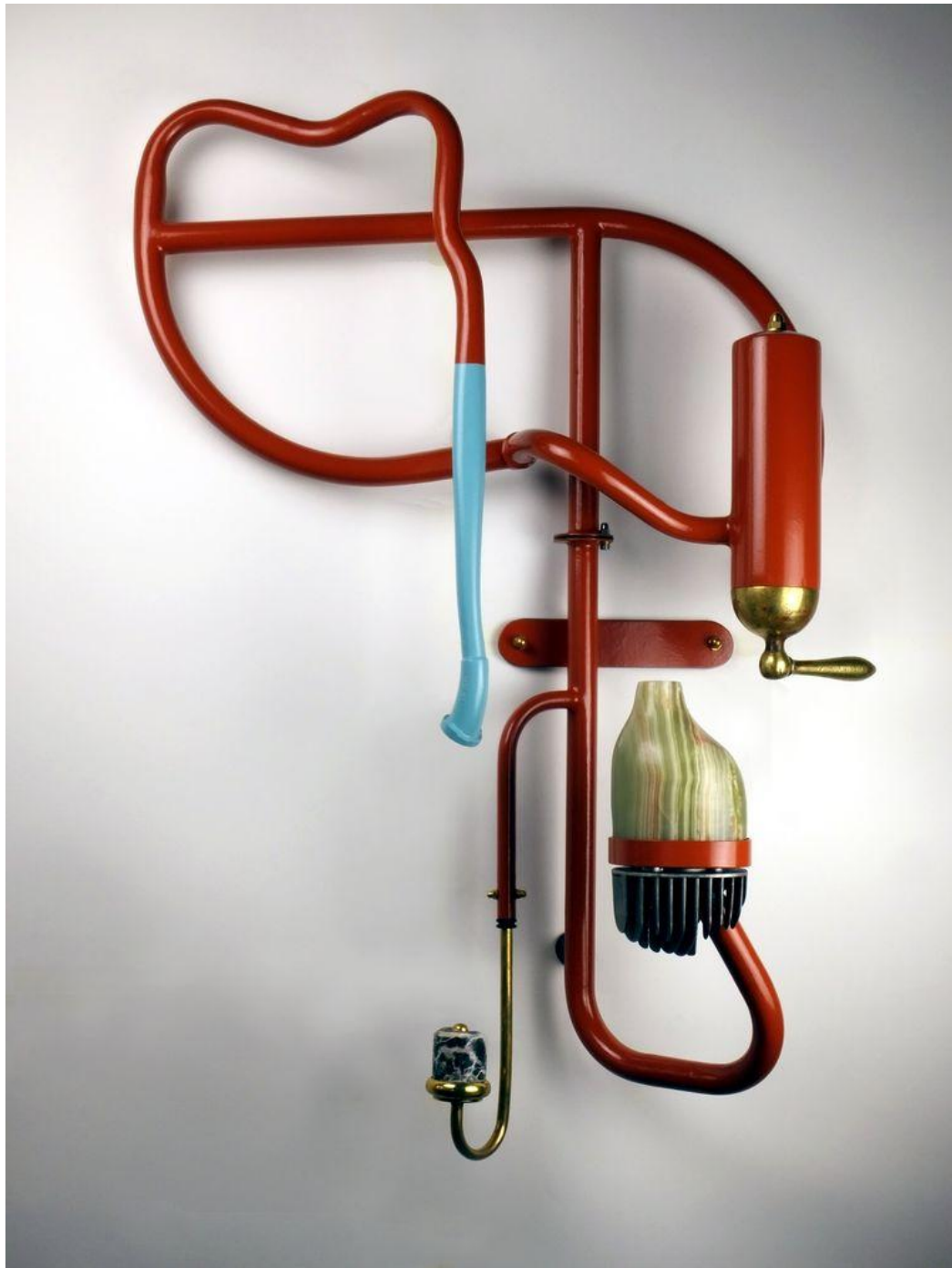


Like cyborg images from the body horror genre

Edo Dijksterhuis 22 januari 2021, 11:42



Willem Harbers, from the series *The last Rock: Maniscopra*.

What is a Scarico? Or a Maniscopra? The words are not in the dictionary. And if you add the corresponding object, you have an episode of Who am I? that is impossible to win. Because these objects could be many things - a household appliance, a medical appliance and even a sex toy - but when it comes to rock-hard definitions, they are just one thing: sculptures by Willem Harbers.

With his forms and use of materials, Harbers is able to constantly entice the viewer to make associations. The parts made of steel, aluminium and brass take the form of pipes, handles, fuel tanks and hinges. The added marble provides an organic component. In *Pendulepre*, for instance, a lung shape can be recognised, which is reinforced by the organ colour of the smoothly sanded and finely veined natural stone.



Willem Harbers, from the series *The Last Rock*: *Pendulepre*.

More stylized

Harbers actually makes a kind of cyborg sculptures: part machine, part living being. They are reminiscent of film classics from the body horror genre, *Crash* or *Tetsuo II: Body Hammer*, but are much more stylized, more controlled than the grotesque film fusions between rock-hard mechanics and soft tissue.

Harbers began his career as a real 'marble man'. After graduating from the Rietveld, he left for Carrara, where he fell in love with natural stone. He explored the abstract form possibilities of the material. He is more of a modernist than a renaissance man, which is underlined by the exclusive use of neutral, white marble.

In recent years, he has also used coloured stone in combination with metal in remarkable colours: mustard yellow, brick red, turquoise. The marble plays an increasingly minor role and may even disappear in the long run. The name of the series, *The Last Rock*, seems to point in that direction.

The exhibited works fall into two groups. In a sculpture like *Trabiccor*, the marble still plays a leading role, albeit a passive one. A rough chunk is held in place by two arms, like the industrial setting for a showpiece.



Willem Harbers, from the series *The Last Rock: Scarico*.

Screws

In most other sculptures, the stone is an integral part of the whole. In Monochronique it forms an emergency button or tongue in a Pacman-like curled piece of yellow steel. In Centripetor, a polished disc is inserted into the side of a kind of vice, like a prehistoric floppy disk. The works show their screws and connectors honestly, nothing is concealed here. And yet you can't figure it out. Are they machines or symbols? Design or art? But it is precisely these questions that make them so pleasantly elusive that you can keep looking at them.

A future now past

Willem Harbers

Where Galerie Franzis Engels, Nieuwevaart 200, Amsterdam, by appointment only

When until march 6