

PRESS RELEASE

Donald Baechler

Opens Thursday November 2 from 6–8 pm
Exhibition continues through December 23, 2017



View, 2017, acrylic and fabric collage on canvas, 60 x 60 in, 152.4 x 152.4 cm

Cheim & Read is pleased to announce an exhibition of new work by Donald Baechler, which will open on November 2 and run through December 23, and be accompanied by a catalogue with essay by Phoebe Hoban. This is the artist's seventh solo show at the gallery, where he also co-curated the group exhibition, *I Won't Grow Up*, in 2008.

With this show, Baechler continues his explorations of heavily outlined, iconic imagery set against richly textured, layered fields. In many of the new paintings, the field is composed of fabric collage, overlaid with striations and blots of pastel-colored acrylic paint. The forms are thick and solidly rendered; floating untethered within its borders. There is an awkwardness and alienation that infuses his figures, which include sickly

looking, moon-headed men; a handcuffed prisoner guided by a police officer's hand; and a pair of armless, Brancusi-inspired lovers locked in a kiss.

Critically, Baechler has been linked to the Neo-Expressionist generation of painters, but he has also been deeply influenced by the Conceptual artist Joseph Kosuth, and he has listed Cy Twombly, Giotto, and Robert Rauschenberg as the three artists most important to his thinking. Expressive brushwork combined with abstract, formal rigor has defined Baechler's work from early on, and these paintings, which are deeply embedded in the history of modernist and postwar art, foreground their visual links to artists as different as James Ensor and Jean-Michel Basquiat.

In a sign of the times, however, Ensor's grimly masked reveler now bears a nauseated grimace, while the graphic punch of Basquiat's unruly, graffiti-based paintings is pressurized into self-contained forms outlined in black and often highlighted in white. The cutout quality of these images, painted flatly against a bustling field, present the figure-ground relationship in terms of polar opposites, further enhancing the paintings' sense of enigmatic estrangement.

Donald Baechler was born in Hartford, Connecticut, in 1956. He attended the Maryland Institute, College of Art, Baltimore (1974–77) and Cooper Union, New York (1977–78). In 1978–79, he spent a year studying at the Staatliche Hochschule für Bildende Künste, Städelschule, Frankfurt am Main. While in Germany he became acquainted with Jiri Georg Dokoupil and Walter Dahn.

Baechler's work is represented in the collections of The Museum of Modern Art; The Whitney Museum of American Art; and The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, all in New York; The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; The Philadelphia Museum; and The Centre George Pompidou, Musée National d'Art Moderne, Paris.

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