

ARTFORUM

Ron Baron

SMACK MELLON

92 Plymouth Street

September 23–November 5

Ron Baron's *Beyond-Beyond*, 2017, is made up of nearly one hundred pairs of white ceramic shoes cast from discarded footwear that might've belonged to laborers, mothers, businessmen, or children. Some have neat perforations, others are stabbed by nails. Carefully arranged across the concrete floor of this gallery, they create a void. One cannot help but think of the souls the works commemorate. And, indeed, Baron's sculptures come from a place of loss: The artist had always used items found at vintage shops and yard sales, and an unnamed tragedy that profoundly affected his family caused the artist to see these castoffs in a different light, as evidence of forgotten lives.

The artist's installation forces us to think about the various kinds of human relationships—romantic, filial, professional—that give meaning to and complicate our narratives. The shoes seem organized by an intuitive logic: A pair of men's dress slip-ons sits beside some tiny Mary Janes with spikes growing out of them; high heels are strewn about as if they were just removed. The work draws us into a deep and ghostly silence.

Beyond-Beyond is a meditative experience. In conjunction with the gallery's cathedral-like ceilings and dramatic spotlighting, this elegant display makes us feel like we've encountered a sacred space: a church, or even a charnel house. Baron gracefully transforms junk into meaningful objects that gently whisper—we just have to listen attentively.



Ron Baron, *Beyond-Beyond* (detail), 2017, ceramic and hardware, dimensions variable.

— Kiara Ventura