

dylan ray arnold, Océane Bruel

## Swallowed Rooms

15.3 - 27.4.2025

*"To live is to pass from one space to another while doing your very best not to bump yourself against the walls."* — Georges Perec

*"There is something inside the body that wants to get out. You feel it when you stand between two mirrors."*  
— Anne Carson

To live is to move through space, shaping and being shaped by it. Océane Bruel and dylan ray arnold work within this interplay, exploring corporeal and mental spaces as fluid, metabolic processes. Their practices coil in loops of memory, materiality, and meaning, tracing systems both organic and constructed. For their exhibition *Swallowed Rooms*, they map out the imperceptible flows—nervous, digestive, respiratory, and emotional—that sustain us.

The title itself lingers in the mind, unsettling yet absorbing, like the physical enclosures and reflective surfaces that recur in their works: mirrors swallow other spaces, drawers withdraw, forms fold in on themselves. Their sculptural and spatial works layer everyday gestures with deeply felt psychological and domestic attachments. The residue of lived environments—notes, souvenirs, images—coalesce into constellations, much like the curated chaos of a fridge door.

Here, the fridge reclines on its side, filled with shredded gift wrap and administrative paper that reflects—literally, as it is also a mirror—life's ups and downs (Océane Bruel, *I Am a Strange Loop*, 2025). Meanwhile, a chair stretches itself thin, accumulating objects in a scene that could embody a comforting restlessness (dylan ray arnold, *How to Live with a Neurotic Cat*, 2025). This personification recalls a sentence by Anne Carson that has shaped our conversations: "The fruit bowl paused." With Carson, the inanimate vibrates. With Océane and dylan, it does the same. Each has a way of being exact in their forms, even in forms that are figures figuring themselves out. Flaws are assumed—vulnerability, too.

Following their previous duo exhibition, *Water Under the Fridge*, presented at In extenso (Clermont-Ferrand, France) in 2024, where trivial, almost imperceptible phenomena were central, *Swallowed Rooms* shifts in scale. Here, the infinitesimal and the banal present themselves in exaggerated proportions—like the pits, respectively from an apple and a cherry—mimicking how the loops we enter (of grief, obsession, or memory) continuously shift in significance and amplitude. The mundane expands into something monumental, revealing the weight of these repetitive cycles and the emotions they carry, before muting itself again.

Océane Bruel and dylan ray arnold metabolize materials, translating personal and shared experiences into works that chew, stretch, and reshape their own boundaries. In dylan's work, mental states—chaotic, compulsive, and oscillating between attempts at order and inevitable collapse—take on a more pronounced presence through assemblages of previously owned, loved and discarded objects. By contrast, the physical body manifests itself through absence in Océane's materials: fruit pits retain the sensation of their presence in the mouth, recalling the moment they were spat out and covered with saliva (*All the Mouths*, 2025 ; *Mouth*,

2025), while sticky shirts envelop pumpkins in a way reminiscent of sweaty clothes clinging to the skin, echoing the wet-drapery technique of ancient Greek sculpture.

The idea of the baroque is central here, with its definition as "something irregular and bizarre" resonating throughout the exhibition, as well as it is understood in exaggeration. For dylan, the baroque seems to transpire in a meandering and overwhelming abundance, whereas for Océane it releases in tension—of moments, of gestures. The works thus embrace multiplicity, excess, and folds—both literal and conceptual. Through surrealist samplings of objects and ideas, they evoke sensations and emotions that are deeply human, creating spaces where perception, repetition, and recursive thinking mirror the cyclical nature of the artists' practice. As Douglas Hofstadter asks in *I Am a Strange Loop*:

*"Do dreads and dreams, hopes and griefs, ideas and beliefs, interests and doubts, infatuations and envies, memories and ambitions, bouts of nostalgia and floods of empathy, flashes of guilt and sparks of genius, play any role in the world of physical objects? [...] Can a blurry, intangible 'I' dictate to concrete physical objects such as electrons or muscles (or for that matter, books) what to do?"*

This question encapsulates the puzzling nature of a *Swallowed Room*: a space where intangible thoughts, emotions, and memories intermingle with the physical world, blurring the boundaries between subject and object, cause and effect, what swallows what—like an infinity mirror reflecting itself endlessly. Following the rhythm of a metabolic process in perpetual motion, the exhibition resists fixed interpretation, existing instead in a constant state of transformation, where objects and spaces inhale and exhale, loop and unloop, echoing the strange yet familiar rhythms of being.

Katia Porro

The exhibition is dedicated in loving memory to Ulla Arnold.

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Katia Porro is a curator, writer and translator based in France. She is currently the director of In extenso (Clermont-Ferrand, France) and the magazine La Belle Revue. In 2020-21, she was Associate Director of the Amant Siena residency. She has held various positions in various art institutions and galleries (Galerie Allen, KADIST Paris, Palais de Tokyo) and has curated exhibitions in France and abroad (Fondation d'entreprise Ricard, Paris; Gether Contemporary Copenhagen; Doc !, Paris; Treize, Paris; monopôle, Lyon) and off-site projects. Katia Porro has published texts in various publications and works as a translator for various magazines, institutions and galleries.

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