, they present themselves as real bruises or red openings of sensuality and eroticism. The tactile aspect of the volumes — black to evoke the latex and leather universe, metallic to escape our expectation of white porcelain and reinforce the artificiality of pretense, or matte, smooth or lustrous, to increase the desire to touch, caress, feel their lasciviousness — all add to the duality of the perception.

The resulting ceramics — parts of which are a direct imprint bursting with reality — then assert their intention with humor and relevance. He has intentionally made these pieces to be objects able to be read equivocally. Ruegg plays with our perception, giving us simultaneously a double reference to the original natural forms while eliciting imprinted iconic temptations. The real nature (the truth?) nevertheless remains open to doubt. The viewer's initial impressions of something rather vegetable-like are immediately confused by more erotic interpretations. Indeed, these ceramics have as much of a resemblance to packaged melons and eggplants as to genitals bound in a smooth and sensual material.

Annette Sloth, gallerist of Puls, Brussels