

GALERIE CHANTAL CROUSEL

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BAS JAN ADER

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Press Release

Born in Winschoten, the Netherlands in 1942, Bas Jan Ader studies art at the Dutch Instituut voor Kunstnijveheidsonderwijs. After several adventurous journeys at sea, an eleven-months journey on board of a cargo, that set sail from Morocco brings him to Los Angeles, where he settles in 1963. In LA, he studies philosophy, and attends the academy of art. From that moment on, Ader becomes very involved in the Californian art scene. He takes part in seminars at CalArts and at Otis College. He becomes a permanent member of the UC Irvine Art Faculty.

In 1975, Bas Jan Ader disappears during a performance : In Search of the Miraculous II, a multi-part work. From Cape Cod (USA), he attempted to cross the Atlantic in a small sailing boat. He was meant to reach Land's End (GB) after a three month's journey. Upon his arrival in Holland, an exhibition, planned at the Groninger Museum, would have presented the works and documentations made during this crossing.

During the seventies, numerous West Coast artists are interested in the relationship between art and life, between performance and photography, as well as in the difference between the art object and the documentation of an action. Bas Jan Ader knows and appreciates the conceptual work of his contemporaries – Ed Ruscha, Gordon Matta-Clark, Dan Graham, Robert Smithson, Chris Burden, John Baldessari, as well as Ger Van Elk. Like several of these artists, he experiments the relationship between his body and his presence modifying a chosen environment. He carefully documents his actions under the final form of sophisticatedly composed films and photographs, texts, publications.

To the characteristics that mark the works of his conceptual contemporaries, Bas Jan Ader adds a very personal element : sober emotion.

'Ader gestures toward the mortal risk and failure inherent in any search for the miraculous or experience of the sublime.' (Bruce Hainley in Legend of the Fall, Artforum, March 1999).

Throughout his work, BJA regularly reminds of his origins. Many of his pieces refer to, or suggest a return to The Netherlands. Thus, for instance in The Artist as Consumer of Extreme Comfort – the only work realized between 1967 and 1969 (with the exception of the magazine Landslide), the photographic self-'mise en scène' is marked by an ambivalent gravity. In this composition, Ader evokes a portrait of the melancholic artist – an allusion to Romanticism – considered as totally obsolete at the end of the sixties.

His extreme engagement in the refusal of established codes, his use of the journey as a form of art, continue inspiring and influencing successive generations of artists.

The Galerie Chantal Crousel is proud to present this first gallery exhibition of Bas Jan Ader in France.

FALL - DISTANCIATION - LOSS