

# SEEING RICHARD

## Erik Weber

(Tangerine Graphic Arts)

There are books and there are books. There are more books and then there are labours of love. This one here is a meticulous presentation of all there is good, splendid about bookmaking, publishing. And the focus should really be on three people here.

Firstly, of course, Richard Brautigan, the writer, without whom. Then photographer Erik Weber for his diligence, awareness of his position in the scheme of things and his tenacity in the face of Brautigan's often contrary nature, his whims and idiosyncracies. And then the publisher Michael Curran who has given this project, this collection of photos, a new life in this still fresh century. What this book best exemplifies is the art of book making. This is no ordinary hardcover. I understand Curran did everything on the book. The works. Yes at over £50 in England it is not the cheapest and may be beyond the pockets of Brautigan readers in the real world. There is a beautifully published paperback edition, which should be available as you read this, with the same attention to detail applied.

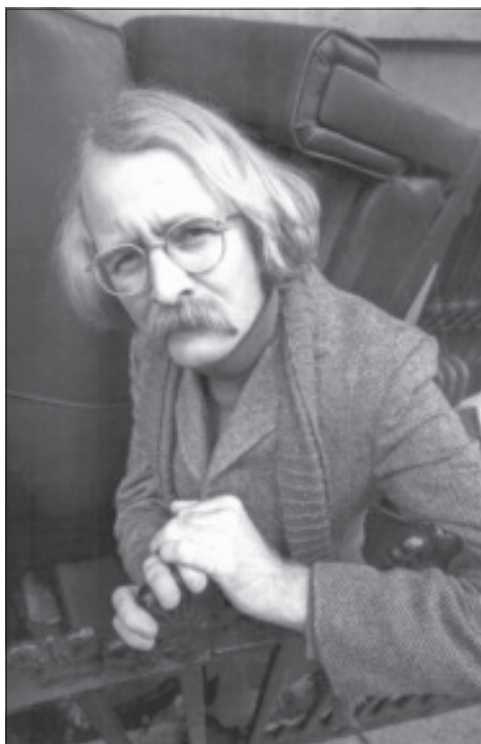
But what of the book and the photographs you might ask? One hundred and eighty eight photos of Brautigan and his immediate environment. Richard the seemingly shy looking blonde haired young man, often with pretty girls. Brautigan the emerging and iconic West Coast writer and evolving to the troubled man he became in his forties. His ascent in the literary world was seemingly meteoric and his decline was just as rapid. Brautigan pictured with friends such as Price Dunn, Susan Morgan, Michaela Blake-Grand, Jim Harrison, Tom McGuane, Ron Loewinsohn, Marsha, Peter Miller, Janice Meissner and many others. Brautigan was fastidious about

photos of himself, often seriously manipulating poses and props.

The landscape of Brautigan's life is carefully documented here, the ramshackle nature of the interiors of the places he lived. It's as though he went

to what I think Americans still term a 'Goodwill' store and brought home a few tired objects and threw them about. That's fine in the years he lived as an unknown writer, yet fame and fortune didn't improve his home improvement skills, shabby without the chic. And Weber captures this and the gloomy aspect of places like his Geary Street place, weathered, faded, overgrown. You ponder why Brautigan would actually choose to live next door to a parking lot. His Bolinas home was equally downbeat, dark. It is little wonder he committed suicide there. Weber's camera finds the overpowering darkness of it all.

A text runs throughout from Weber and there are introductions from Brautigan biographer William Hjortsberg and from English musician Jarvis Cocker. Fittingly the final photo is one of Brautigan and Erik Weber together in San Francisco in 1965. Absolutely a dream book for fans of Richard Brautigan.



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ISBN 978-1-910691-01-4

Tangerine Press, 18 Riverside Road, Garratt Business Park,  
London, England SW17 0BA  
eatmytangerine.com

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