

Introduction

I am a Brussels-based visual artist developing a multimedia practice that includes in-situ installations, sculpture, and image-driven media. At the core of my practice is an inquiry into how material histories and cultural meanings shift within a globalized context, operating between what is considered real and fake. In my studio, I continuously test and reconfigure sculptural materiality, historic forms, and semi-digital methods. Through a strong focus on materiality, process, and modes of display, I question ideas of authenticity, tradition, and transformation occasionally rooted in misinterpretation. My work offers an anachronic exploration of how historical references and contemporary sensibilities coexist, generating unlikely connections expanding from where we are from, into how we come together.

The #BALUSTER Series

I submit my ongoing sculpture series #BALUSTER for the Art Contest 2026. Spanning ten years of work, this series dissects the premises of originality, exploring the cultural “soft borders” of the world through pieces that prove to be a step ahead of my own understanding.

The series is inspired by contested figures from popular culture and art history who subverted modernity and instrumentalized stereotypes. I give these mechanisms physical resonance. By stacking, juxtaposing, and merging materials, I draw parallels between personal anecdotes and biographical histories, translating literal interpretations of poetic elements into specific techniques related to these personages.

- **#BALUSTER#CarmenMiranda:** As a child visiting my grandparents in Brazil, we constantly compared Brazilian and Belgian fruits. This act of comparison became my raw material. I carved fruits in multiple stages of abstraction using exotic, local, and composite woods. Stacked together and topped with a shoulder-height bowl, the structure assumes the anthropomorphic allure of a performer. Miranda turned her caricatured "Tutti-Frutti Hat" image into a strength; my homage constructs her silhouette as an armor of exotic, modernist decay, using charred wood to introduce a tragic uniformity.
- **#BALUSTER#SeiShonagon:** Intrigued by the fiercely modern, witty observations in the 11th-century *Pillow Book* by Japanese lady-in-waiting Sei Shonagon, I created a hybrid between an archival display and a coat hanger. I collaborated with Maruroku Co., a kimono manufacturer in Kanazawa, to dye fabrics in traditional Kaga Yuzen colors, crafting a baluster-shaped pillow with black silk-backed lips—referencing Shonagon’s descriptions of teeth blackening. The central shaft features two wooden panels carved into a baluster silhouette. As a prolific global archetype, the baluster carries conflicting cultural interpretations, allowing me to reinvent this shape to reincarnate versions of self.
- **#BALUSTER#JackieChan:** This sculpture interrogates a stereotype. Watching Jackie Chan movies in Belgium led me to study Mandarin at age 16 and work at a Chinese restaurant in rural Flanders. Chan’s contradictory persona—both martial arts master and ridiculed cliché—mirrored how customers perceived the Chinese family I worked for. Reinterpreting the traditional kung-fu wooden dummy, I replaced its rigid limbs with baluster spindles and added a limp leg. Placed on a chair and crowned with an upside-down Chinese lantern frame, the piece reflects the complex interplay of identity and external perception.

These performative, sculptures operate as storytelling tools, blending truth and fiction to challenge the rigid, binary definitions of identity and representation dominating contemporary discourse.