



Searching for Sebald

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W.G. Sebald's books are *sui generis* hybrids of fiction, travelogue, autobiography and historical exposé, in which a narrator (both Sebald and not Sebald) comments on the quick blossoming of natural wonders and the long deaths that come of human atrocities. All his narratives are punctuated with images--murky photographs, architectural plans, engravings, paintings, newspaper clippings--inserted into the prose without captions and often without obvious connection to the words that surround them. This important volume includes a rare 1993 interview called "'But the written word is not a true document': A Conversation with W.G. Sebald about Photography and Literature," in which Sebald talks exclusively about his use of photographs. It contains some of Sebald's most illuminating and poetic remarks about the topic yet. In it, he discusses Barthes, the photograph's "appeal," the childhood image of Kafka, family photographs, and even images he never used in his writings. In addition, *Searching for Sebald* positions Sebald within an art-historical tradition that begins with the Surrealists, continues through Joseph Beuys and blossoms in the recent work of Christian Boltanski and Gerhard Richter, and tracks his continuing inspiration to artists such as Tacita Dean and Helen Mirra. An international roster of artists and scholars unpacks the intricacies of his unique method. Seventeen theoretical essays approach Sebald through the multiple filters of art history (Krauss), film studies (Kluge), cultural theory (Benjamin), psychoanalysis (Freud), and especially photographic history and theory (Barthes, Kracauer), and 17 modern and contemporary art projects are read through a Sebaldian filter. If Sebald's artistic output acts as a touchstone for new critical theory being written on "post-medium" photographic practices, *Seaching for Sebald* suggests a model for new investigations in the burgeoning field of visual studies.

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