

David Douard

Permanent Hymns

April 26 — June 4, 2025



David Douard. *Permanent Hymns*, exhibition view, Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris (2025). Photo: Jiajun Deng.
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For his fourth exhibition at Galerie Chantal Crousel, *Permanent Hymns*, David Douard composes a polyphony of shapes and materials, like many shared hymns. Through a series of new works, the artist creates a plastic language, in constant mutation, blending mediums and motifs in a balance between fragility and statuesque presence.

Several sculptures carry forward the emblematic elements of his practice—glass spheres, floral contaminations, album covers, cloths, textual fragments, metal chains—within a movement of expansion, of proliferation. These shapes multiply into new configurations, opening onto a balanced verticality, rounded volumes, pedestals in soothing colors, and the presence of sources of light.

The sculptures interact with more intimate wall works. These drawings and collages echo the curved lines of the sculpted volumes. The frames remind us of the pedestals' shades on which some of the works unfold, thus creating a subtle game of correspondence.

Other large-format mural works, made of resin, paint, cloths, wood and screen-printed acrylic glass, add density to the overall presentation.

In this new exhibition, David Douard develops his own visual language where every artwork is linked to the other by a discreet yet ubiquitous tension. A reflective semi-sphere becomes a tipping and convergence point, in which the visitor discovers his own reflection. A non-human figure appears, enigmatic, alien-like, immersed in a polyphony of forms that resonate with these *permanent hymns*.

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WICKED OOZE! (UNDEAD REMIX)

by Charlie Fox

Which world are we in?

The one where a shiny chrome fanged bat headdress, garlanded with pearls and flowers rendered in chilly metal, is worn after a dystopian ritual, a celebration of the coming of spring, perhaps, the vernal equinox on a landscape littered with toxic waste, garbage, animal bones, all of it strangely aglow.

The one where people melt before a huge pile of shrieking pink mutant ejaculate littered with cute pink flowers, as if a luscious artificial Jeff Koons garden was inside it, slowly mutating into *something else*.

The one festively scarred by the fact that David Cronenberg's masterpiece *Crash* with its creepy marriage of flesh and metal was actually the biggest blockbuster of 1996.

OK, David Douard's sculptures offer us all of these worlds at once. He's a mad scientist. I'm not even sure what they are all the time. The way they're laid out reminds me of autopsies, creatures laid out, inside and outside mixed together. They give me the creeps. It's magical.

He creates a mutant version of sculpture, where it's possible to catch the leftovers of the medium's past peeping out through the chaos and debris, e.g. a cyberpunk version of Robert Rauschenberg during that early phase where he was all about the enchantment of garbage, most especially the gore-splattered *Bed* which hangs like one of David's sculptures, simultaneously a murder scene, sci-fi marshland and fucked-up found object. David doesn't fuck with goats but as a treat in one of these pieces, there appears to be a little plastic deer's skull. (Tetsumi Kudo is in there, too, undead but still growing, with his body parts and fake organic matter. Kudo liked flowers, too.) The organic and the engineered are mating, impersonating each other, creating weird new entities.

Painted roses hidden here and there rather than those that rot, metal flowers, metal beams used as bones. Given the anatomical dimensions of all this, I wonder if they're also mutations of the surrealist concept of the exquisite corpse, a trippy distortion of the body rendered by several brains at once, but, like, for the oozy brain-scrambling era of Chat GPT. Or its aftermath.

'Permanent hymns' rather than lullabies but permanent hymns to what? Nightmares? H.R. Giger? Perhaps a piece of metal is a permanent hymn, which, unlike the tragically organic, can't decay but turns strange over time. Rust never sleeps. Even the beautiful bat skull, concocted by some dedicated and sensitive future creature, will in time become a playground for worms. It reminds me of the skull, the memento mori lurking in Renaissance paintings, roses growing from the eye sockets.

And the orbs, those huge shiny monster eyeballs scattered through David's works, they throw us into another world, too. Yup, 'the future', a term which can only be handled in a hazmat suit with a feeling of jet-black dread flowing through you. A future of further decay, environmental toxicity, in which our relationship to technology (and technology's relationship to us) gets closer and closer...

A future where the things *encrypted* within David's works, the feast of materials hidden within the work, is studied by an archaeologist wearing a metal version of a plague mask.

Is that a fence or the membrane of a flayed mutant's facial tissue?

Was that a coffin?

When you get close to David's work, sometimes you can see your face turned to ooze in its shiny surface. 'Warped' is probably the best thing to say. Yeah, 'warped'. A new mutant, waiting to be dissected.

Born in 1983 in Perpignan, France.
Lives and works in Paris, France.

Language is the very basis of David Douard's work. The texts and poems he collects on the Internet are manipulated, transformed in order to become a vital flow, feeding into his sculptures. Through language as an ingredient, David Douard redefines space as hybrid and collective by injecting anonymous, chaotic, deviant, ill and frustrating poems in it. As he recreates an infected environment where the real world used to be, the fantasy brought by new digital technologies expands.

David Douard graduated from the École nationale supérieure des Beaux-Arts de Paris in 2011. Since 2022, he teaches at the École nationale supérieure d'arts de Paris-Cergy. His work has been shown in solo and group exhibitions organized by international institutions such as UCCA Dune Art Museum, Qinhuangdao (2023); Serralves Museum, Porto (2022); FRAC Île-de-France, Paris (2020); Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin (2019); KURA c/o Fonderia Artistica Battaglia, Milan (2018); Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2018, 2014); Musée d'Art Moderne de Paris, Paris (2017, 2015); Kunstverein Braunschweig, Braunschweig (2016); Fridericianum, Kassel (2015); SculptureCenter, New York (2014); Astrup Fearnley Museet, Oslo (2014); Fondation Pernod Ricard, Paris (2012).

David Douard recently curated exhibitions at institutions such as the Fondation Pernod Ricard (2024) and Basement Roma (2024).

He has also participated in various biennales: Belgrade Biennial (2021); Gwangju Biennial (2018); Taipei Biennial (2014); Lyon Biennial (2013). In 2017-2018, he was a fellow-in-residence at the French Academy in Rome, Villa Medici. Additionally, he received the Fondazione Ettore Fico award in 2017 during the Artissima fair in Turin.

His works are part of the collections of the Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami; Long Museum West Bund, Shanghai; Collection Pinault, Paris; Serralves Museum, Porto; Musée d'Art Moderne de Paris, Paris; CNAP, Paris; Lafayette Anticipations, Paris; FRAC Île-de-France, Paris; FRAC Limousin, Limoges; FRAC Champagne-Ardenne, Reims.