

# John Baldessari

## Quotes

*Art, Thinking, Photography, Ideas, Trying, Simple, Artist, Want, Moving, Feels,  
Dickens, Normal, Saws, Cameras, Felt, Definitions, My Friends, Ifs, Writing,  
Green*

If I saw the art around me that I liked, then I wouldn't do art.

~John Baldessari

I go back and forth between wanting to be abundantly simple and maddeningly complex.

~John Baldessari

I think art, if it's meaningful at all, is a conversation with other artists. You say something, they say something, you move back and forth.

~John Baldessari

Talent is cheap, you have to be possessed or obsessed, rather. You really have to feel like you cannot not do art, and that is something you can't will.

~John Baldessari

Look at the subject as if you have never seen it before. Examine it from every side. Draw its outline with your eyes or in the air with your hands, and saturate yourself with it.

~John Baldessari

I will not make anymore boring art.

~John Baldessari

**A TWO-DIMENSIONAL SURFACE WITHOUT ANY ARTICULATION IS  
A DEAD EXPERIENCE**

~John Baldessari

I don't try to be funny. It's just that I feel the world is a little bit absurd and off-kilter and I'm sort of reporting.

~John Baldessari

Well, why is this art? Why isn't that art?

~John Baldessari

I was always interested in language. I thought, why not? If a painting, by the normal definition of the term, is paint on canvas, why can't it be painted words on canvas?

~John Baldessari

Probably one of the worst things that happened to photography is that cameras have viewfinders.

~John Baldessari

If you're smart, you abandon the things that didn't work out so well, and you enlarge upon the things that seem to be successful.

~John Baldessari

I used to jokingly say, "I don't teach art. I'm an art doctor." Students come to me and say, "My art's sick," and we help them make it well.

~John Baldessari

Writing helped me understand what I was thinking about.

~John Baldessari

I could never figure out why photography and art had separate histories. So I decided to explore both.

~John Baldessari

Artists are better at finding a way to kill their time.

~John Baldessari

There's no such thing as a bad photograph.

~John Baldessari

Photos should suggest a word(s) and vice versa. They should be equal and interchangeable.

~John Baldessari

That should be the goal for all art, to be as simple as a flashcard.

~John Baldessari

Most of my friends are women. I think women are more interesting to talk to.

~John Baldessari

Find the most puzzling kind of art you can think of, and then go out and try to approximate it with your camera. Take a photograph that corresponds to it. (Assignment to students.)

~John Baldessari

The idea of vaudeville clowns and court jesters is always to show the flaw, to point out what's not working and why it's not coherent.

~John Baldessari

I didn't see painters doing paintings of glassware and glass shelves or sand dunes and receding snow fences. Why does that interest photographers and not artists?

~John Baldessari

I think I live such a boring life. But I can't imagine any other kind of life, so I guess it's the life I want.

~John Baldessari

Ideally I would like the work to be a hybrid between painting and photography.

~John Baldessari

It's human desire to be understood. And we always feel we're not understood.

~John Baldessari

I want to produce images that startle one into recollection.

~John Baldessari

A lot of ideas don't translate very well into art. To say, "Oh my god, the grass is green ..." You're going to end up with a big green painting.

~John Baldessari

I think the term 'conceptual art' is a useful term for writers, a basket to put people in, like Pop Art or Impressionism or whatever.

~John Baldessari

I always felt like I was right out of Dickens, looking in the window of the Christmas feast, but not at the feast.

~John Baldessari

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