

John Baldessari, born 1931 in National City, California, is known as the father of conceptual art and arguably ranks among the world's most renowned living artists. Actually, one might also call him the godfather of conceptual art. He has been a mentor to such artists as Rita McBride, Mike Kelley, David Salle and also Matt Mullican, and is much admired as a teacher. Baldessari first caused a considerable stir in 1970 when he located, or rather tried to locate, every painting he had ever made up to 1968 and thereupon had the entire lot officially cremated. Since then, well over 100 solo exhibitions have been organized of his work and he has been represented in well over 1000 group exhibitions. He has received untold rewards and has been on view in all the major museums, including the Metropolitan Museum in New York and Tate Modern in London. We have worked with John Baldessari for more than 20 years and are most pleased to present a new exhibition.

Paintings, drawings, photographs and video are some of the media Baldessari uses as a means of expression. These he often combines, additionally incorporating lettering or words, which he says are as conclusive and compelling as pictures. Through the combination of words and images, the artist's canvases make statements over and above what viewers see. By placing shrill patches of colour on parts of pictures, Baldessari emphasizes what he has concealed. He also paints over pictures, combining and interrelating them by presenting them as a suite.

In his most recent series of 13 large-format works on view at Mai 36 Galerie in Zürich, the artist has returned to the combination of text and image. He has torn out, enlarged and rearranged pictures from newspapers, adding names of dishes typical of today's haute cuisine. An unmistakable political flavour resonates in the absurd combination of excellent food – now an omnipresent subject in newspapers and especially TV shows – with photographs supposedly casually torn out of newspapers and the artist's familiar use of strong colours covering parts of pictures or entire surfaces. Baldessari calls his new series Morsels and Snippets. The title reflects the characteristic lightheartedness that informs his images and stands in penetrating contrast to the nature of his subject matter. It is a lightheartedness of presentation that is juxtaposed with a delight in experimentation, a penchant for fragmentation and a provocation that gives viewers both literal and figurative food for thought.

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