



# Bas Jan Ader:

Suspended Between Laughter and Tears



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September 30 – December 10, 2010  
Guest-curated by Pilar Tompkins Rivas  
Organized by Pitzer Art Galleries, Pitzer College and Claremont Museum of Art



Documentation: Photo of Bas Jan Ader at his show at Claremont Graduate School (1967), Photograph, 8 x 10 inches, Courtesy of the Bas Jan Ader Estate & Patrick Palmer Editions.

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1963-1967, Bas Jan Ader studies art  
1967-1969, Bas Jan Ader studies philosophy

## ***The sea, the land, the air. The space between them.*** **Pilar Tompkins Rivas**

What would possess a man to venture out across the open ocean alone in a small sailboat scarcely 12 feet in length? Had he made it, Bas Jan Ader would have held the world record for crossing the Atlantic in the smallest vessel to do so in 1975. At first glimpse, this appears to be the feat of a daredevil or a madman, and as an artist, Ader's voyage references an extreme type of performance art intended to push the absolute limits of the body. Instead, Ader's journey, the second phase of an uncompleted artwork trilogy titled *In Search of the Miraculous*, reflects a mingling of the aforementioned notions belied by a much deeper impulse. In the tradition of vision quests, this passage was his own epic poem where the artist serves as the central heroic figure. In this work, Ader pits himself against the elements, a proposition in which the reconciliation of existential truths, and queries of fate and faith likely played a major role.

Bas Jan Ader's practice is most frequently explored through his film work, much of which consists of variations on a theme of the artist falling through space. As such, the work has often been discussed in relationship to the concept of failure, where the fall reflects an inability to defy Newtonian law, or is the amusing result of decisive, yet clumsy, artistic actions suggesting the body as a moving marker in the visual plane. Yet Ader's close friend and collaborator William Leavitt has given a clear insight into the psychological motivations that led to a distinct direction in Ader's work—one that based its premise on the quest for unwavering truths, or absolutes, such as the archetypes of heaven and earth, father and son and hero and martyr. The notion of falling situates itself as the tension between these paradigms, or the failure to reconcile both sides of the equation. Leavitt writes:

“As well as his desire for concrete truth, he had a corresponding attraction to the imperfect, the broken, the mistaken and the misunderstood. That his father died a martyred hero in WW II had something to do with this. His father was the absolute ideal that existed powerfully in his imagination, but there was, however, no balancing image of a fallible human being by which he could gauge himself, and he therefore could only participate with a handicap

in the natural process of the son striving to surpass the father. In what I think is one of his best works, *The Boy Who Fell Over Niagara Falls*, he reads the story of this mishap as it is printed in a popular magazine, while he himself drinks a glass of water slowly, sip by sip. To me he is saying that only through distanced words and gentle action can he evoke the poignancy of this lack, and that his relationship to heroism must be metaphoric.<sup>1</sup>

The bulk of Ader's works build upon closely related themes that are rooted in his own family history and the idealized image of his father as Leavitt alludes to in his statement. For example, in contemplating Ader's unfinished trilogy, *In Search of the Miraculous*, as a filial narrative, the three structural components are prototypical chapters: the son's departure from home is a midnight walk from Los Angeles to the sea documented in photographs; his rite of passage is an onerous, and ultimately failed, journey on the open ocean; and his return as a prodigal son would have been his arrival and subsequent walk through Amsterdam, which never came to pass. In a Jungian archetypal understanding of character roles he plays in this piece, or intended to play, it is particularly important to note Ader filtered much of his artwork through his father's experiences.

As a young man, Bas Jan Ader's father, Bastiaan Jan Ader, undertook his own iconic journey, traveling from his homeland in the northern Dutch province of Groningen to Jerusalem by bicycle. This pilgrimage to the Holy Land surely influenced Ader's own decision to set forth on a comparable feat. Not unlike certain Biblical and mythological stories with similar structures, an epic and arduous journey is the critical device of spiritual transcendence and transformation.

The idea of undertaking such a devout task may be rooted in his religious upbringing and the hero-complex associated with his father, a minister in the Dutch Reform Church who was part of the resistance movement in wartime Holland. Ader's father was killed by the Nazis for harboring Jews and transporting them to safety in the northern parts of the country. Jews were also hidden in his mother's home, and according to Mary Sue Ader-Andersen, Ader's widow, Ader recounted that his father even contributed to the derailing of Nazi trains moving through the country. Ultimately, Baastian Jan Ader was shot for his participation in these activities when Ader was a young child. The figure of Ader's father can certainly be felt overtly within his works. *Untitled (Swedish Fall)* can clearly be linked to the falling of this hero as he was shot in the woods during the war, and *All My Clothes* may refer to the anecdote when Ader's mother threw their possessions out the window of after being given a matter of minutes to vacate their home by the Nazis.

In an interview with Ader-Andersen, she states that Ader had rejected the religious environment in which he was raised. His mother wanted him to become a minister and follow in his father's footsteps, but Ader rebelled. "He was a fallen man in that sense, Bas was, because he was totally irreligious, didn't want to deal with all that stuff,"<sup>iii</sup> says Ader-Andersen.



Single print from *In Search of the Miraculous (One Night in Los Angeles)* (1973). Gelatin silver print with hand-written text in white ink, 3 1/2 x 5 inches. Photo: Mary Sue Ader-Andersen, Courtesy of The Bas Jan Ader Estate & Patrick Painter Editions.



Yet Ader's own journey across the Atlantic seems to have much to do with reconciling a question of religious faith. The title *In Search of the Miraculous*, is itself derived from the pilgrimic accounts of Russian philosopher P. D. Ouspensky about the teachings of the Greek-Armenian mystic George Ivanovich Gurdjieff<sup>iii</sup>. The structure of Ader's piece mirrors Ouspensky's own travels in pursuit of enlightenment and self-realization, as well as referring to Greco-Judaic-Christian episodes where man's testament of faith (eg. story of Jonah and the whale) is required for proving God's supreme power.

In an undated, short diary entry made by Ader, we see a newspaper clipping about two charismatic Pentecostal, or "Holy Roller," preachers who died after ingesting strychnine. The article describes that two men had first allowed themselves to be bitten by poisonous snakes, as a demonstration of their faith in God, and then further tested the limits of their beliefs by swallowing the poison. The article states, "Their sect bases its belief in the handling of snakes on Mark 16:18, reading: 'They will pick up serpents, and if they drink any deadly thing, it will not hurt them.'"<sup>iv</sup> Above the newspaper clipping is a quote in Ader's handwriting from Milton's *Paradise Lost*: "The Lord speaks: 'I made him just and right, sufficient to have stood, though free to fall.'"<sup>v</sup>

In this passage from Milton's 17th century epic poem, the author is referring to the creation of Man, suggesting that Man was made with all the capacity



"What Makes Me So Pure, Almost Holy? And More"

+

"What Does It Mean? Cheep Cheep"

Written and Drawn by Bas Jan Ader



to stand in God's grace, but has equal capacity to fall from favor. Ultimately, it is one's own free will that determines one's fate. As in the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve have free will to question God and to tempt their fate, following the serpent instead of trusting that they would be cared for by God. As the Biblical story goes, it was Man's desire to know all that God knows which led to his fall.

Ader's juxtaposition of these Biblical references, paired with the recurring scenarios in his work, imply that he was considering the notion that fate is held in the balance of a single moment. This moment, so aptly represented by Michelangelo's *Fall of Man* in the Sistine Chapel fresco cycle, is a point of contemplation between standing and falling. It is the precipice of all of mankind. It is a moment of eternal suspension between the forces of good and evil, positive and negative, light and darkness, standing firmly on land or floating adrift through air or sea.

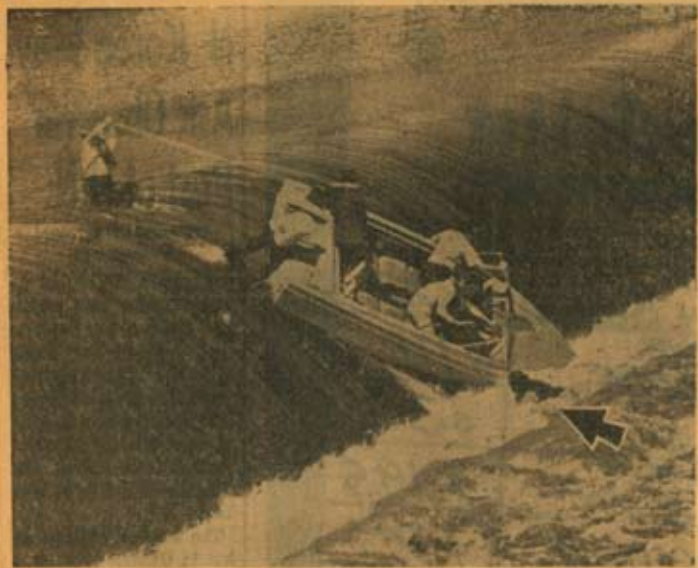
Ader copied the Milton passage twice within his archived notes, honing in on the idea that man was "free to fall," "fall" being underlined slightly in one of the entries. This aspect of choice is important in evaluating Ader's overall body of work. Choice infers that there is more than one outcome for any given situation, yet there are only two options that can be considered before the myriad of possible conclusions—that of the binary position of making the choice itself. One must first start with "yes" or "no." In Ader's work, repeatedly there is a decision to refrain or acquiesce to any given action.

A second note with a newspaper clipping is also a part of Ader's archive. It is an image that depicts a small rescue boat trying to save someone who has been swept away in the current of a dam. Next to it the artist writes:

the sea, the land, the artist has observed their change and stood with great sadness to know even they will be no more

the sea, the land the artist has with great sadness known they too will be no more

This short train of thought seems to suggest that Ader was grappling with very basic, philosophical questions about life—timeless issues, such as the epistemological questions explored by German philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (one of the authors Ader is known to have studied in depth and whose work, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, he chose to take with him on his fatal sea voyage) and Plato (also named by Ader-Andersen as one of Ader's areas of interest), who argue that Knowledge: (1) lies between the realms of Truths and Beliefs and that it is a subset of those two categories and (2) lies between that which is observable and that which must be accepted on faith.



**TRAGEDY IN MAKING**—Boat going to rescue of man in water at Waverly, Iowa, is swept over Cedar River Dam. Arrow locates volunteer fireman, one of rescuers, who drowned moments later. Man being pulled over dam behind boat escaped death and the man rescuers sought to save also survived river ordeal.

**SYMING CIA**

WASHINGTON (AP) — Sen. Stuart Syming- ton (Mo.) said today he obtained 100 copies of a "significant" CIA document which he said would help explain his committee's findings on the White House's role in the Watergate scandal. "It is a document that the CIA is not allowed to release," Syming-ton said. "It is a document that the CIA is not allowed to release."

*the sea, the land,  
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The Lord speaks:  
"I made him just and right,  
sufficient to have stood, though  
free to fall."

*Milton  
Paradise Lost  
Book III 95*

**2 HOLINESS PREACHERS DIE IN TEST OF FAITH**

NEWPORT, Tenn. (AP) — Two Holiness preachers who had survived the bites of poisonous snakes tested their faith with strychnine and died. The Rev. Jimmy Ray Williams, 31, of Carson Springs, Tenn., and the Rev. Buford Pack, 30, of Marshall, N.C., died Sunday a few hours after drinking the poison at the Holiness Church of God in Jesus Name. Cocks County officers said copperheads and rattlesnakes were handled at the mountain sect's religious service Saturday night. After the snakes had been handled, Mr. Williams and Mr. Pack drank the strychnine as a further test of their faith. Both preachers had survived snakebites at previous religious services. Their sect bases its belief in the handling of snakes on Mark 16:18, reading: "They will pick up serpents, and if they drink any deadly thing, it will not hurt them."



**2 Remaining Suspects University of 6 Seized Give In**

Bas Jan Ader notebook entry (date unknown), Paper and newspaper clipping, Courtesy of The Bas Jan Ader Estate & Patrick Painter Editions; Inset: Michelangelo Buonarroti (1475-1564), The Sistine Chapel; Fall of Man, Photo Credit: Erich Lessing / Art Resource, NY

Left: William Blake, English (1757-1827), The Temptation and Fall of Eve (illustration to Milton's "Paradise Lost"), 1808, Pen and watercolor on paper, 19 9/16 x 15 1/4 inches, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston Right: Bas Jan Ader notebook entry (date unknown), Paper and newspaper clipping, Courtesy of The Bas Jan Ader Estate & Patrick Painter Editions.





In Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, the author brings forward an evolutionary assessment of the trajectory from that which is sensed and perceived into that which is known. In order to do this, Hegel implemented a system of oppositions in which two concepts worked to hold the other in balance, yet which were ultimately integrated and united. An example is immanence, or the presence of God within all things in Nature and therefore known to man, and transcendence, in which God is both within and beyond the Universe and thus ultimately unknowable by man. This is part of the theological contradiction in the Christian Bible that God is infinite and beyond the material world, yet there exists through the Creation story and the Christ story, God's interaction with the physical realm in which we live. It is a paradox between an omniscient, omnipresent Deity and the finite and physical limitations of Man and his world.

Considering Ader's deep-seated interest in Hegel and Plato, we can see that the suspended space between what is knowable and what is real provided a theoretical armature from which he could move forward with his artistic practice. When one poses the questions of why Ader undertook a sea voyage in a small sailboat that was never intended for the open ocean, why he thought he could make it, why he chose to do it knowing the risks and what he really sought to find on this journey, it is pivotal to look past concerns of conceptual art and see a much broader spectrum of answers that Ader was searching for, perhaps not as an artist but first as a man.

Precursors to *In Search of the Miraculous* seemed to prepare Ader for this major work. In *Farewell To Faraway Friends*, Ader is a lone figure, gazing longingly on the horizon. He contemplated these metaphysical themes satirically in his self-publications and journals such as, *What Makes Me So Pure, Almost Holy? And More + What Does it Mean? Cheep Cheep* and *Implosion / The Artist Contemplating the Forces of Nature*. And in his final graduate exhibition, Ader presented all of his mature themes, albeit in the format of drawing, painting and sculpture, as he had not yet made the transition into performative and conceptual practices. Within these seminal works, Ader presents the basic components of his later, more sophisticated pieces, such as a bicycle standing upright in a painting, then falling to the floor in a sculpture, and an image of the artist sitting atop his house excogitating abstract concepts before falling inward upon himself.

As a Dutch artist working in and around Los Angeles, Ader brought a certain set of concerns with him that were then filtered through his experiences of studying and working in Southern California during the 1960s and 1970s. Despite the fact that he was represented by Claire Copley Gallery, which was situated within Los Angeles's mainstream art galleries along La Cienega Boulevard and showed important conceptual artists such as Michael Asher, Lawrence Weiner, Allen Ruppersberg and Daniel Buren, Ader worked somewhat parallel to his contemporaries outside of that framework. Geography played an influential part in that he lived in the city of Claremont, 35 miles east of downtown Los Angeles.

# IMPLSION



# BAS JAN ADER

Additionally, his work leaned towards the romantic, which was in contrast to the macho scene of the artists established through Ferus Gallery as well as the slickness of Light and Space and Fetish Finish artists active during this period.

Ader's work allows for a vulnerability that was uncommon in the Los Angeles art scene at that time. There is a tenuous point in which the artist allows himself to be exposed, whether physically or emotionally, that is present in most of his works from *I'm Too Sad to Tell You*, to *Light Vulnerable Objects Threatened by Eight Cement Bricks*, and of course *In Search of the Miraculous*. Ader-Andersen states:

“He was in touch with his feelings, more so than anybody else I've ever known. I think he was just aware of the vulnerability and playing it. That was part of what that was about, the riding the bicycle into the canal and the fall from the tree and fall from the roof. That was all really purposefully setting himself up against the odds. And nobody else was working in that vein at all at that time.”<sup>vi</sup>

In slight contrast to this statement, there are specific works created in California during the same era that correlate to Ader's oeuvre. The literal pun of Bonnie Sheikh's *Cleaning the Griddle* done in San Francisco in 1973 is not unlike *Sawing* by Ader.<sup>vii</sup> Howard Frieda's *Allmydirtyblueclothes* from 1969-70<sup>viii</sup> shares not only a closely linked execution, but also similar title to Ader's *All My Clothes*, while Frieda's *40 Winks*



Photograph from *Final Voyage (In Search of the Miraculous)* (1975), 4 x 6 inches, Photo: Mary Sue Ader-Andersen, Courtesy of The Bas Jan Ader Estate & Patrick Painter Editions.



*(The Journey)* from 1971, where the artist takes an extended walk through Berkeley until the audience following him disperses, lays near to *In Search of the Miraculous (One Night in Los Angeles)* in the sense that a trek may incorporate a sense of letting go. Chris Burden also created a “walk” where he ventured southward from San Felipe, Baja California for a two-week period,<sup>ix</sup> and on a separate occasion took a small sailboat on the Sea of Cortez, not unlike Ader’s sea voyage. Endurance works were not uncommon in the era, including those made famous by Burden, such as *Shoot*, 1971, *Through the Night Softly*, 1973,<sup>x</sup> and *Trans-fixed*, 1974, which saw the artist nailed through the palms to a Volkswagen Beetle.<sup>xi</sup> Other relationships can be drawn to performance works by artists such as Linda Montano, who was handcuffed to artist Tom Marioni for three days in 1973 and was blindfolded for three days in 1974 in the piece *Three Day Blindfold*.<sup>xii</sup>

Although these relationships are present, it remains unclear to what degree the works may be seen as a derivation of one another. As many of the aforementioned works pose difficult questions about public and private subjectivity of the body, Ader’s pieces reflect prototypical narratives developed within the framework of contemporary methodologies of the region and time period. Given the context of these works, Ader’s decision to set out across the Atlantic,

although extreme, was not without some level of precedent artistically yet Ader’s motivations appear to emanate from the philosophical rather than the corporeal.

Additionally, Ader created a series of journals in conjunction with William Leavitt that poked fun at the Los Angeles art scene and the artistic concerns of the day. *Landslide*, as the journals were titled, alluded to the 1970s art magazine *Avalanche*. Components included interviews and artworks by fake artists, instructions for a pseudo, Kaprow-style “happening,” and a reference to *Fartforum* in lieu of *Artforum*. Through these exercises, it is clear that Ader was a conscientious part of the Los Angeles contemporary art scene, but also far enough away from it to satirize it. As Ader was concerned with seeking deeper truths instead of open-ended experimentation, he turned to romantic and utopian influences from his Dutch artistic heritage.

Ader’s source material pulled from the Dutch artistic legacy, including references to classical still life traditions, such as in the video *Primary Time*, and his direct reflections on Piet Mondrian, De Stijl and neoplasticism. Citing the lighthouse of Westkapelle that inspired Mondrian to consider the geometric flat plane as an absolute form in painting, Ader made a series of works with this structure in the

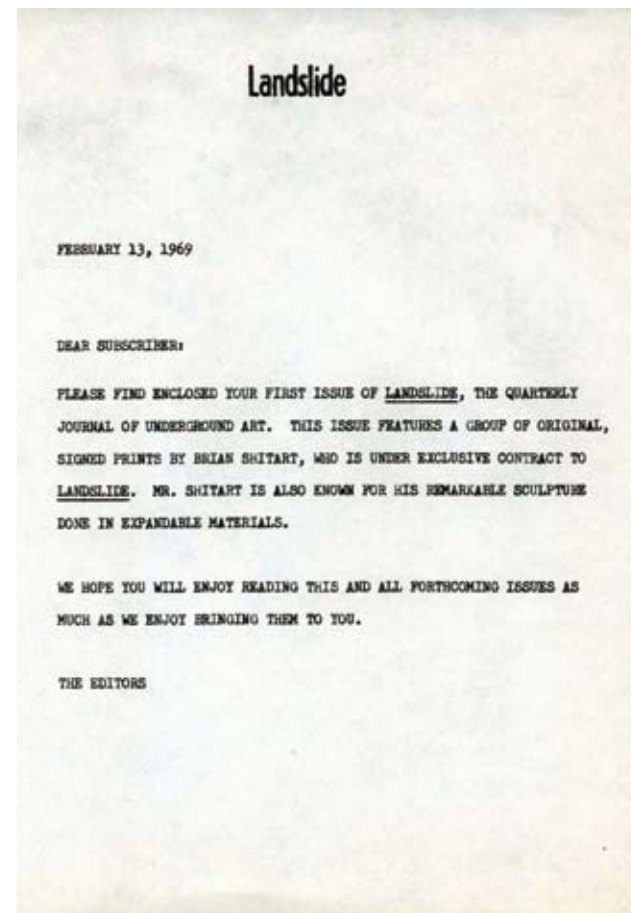




background and himself as a central figure in the foreground. It is important to note that the lighthouse was also considered to be a church-tower and was considered to be a symbol of Christian faith.<sup>xiii</sup>

Several works by Ader include the title *On the Road to Neo-Plasticism* and collectively they playfully criticize Mondrian totalitarianism. What happens on the way to that idealized harmony and order, if one should stumble and fall along the way? Ader tells us over and over again in these pieces, that a small misstep can lead to the teetering and collapse of those truths, as evident in his falling over a sawhorse in front of the tower, falling within a group of objects of minimalist form and color, or falling, head covered in black as the hard black lines of Mondrian's work that held his picture plane together, in front of the tower. In these works, Ader's figure is first the vertical and then the horizontal line of the grid that cannot be contained in a static plane. *Primary Time*, a video in which Ader creates a revolving series of floral bouquets in the three primary colors, clearly wishes to destabilize the chromatic organization that Mondrian implemented through neoplasticism.

The dialog that Ader established between his work and that of another generation of artists mimics P. D. Ousepensky's following and then eventual rejection of his master's teachings and esoteric doctrines. Ader and Ousepensky both structure the weight of their discourse from their respective *In Search of the Miraculous* works around a contemplation



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## bas jan ader

"in search of the miraculous"  
(songs for the north atlantic; july 1975 - )

in cooperation with the claire m. copley  
gallery, los angeles, usa, and the  
groninger museum, groningen, holland

and suspenseful tension concerning filial piety. For Ousepensky, the "miraculous" referred to man's need to exert tremendous effort to undergo personal transformation on the way to a higher awakening of human consciousness. Ultimately, Ader required the same thing.

<sup>i</sup> Andriess, Paul. "Quotations of Bas Jan Ader, Comments of Bill Leavitt.", Bas Jan Ader: Kunstenaar (Dutch Edition) [Unknown Binding]

<sup>ii</sup> Interview with Mary Sue Ader-Andersen by Pilar Tompkins, June 2009, transcript page 63.

<sup>iii</sup> P.D. Ouspensky, In Search of the Miraculous: Fragments of an Unknown Teaching, Harcourt, Inc.: New York, 1949.

<sup>iv</sup> Bas Jan Ader archive, courtesy of Patrick Painter, Santa Monica, California.

<sup>v</sup> Bas Jan Ader archive, courtesy of Patrick Painter, Santa Monica, California.

<sup>vi</sup> Interview with Mary Sue Ader-Andersen by Pilar Tompkins, June 2009, transcript page 31.

<sup>vii</sup> Loeffler, Carl E. Performance Anthology: Source Book for a Decade of California Performance Art, Contemporary Arts Press. San Francisco, 1989, p.92

<sup>viii</sup> Loeffler, Carl E. Performance Anthology: Source Book for a Decade of California Performance Art, Contemporary Arts Press. San Francisco, 1989, p.18

<sup>ix</sup> Loeffler, Carl E. Performance Anthology: Source Book for a Decade of California Performance Art, Contemporary Arts Press. San Francisco, 1989, p.71

<sup>x</sup> Ibid.

<sup>xi</sup> Loeffler, Carl E. Performance Anthology: Source Book for a Decade of California Performance Art, Contemporary Arts Press. San Francisco, 1989, p.101

<sup>xii</sup> Loeffler, Carl E. Performance Anthology: Source Book for a Decade of California Performance Art, Contemporary Arts Press. San Francisco, 1989, p.85

<sup>xiii</sup> Blotkamp, Carel. Mondrian: The Art of Destruction. Reaction Books, Ltd., London, 1994.



Bas Jan Ader and Mary Sue Ader-Andersen in front of Kabinett für aktuelle Kunst, Bremerhaven, Germany, 1972. Black and white photograph.

## VENTURA, CALIFORNIA, August 12, 2009

### A conversation with Mary Sue Ader-Andersen

- PT: I'd like to talk about the way that Bas Jan handled his own editing process. Going through his archive, there are multiple versions of the same piece and not everything is exhibition-ready. What was his editing process like?
- MSA: Well, there were some things that are considered a sketch or a preliminary starting point. He once said to somebody, "All of my works are masterpieces." That's because he only did masterpieces. He never did the things that he'd had doubts about.
- PT: Did he think *In Search Of the Miraculous* was his masterpiece?
- MSA: Yes, I think he did—the photographs, the trip and everything. But I think he thought it was also one of the things he was doing at the moment and he had other plans for the future.
- PT: I was curious about the development of other works like *Please Don't Leave Me* and *Readers Digest Digested*. How were they executed? They exist in slide documentation and they look like installations, but they don't appear to be done in public venues.
- MSA: No, they were done in our garage, which become a one-night gallery and people were invited to see them.
- PT: And that was in Claremont?
- MSA: Yes, in our garage. Also *Please Don't Leave Me* and *Thoughts Unsaid* and works like those—the *Readers Digest* piece and that era of work were done there as well.
- PT: How did you see the concept for the piece, *Sawing*, fitting within his overall body of work?
- MSA: Well, a lot of his work had multiple levels of meaning. And that's certainly true of that piece. But I don't think this was as philosophical as the other ones were. It's kind of a pun, and he did a lot of puns. He was an amazing punster. Almost got into fights with people because of it.
- PT: Really? That takes us to a different area that I wanted to talk about which is the sense of humor in his work. One of the things that is coming up in

- my research is that his work is always presented with such gravity, I mean, not making a pun.
- MSA: That's right.
- PT: It's very heavy and very philosophical, but at the same time quite funny. There also seems to be a preciousness in the way that the work is treated institutionally, and it seems like the work doesn't even necessarily want to be about that.
- MSA: Right. Yeah.
- PT: What do you think about that? What do you think his take would be on the way the work is interpreted today?
- MSA: I think the way it is presented by institutions is much graver than it should have been, I mean, than it would have been if he'd been there. He would have been laughing at some of the stuff, you know? Not all of them were humorous, but I think the crying piece was humorous for us. Not the film, the film was done at a different time. That had more gravity to it.
- PT: Oh, so you're saying that the content of the piece, in the later film was actually intended to be more serious than earlier versions?
- MSA: Yes. Well, it was, actually. It was done by a professional filmmaker who did a really great job—a Dutch guy. It was just a different level of meaning and feeling than the original was.
- PT: I noticed in the earlier versions, where he is holding a teacup, that it seems like he's working himself up into tears like an actor.
- MSA: Mm-hmm, yeah.
- PT: And then in the final film version we don't see

- any of that. We just see it begin and it becomes emotional very quickly.
- MSA: Yes, we had to figure out how to do that. I don't want to talk about exactly how we did it.
- PT: So then was *The Artist as Consumer of Extreme Comfort* also meant to be theatrical and posed in a similar way?
- MSA: Yes, that's also another thing people get wrong. We did it at my parents' house in Los Angeles and had our dog, Loopy, in the picture. And I think it was totally fitting into the romantic element, and taking away the pun, the piece that was definitely talking about the idea of going beyond oneself and attempting to get a greater meaning from life. It was a neat piece. I like that piece.
- PT: What was his interest in going after a doctorate in philosophy after he'd finished the masters in art?
- MSA: He had gotten pretty excited about the element of philosophy of art—that was something that really intrigued him. He meant to go on with that and write a dissertation on the philosophical aspect of creativity. He read some things that really meant something to him that he wanted to explore further, but then I think he got tired of it.
- PT: I know he was really interested in Hegel.
- MSA: And Socrates and Plato, and one of those guys wrote about creativity and art. Those were his big guys, the ones he was most interested in.
- MSA: But I know in the sail, he was aware of the dangers that were involved in that, and he didn't

let me read any of his sail book—books that the other people who'd done around the world or across the Atlantic or single-handed sailing, because he knew that that was gonna scare the hell out of me. And I decided I wasn't gonna read 'em, no matter what anyway, because I don't need to know the details of all that, how they handle the dangers or the fears. It's just not the part of the work that I want to know.

PT: What was it like on a personal level at that time, preparing for that trip?

MSA: Well, it was absolutely awful for me. I mean, and probably for him, too, but it was absolutely crushing that that was gonna go on, that he had made that decision. But then I always believed that you can't control somebody. And you can't get them to not do what they really need to do.

PT: Did he have doubts about it himself?

MSA: I don't think so, no. He'd always talked about it. When I first met him, he was gonna get a raft and sail it to China across the Pacific. And that I said, "God, are you serious?"

PT: That was when he was 19 or 20?

MSA: Yeah, it was early on. Fortunately he dropped that idea, became a little bit more realistic. But once he had decided that, there wasn't anything I could do about it, he was gonna go no matter what. And then I just got onboard and helped him realize it. But I did lots of crying and I had a lot of anger about it. I offered to divorce him and never see him again if it had anything to do with our relationship, but it didn't apparently.

PT: What did he tell you that it was about for him, or what was it that he needed to achieve that couldn't be done in another way?

MSA: Him against the elements. That was his literal reason for doing that. Plus, another sideline was that he wanted to be the sailor who sailed the smallest boat across the Atlantic single-handed. And he would have been. But like the guy who just recently got back from sailing around the world, the kid—he was one of something like three people doing it this year. And so his record was not going to last more than a few months, I think.

PT: It's very hard for me to understand the motivation that some people do have to set world records and to put themselves in the most difficult and precarious situations.

MSA: Yeah, like, climbing the highest mountain or something like that.

PT: It's a level of motivation to do something that no other person has been able to achieve physically. It seems like with those kinds of proposals, it's not about physical strength; it's about mental will.

MSA: Definitely. He tried to get sponsorships from the sailboat manufacturer and some other business that had to do with cruising and wasn't able to get anybody to do that, unfortunately. Then we might have been able to afford a radio and all the other nicer things that you need if you're gonna survive on the ocean. We couldn't afford to get any of that.

PT: So that's why he didn't have more safety equipment or ways of communicating —

MSA: Yeah.

PT: — with the Coast Guard if something had gone wrong?

MSA: Yeah, no. He didn't have any way of doing that.

PT: I remember in the interview, in the 1976 interview, you said that he had a device that could let people know around the immediate periphery, on the horizon and shortwave radio, or something —

MSA: No, he had a rescue device that would go off and the planes overhead could hear it, depending on how close they were and if they were flying over at that moment. We don't know if he actually set that off or what. I guess he had contact with some freighter not too long after he had sailed out. I think it was maybe a week or two and just said "Hi" I guess.

PT: What do you think happened during that voyage?

MSA: I don't want to think about it. At least his boat was still floating, and that's why we got that boat, because it was filled with Styrofoam. And he also got heavier weight rigging and fibreglassed up the cabin so that it wouldn't be as vulnerable to the waves. And he had a self-steering vane that would allow him to go to sleep apparently. The cabin was six feet long and might have been around five feet wide. He had himself with a lifeline hooked onto the boat. When it was discovered the rigging was gone and the mast was bent or gone. I'm not sure which, but that's all we know about that. Yup.

PT: And you were waiting in Amsterdam.

MSA: Mm-hmm.

PT: What was going through your mind during that time?

MSA: Well, I was hoping he'd make it before I had to fly back, because I had to teach. But he didn't. And so I kept expecting him through December. I'd been told that he might have lasted that long. He knew how to get food and water out of the elements. And he knew how to be shipwrecked. He'd been shipwrecked before. And he'd made as many precautions as he could have, except for the radio. And we couldn't do anything about that.

PT: When did you give up hope?

MSA: I went back in December and my brother-in-law and I went to the embassies of the areas that he might have gone close to and notified them and asked them to be on the lookout or investigate it. We never heard anything about it.

PT: That was around Christmas?

MSA: Yes. Interpol was investigating and his sailing papers and his driver license and passport were all found. That's how they found me, because they found his address and somebody called information. They found me that way, somebody from Spain.

PT: What did they do with the boat and his effects that were recovered?

MSA: The boat was salvage for the fisherman that found it. It went to the navy yard to begin with and then later on the guy (that found it) claimed

PT: it as salvage. When my brother-in-law and I went to see the navy in La Coruña, Spain, they had his sextant, some of his clothing and some of the cans [of food] and his passport and all that stuff. But then when the guy claimed the boat for salvage, he put in his backyard and it got stolen. That's bizarre.

MSA: Well, yeah, it is. It's really bizarre. It's never been found. So it's gone, or somebody might have probably re-rigged it and painted it a different color and gave it a different name. But it was never found, so far as we know. So I didn't give up hope until I think around December, January. I think we still hoped in December, 'cause that still might have gotten there. But so anyway, I gave up hope. I mean, I figured that he was dead. That was in the front of my mind—that was what I articulated. Most people thought he was just missing or that he'd gone someplace else and changed his identity or whatever and disappeared. I didn't like that of course at all. That just was really upsetting to me at the time, in December.

PT: Were his students primarily generating this, or other people?

MSA: Well, a lot of people. I guess he said it to James Turrell—that he had thought about disappearing for three years and then coming back. So in the back of my mind, I always held out that hope, that he'd just disappeared and was gonna come back. So I kept him alive that long, until January first of '78. When that didn't happen,

then I started to have him declared dead. I got a lawyer and went to court and they said he was presumed dead, lost at sea.

PT: I know that must be so incredibly difficult to have people conjecture that your husband would have essentially abandoned you. It must have been so incredibly difficult.

MSA: Yeah, it was, definitely.

PT: And what do you think about the speculation that he was on a suicide mission?

MSA: Well, I know what's the truth and so it doesn't matter what they think. I've gotten totally used to the idea that people are gonna talk about it and write about it, you know? I got that down really well the winter of '75. I talked about it and I cried about it and I talked about it with Ger van Elk. And Ger said, you know, that Bas wouldn't have wanted that to go on. Once I thought about it I agreed.

PT: The speculation?

MSA: Yeah, the mystery. I knew he was not ever gonna do something like that to me or his brother and his mother and so that was that—

PT: What's it been like for you personally to find yourself in this position, to deal with someone else's artistic legacy? And you're an artist yourself. How is that?

MSA: It's fantastic. I mean, my work goes on regardless. To me, it's just great. He would have loved it. He would have thought that that was just so special. He would have thought he deserved it, of course, because that's the way he was. But

how could you not like it? It makes me feel really happy with the effort that I put into it with him. And, you know, it just is like a total vindication of his lack of notice in the Los Angeles area all those years. Because he only had that one solo show.

PT: One show at Claire Copley gallery?

MSA: Yes. I guess he had one at Irvine, too. He had the students. Instead of painting it on the wall, I think it was the flower piece, the one where the flowers die out, he had the students draw that in on the wall directly and—with pencil instead of with paint, which is kind of—probably took a long time.

PT: Mary Sue, I think that's all of my questions. Do you have anything else you think you want to add?

MSA: No, I can't think of any.

PT: Great.

MSA: Yeah.

PY: All right, thank you so much for your time.

MSA: You're welcome.

PT: Thank you. OK that's it. That's it.





## ***Greetings from Beautiful Ader Falls***

### **Andrew Berardini**

In one of his notebook entries, Ader jotted an idea for a postcard: “Greetings from Beautiful Ader Falls.” More ominously, he wrote, “All is falling.”

Bruce Hainley, “Legends of the Fall,” *Artforum*, March 1999

A tired township in the far western hinterlands of New Amsterdam, the village of Ader Falls resembles a half-finished sand-castle, speckled and windblown, construction abandoned as its towers, townhouses and tract homes were being erected. Though inhabited, it smells mostly like an outpost that, even half-baked, could’ve been something much grander if time hadn’t finally run out. Though spare and modern by design, the village has taken on a mantle of wistfulness, the air thick with metaphysical musings, like an ancient civilization long since collapsed, yet still more advanced than the current culture.

The denizens derive their spare cultural understanding from a set of mail-order prints of Dutch and German masters (from sweeping Casper David Friedrichs to a flyspecked Mondrian) hawked at the local general store by their proprietor (who once had a Dutch uncle) with a bourgeois flourish. A lone radio station spins the sadder, dreamier songs of ’50s hit machines on slow revolution, making the jingle and pop of bubblegum wheeze and murmur along like a funeral hymn.

There’s a photobooth outside the general store, the kind that spits out four shots, black-and-white, for a dollar, but the snaps are always abandoned, the pictures taken always make the sitter seem so sad. Though sadness can imbue a man or woman with the beauty of its depth, one does not like to remember oneself burdened with such tragedy.

The residents, unharrassed, except by time and accident, live day to day in a series of simple gestures, movements stripped of unnecessary meaning and performed with a present-tense, deadpan seriousness normally reserved for



soldiers, comedians and recently recovered alcoholics. They may occasionally finger through dog-eared copies of *Reader's Digest*, but only to linger overlong on the disasters. Having come to Ader Falls from difficult and strange stories abroad, following shipwrecks and nervous breakdowns, after chasing one chimera or another, ultimately broken from their lost and gone beloved, they have finally found a place to look for what cannot be found. Residency is, and has always been, fluid, its history written on water with wind.

Ader Falls is an upstate New York hamlet on the edge of Southern California sprawl, a phantom truck stop often (if not always) missed on the long, lonesome midnight interstate between Los Angeles and New York City. But the lights of Ader Falls do flicker at nightfall and the meager few townfolk find that when smashed with a stone, most lights will go out.

Founded (like so many heartlandish American townships) by a ne'er do well adventurer and dreamer, a brooding European prankster, who died young, Ader Falls harbors an unusual share of drifters and grifters, cons so talented they deserve the additive cognomen of "artist."

Ader Falls has no waterfall, at least not any waterfall that we would consider anywhere near the words "majestic" or the sensually bureaucratic "voluminous" which often get appended to Niagara. But things do fall there. People from trees and houses. Rocks onto lightbulbs. Often, tears.

Perhaps the most notable feature of this nondescript burg is its unique relationship to gravity. In Ader Falls things fall. Not the Yeatsian gyre of things falling apart nor the imperial

Roman arch of a rise followed by the inevitably deflationary fall, but the curious gravitational calibrations of reality being regularly tested with humor, and its limitations a cause for mourning. Gravity blankets the hills like a forgotten curse, a curse that inspires hope in breaking gravity's laws with jocular, thigh slapping hope and always foundering, despairingly.

The townspeople can be found weeping in the streets, at their jobs, behind desks and countertops, at the factories and shoe stores, their tears dripping into lukewarm cups of coffee and on freshly printed receipts. A tourist to Ader Falls might venture to ask the lachrymose population the cause of their powerful sadness, but they are unable to squeeze a word out through their melancholic wheezes. Spend too much time there and neither will you.

The weeping can begin at breakfast, an off-hand comment that cuts through all the morass and callousness of modern life, just a few trickles over runny eggs and golden brown toast, the kind of tears your tough old father would weep at the recounting of a World War II sea battle, but the trickle mounts and by lunch, it's a torrent. Standing up from their leather roll chairs, grabbing the wall for balance as they stumble out into the streets, the weeper begins to laugh at their terrible situation (the only retort for tragedy being comedy, as everyone knows). But the two





(the laugh and the cry) get stuck together, like when one tries to breath and drink at the same time, and the two get mixed and the swallower/breather would begin to choke uncontrollably. Red faced, wet-eyed, face convulsive.

The laughter/weeping in Ader Falls could continue all day, or like a sudden change in the weather, disappear as slinkily as it came, travelling beneath the surface until the next day or the day after it would return: as a sob or a snivel, a whimper, a whine and a wail, inevitably dropping to the desperate release of brawling, before descending at its nadir to embarrassed blubbing.

As if the town were built on a well of sadness, the people of Ader Falls weep with abandon, a freedom lost on everyone but children or the desperate. Seeing another resident weep, you might start weeping yourself, or laughing at the ridiculousness of a town of people who weep, and start laughing so hard that tears come to your eyes and once broken becomes weeping.

Periodically, denizens, drifters and pilgrims get inscribed into the annals of local lore like how other towns might honor their native sons and daughters as football stars or war dead. Those notable few of Ader Falls have performed duties and rituals, actions and gestures which define the civic soul, there are no statues in Ader Falls, but their names have currency in the city's precincts and are passed around in hallowed whispers.

Sebastian Stumpf, who hailed from Leipzig, Germany, bootstrapped his way to Ader Falls as a freelance gravity-tester, though he had occasionally acted as calibrator and deconfounder of other environmental factors in his long career. He has, regrettably to his various, previous employers, taken his tests a little too far for the stuffy bureaucrats and tiresome grandees involved in the sensitive, political work of gravity determination. The people of Ader Falls welcomed him as a native son and he is currently employed by the township for his particular abilities.

Fernando Sanchez, smuggled into the country as a baby, has found some way to channel the wretched boisterousness of the world, like a raging river through the phone lines and fiberoptic cables into a simple set of gestures that make falling seem like the only thing left to do. So he does. Ader Falls welcomed him.

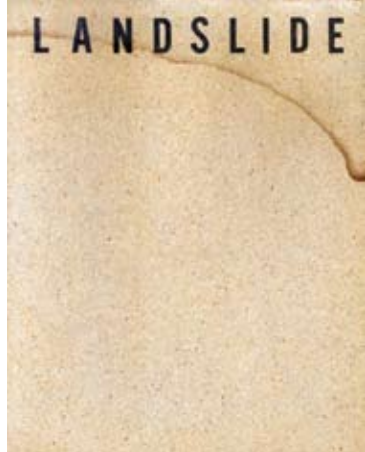
Artemio gathered up all the weeping he could, like collecting lost kittens from the alleys of Hollywood. Each mewling cat, a scene from some lost actor finding a way to produce, even force, tears that fall so easily in Ader Falls. One can try not to let other people's crying affect one's own, but it's impossible. Every time one sees another weep, a little bit of their sadness is caught, a mild disease, not one that will likely kill, though it could. It's a disease that lives in one's house, its feet padding through bedrooms and kitchens, the mimicry of woe inflects our own. The people of Ader Falls often shed tears, and can't help but think of these stray images, collected by Artemio, as they weep.

Martin Kersels, the biggest man to ever visit Ader Falls, tests the limits of gravity with every step. Though attempts to bend reality have resulted in him catapulting friends as test subjects. His results, however, have been inconclusive, and Kersels has accepted gravity, and he falls now often and with joy.

Kate Newby has never been to Ader Falls, though they've adopted her as honorary citizen. She sends plaintive telegrams to the town, sent in care of the city itself. The messages are so gentle, the telegrams get folded up and stored in the cities archives, reread on holidays, though occasionally they are buried in parks and industrial yards. One or two has bloomed, the gentle buds are cared for like children.

Piero Golia passed through Ader Falls only briefly, en route to disappearing. Though only in the town fleetingly, his disappearance was so total and complete when he finally accomplished it that he left a permanent unfillabe space in the town. The space, known as Golia's Gap, is the closest thing the town has to a monument. A few who wish to disappear walk through it at every opportunity, they've yet failed to replicate his act, though they do tend to lose focus for a variable time afterward. Perhaps superstitiously, most everyone else avoids walking into the space, always around it, lest they disappear too. One never knows, now does one.

Gonzalo Lebrija only ever passed through as well. But in Ader Falls, people only ever pass through, many leave a residue of their ghostly passing, though some leave stronger traces than others. When Lebrija ran through town, he seemed to be onto someplace else, trying to close some distance, trying to make his way past what cannot be passed, his loneliness stuck to the town forever, all echoing footsteps for those far from home in Ader Falls are the footsteps of Lebrija.



Thiago Rocha Pitta's steel boat came to town filled with water, the water gave him his shape and he was unable to leave it lest he lose his way. The boat, crusted with salt and wear, was dragged by some secret fire he burned with a chemistry set that looked an old fashioned compass and the trappings of an apothecary, the glass bottles filled with swirling purple and green liquids Pitta stole from a passing storm and bonded with his own reveries. He dreamed of the ocean, from which he would always be parted, susceptible to drowning as he was, as we all happen to be.

Jed Lind brought a boat too, an unfloatable lattice work he hoped to take down the falls, to capsize in the white spray. There was snowy foam of water, no riparian splashes, so he left it in a place where at the very least it might be wet by the rain, having never expecting to sail it anyhow, as if the impossible journey had already occurred, it sailed with each cut of the carving knife to shape the unfloatable boat. When the wind sweeps through town, it whips around the boat and blows a long, low whistle like a distant train.

Diego Teo came through town in paint-splattered trousers that could never get dry. He tried to paint portraits but the paint, never dry, would get covered up before it had a chance to settle. He painted a mural one night, leaving before morning, the paint is always shifting and changing, never able to settle, never able to stop moving, filled with a wanderlust for other pictures.

Most of these adopted sons and daughters, these passer-throughs, ramble past the signs on the road coming in and out that demarcate the municipal boundaries. "Welcome to Beautiful Ader Falls" greets all comers as they drift into town. As they leave hangs another sign, on the opposite turn of the welcome, written in the same willowy script, and at night, as it so often is, the sign is illuminated by a single white bulb, the light crisp and ghostly, one last note from the town before it gets left behind, usually forever.

In black letters on a white field is written the message, "Please Don't Leave."





## ***Before the Next Teardrop Falls*** **Ciara Ennis**

In the pantheon of tragic icons, inductees of the 1970s include, among others, Jimi Hendrix, Janis Joplin, Diane Arbus and Harvey Milk—culturally significant figures whose stars burned brightly and then burnt out. Their untimely deaths secured eternal homage: reputations of genius, gravesites pilgrimages and plentiful hagiographies. Dutch conceptual artist Bas Jan Ader, although embodying a less defined cultural silhouette, remains a cult figure among his small group of devoted adherents. His reputation—unlike other influential figures who left a substantial record of accomplishment and continue to receive new biographical treatments—rests upon a slim portfolio, yet continues to grow beyond the scale of his brief lifetime. One reason for this is Ader's epic odyssey from Cape Cod, Massachusetts to Lands End, England in a twelve-foot boat, resulting in his apparent death (his body has yet to be found). He is, in this regard, like D. B. Cooper, another 1970s character who vanished from the spotlight almost as quickly as he came into it leaving behind only speculation and mythmaking. Four years prior to Ader's disappearance, Cooper hijacked a Boeing 727, extorted a \$200,000 ransom then parachuted from the airplane (a fall of 10,000 feet), never to be seen again. Like Ader and other similarly unlikely celebrities, Cooper's body has never been found, casting inevitable doubt over his mortality. Such uncertainty, however slight, allows for the impossible belief that our beloved heroes may in fact still be alive; in this way we become like grief-stricken, yet ever-hopeful relatives, needing the proof of the body in the morgue before surrendering to the cold hard facts.



A 1972 FBI composite drawing of D. B. Cooper

Although diminutive in quantity, Bas Jan Ader's poignant body of work—consisting of a handful of films, a stack of photographs and a few drawings—is anything but inconsequential. Despite spanning only eight years (1968-1975), Ader's practice succeeded in building and expanding upon conceptual art's legacy by imbuing the cold scientific and factual nature of the medium with an emotion and wit that set it apart from most conceptual practices of the day. While the use



*Fall II, Amsterdam* (1970). Black and white 16mm film transferred to DVD, silent, 19 seconds. Edition of 3. Camera: Mary Sue Ader-Andersen (Photographic still versions: Ger van Elk), Courtesy of The Bas Jan Ader Estate & Patrick Painter Editions.



*Broken Fall / (Organic) Amsterdamse Bos, Holland* (1971). Black and white 16mm film transferred to DVD, silent, 1 min, 44 sec. Edition of 3. Camera: Peter Bakker, Courtesy of The Bas Jan Ader Estate & Patrick Painter Editions.

of his body as both medium and tool aligned his work with such conceptual performance artists as Chris Burden, Bruce Nauman and Vito Acconci, Ader's willful and ebullient use of irony and the absurd contrasted with his cohort's exacting solemnity. Much of his practice revolved around the act of falling, which he photographed, filmed and re-enacted in mundane situations. *Fall I* (1970), a silent six-second 16mm film, depicts Ader falling off a chair from the roof of his Claremont, California bungalow. Like all of his works, it is deceptively straightforward and direct—the forthright recording from a fixed position of a simple act with a very clear beginning and end. Absent of extraneous detail one is left to ponder on the meaning of such a deed—both absurd and potentially injurious. Similarly in *Fall II, Amsterdam* (1970) Ader is filmed riding a bicycle, a bouquet of flowers in one hand, while steering into Amsterdam's Reguliersgracht canal. There is no ambiguity as to Ader's intention to drive into the canal but complicating the otherwise straightforward narrative are the flowers—who were they for and why were they abandoned to the water?

Falling of a different kind is pictured in *Untitled (Tea Party)* from 1972, a series of six sequential color photographs depicting Ader in a relaxed rural setting indulging in a spot of tea beneath a large box, propped up on a stick. In the final photograph the box collapses trapping Ader underneath. The disconnect between the elaborate tea ceremony and makeshift shelter creates an amusing and perplexing image that suggests that rituals, however absurd, are there to provide meaning in our otherwise nonsensical lives. Although clearly referencing the exaggerated actions of early silent films that relied on the comedic effect of *schadenfreude* and slapstick to entertain in place of fast-paced dialogue, all three works are laugh-out-loud funny yet woefully desolate and ultimately hopeless—a sense of disquiet and futility festers beneath their surface. This is further emphasized in *Broken Fall (Organic)* (1971), which is similar in form and content to *Fall I*, and *Fall II*, featuring Ader hanging from the branch of a tree suspended over a large ditch. Such an act is, of course, doomed to fail and results in his inevitable fall when his arms give way and he plunges to the ground below.

Although wary of linking personal biographies to artistic output one could surmise that the element of unease resonating in Ader's work could be traced to his turbulent youth—teenage years spent in a troubled youth facility and the legacy of his father's death; a member of the Dutch Resistance during WWII, Bastiaan Jan Ader was executed in a forest by

Although wary of linking personal biographies to artistic output one could surmise that the element of unease resonating in Ader's work could be traced to his turbulent youth—teenage years spent in a troubled youth facility and the legacy of his father's death; a member of the Dutch Resistance during WWII, Bastiaan Jan Ader was executed in a forest by



*All My Clothes* (1970) Gelatin silver print, 11 x 14 inches, Edition of 3, Photo: Bas Jan Ader, Courtesy of Dean Valentine c/o Art Collection Management.



*Untitled (Tea Party)* (1972), 6 C-type prints, 4.9 x 7.87 inches each, Edition of 3, Courtesy of The Bas Jan Ader Estate & Patrick Painter Editions.



firing squad when Ader was two years old. Ader refused to discuss his work's meaning, insisting that it should speak for itself and would have never offered personal histories as an explanation. However, certain works such as *All My Clothes* (1970)—a photograph of the eponymous contents of Ader's closets spread out on the roof of his Claremont house—is reminiscent of his Mother throwing the family's clothes onto the street when the Nazis threw them out of their house. Similarly, *Untitled (Sweden)* (1971), which exists both as a double slide projection and as a photographic diptych, presents two near identical forest scenes that vary according to light and Ader's placement. On the left panel he is the lone figure dwarfed by towering pines and on the right, equally overwhelmed, he lies prone (supine?) contiguous to fallen trees. Such a work could easily be interpreted as a recreation of his father's execution, and that the falling motif re-staged and re-enacted in multiple forms is a way for Ader to neutralize a deeply traumatic event by endlessly repeating it.

The tragic/comic aspect that permeates both these works—and the rest of his oeuvre—leaves one uncertain as to whether the emotions evoked are sincere or pantomimed for effect or a combination of both. *All My Clothes*, in addition to its tragic connotations, conjures images of the British 70s sitcom *The Fall and Rise of Reginald Perrin* (1976), which pictures a beach strewn with clothes and a naked Perrin running into the sea to fake his own death while the opening credits roll. An expert at such emotional manipulation, Ader excels himself in his magnum opus *I'm Too Sad To Tell You* (1971), a 16 mm film of the artist working himself up into an extreme emotional state.

Crumpled forehead, wobbling jaw and trembling lips evolve into a climax of unrelenting tears that appear so genuine—and perhaps they really were—that one feels transfixed, a reluctant voyeur, incapable of turning away from the stranger's inexorable grief. Epic, theatrical, yet thoroughly believable, Ader's emotional meltdown, although thoroughly mute, has the intensity of a Greek tragedy and the banality of a kitchen sick drama all contained within a grainy six-minute film—a distillation of a life marked by expulsion, displacement and inconsolable grief.

The combination of high and low sentiment is present in other works such as *Farewell to Faraway Friends* (1971), which summons forth illusions to 19th century romantic and transcendental painting that celebrated the spiritual and metaphysical effect of nature in contrast to the inconsequence of man. Ader's photograph depicts himself silhouetted against a vast Swedish fjord with mountains in the distance at what could be sunset. Simultaneously noble in sentiment and postcard kitsch, Ader's image is both ironic and deeply melancholic.

Given his unique pathos driven and schadenfreud inflected brand of conceptualism, it is hardly surprising that Bas Jan Ader has had a major impact on subsequent generations of artists' practice. His quixotic actions and performances have cleared the way for others to make similarly inspired work that plays with the absurd and deadly somber. There are several works that come to mind—in addition to the contemporary works in the exhibition—that exercise the same temporal economy, paired-down form and droll humor that Ader employs. *Studio Visit* (2005), a video







work by Los Angeles based artist Joe Sola, is a looping six-minute compilation of meetings with various curators recorded in the artist's studio. Without warning, Sola leaps through a glass window crashing to the ground below, which in each instance elicits a confused, hysterical or concerned response from the viewer. Dutch artist Eric Wessello provokes a similar startled and terror-stricken reaction in *Düffels Möll* (1997), a film displaying the artist trussed-up to a rotating windmill blade moving at random speeds according to the wind pressure. While both these works flirt with danger and are to some extent beyond the artist's control, *Hysteria* (1997) by British artist Sam Taylor Wood is a highly choreographed and carefully maneuvered work that owes more than a nod to Ader's *I'm Too Sad Too Tell You*. Shot close-up, the artist is caught in the throes of hysterical laughter that develops during the eight-minute film into paroxysm of tears. Like Ader's work, the extremity of the emotion conveyed is frightening in its intensity and made more acute by it being mute.

Although Bas Jan Ader's place within the art historical canon is secure, his practice is often hard to pin down. Emerging as he did within the context of early 70s conceptualism that privileged systems and methodologies above excavation of emotional states—be they real or performed—meant that his work stood, to some extent, alone. His critical investigation of the more



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Bas Jan Ader

"In Search of the Miraculous"

traditionally gendered emotions of romanticism, sentimentality, melancholy and fragility stood in opposition to the macho acts of some of his contemporaries such as Chris Burden who was shooting himself in the arm *Shoot*, 1971 and crucifying himself to the roof of a Volkswagen Beetle (*Transfixed*, 1974); or Dennis Oppenheim who gave himself severe sunburn (*Reading Position for Second Degree Burn*, 1970) and repeatedly rolled his under arm over exposed wires (*Arm and Wire*, 1969). Although there are many parallels between the artists—testing the physical and psychological limits of their body—Ader was ultimately exploring failure and the meaningless and inconsequential nature of human life, which he did in a highly compelling, unique and whimsical way. Like Cooper—the roguish skyjacker who lives on in our imagination as a romantic outsider despite his criminality—Bas Jan Ader engenders our sympathies precisely because he attempted the impossible, or more specifically, the miraculous—Ader's final work that led to his demise was titled *In Search of the Miraculous* (1975). Extraordinary acts attempt to defy mortality; they conjure the heroics of Greek legends, where no obstacle was insurmountable if the proper ritual was applied. Perhaps Bas Jan Ader and D. B. Cooper—like the fictional Reginald Perrin—have washed up on some metaphorical shore, leaving us but also their methods behind, asking if we are brave enough to follow.



*I'm Too Sad To Tell You* (1971), Black and white 16mm film transferred to DVD, silent, 3 min., 34 sec, Edition of 3, Camera: Peter Bakker, Courtesy of The Bas Jan Ader Estate & Patrick Painter Editions.

## Artists' Biographies



Artemio, *The Crying Game* (2004), DVD, 10 minutes, Courtesy of the artist.

**Artemio** studied at the National Autonomous University of Mexico in Mexico City; the Centro Artesanal Independencia in Mexico; Parsons School of Design in New York, NY; and The Sculpture Center in New York, NY. He has participated in numerous solo exhibitions including, *Hollywoodpedia* at the Galeria de la Raza in San Francisco, CA (2010); *ChakraK-47* at LAXART in Los Angeles, CA (2010); *AK47 AyaKrops47* at La Central in Bogota, Colombia (2009); *Gesamtkuntwerk*, at YAUTEPEC in Mexico City, Mexico (2009); *Ayakaypa Muyuquspan* at Galeria Revolver in Lima, Peru (2009); *If You Leave Me, Can I Go With You?...* at Curro y Poncho Galeria in Guadalajara, Mexico (2008); *13* at Y gallery in New York City, NY (2008); and *Hollywood Remix, Artemio & Ed Young* at the Hayward Gallery in London, England (2008). He has also participated in numerous group exhibitions

including, *VIA* at the Pacific Design Center in Los Angeles, CA (2010); *Cuerpo Maquinico* at Museo de Arte Acarigua-Araure in Venezuela, S.A. (2009); *Manimal* at the National Center for Contemporary Art in Moscow, Russia (2009); *Names and Places* at the First Draft Gallery in Sidney, Australia (2009); *10th Bienal de La Habana* at La Cabaña in Havana, Cuba (2009); *Celluloid Dreams* at the Jackson Heights Film Festival in Queens, NY (2008); *Se Permuta* at the Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Oaxaca in Oaxaca, Mexico (2008); *A Common Effort* at Ideobox Gallery in Miami, FL (2008); *TALENT PRReVIEW '09* at White Box in New York, NY (2008); *Here Once Again* at the Loop Gallery in Seoul, Korea (2008); and *Otra de Vaqueros* at CECCH—Centre D'édition Contemporaine—Genève in Geneva, Switzerland (2007). His exhibitions as a curator include, *Imitating Life* at Sala Miro Quezada in Lima, Peru; *Perdidos en el Espacio* at Fundacion Espais in Girona, Spain; and an exhibition at CELARG in Caracas, Venezuela. He was awarded the FONCA prize, Jóvenes Creadores in 2000/2001 and 2008/2009. Artemio Narro Aguilar lives and works in Mexico City, Mexico.

**Piero Golia** is an Italian artist who has been working in the United States since 2002. He has participated in numerous solo exhibitions including, *Loser* at Noguera Blanchard in Barcelona, Spain (2009); *Ruins, Regrets and Visible Effects, Piero Golia & Fabian Marti* at the Swiss Institute in Rome, Italy (2009); *Oh My God, That's So Awesome!* at Bortolami in New York, NY (2009); *Knives* at Galleria Fonti in Naples, Italy (2008); *Time Machine* at Bortolami-Dayan Gallery in New York, NY (2007); and *Postcards From the Edge* at Cosmic Galerie in Paris, France (2007). He has also participated in numerous group exhibitions including, *Power Alone* at Witte de With in Rotterdam, Netherlands (2010); *Things That Only Artists Can Do* at the Museo de Arte Contemporánea de Vigo in Vigo, Spain (2010); *Italian Open* at Annet Gelink Gallery in Amsterdam, Netherlands (2009); *Les Enfants Terribles, Eight Interpretations of la Collección Jumex* at the Fundación/Colección Jumex in Mexico City, Mexico (2009); *Ruin, Regrets and Visible Effects* at the Instituto Svizzero di Roma in Rome, Italy (2009); *Nothingness and Being* at the Fundación/Colección Jumex in Mexico City, Mexico (2009); *The Dor* at the Instituto Svizzero, Venezia in Venice, Italy (2009); *California Biennial* at the Orange County Museum of Arts in Newport Beach, CA (2008); *Retrospective* at Gagosian Gallery in New York, NY (2008); the *Moscow Biennale of Contemporary Art* in Moscow, Russia (2007); *Lara Favaretto, Francesco Gennari, Piero Golia, Massimo Grimaldi* at Engholm Engelhorn Galerie in Vienna, Austria (2007); and *Uncertain States of America—American Art in the 3rd Millennium*, curated by Gunnar B. Kvaran, Daniel Birnbaum, and Hans-Ulrich Obrist at the Le Musée de Sérignan, Galerie Rudolfinum in Prague, Czech Republic (2007). Piero Golia currently works and lives in Los Angeles, California.

On January 14, 2005, Piero Golia vanished from New York City. The only indication of his intent to disappear lay in a series of instructions he had given in the days and weeks leading up to his sudden exit. He convinced his dealer to furnish him with substantial cash funds, and his gallery to provide him with spare but essential traveling supplies: a sleeping bag and a strong pair of shoes. Upon Golia's request, an employ of the gallery shipped Golia's belongings to a specified hotel in Copenhagen.

On February 7, in the same mysterious fashion in which he departed from New York City almost a month before, Golia resurfaced at Copenhagen's Royal Academy of Arts. There he delivered a unique lecture about his journey. Without any form of identification or traceable method of payment, Golia's movements during his voyage were undetected. Golia traversed vast distances and crossed multiple borders, but there is virtually no evidence of his travels. The sole record are the blankets that he made, covered with generic, postcard-like landscapes of American National Parks.

text by Janin Armin

Piero Golia, *The Vanishing* (2005), Courtesy of the artist.



Martin Kersels, *Tripping 1 (a,b,c)* (1995), C-type prints, triptych, 17 ¾ x 27 ¾ inches each, Courtesy the artist and ACME, Los Angeles.

**Martin Kersels** received his MFA from the University of California in Los Angeles, California in 1995. He has participated in numerous solo exhibitions including, *Fat Iggy: Discography* at Galerie Georges-Philippe & Nathalie Vallois in Paris, France (2009); *Martin Kersels: Heavyweight Champion* at the Santa Monica Museum of Art in Los Angeles, CA (2008); *Charms in a Throne Room* at ACME in Los Angeles, CA (2006); *Orchestra for Idiots* at Galerie Georges-Philippe & Nathalie Vallois in Paris, France (2005); and *Illuminous* at Guido Costa Projects in Turin, Italy (2004). He has also participated in numerous group exhibitions including, the *2010 Whitney Biennial* at the Whitney Museum in New York, NY (2010); *Second Nature: The Valentine Collection* at The Hammer, UCLA Hammer Museum in Los Angeles, CA (2009); *Seriously Funny* at the Scottsdale Museum of Contemporary Art in Scottsdale, AZ (2009); *Index: Conceptualism in California from the Permanent Collection* at the Museum

of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles, CA (2008); *Vallois* at Galerie Georges-Philippe and Nathalie Vallois in Paris, France (2008); *California Video* at The Getty Center in Los Angeles, CA (2008); *Sculptors' Drawings: Ideas, Studies, Sketches, Proposals, and More* at Angles Gallery in Santa Monica, CA (2007); and *Accidents* at Galerie Georges-Philippe & Nathalie Vallois in Paris, France (2006). He was the recipient of the Guggenheim Fellowship Award in 2008. His work is included in the collections of the Museum of Contemporary Art in San Diego, CA; the Los Angeles County Museum of Art in Los Angeles, CA; the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles, CA; the Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona in Barcelona, Spain; and the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris, France. Martin Kersels currently lives and works in Los Angeles, California.

**Gonzalo Lebrija** received his BFA from El Instituto Tecnológico de Estudios Superiores de Occidente ITESO in Guadalajara, Mexico in 1998. He has participated in numerous solo exhibitions including, *The Distance Between You and Me* at I-20 Gallery in New York, NY (2010); *Via*, a public video screening curated by Los Angeles Nomadic Division (LAND) in Los Angeles, CA (2010); *Gonzalo Lebrija* at Travesio Quattro in Madrid, Spain (2008); *El Mundo De Ayer* (a collaboration with Jose Dávila) at VOLTA Sculpture Projects in Basel, Switzerland (2007); *La Nuit Étoilée* at Laurent Godin in Paris, France (2007); at Ikon Gallery in Birmingham, UK (2007); and *Columba Livia* at Pilar Parra & Romero in Madrid, Spain (2007). He has also participated in numerous group exhibitions including, *Energy Effects* at MCA Denver in Denver, CO (2010); *Nothingness and Being*, curated by Shamim M. Momin at La Colección Jumex in Mexico City, Mexico (2009); *Videonale 12* at the Kunstmuseum Bonn in Bonn, Germany (2009); *The Future is But the Obsolete in Reverse* at Galerie Michael Janssen in Cologne, Germany (2008); *Viva Mexico!* at the Zacheta National Gallery of Art in Warsaw, Poland (2007); *Trinchera* at the Museo Raúl Anguiano in Guadalajara, Mexico (2007); at the Jakarta Institute of Art in Jakarta, Indonesia (2007); at Art and Science in Monterrey, Mexico (2007); and the Casa Museo Luis Barragan in Mexico City, Mexico. He has been awarded the Scholarship for Alternative Media, FONCA, National Fund for Culture and Arts in México in 1999/2000; the prize for the best video at the VII. Muestra de Video ITESO in Guadalajara, Mexico in 1997; and placed best documentary film with the VIII, International Filmfestival in Lima, Peru in 1997. Gonzalo Lebrija currently works and lives in Guadalajara, Mexico.



Gonzalo Lebrija, *The Distance Between You and Me* (2008), 16 mm film, Photo: Joshua White, Courtesy the artist and I-20 Gallery, New York.



Jed Lind, *Capsized Dreamers—A Shipwrecked Shelter for 1975 (2005)*, Guppy 13 sailboat, identical to that used by Bas Jan Ader in his 1975 performance, *In Search of the Miraculous*, 150 x 65 x 72 inches, Courtesy of the artist.

*Il* at Comic Gallery in St. Petersburg, Russia (2007); *Incognito* at the Santa Monica Museum of Art in Los Angeles, CA (2007); *Somewhere Better Than This Place, Nowhere Better Than This Place* at One Night Gallery in Havana, Cuba (2006); *Du Cote de Jessica Bradley Art and Project* at Galerie Rene Blouin in Montreal, Canada (2006); *Jessica Bradley Art and Projects* at the Toronto Alternative Art Fair International in Toronto, Canada (2005); and *Supersonic: 1 Wind Tunnel, 8 Schools, 128 Artists* at Art Center College of Art in Pasadena, CA (2004). Jed Lind currently lives and works in Los Angeles.

**Jed Lind** received his MFA from the California Institute of the Arts in Valencia, California in 2004. He has participated in numerous solo exhibitions including, *Fluid Geographies* and *A False Dawn* at ART+PROJECTS in Toronto, Canada (2008/05); *Domes and Guiding Lights* at D301 Gallery at the California Institute of the Arts in Valencia, CA (2004); and *Mirrored Circle* at the Mint Gallery at the California Institute of the Arts in Valencia, CA. He has also participated in numerous group exhibitions including, *Wide Angle* at the University Art Museum at Cal State Long Beach in Long Beach, CA (2009); *Infrastructure* at the Wignall Museum at Chaffey College in Rancho Cucamonga, CA (2008); *Group Show* at the Open Gallery, Outpost for Contemporary Art in Los Angeles, CA (2008); *Intersection* at the Eagle Rock Center for the Arts in Los Angeles, CA (2008); *The Search for Space* at Vault 14 in Valletta, Malta (2007); *Notes From the Overpass—St. Petersburg—Los Angeles* at Gallery G18 in Helsinki, Finland (2007);

**Kate Newby** received her MFA from the Elam School of Fine Arts at the University of Auckland in New Zealand in 2007. She has participated in numerous solo exhibitions including, *Burnt House, A Little Later* at Gambia Castle in Auckland, New Zealand (2010); *Get Off My Garden* at Sue Crockford Gallery in Auckland, New Zealand (2009); *Blow Wind Blow* at Y3K Gallery in Melbourne, Australia (2009); *Thinking With Your Body* at Gambia Castle in Auckland, New Zealand (2008); *My Poetry, For Example*, at Rooftop and Vacant Plot at Symond Street in Auckland, New Zealand (2007); *A Windy Fire* at Te Tuhi in Auckland, New Zealand (2007); and *Very Interesting, Very International* at Site-specific Projects (2004/05). She has also participated in numerous group exhibitions including, *The Sky, a Window and a Tree*, a collaboration with Fiona Conner at the California Institute of the Arts in Valencia, CA (2010); *Cross Colouring* at the Hell Gallery in Melbourne, Australia (2009); *IN CASE IT RAINS, IT MIGHT INVOLVE WATER*, curated by Marijke Appleman for ADSF in Rotterdam, Netherlands (2009); *The Future is Unwritten* at The Adam Art Gallery in Wellington, New Zealand (2009); *Today is OK* at Klerkz in Milan, Italy (2009); the *Brussels Biennial 1* in Brussels, Belgium (2008); the 4<sup>th</sup> *Y2K Melbourne Biennale of Art and Design* at TCB in Melbourne, Australia (2008); *Many Directions, As Much as Possible All Over the Country* at 1301PE in Los Angeles, CA (2008); *Giant Monuments*, with Sanne Mestrom in Münster, Denmark (2007); and *Omnipresents* at the Gertrude Contemporary Art Spaces in Melbourne, Australia (2007). She has been awarded the Creative New Zealand Work Grant in 2008; the Heneritta and Lola Anne Tumbridge Watercolour Scholarship in 2007; and the Creative Communities Grant from the Auckland City Council for a site-responsive installation in Central Auckland. Kate Newby lives and works in Auckland, New Zealand.



Kate Newby, *Far fetched and creatively exciting*, Performance photograph (2006), Courtesy of the artist.



Thiago Rocha Pitta, *O Cúmplice Secreto (The Secret Sharer)* (2008), 16 mm film transferred to DVD, silent, 8 minutes, Edition of 5, Photo: Pedro Urano, Editing: Isabel Escobar, Courtesy of the artist.

**Thiago Rocha Pitta** was born in Tiradentes Minas Gerais in Brazil. He has participated in numerous solo exhibitions including, *A Rocky Mist* at Meyer Riegger in Karlsruhe, Germany (2009); *Notes on an Inland Shipwreck* at Andersen's Contemporary in Berlin, Germany (2008); *Calmaria* at the Galeria Millan in São Paulo, Brazil (2008); *SCAI X SCAI* at the Arts Initiative Tokyo [AIT] in Tokyo, Japan (2008); *Uma Trilogia* at the Vale do Anhangabau in São Paulo, Brazil (2007); and *Requiem* at A Gentil Carioca in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (2006). He has also participated in numerous group exhibitions including, *Auszeit* at the Kunstverein Arnsberg in Arnsberg, Germany (2009); *Landschaft 2.0* at Kunstverein und Stiftung Springhornhof in Neuenkirchen, Germany (2009); *NatureNation* at the Museum on the Seam in Jerusalem, Israel (2009); *A Stake in the Mud, A Hole in the Reel, Land Arts Expanded Field 1968-2008* at the Museo Tamayo Arte Contemporáneo in Mexico City, Mexico (2008); *Paraísos Indomitos/ Untamed paradises* at the Centro Andaluz Arte Contemporáneo,

Sevilla, Fundació Suñol in Barcelona, Spain (2008); *SEJA MARGINAL, SEJA HEROI* at Galerie Vallois in Paris, France (2008); the *Singapore Biennale* in Singapore (2006); *Time Frame* at P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center, MOMA, New York 5th International Biennale of Visual Art and Photography in Liège, Belgium (2006); *Zeitgenössische Fotokunst aus Brasilien* at the NBK Neuer Berliner Kunstverein in Berlin, Germany (2006); *Troca Brasil* at Pacific Northwest College of Art in Portland, OR (2005); and *J'en rêve* at the Cartier Foundation in Paris, France (2005). In 2009 he was awarded the Open Your Mind Award, St. Mortiz Art Master in Switzerland and in 2004 he was awarded the Premio Marcantonio Vilaca SESI CNI. Thiago Rocha Pitta currently lives and works in São Paulo, Brazil.

**Fernando Sanchez** received his MFA from the University of California in Los Angeles in 2007. He has participated in numerous solo exhibitions including, *With Blood, Guts, and Stiff Lust* at the de Soto Gallery in Los Angeles, CA (2009); and *Straight Gangsta* at The Future Gallery in Berlin, Germany (2008). He has also participated in numerous group exhibitions including, the *Rotterdam VHS Festival* in Rotterdam, Netherlands (2009); *Just Add Water* at the deSoto Gallery in Los Angeles, CA (2009); *While We Were Working* in Chicago, IL (2008); *The Main Event* at the Schroeder Romero Gallery in New York, NY (2008); *Egos Day Glow* at 533 in Los Angeles, CA (2008); *Art Seen* at the Art Exhibit and Charity Auction Benefiting AIDS Research Alliance in Los Angeles, CA (2008); *Gravity Show* at the Telic Arts Exchange in Los Angeles, CA (2008); *Really Bad Videos* at Lloyd Dobler Gallery in Chicago, IL (2008); *Ghosts of Presence: International Emerging Artist's Video* at Art Gallery of York University in Toronto, Canada (2007); *Words—No Words* at Gaidaro Gallery in The Hague, Netherlands (2007); *All In* at the Torrance Art Museum in Torrance, CA (2007); *Pirates and Hustlers* at the Telic Arts Exchange in Los Angeles, CA (2007); and *Our Distance from Things* at the Telic Arts Exchange in Los Angeles, CA (2007). Fernando Sanchez currently lives and works in Los Angeles.



Fernando Sanchez, *Pancho: Lessons from the Romantic*, (2010), Online Exhibition, Domain: [www.panchotheromantic.com](http://www.panchotheromantic.com), Courtesy of the artist.



Sebastian Stumpf, *marcher dans l'air* (2002), 35 mm slide projections, looped, Dimensions variable, Courtesy of the artist.

**Sebastian Stumpf** studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Nuremberg, Germany; the École Nationale des Beaux-Arts in Lyon, France; and the Academy of Visual Arts in Leipzig, Germany. He has participated in numerous solo exhibitions including, *Never Really There* at the Landesgalerie in Linz, Austria (2009); *Gravity Pulls Everything II* at the Goethe-Institut in Stockholm, Sweden (2009); *Up and Down* at Annex 14 in Bern, Switzerland (2008); *Leaving Again* at Talents 13, C/O Berlin in Berlin, Germany (2008); *Trees and Basement Garages* at the Galerie Kleindienst in Leipzig, Germany (2008); *Sebastian Stumpf—Videoinstallationen* at the Museum Folkwang in Essen, Germany (2007); and *Faux Terrain* at the Goethe-Institut in Lyon, France (2006). He has also participated in numerous group exhibitions including, the *6th Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art* in Berlin, Germany (2010); *Take Space for Example* at Annex14 in Bern, Switzerland (2010); *Out of Control* at the 7<sup>th</sup> International Biennale of Photography and Visual Arts in Liège, Belgium (2010); *On Concrete* at the Tokyo Wonder Site / Institute of Contemporary Art and International Cultural Exchange in Tokyo, Japan (2009); *Trees*, Project Space, in conjunction with Graffiti / État des Lieux at the Galerie du Jour—Agnès B. in Paris, France (2009); and *Close the Gap #1 und #2* at the Stadtgalerie Kiel and UBS Zurich in Switzerland (2008). He has received many awards such as the Marion Ermer Prize in 2010; the Working Grant Kulturstiftung des Freistaates Sachsen in 2010; the Grant of DAAD for Portugal in 2006 and 2007; and the Academy prize of Akademie der Bildenden Künste in Nuremberg in 2005. His works are included in the public collections the Museum of Fine Arts Leipzig, Germany; the Photography Collection of Museum Folkwang Essen, Germany; and the UBS Collection in Zurich. Sebastian Stumpf lives and works in Leipzig, Germany.

**Diego Teo** studied at the National Autonomous University of Mexico in Mexico City, Mexico. He has participated in numerous solo exhibitions including, *Siempre Otra Vez* at the Museo de Arte Moderno in Mexico City, Mexico (2010); *Casi Basura* at the Galeria de Arte Mexicano in Mexico City, Mexico (2009); *Otra vez Termino, Otra vez Comienzo* at the Museo Sala de Arte Publico Siqueiros in Mexico City, Mexico (2008); *Rastro* at the Galeria Proyectos Monclova in Mexico City, Mexico (2008); *Diego Teo* at Feria de Arte Contemporaneo La Otra in Bogotá, Colombia (2007); *In search of the Miraculous* at the Cantina Libertad Social Club in Los Angeles, CA (2007); *Espacios Salinos* at ARCO 2007 in Madrid, Spain (2007); *Juego Escultórico Para Una Esquina* at MUCA CU in Mexico City, Mexico (2006); and *Espacio*, Atrio Centro in collaboration with Art & Idea in Mexico City, Mexico (2006). He has also participated in numerous group exhibitions including, *Chilangolandia* at McNish Art Gallery in Oxnard, CA (2007); *Siete Lugares* at Casino Metropolitano in Mexico City, Mexico (2006); *Distorsión* at the Museo de Arte Carrillo Gil in Mexico City, Mexico (2006); *Sociedad Internacional de Valores Artísticos Mexicanos* at the Galeria Casa Lamm in Mexico City, Mexico (2006); *MACO 2006* at Art & Idea in Mexico City, Mexico (2006); *Basura Afortunada* at the Celda Contemporánea in Mexico City, Mexico (2006); *Objetito* at Espacio Rimjaus in Mexico City, Mexico (2006); *Eco — Arte Contemporaneo Mexicano* at the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía MNCARS in Madrid, Spain (2005); *Diaz Contemporary* at the Diaz Contemporary Gallery in Toronto, Canada (2005); and *Breve Historia Contada a Mano* at the Centro de Arte Joven in Madrid, Spain (2005). Diego Teo currently lives and works Mexico City, Mexico.



Diego Teo, *In Search of the Miraculous* (2007), Video slide show and posters, 38 seconds, Courtesy of the artist.

# Exhibition Checklist

## Videos:

1. Bas Jan Ader  
*Fall I, Los Angeles* (1970)  
Black and white 16mm film transferred to DVD, silent  
24 seconds  
Edition of 3  
Camera: Mary Sue Ader-Andersen  
(Photographic still versions: William Leavitt)  
Courtesy of The Bas Jan Ader Estate & Patrick Painter Editions

2. Bas Jan Ader  
*Fall II, Amsterdam* (1970)  
Black and white 16mm film transferred to DVD, silent  
19 seconds  
Edition of 3  
Camera: Mary Sue Ader-Andersen  
(Photographic still versions: Ger van Elk)  
Courtesy of The Bas Jan Ader Estate & Patrick Painter Editions

3. Bas Jan Ader  
*I'm Too Sad To Tell You* (1971)  
Black and white 16mm film transferred to DVD, silent  
3 minutes, 34 seconds  
Edition of 3  
Camera: Peter Bakker  
Courtesy of The Bas Jan Ader Estate & Patrick Painter Editions

4. Bas Jan Ader  
*Broken Fall (Geometric) Westkapelle, Holland* (1971)  
Black and white 16mm film transferred to DVD, silent  
1 minutes, 49 seconds  
Edition of 3  
Camera: Peter Bakker  
Courtesy of The Bas Jan Ader Estate & Patrick Painter Editions

5. Bas Jan Ader  
*Broken Fall (Organic) Amsterdamse Bos, Holland* (1971)  
Black and white 16mm film transferred to DVD, silent  
1 minutes, 44 seconds  
Edition of 3  
Camera: Peter Bakker  
Courtesy of The Bas Jan Ader Estate & Patrick Painter Editions

6. Bas Jan Ader  
*Nightfall* (1971)  
Black and white 16mm film transferred to DVD, silent  
4 minutes, 16 seconds  
Edition of 3  
Camera: Peter Bakker  
Courtesy of The Bas Jan Ader Estate & Patrick Painter Editions

7. Bas Jan Ader  
*Primary Time* (1974)  
U-Matic tape transferred to DVD, silent  
25 minutes, 47 seconds  
Edition of 3  
Camera: Taped at University of California, Irvine by video technicians  
Courtesy of The Bas Jan Ader Estate & Patrick Painter Editions

## Photography (documentation):

8. Bas Jan Ader  
*The Artist as Consumer of Extreme Comfort* (1968/2003)  
Gelatin silver print  
13 1/4 x 19 inches  
Edition of 3  
Photo: Mary Sue Ader-Andersen  
Courtesy of The Bas Jan Ader Estate & Patrick Painter Editions

9. Bas Jan Ader  
*Study for On the Road to a New Neo Plasticism, Westkapelle, Holland* (1971)  
4 C-type prints  
3 1/2 x 3 1/2 inches each (image)  
12 x 12 inches each (framed)  
Edition of 3  
Photo: Mary Sue Ader-Andersen  
Courtesy of The Bas Jan Ader Estate & Patrick Painter Editions

10. Bas Jan Ader  
*Broken Fall (Geometric), Westkapelle, Holland* (1971)  
C-type print  
15 3/4 x 11 1/2 inches  
Edition of 3  
Photo: Mary Sue Ader-Andersen  
Courtesy of The Bas Jan Ader Estate & Patrick Painter Editions

11. Bas Jan Ader  
*Untitled (The Elements)* (1971/1973/2003)  
C-type print  
11 x 14 inches  
Edition of 3  
Photo: Neil Tucker-Birkhead  
Courtesy of The Bas Jan Ader Estate & Patrick Painter Editions

12. Bas Jan Ader  
*Untitled (Westkapelle, Holland)* (1971/2003)  
2 C-type prints  
16 x 16 inches each  
Edition of 3  
Photo: Mary Sue Ader-Andersen  
Courtesy of The Bas Jan Ader Estate & Patrick Painter Editions

13. Bas Jan Ader  
*Untitled (Swedish Fall)* (1971/2003)  
C-type prints  
16 x 16 inches each  
Edition of 3

Photo: Erik Ader  
Courtesy of The Bas Jan Ader Estate & Patrick Painter Editions

## Documentation Archive/Ephemera/Books:

\*\* all items for display case unless otherwise noted

14. Bas Jan Ader  
*Please don't leave me (Wall, second version)* (1969)  
Photo documentation of installation  
8 x 10 inches  
Courtesy of The Bas Jan Ader Estate & Patrick Painter Editions

15. Bas Jan Ader  
*Please don't leave me (Sand version)* (1969)  
Photo documentation of installation  
8 x 10 inches  
Courtesy of The Bas Jan Ader Estate & Patrick Painter Editions

16. Bas Jan Ader  
Single print from *In Search of the Miraculous (One Night in Los Angeles)* (1973)  
Gelatin silver print with hand-written text in white ink  
3 1/2 x 5 inches  
Photo: Mary Sue Ader-Andersen  
Courtesy of The Bas Jan Estate & Patrick Painter Editions

17. Bas Jan Ader  
*Implosion/The Artist Contemplating the Forces of Nature* (1967)  
Offset lithography on paper  
17 x 11 inches (image)  
12 1/4 x 18 1/8 inches (framed)  
Courtesy of The Bas Jan Ader Estate & Patrick Painter Editions

18. Bas Jan Ader  
*“What Makes Me So Pure, Almost Holy? And More” + “What Does it Mean? Cheep Cheep”* (1967)  
Published by Bas Jan Ader at Claremont Colleges Printing Service:  
Claremont Graduate School and University Center Claremont, California



Offset lithography on paper, 44 pages ring bound  
11 x 8 1/2 inches  
Edition of 100  
Courtesy of The Bas Jan Ader Estate & Patrick Painter Editions

19. Bas Jan Ader  
*Untitled photographs* (1967)  
6 photographs from Claremont Graduate School exhibition  
10 x 10 inches each  
Courtesy of The Bas Jan Ader Estate & Patrick Painter Editions

20. Bas Jan Ader at Claremont Graduate School exhibition (1967)  
Photograph  
8 x 10 inches  
Courtesy of The Bas Jan Ader Estate & Patrick Painter Editions

21. Bas Jan Ader and Mary Sue Ader-Andersen (1972)  
Photograph  
7 x 9 inches  
Courtesy of The Bas Jan Ader Estate & Patrick Painter Editions

22. Bas Jan Ader with Art & Project  
*Bulletin 89 - Bas Jan Ader, In Search of the Miraculous* (1975)  
Offset lithography on paper  
11 3/4 x 16 1/2 inches  
Edition of 800  
Collection of Philip Aarons and Shelley Fox Aarons

23. Bas Jan Ader and William Leavitt  
*Landslide: Quarterly Journal of Underground Art* (1969-1970)  
Four publications:  
1) *Landslide* (1969)  
11 3/4 x 9 inches  
2) *Landslide #2* (1969)  
11 1/4 x 8 3/4 inches  
3) *Landslide #4* (1969)  
8 3/4 x 7 inches  
4) *AAAARRGH! An at home happening in four fragments, [Landslide #5]* (1970)

8 1/2 x 7 inches  
Courtesy of The Bas Jan Ader Estate & Patrick Painter Editions

24. Bas Jan Ader  
*In Search of the Miraculous* exhibition announcement card (1975)  
4 x 6 inches  
Collection of Philip Aarons and Shelley Fox Aarons

25. Bas Jan Ader  
*Notebook by Bas Jan Ader* (c.1969)  
Lined spiral notebook  
4 x 7 inches  
Collection of Mary Sue Ader-Andersen  
Courtesy of The Bas Jan Ader Estate & Patrick Painter Editions

26. Bas Jan Ader  
*Hurtful is the Park* (1964)  
India ink on paper, 3 pages with collage, 40 pages and cover, glued  
9 1/4 x 7 1/2 inches  
Collection of Mary Sue Ader-Andersen

27. Bas Jan Ader *Final Voyage (In Search of the Miraculous)* (1975)  
Color 16mm film transferred to DVD, silent  
Camera: Bas Jan Ader and Mary Sue Ader-Andersen  
Courtesy of The Bas Jan Ader Estate & Patrick Painter Editions

28. Bas Jan Ader Photograph from *Final Voyage (In Search of the Miraculous)* (1975)  
4 x 6 inches  
Photo: Mary Sue Ader-Andersen  
Courtesy of The Bas Jan Ader Estate & Patrick Painter Editions

29. Bas Jan Ader *In Search of the Miraculous Discovery File 143/76* (2007)  
11 1/2 x 8 1/4 inches  
Published by Marion van Wijk & Dalstar, Veenman Publishers, NL

30. *Avalanche* Magazine No. 13 Summer 1976 (1976)  
Interview with Mary Sue Ader, Los Angeles, May 28, 1976

17 x 11 1/2 inches  
Published by the Center for New Art Activities, New York City  
Courtesy of Mary Sue Ader-Andersen

31. *Reader's Digest* including story of *The Boy Who Fell Over Niagara Falls* (1972)  
Magazine with hand written notes by Bas Jan Ader  
7 1/2 x 5 1/2 inches  
Published by The Reader's Digest Association, Inc., Pleasantville, New York  
Collection of Paul Andriess, the Netherlands

32. Bas Jan Ader graduate school notes (c. 1967)  
7 sheets of paper  
8 x 10 inches  
Collection of Claremont Graduate University

33. P. D. Ouspensky  
*In Search of the Miraculous* (1965)  
Book  
8 x 5 1/4 inches  
Published by Harcourt, Inc. © 1949

34. Bas Jan Ader's resume (1972)  
8 x 10 inches  
Courtesy of The Bas Jan Ader Estate & Patrick Painter Editions

35. G. W. F. Hegel  
*Phenomenology of Spirit* (1977)  
Book  
8 x 5 3/8 inches  
Published by Oxford University Press

36. Bas Jan Ader notebook entry (date unknown)  
Paper and newspaper clipping  
Courtesy of The Bas Jan Ader Estate & Patrick Painter Editions

37. Bas Jan Ader notebook entry (date unknown)  
Paper and newspaper clipping

Courtesy of The Bas Jan Ader Estate & Patrick Painter Editions

38. Bas Jan Ader  
*The Boy Who Fell Over Niagara Falls* (1972)  
Performance, documented by film and photographs  
Camera: Adriaan van Ravenstein, Art & Project, Amsterdam  
Courtesy of The Bas Jan Ader Estate & Patrick Painter Editions

39. Bas Jan Ader  
*The Boy Who Fell Over Niagara Falls* (1972)  
6 photographs  
3 1/2 x 5 inches  
Photo: Mary Sue Ader-Andersen  
Courtesy of The Bas Jan Ader Estate & Patrick Painter Editions

#### Slide Projection:

40. Bas Jan Ader  
*Light Vulnerable Objects Threatened by Eight Cement Bricks* (1970)  
Installation/performance  
(14) 35mm color slides digitized  
Courtesy of The Bas Jan Ader Estate & Patrick Painter Editions

#### Installations:

41. Bas Jan Ader  
*Please Don't Leave Me* (1969)  
Paint, light bulbs and wire  
Dimensions variable  
Edition of 3  
Courtesy of The Bas Jan Ader Estate & Patrick Painter Editions

#### Other artists:

42. Artemio  
*The Crying Game* (2004)  
DVD video  
10 minutes  
Courtesy of the artist

43. Piero Golia  
*The Vanishing* (2005)  
Courtesy of the artist

44. Martin Kersels  
*Tripping 1 (a,b,c)* (1995)  
C-type prints, triptych  
17 3/4 x 27 3/4 inches each  
Courtesy of the artist and ACME, Los Angeles

45. Gonzalo Lebrija  
*The Distance Between Me and You* (2008)  
16 mm film  
Photo: Joshua White  
Courtesy of the artist and I-20 Gallery, New York

46. Jed Lind  
*Capsized Dreamers—A Shipwrecked Shelter for 1975* (2005)  
Guppy 13 sailboat, identical to that used by Bas Jan Ader in his 1975 performance, *In Search of the Miraculous*  
150 x 65 x 72 inches  
Courtesy of the artist

47. Kate Newby  
*All Parts. All the time.* (2010)  
Rocks, acrylic paint  
Site-based installation  
Dimensions variable  
Courtesy of the artist

48. Thiago Rocha Pitta  
*O Cúmplice Secreto (The Secret Sharer)* (2008)  
16 mm film transferred to DVD, silent  
8 minutes  
Edition of 5  
Photo: Pedro Urano  
Editing: Isabel Escobar  
Courtesy of the artist

49. Fernando Sanchez  
*Pancho: Lessons from the Romantic* (2010)  
Online Exhibition  
Domain: www.panchotheromantic.com

50. Sebastian Stumpf  
*marcher dans l'air* (2002)  
(10) 35mm-slide projections, looped  
Dimensions variable  
Courtesy of the artist

51. Diego Teo  
*In Search of the Miraculous* (2007)  
Video slide show and posters  
38 seconds  
Courtesy of the artist

## Curator's Biography

**Pilar Tompkins Rivas** is an independent curator based in Los Angeles, California and is director of the Latin American branch of the Artist Pension Trust, APT: Mexico City. Additionally, she is former curator of the Claremont Museum of Art (CMA). She is currently curating several exhibitions for the Getty Foundation's *Pacific Standard Time* initiative including the Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs' Civic Virtue: the Impact of the Los Angeles Municipal Gallery and the Watts Towers Arts Center, and the UCLA Chicano Studies Resource Center's *L.A. Xicano, Mapping Another L.A.: The Chicano Art Movement*, and *L.A. Xicano, Oscar Castillo: Icons of the Invisible* to be held at UCLA's Fowler Museum. Other projects also include the exhibition *Citizen, Participant* opening in November 2010 at Darb 1718 in Cairo, Egypt. Recent exhibitions include: *Post American L.A.*, *Multiverse*, *The Passerby Museum* and *Vexing: Female Voices from East L.A. Punk* which represented the City of Los Angeles at the 2009 Guadalajara International Book Fair. In 2006, she was a founding director and curator of *The MexiCali Biennial*, a bi-national art exhibition and music event transcending the constraints of the US/Mexico border.

## Contributing Writers' Biographies

**Andrew Berardini** is a writer based in Los Angeles. He contributes regularly to *Frieze*, *Rolling Stone* and *Paper Monument*. He is a Los Angeles editor for *Mousse Magazine* and senior editor for *ArtSlant*, and recently curated original projects with Bruce Nauman, Dave Muller, Raymond Pettibon and Yoshua Okon as well as produced the Los Angeles premiere with Lawrence Weiner of the artist's film, *Water in Milk Exists*. This past year, Berardini penned a monograph on the artist Richard Jackson (published by the Rennie Collection in fall 2010) and contributed to books for the Witte de With in Rotterdam and the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts in San Francisco. His fiction appeared last year in the anthology *MYTHTYM*, edited by Trinie Dalton, and was recently included in a collaboration with artist Alexandra Grant mapping the Watts neighborhood of Los Angeles called *Five Senses/107th Street*, alongside the writers Allison Carter, Douglas Kearney, Gabriela Jauregui and Salvador Plascencia. He is currently working on a novel about Los Angeles post-punk street gangs/businessmen, modeled after the Hapsburg dynasty, which will likely turn out to be some sort of tragic love-story.

**Ciara Ennis** is the director/curator of Pitzer Art Galleries at Pitzer College and was the curator of exhibitions at the University of California Riverside/California Museum of Photography, particularly of *Still, Things Fall From the Sky* (2005), *Ruby Satellite* (2006) and *Eloi: Stumbling Towards Paradise* (2007). Ennis moved from London to Los Angeles where she was project director for *Public Offerings*, an international survey of contemporary art, at MOCA, Los Angeles, 2001. From there she became associate curator at the Santa Monica Museum of Art, where she initiated the Project Room and programmed a series of experimental exhibitions with such artists as Urs Fischer, Simon Leung, Mark Leckey, Johan Grimmonprez and Eduardo Sarabia. Ennis has been director of Pitzer Art Galleries for the past two years, during that time she curated a number of exhibitions including: *Antarctica* (2007); *Narrowcast: Reframing Global Video 1986/2008*, co-curated with Ming-Yuen S. Ma (2008); *Veronica* (2009); and *Capitalism in Question*, co-curated with Daniel Joseph Martinez (2010). Ennis' curatorial practice blurs fact with fiction and focuses on storytelling as a means to explore the fluidity and fragility of identity, revealing the subtleties of the social, political, and the cultural issues that impact our lives. She received her MA in Curating Contemporary Art from the Royal College of Art, London.

# Acknowledgements

Bas Jan Ader: *Suspended Between Laughter and Tears* was guest-curated by Pilar Tompkins Rivas and organized by Pitzer Art Galleries, Pitzer College and Claremont Museum of Art

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## With Special Thanks To:

Mary Sue Ader-Andersen  
Andrew Berardini  
Michael Briggs  
Max King Cap  
Claremont Graduate University  
Gabriela Contreras  
Molly Concannon  
Consulate General of the Netherlands  
Gabriela Corchado  
Rene Daalder  
Pedro de Llano  
Joseph Dickson  
Stephanie Estrada  
Fundación/Colección Jumex, Mexico City  
Noe Gaytan  
Michelle Ginsberg  
Alan Jones  
John Lucas  
Gisela Morales  
Bill Moreno  
Patrick Painter

Kira Poplowski  
Adrian Rivas  
Laura Skandera Trombley  
Anne Turner

## Catalogue Production:

Design: Stephanie Estrada  
Editor: Kira Poplowski  
Printing: Inland Group

This catalogue was printed in an addition of 1000 copies and is available through Pitzer College

*Bas Jan Ader: Suspended Between Laughter and Tears* was made possible by a generous grant from Fundación/Colección Jumex, Mexico City and the Consulate General of the Netherlands, San Francisco





Bas Jan Ader:  
Suspended Between Laughter and Tears  
ISBN: 978-0-9829956-0-0  
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