



John Baldessari: The Städel Paintings

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In 1970, California-based conceptual artist John Baldessari (b. 1931) destroyed all the paintings he'd produced from 1953 to 1966, paving the way for an independent and unmistakable pictorial style that lay between painting and photography, text and image. The last member of the American postwar avant-garde, Baldessari is known for creating collages featuring found photography and appropriated images—often pieced together to suggest a narrative or riddle, but typically in a way that reveals the similar messages communicated by seemingly unrelated images.

His most recent series of large collages, created for an exhibition at the Städel Museum Frankfurt in Germany, draw on masterpieces from Lucas Cranach the Elder to Maria Lassnig at the Städel. This publication reproduces these collages, while accompanying essays and an interview with John Baldessari and Philipp Kaiser add depth to the pieces. The book explores how Baldessari used texts and photographs to uncover a multifaceted opposition and juxtaposition of old and new art. It also examines the ways that Baldessari employs classic modernist pictorial strategies—including montage and the integration of everyday elements—in order to confront the artistic practices of the postwar avant-gardes, such as discourses on consumerism and the media. As he intertwines media and materials and combines entirely distinct groups of artistic subjects, the unambiguousness of the pictorial language gives way to a multilayered readability.

Lavishly produced and illustrated with seventy color images, *John Baldessari* offers an early look at the latest works by one of today's most important conceptual artists.

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