

DONALD BAECHLER: KNOW AN ARTIST BY HIS SHOES



INSTALLATION VIEW. COURTESY CHEIM AND READ

Donald Baechler's *New Work*, on view now at Cheim & Reid, is a mix of large, mixed-medium collages in cheerful, chalky hues, and playful floral sculptures cast in bronze. Those collages, in particular, see the stuff of pop art—cartoon skulls and soccer balls—drizzled in paint like graffiti, or the messy residue of the artist's store. But while the exhibition is up, through May 1, you can also get a literal look at the artist's work process. Partners & Spade—part boutique, part art space—hosts a collection of books, wrestling fan pages and garden ornaments that have inspired Baechler. As part of *Source Material*, Partners & Spade is also selling some of Baechler's work clothes, including his paint-covered Chuck Taylor All Stars. (They're a size 10.5 medium, if you're curious, and on sale for \$200.) Baechler's appropriation technique owes a lot to his refusal of the role of *auteur*, and the artist credits his studio manager, Erin Krause, with the companion exhibition at Partners & Spade. The Spade of Partners & Spade is Andy Spade, of the tastemaking husband-wife duo behind the Jack Spade and Kate Spade brands. Andy and wife Kate are longtime collectors of Baechler's work, the artist said, adding that he'd always loved the various props displayed at Jack Spade's SoHo

store."[T]here existed a kind of mutual awareness that we were interested in accumulating the same sorts of flotsam and jetsam; random categorized objects, folk-art encrustations, discarded toys," Baechler said, via email. "The idea [was] to give a narrow glimpse into the world of objects and images that informs what I do in the studio.



PHOTO COURTESY PARTNERS & SPADE

The objects on view at Partners & Spade come from all sorts of places, with some dating back 20-odd years. Some were picked up on the artist's trips to India, Thailand and North Africa; others he's received as gifts from fans of his work, or as he puts it, people who have "figured out what I'm up to." Said Baechler: "I'll get boxes full of books and objects from perfect strangers in the oddest places. Teachers will send me students' drawings, etc. It's hard to sift through it all." Baechler says he's rather attached to the "bits of paper and plastic" that inform his work. Hence the aforementioned garden ornaments and antique puppets, for example, are not for sale, just the work clothes. Collection and accumulation factor into the art in other ways: for example, studio dropcloths are used as canvases in the Cheim & Reid show, and variations on globes, skulls and roses—frequently seen in previous work—appear in *New Work*: "In the same way I accumulate objects, I also accumulate images, and I find them arranging themselves into categories too," he said. "And some images insist on being painted, others don't."

NEW WORK IS ON VIEW THROUGH MAY 1. CHEIM AND REID IS LOCATED AT 547 WEST 25 STREET. SOURCE MATERIAL IS ON VIEW THROUGH MAY 1. PARTNERS AND SPADE IS LOCATED AT 40 GREAT JONES STREET, NEW YORK.