

MAI 36 GALERIE

JOHN BALDESSARI: (FOOD)

Vernissage: Sunday, June 11, 2023, 11am
Exhibition duration: June 09 – August 12, 2023
Opening hours: Tues-Fri 11am to 6:30pm, Sat 11am to 5pm

Mai 36 Galerie is pleased to present JOHN BALDESSARI: (FOOD), a tribute exhibition in honor of the late John Baldessari, bringing together works from 10 series, spanning from his earliest work in 1970 to his final series in 2019. The exhibition marks Baldessari's 15th solo exhibition at the gallery in a relationship that dates back over thirty years.

With John Baldessari's passing on January 2nd, 2020, we were left with time to reflect on John's life, his personality, humor and sharp thinking. It led us to our exhibition JOHN BALDESSARI: (FOOD) which is based on John's passion for food and his amusement with food culture and all its absurdity. John was a welcomed guest at his local Venice Beach restaurants and a good friend of celebrity chef Wolfgang Puck.

From asparagus, cucumbers and oranges to sautéed scallops, food has been a popular subject throughout many of John's series, often serving as a commentary on the relationship between art, consumerism and culture. In 2004, Baldessari published the book "Yours in Food", featuring reflections on food and eating from various contemporary writers.

The exhibition starts with remains of the historic work "The Cremation Project" from 1970. In 1970, Baldessari radically decided to burn all paintings he had made between 1953 and 1966 and baked their ashes into cookies and placed them in a glass urn. This act marked the beginning of a new phase for Baldessari—namely the juxtaposition of text and image.

In his early series "Choosing" from 1971, Baldessari used raw food in a conceptual game about choosing. In "Asparagus" a participant was asked to choose any asparagus from a group of three for whatever reasons. The chosen asparagus was carried over; the two others were discarded and two new asparagus were added. The next choice was made, and so on.

The series "Morsels and Snippets" sarcastically played on the snobbery of haute cuisine, where menus are so elaborate that guests must decipher dishes first to understand their ingredients. Being allergic to seafood, this became a silly yet existential personal task for Baldessari. An unmistakable political flavor resonates in the absurd combination of excellent food with photographs supposedly casually torn out of newspapers and the artist's familiar use of strong colours covering parts of pictures. The resulting provocation gives viewers both literal and figurative food for thought.

John Baldessari was a witty and intelligent artist who saw the world in all its awkwardness. We often talked about how life can be wired and how crazy people can be. For him, making art was a series of decisions made in a playful manner, using his deadpan humor.

He was one of the founders of conceptual art and today ranks among the world's most renowned artists. His impact on generations of artists is profound and his role as a teacher at CalArts and UCLA helped to establish the West Coast as a leading site of innovation in art. Baldessari's solo shows have traveled to major museums worldwide, including the Metropolitan Museum in New York, MACBA in Barcelona, LACMA in Los Angeles, Museo Jumex Mexico City and Tate Modern in London. We have worked with John Baldessari for more

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than 30 years and are most pleased to present this long-awaited 15th solo exhibition of John Baldessari - honoring the artist as one of the greatest of our time.

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