

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

ARTIST DAVID SALLE ON INTERIOR DESIGN AND \$50 WATCHES

April 17, 2015  
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<http://www.wsj.com/articles/artist-david-salle-on-interior-design-and-50-watches-1429290685>



**IN THE EARLY 1980S**, artist David Salle made an imposingly big name for himself with paintings that elevated the use of pastiche—the juxtaposition of seemingly unrelated imagery delivered in contradictory styles that nevertheless hold together as a whole.

Although he still works in a similarly collage-inspired vein, the 62-year-old painter has embraced an ever-expanding roster of media over his 40-year career. He’s created glazed stoneware sculptures that look like smashed vessels, directed a feature-length film (1995’s “Search and Destroy”) and dabbled in other arts, including a long-running collaboration with choreographer Karol Armitage, for whom he has created set and costume designs. “When people ask about my contribution to her ballets, I usually say, ‘I do the décor.’” he said, half-jokingly.

Humor aside, Mr. Salle is something of a design buff. In his work, he’s borrowed freely from the world of interiors—adhering a set of legless Eames chairs to his seminal 1983 painting “Brother Animal,” for example—and has turned images of household goods into highly charged signifiers on his canvasses. He has also worked with architect Christian Hubert on two residences: a Tribeca loft in Manhattan, complete with a flagstone accent wall, and a zinc-clad house in the Fort Greene neighborhood of Brooklyn, where he currently lives. Meanwhile, his airy, light-filled country home in East Hampton comes equipped with giant hanging paper lanterns and Hermann Czech chairs by Thonet. “Everything in my houses is pretty deliberate,” said Mr. Salle. “Except for all the stuff that’s not.”

On April 9, Mr. Salle opened “Debris” at Dallas Contemporary, an exhibition of works—including ceramic vessels and platters—that he has made over the last five years. A solo show, highlighting two recent painting series, will open at Skarstedt Gallery in New York on April 30. He spoke to us from his Brooklyn studio about enduring midcentury furniture, his strict price limit for watches and a bathtub that’s better to look at than to use.

**I grew up with:** midcentury furniture, and I still get a sense of rightness from living with it. I don’t think it’s only because of a generational memory; 60 years later, some of these objects still seem unsurpassed. I have two chairs designed by Gio Ponti the year I was born [1952], which are really perfect.

**My childhood room had:** drapes and a bedspread of blue-and-green plaid I picked out myself. Many years later, I used a similar plaid in a painting. I can't remember a thing about my teenage room...I don't think it was *decorated* at all.

**As a traveler, you can see:** how a place ebbs and flows over time. London, for example, was once nostalgic and insular. Now, it's shiny and extroverted.

**The best advice I ever received was:** from Martin Scorsese, who once told me, "The projectionist is the final arbiter": i.e., how your work is seen—the physical reality of it—determines what it comes to mean.

**In the studio, I listen to:** all kinds of things. Right now, I'm taken with Grachan Moncur III, a trombonist and free-jazz composer from the 1960s who's still working today. His Blue Note recordings from the mid-60s are really too much.

**I can't live without:** a watch, but I never spend more than \$50 for one. I buy them at airports.

**I spend a lot of time:** in my East Hampton home, in all seasons. When I'm there, I don't read the newspaper, and there are days when I don't speak to a soul.

**The easiest way to transform a room:** is to take out most of the furniture and hang one great painting. Most rooms are too crowded—including my own.

**I collect:** ceramic pieces by a few midcentury Italian masters, such as Guido Gambone, Marcello Fantoni and Fausto Melotti, that I love extravagantly.

**Making ceramics isn't:** a more physical act than painting. Clay is an immediate, visceral material, but so is oil paint. Glazing is another matter: It's pure alchemy.

**There's nothing design-y about:** my studio. It's a well-proportioned rectangle with a certain amount of clutter.

**A book I find wonderful is:** "Several Short Sentences About Writing," by Verlyn Klinkenborg. He's talking about sentence construction, not painting, but there's a clear analogy.

**A big part of my day is:** Reading. Sometimes *too* big a part.

**A transformative technology can:** change how you hail a cab, but I'm not sure it changes the structure of things that are really important to me. When I was in art school, the first portable black-and-white video cameras were introduced and quickly became part of the artist's tool kit. There was a lot of talk then about how they would fundamentally transform art. And of course they did no such thing.

**I feel guilty about:** driving. I like cars a lot—I love driving—but my next car will be electric.

**My favorite local Brooklyn restaurant is:** Roman's in Fort Greene, where I often go for a late supper. Sitting at the bar, ordering from their daily menu, reading a book...all is right with the world.

**One piece of décor I love to look at in my home is:** a beautiful Japanese-style soaking tub...that I've used once in 10 years.