

Carte Blanche à DAVID DOUARD *inner GLOW'* *replica* with Nicolas Ceccaldi Valerie Keane Antoine Trapp

June 04–
Sep. 30, 2024

'Welcome Home' should be written on the welcome mat at the entrance of *inner GLOW' replica*. And while it isn't explicitly stated (words are scarce, but present within the show), one quickly grasps that this Carte Blanche orchestrated by David Douard with works by himself, Nicolas Ceccaldi, Valerie Keane, and Antoine Trapp, is somewhat of a domestic display: an inner space, the inside of a body, a cave, a (literal) Basement. David Douard's scenographies often share a common trait: on the surface, they seem hard to read. Yet, they always end up seizing those who join them, as if one were there to stay, hang out for days, melt into his sofas, and spend hours obsessing over the carefully accumulated objects, glimpses of words, and teenage-like images that slowly reveal themselves as one looks closer. The exhibition begins and ends with *Zac's Haunted House*, the GIF-based novel by American author and poet Dennis Cooper. In this work, Cooper abandons words in favor of a visual narrative that explodes language as we know it, ushering in a pre-meme era of universal horror. This wordless, internet-fueled fiction embodies the poetic code of this mash-up show: an acid loop of both romance and terror. As if continuing an image-based slightly perverse conversation, Antoine Trapp's binder hangs on the wall of Basement Roma, featuring around 250 pictures depicting AI in domestic and creepy romantic contexts. Created between April and now, this folder acts as a metaphorical corridor to the other side of the IRL. Trapp explains, "When considering keywords, 'passing' stands out, referring to 'straight passing' or 'real passing,' like a generated image passing as a photo." His and David Douard's fascination with the idea of 'auto-cannibalism' and 'autophagous loop,' are brought to the surface through the binder. This concept is echoed in an article on the SUPA's website (a company that specializes in advanced AI solutions, focusing on improving AI reliability and performance), which discusses the idea of AI cannibalism: "Training AI on its own content can lead to a form of 'AI cannibalism,' where the model continually consumes and learns from its own outputs." Within this space of disturbances, Valerie Keane's work offers reassurance. It's like a 'necklace or a ring,' an ornamental barrier that makes you feel good and that you can't leave the house without, lest you feel naked and vulnerable. Valerie Keane's sculptural works, consisting of two sharp hanging sculptures, act as ornamental entities for something intangible within the space, almost like a soul in need of protection. Douard's joker smile looks into them, adding another layer to the scene: these sculptures, devoid of any visible connection to the internet (but not to technology), evoke the presence of a ghost or a fantastical ornament hanging from the ceilings. They resemble a Duchampian "machine solitaire," a machine without a function, existing purely as an enigmatic presence.

Finally, Nicolas Ceccaldi's *Untitled (Winnie the Pooh)*, sits on the floor of the show. "Viewers will be watched by the Winnie the Pooh, just as my family and I were watched for all the years we had him in our house. He was so close to us," David Douard explains. In this show, the life of the exhibition unfolds under the spying camera-nose of the Pooh: a slightly creepy, childlike recorder of life. All works and everyone who spends time in this space will double through David Douard's mirrors featured in two of his works. The interplay between accidental reflections, and AI's infinite reproduction, weaves a common thread through seemingly mashed-up elements. Yet, nothing feels desperate in this space. If *inner GLOW's replica* was a movie scene, one could imagine a character in it screaming "Let me in! Let me out!"—changing their mind in a loop, wondering on which side of the door they'd rather be.

Text by Sofia Gallarate

Basement Roma