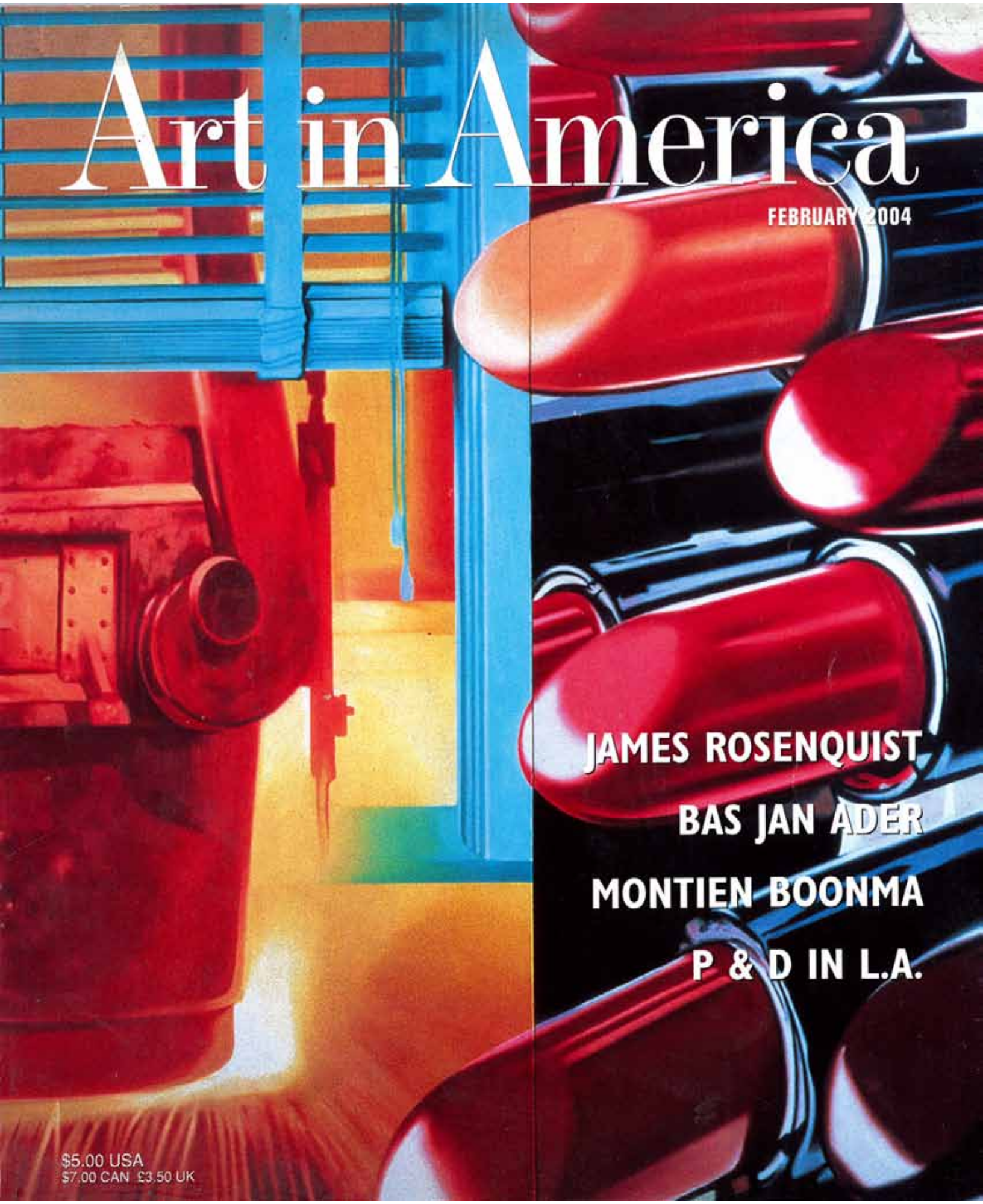

Art in America

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JAMES ROSENQUIST

BAS JAN ADER

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Cover: James Rosenquist, *House of Fire* (detail), 1981, oil on canvas, 6½ by 16½ feet. Metropolitan Museum of Art. Photo courtesy the artist.
See article beginning on page 96.

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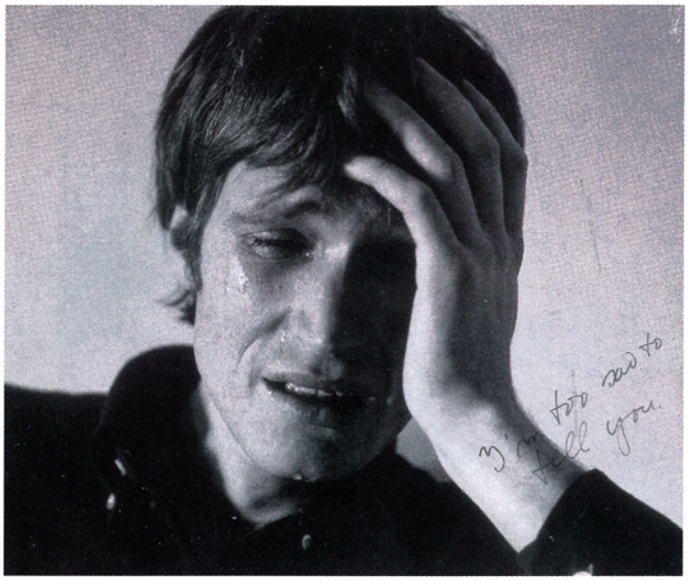
The Audit Bureau

In Dreams Begin Responsibilities

When Dutch artist Bas Jan Ader was lost at sea in 1975, he left behind a slim body of mostly photo-based work. Now posthumous editions of some of these pieces are raising provocative questions.

BY WADE SAUNDERS



Bas Jan Ader:* I'm Too Sad to Tell You*, 1970, black-and-white photograph with handwritten text, 19⅞ by 23¼ inches. Courtesy Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam.

I first saw Bas Jan Ader's work in Southern California in the mid-'70s and was transfixed. Ader had perfect visual pitch and courage. He was a Conceptual artist, or, more accurately, a "concept" artist: immateriality interested him more than materiality. He focused on an idea, a noumenon, and then searched for its phenomenal forms. He made photographs, films, installations, performances, audio- and videotapes, books and works on paper. Sometimes Ader used the same idea to create related pieces in different mediums—a photograph and a film, for example. Though Ader worked in a range of ways, he produced little.

I'm Too Sad to Tell You (1970)—a black-and-white photograph of him crying, with that phrase handwritten in the lower right-hand corner of the image—is sad, funny, pathetic, dishonest, luminous. It is a piece that experience does not render familiar. *I'm Too Sad to Tell You* still makes me shiver, even in reproduction. Ader took something that was a lie—he had worked up his fit of tears—and made it more real than most news photos. For me, the picture conveys narrative time, like a movie scene, not a movie still. (Ader made three black-and-white silent 16mm films that shared this title and subject. He put aside the earliest try, shot in Los Angeles in 1970, as well as one of the two attempts he shot in Amsterdam in 1971. In group shows he exhibited a 214-second—including 16 seconds of title—version filmed in Amsterdam.)

Ader made anti-spectacular art, and his reputation spreads by word of eye. Although his work has been more widely shown in the last decade than in the two before, we artists remain his core public. We envy the simplicity of his pieces, which, like reflections on still water, appear graspable until you reach for them. We admire Ader for the little he did, for the much he preferred not to and for other reasons. His fans span several continents and artistic generations. For some of us, his oeuvre is not good or great; it is essential.

Ader was born on Apr. 19, 1942, in wartime Holland. In 1962, aged 20, he headed south from Holland and wound up in Morocco. There he was engaged as the only crew on the *Felicidad*, a 45-foot sailboat, whose skipper turned out to be dangerously incompetent. After a difficult 11-month voyage across the Atlantic and through the Panama Canal, Ader arrived in Los Angeles. He lived in and around L.A. for the next 12 years, studying studio art and then philosophy, marrying Mary Sue Andersen, working and teaching. He also created artworks and exhibited in Holland.

Bastiaan Jan Ader, Bas Jan's father, was a Dutch Protestant reverend. During World War II, he and his wife, Johanna, who had been working in Amsterdam for a publishing company before the war, hid Jews—at first two acquaintances, then sometimes more than a dozen—in their home in the province of Groningen, in the north of Holland close to the German border. Bastiaan also organized a network to bring Jews from Amsterdam to clandestine locations in the northern provinces and elsewhere. In 1944, he was arrested by German forces and their Dutch collaborators, tortured and then held in prison. His Resistance role was much greater than his captors were able to learn. On Nov. 4, 1944, his son Erik was born; on Nov. 20, 1944, the Germans shot Bastiaan Jan Ader and six other prisoners in reprisal for the wounding of a soldier by a Resistance group. Though Bas Jan's and Erik's remarkable father was dead, he remained very present to his family, and to an extended community.

On July 9, 1975, Bas Jan Ader, then 33 years old, headed out from Chatham, Mass., on Cape Cod, in his 12½-foot-long sailboat *Ocean Wave*, bound for Falmouth, England. He intended to catch the Gulf Stream and cross the Atlantic in its flow. He anticipated the passage taking 10 weeks. Ader's craft was perhaps the smallest theretofore used in such an attempt, and both art and extreme sport figured in his planned voyage. His capsized boat was retrieved in the ocean off Ireland in April 1976; it was floating almost vertically with just the stern above water and appeared to have drifted in this fashion for at least six months. Ader's body was never found.

He had conceived this Atlantic voyage as the second part of his projected triptych *In Search of the Miraculous*, 1975. (He lifted the title from a book by philosopher P.D. Ouspensky.) He intended it to be a sort of transcendental *Gesamtkunstwerk*, which would surpass everything he had done till then and would give body to his metaphysical leanings. That increasingly important aspect of his work has been underestimated in the critical writing on him to date. The first part had been his show that opened on Apr. 22, 1975, at the Claire Copley Gallery in L.A. There Ader showed *In Search of the Miraculous (One Night in Los Angeles)*, 1973. Two versions of the work exist. One is composed of 14 11-by-14-inch black-and-white photographs, the other of 18 8-by-10-inch black-and-white photographs; Ader culled the images for both pieces from the same one-night shoot.

We see him traversing L.A. on foot at night, from inland to shoreline. He's generally shown from a distance and from behind. He carries a powerful flashlight. We feel we've lived some of the pictures or seen them in movies. Each image bears a phrase handwritten in white ink across the bottom. The phrases are lyrics from "Searchin'"—the Coasters' 1957 hit, lyrics by Jerry Lieber and music by Mike Stoller—and provide continuity and a slight narrative. Ader is on a quest but in an urban environment, a pedestrian in a city designed for cars,

Ader's boat from Art & Project's* Bulletin 89*, July 1975. Courtesy Patrick Painter Editions, Vancouver/Hong Kong.

searching for a woman when night has rendered everyone inaccessible, traveling alone but accompanied by a classic L.A. party tune. He juggles all manner of references in his "cover" of "Searchin'." Like his best pieces, it is serious and funny, offering gravitas without gravity.

At Copley, he also exhibited a continuous 80-slide projection, coupled with an audiotape, showing a nine-person chorus singing sea chanteys with a pianist accompanying them. (The singers came from the University of California, Irvine, where Ader was then teaching, and they sang live at the opening.) Typed chantey lyrics were shown on a wall under glass. I remember knowing around that time that Ader planned to carry sea songs from the New World to the Old World. He was re-performing the history of European maritime exploration and his own first transatlantic voyage, but running the geography backward.

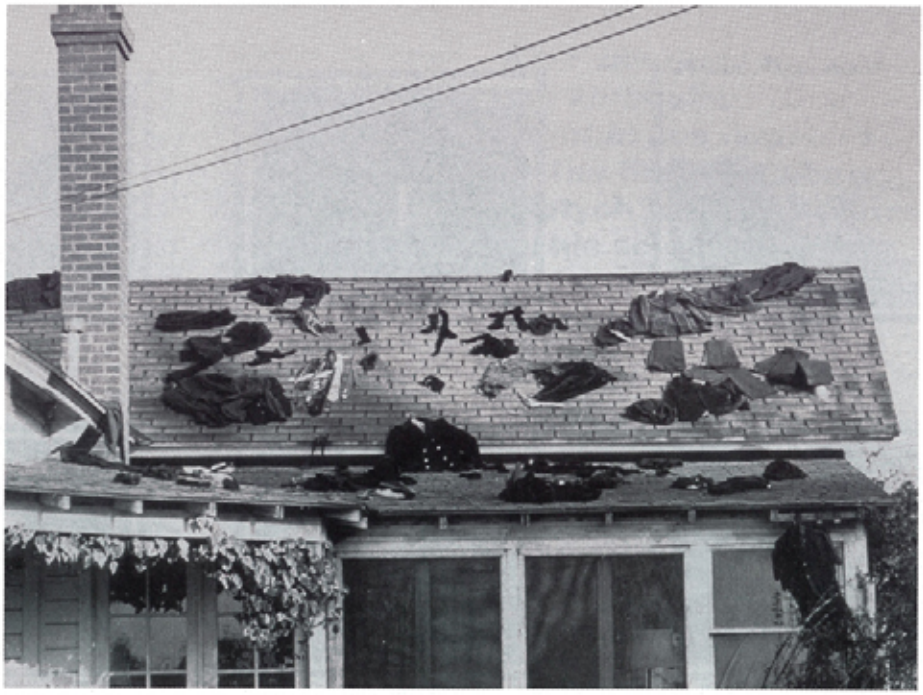
The third part of the exhibition was slated for the Groninger Museum, close to where Ader had grown up. He planned to include the pieces from the Copley show, documentation from his second Atlantic crossing and possibly a new *One Night* piece to be done in Amsterdam. In the triptych, he was perhaps trying to link two parts of his experience: his upbringing in a country he habitually described as cold, gray and bleak, and his 12-year artistic coming-of-age in warm and sunny L.A. Ader's own development had synced with that city becoming an important art center.

Much art depends on what is left out, and Ader perfected an esthetic of elision and lightness, paring each idea down to its essence. Some of his pieces began as their titles, the physical work then following. He struggled with presentation, putting aside early versions as he tried to decide how each piece should exist. Although he twice performed his work *The Boy Who Fell over Niagara Falls* (1972), he didn't repeat his installations: they were made and documented, and then they disappeared. While some Conceptual artists conceive and sell pieces as sets of instructions for the buyer to execute, Ader didn't work that way. (He did once mail out a simple proposal for a one-week show in a noncommercial venue.)

When Ader was alive, the comic and the downhearted stayed perilously balanced in his works. But the manner of his dying now disturbs that delicate equilibrium. His perishing shadows our present seeing, especially given Ader's predilection for themes of falling, failing and disappearance, and his frequent depiction of solitude, absence and loss.

Today, I am less inclined to grin in front of *All My Clothes* (1970), an 11-by-14-inch black-and-white photograph of Ader's wardrobe scattered across the roof and porch roof of his Claremont bungalow. In the lower right-hand corner of the picture, a shirt and a long coat hang from a board nailed between the ends of two of the porch-roof joists. A breeze seems to animate them.

The title and image turn around each other in a sort of double synecdoche. The title tells us the image, the image shows us the title, and both refer to Ader, who is nowhere visible. The piece looks simple and casual, in form and execution. But the seeming ease is feigned; Ader offers us an offhand inventory of a human being.



All My Clothes, *1970, black-and-white photograph, 11 by 14 inches. Courtesy Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen.*

Affect was Ader's subject, and his best pieces move us in ways rare in art and rarer still in Conceptual art. His works can elicit a psychological projection on the part of the viewer, making one feel, for instance, like crying. I've felt the impulse several times, and other writers have noted the same effect. This emotional power depends, in part, on singularity: just think of the story "The Boy Who Cried 'Wolf!'" and the fatal danger of repetition. As an artist, Ader understood that story and avoided trivializing his work. But the fact that Ader's art affects us so personally can lead us to confuse the work with the man.

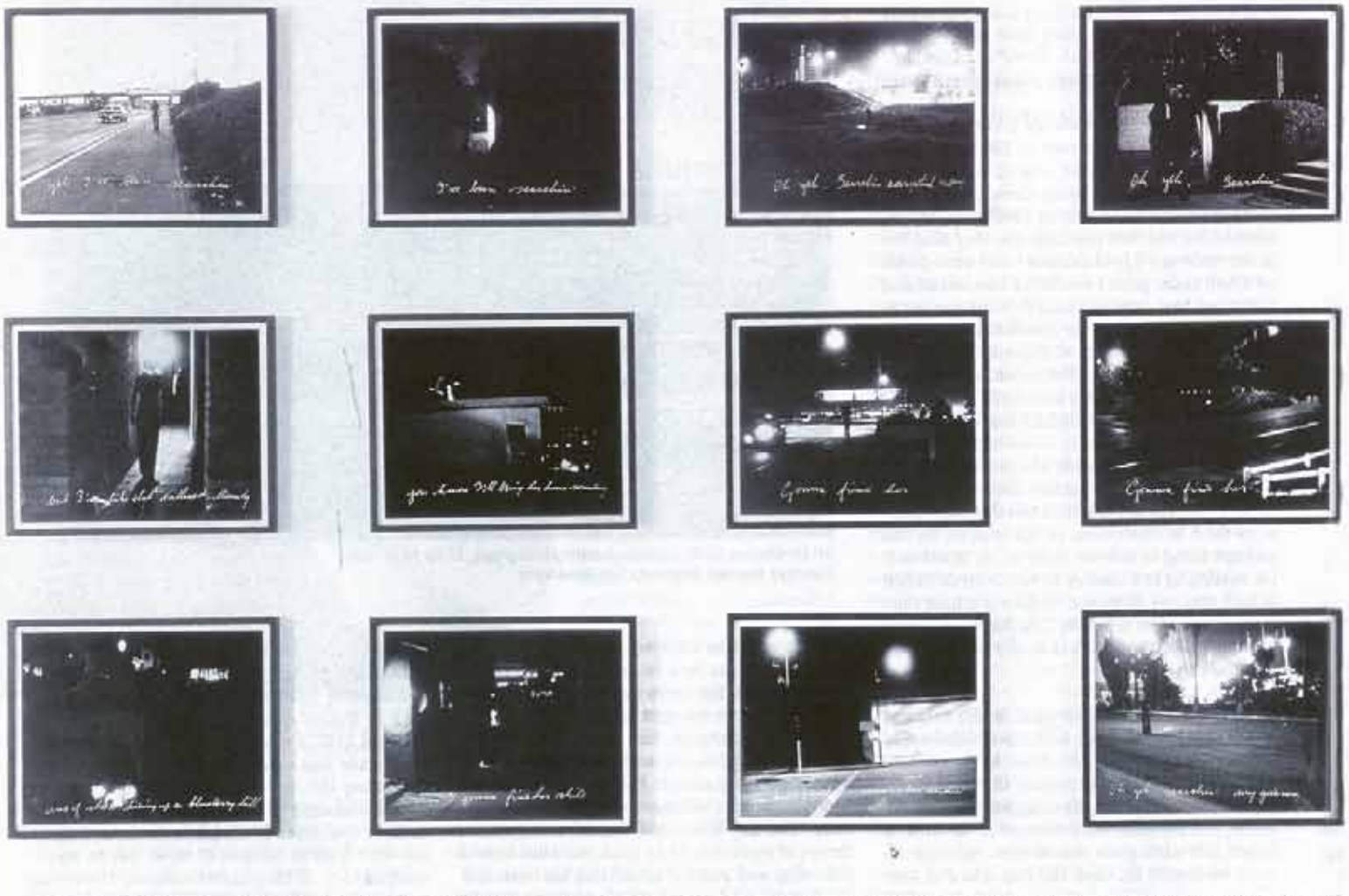
T.S. Eliot's famous distinction between "the man who suffers and the mind which creates" may now seem self-pitying, and outdated if one thinks of the lifestyles of some of today's well-known artists. But Eliot's proposed separation remains essential: artworks and their creators are not coextensive. My subject is Bas Jan Ader's art and his character as an artist. That part of his being remains visible in the works he exhibited and how he chose to present them.

Galerie Chantal Crousel in Paris recently showed seven pieces credited to Ader: two color photos, three black-and-white photographic works and two text-and-object installations. All seven pieces exist in editions of three and were physically produced after the artist's death. Initially I was glad to see Ader's works firsthand rather than reproduced in books, but then I became uneasy in the gallery: the exhibition felt strangely off to me, though I was uncertain why.

In 1971, Ader created four color photographic works (three single images and one four-part piece) in which the Westkapelle Lighthouse, so important in Piet Mondrian's painterly development, looms in the background and is named in the titles. These four photo works teeter between burlesque and homage and are among Ader's most accessible pieces. *Broken Fall (Geometric), Westkapelle, Holland* (1971) and *Pitfall on the Way to a New Neo-Plasticism, Westkapelle, Holland* (1971) were shown at Galerie Crousel. Ader made and signed one print of *Broken Fall* measuring 15⅝ by 11⅞ inches and one print of *Pitfall* measuring 15¾ by 11¾ inches. He intended to issue a number of his photos—these included—and films in editions of three, but he didn't complete any of his planned editions. The prints on view in Paris were numbered 3/3 and were made in the 1980s, as I'll explain further on. They differ ever so slightly from the lone vintage prints that Ader made, but not in any significant ways. They carry a single date, since they are part of the edition he had imagined and started. It was a treat to see them.

In *Broken Fall (Geometric)*, Ader's blurred body is about 45 degrees from vertical, and his sideways fall has started knocking over a dark blue painted sawhorse, seen from the end. Two of the legs have been pushed vertical by Ader's weight, while the other two have been lifted off the ground. Excepting the now vertical legs, the rest of the sawhorse and the artist's body form a composition in dark diagonals. Here Ader elegantly reprises Mondrian's dispute with Theo van Doesburg concerning orthogonal versus diagonal lines, but does so almost as an aside in an image that looks like a snapshot gone awry. (Ader also made a 109-second—including 17 seconds of title—black-and-white silent 16mm film *Broken Fall (Geometric), Westkapelle, Holland*, 1971, which was shot by Peter Bakker.)

A crucial figure for Ader, Mondrian mixed extreme rigor with almost jazzlike improvisation, was passionately interested in the spiritual and philosophical dimensions of art, and emigrated to America. While the location and props of Ader's



In Search of the Miraculous (One Night in Los Angeles), *1973, 18 black-and-white photographs with handwritten text in white ink, each 8 by 10 inches. Courtesy Patrick Painter Editions*

Westkapelle pieces come from Mondrian, the action of falling in these works is purely Ader's. Where Mondrian strives toward stability, Ader allows himself to be mastered by gravity. And one can sense also in these pieces an echo of Robert Rauschenberg's erasure of a Willem de Kooning drawing, a gesture that was likewise both funny and aggressive. (Ader returned to the subject of Mondrian in a series of eight large gouaches done in 1974 titled *Piet Niet* [Piet Not]; one letter of the title appears on each sheet of paper.)

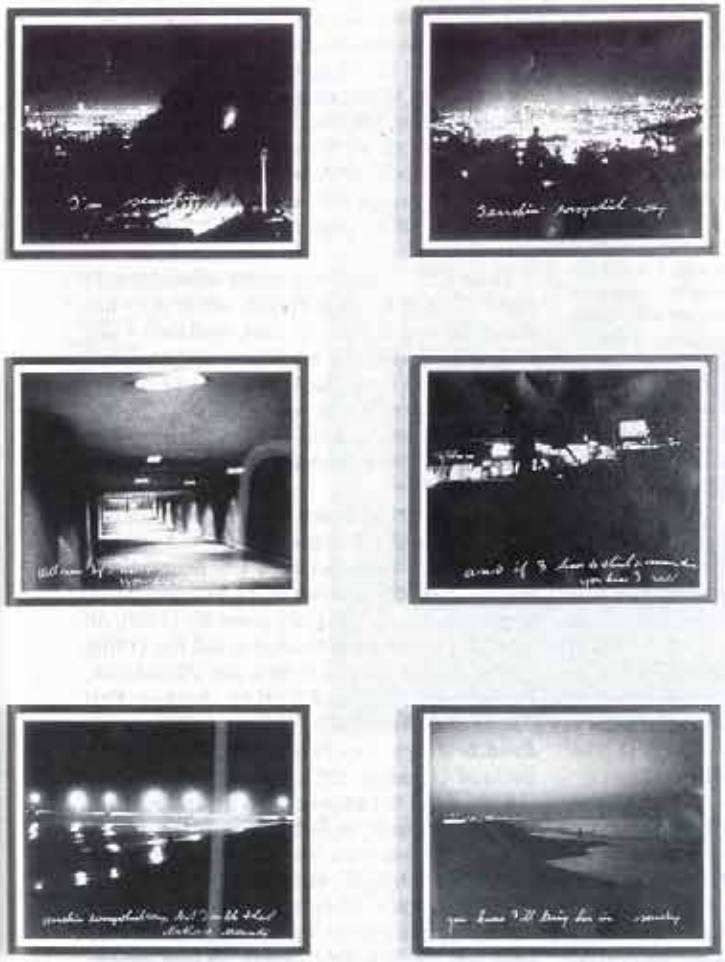
The three black-and-white photographic works shown in Paris—*Broken Fall (Organic) Amsterdamse Bos, Holland* (1971/1994), *Sawing* (1971/2003) and *The Artist as Consumer of Extreme Comfort* (1968/2003)—had two dates after their titles, as did the installations *Please Don't Leave Me* (1969/2003) and *Thoughts Unsaid, Then Forgotten* (1973/2003). The double dates indicate that these are posthumous pieces; the first date is when Ader was involved in the idea of the piece, and the second is when the Ader estate produced and then authenticated a work that Ader himself had never issued in that form.

Myriad and thorny issues surround "posthumousness," from Max Brod's decisions concerning Franz Kafka's manuscripts to Hank Williams, Jr., recording duets with Hank Williams [Sr.]. Even well-meaning efforts can be open to question. (See Raphael Rubinstein's article in *A.i.A.*, Feb. '02, describing the ongoing project to develop, print and present some of the thousands of images that Garry Winogrand shot but never looked at, since he left the rolls of film undeveloped.)

Estates can be handled in very different ways. At her death, Francesca Woodman (1958-1981) left finished prints of around 700 of her negatives and instructions to preserve her oeuvre. As interest in her work developed, Woodman's parents decided to edition posthumously prints of photographs that she herself had printed, and that curators, critics, other artists and they themselves thought best represented her oeuvre (around 150 images to date). The posthumous prints are as close as possible—in appearance and intention—to the ones made by the artist. Almost all have been done by Igor Bakht, who printed for André Kertész, and he follows Woodman's vintage prints concerning size, cropping and printing choices, including small or large original printing "errors." The posthumous prints are minutely compared to the vintage print and, if deemed acceptable, immediately stamped on the back to certify them. The edition size is always 40. In a conscious strategy to prevent collectors from keying in on only a few works and exhausting those editions, 15 prints per image remain with the estate.

Some artists act to restrict what can be done with their work after their death. The photographer Brett Weston was one of Edward Weston's four sons, and he printed an important portfolio for his father, when the latter was incapacitated. Brett Weston believed he was the only person able to properly print his own pictures. He burned the bulk of his negatives on his 80th birthday and announced his action; those photographs of his would never be printed posthumously.

Money figures in most decisions to issue posthumous works, though these editions may serve other ends as well, such as keeping the dead artist's work in public view. The moral status of such pieces may be imagined as a point on a gray scale ranging from light to dark. The completion of editions already started during the artist's lifetime falls toward the pale end of this shadow ruler, as, for example, the fabrication of metal sculptures by Tony Smith. Located in the middle values are posthumous editions consistent with the artist's methods and/or



Collection Philip E. Aarons & Shelley Fox Aarons.

expressed intentions, but started after his death. This describes the majority of the posthumous castings of Auguste Rodin's works undertaken by the Musée Rodin, though the legitimacy of a few of these bronzes is a subject unto itself. (The pieces are not cast from Rodin's original plasters, but from plaster casts of his plasters, and the precise date of particular bronze castings can be hard to verify.)

At the somber end of the scale are posthumous sculptures cast using *surmoulage*, which involves molding from an existing casting or from a work that was never intended to be cast—rather than from a plaster, clay or wax original—and which results in a slightly smaller casting having less detail than the original, since a generation has been added. Such editions have been common with a number of sculptors, Frederic Remington, for instance, and may even be made by collectors who own noncopyrighted works. The castings may originate with the artist's family members, who assert that they are only following the artist's orally expressed wishes, as was the case with Julio González's daughter, who issued bronze editions of his welded iron sculptures. Whether or not it issues posthumous editions, an artist's estate may end up far richer than the artist ever was.

Sometimes posthumous pieces are made without the consent or the knowledge of the artist's estate. In the 15 years following Man Ray's death in 1976, Lucien Treillard, Man Ray's last assistant, produced and sold many hundreds of posthumous prints of photographs, largely unknown to the artist's widow and legatee, Juliet, who left day-to-day affairs to Treillard. He continued to use the ink stamp that Man Ray had used when alive, making it difficult to distinguish between the late prints approved by the artist and Treillard's own prints, which would have had less value had their date and nature been indicated. (The forgery of vintage Man Ray prints by unknown parties is a separate matter.)

Ader saw *In Search of the Miraculous (One Night in Los Angeles)* as the first part of a triptych to be completed by his solo voyage and another *One Night* shoot in Amsterdam.

The disaccord between my memory of Bas Jan Ader's work and what I saw in Paris made me wonder what posthumousness meant in his case, so I decided to research the history of his estate. After Ader was lost at sea in 1975, his work came close to disappearing as well. But in 1979, four men who were enthusiastic about Ader's oeuvre joined forces in hopes of saving it for history. Each person brought a different expertise to the project. Ger van Elk is one of the few internationally consequential Dutch artists of his generation; he was Ader's friend from age 18 and helped him realize certain pieces. Erik Ader is Bas Jan's younger brother; he well knew Bas Jan's character and beliefs and had photographed two projects for him. (Erik Ader understands the lure of the ocean, having crewed in an around-the-world sailboat race; he is now a Dutch ambassador.) Adriaan van Ravesteijn was then co-owner of Art & Project, the Amsterdam gallery that showed Ader (and van Elk) and played a very important role in the history of Conceptual art. Martijn Sanders is a civic leader in Amsterdam and a well-known collector.

Working as a team, these individuals tracked down all they could of the widely scattered and haphazardly stored material and brought it together. Had they not acted when they did, little of Ader's oeuvre would have survived. In 1980, they hired art-history student Paul Andriesse to research and organize the archive and inventory the existing pieces. Andriesse had seen and admired Ader's work in the '70s at Art & Project and, coincident with his hiring, chose to write his art-history master's thesis on Ader. I have corresponded indirectly with Mary Sue Andersen, Bas Jan's widow, exchanged letters and spoken with Erik Ader and Paul Andriesse, and met with Ger van Elk.

Van Elk saw Ader frequently between 1969 and 1975, both in Amsterdam and in the L.A. area,

View of the 2003 exhibition "Wish You Were Here" at the Cleveland Institute of Art, showing Ader's "In Search of the Miraculous," 1975, including slide projection and soundtrack of choir singing sea chanteys, and, in background, In Search of the Miraculous (One Night in Los Angeles). *Photo Robert Muller.*

Although Ader never printed *Broken Fall (Organic)* as a stand-alone photo, we know that he intended to, so the posthumous edition approved by the estate is minimally problematic.

where van Elk lived for a couple of years in that period. The two men argued frequently about what having a "career" in art entailed. Van Elk was pragmatic: he believed in regularly producing work, which could be shown and (perhaps) sold. Making art was a sort of job.

Art, not productivity, was Ader's passion. He realized and exhibited the few ideas that moved him, while holding himself quite aloof from the L.A. scene. In a 1976 interview, Andersen said: "He taught because, well . . . he enjoyed talking. Teaching was the only opportunity he allowed himself to communicate about art, except with his very best friends."[1] (Van Elk and William Leavitt, an L.A. Conceptualist, are the artists she mentions Ader being close to.) We can't change the fact that Ader chose not to make work in quantity. (Myron Stout might be seen as another artist for whom quantity was not a concern.)

Ader had made no preparations to die, so the crucial choices facing his self-appointed conservators concerned the status of the material they recovered. With patience, field trips, interviews and their own detailed knowledge, they were able to document which pieces Ader had chosen to show, where and under what circumstances. They took their responsibility seriously, and their research was thorough.

Erik Ader wrote me that:

> It is that working group which started the work [of classifying the oeuvre]. It is also that group who took the ultimate decisions on the status of the material: "works of art," and the rest.
>
> I think Mary Sue [Andersen] was consulted and approved the choices. Mary Sue was in general delighted that it was being taken care of. Paul [Andriesse] was brought in to bring system to the material, make it accessible and presentable. Paul was also, I think, listened to before decisions on the status of the work were taken; I felt myself the least competent, but felt content with the choices and the general atmosphere of serious dedication of all in the process.

The five people cataloguing Ader's legacy saw that an almost puritanical strictness was fundamental to his art-making choices. Van Elk had already noticed that rigor when Ader was a beginning art student. They felt that Ader's stringency had to be respected in deciding what constituted finished works. With Andersen's assent, they elected to complete 10 photographic editions that Ader himself had started; Andriesse supervised the printing. One or two prints in each edition were made after Ader's death, yet they are genuine works, because Ader himself had made an identically sized and composed photographic print at least once. Such was the case with the Westkapelle pictures discussed earlier.

In 1986, Andriesse published an article on Ader in *Jong Holland*, an art-history magazine. Two years later, Andriesse's monograph *Bas Jan Ader: Kunstenaar/Artist* (Amsterdam, Openbaar Kunstbezit, 1988) appeared concurrently with the 1988 Ader show organized by the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam; it remains the crucial source concerning the oeuvre. In his book Andriesse included a 36-item list of Ader's works, representing both his own view, as an art historian, and the careful and time-consuming consensus reached by those involved with Ader's legacy. Andersen's input is evident in the list, where Andriesse cites her as "Ader's next of kin." Annotations to the inventory clarify the status of each item and its variants: about two dozen were considered to be completed works; the rest were printed matter, sketches or temporary installations for which no instructions were known. Andriesse's summary remains definitive: in the 15 years since the list was published, few new facts concerning Ader's work or working habits have come to light.

From 1977 to 1988, the estate remained with van Ravesteijn at Art & Project, where Ader had begun showing in 1972. In 1988, Andriesse—who had, besides studying art history and archiving Ader, worked in art galleries from 1977 on—began to represent the estate. (His Amsterdam gallery, founded in 1980 and bearing his name since '84, has been crucial to the Dutch art scene for two decades.)

Erik Ader and Andriesse wanted to keep the oeuvre together to the degree possible. Andriesse offered the Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen in Rotterdam a suite of seven of the editioned photographic works—*Please Don't Leave* Me (1969); *All My Clothes* (1970); *I'm Too Sad to Tell You* (1970); *Pitfall on the Way to a New Neo-Plasticism, Westkapelle, Holland* (1971); *Broken Fall (Geometric), Westkapelle, Holland* (1971); *On the Road to a New Neo-Plasticism, Westkapelle, Holland* (4 parts), 1971; *Untitled (Tea Party)* (1972). Karel Schampers, then a curator at the Museum Boijmans, worked closely with Andriesse to bring the purchase about. Excepting *On the Road to . . .*, Schampers chose vintage prints.

Andriesse knew Ader's oeuvre as well as anyone and had gained a sense of Ader's determined character and strong beliefs through his long association with the working group. Andriesse was against issuing posthumous pieces, as were the others on the team. They all felt that re-creating works or publishing posthumous editions that Ader had not undertaken himself, or specifically

Poster for Ader's 1972 exhibition at Kabinett fur Aktuelle Kunst, Bremerhaven, Karlsburg. Courtesy Galerie Paul Andriesse, Amsterdam.

Right, Broken Fall (Organic) Amsterdamse Bos, Holland, *1971/1994, gelatin silver print, 18 by 24½ inches. Courtesy Patrick Painter Editions.*

Near right, Broken Fall (Geometric), Westkapelle, Holland, *1971, color photograph, 15⅞ by 11⅞ inches. Courtesy Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen.*

Far right, Pitfall on the Way to a New Neo-Plasticism, Westkapelle, Holland, *1971, color photograph, 15⅞ by 11⅞ inches. Courtesy Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen.*

authorized in written instructions, violated what he had done and believed. (Thus they left *In Search of the Miraculous* as two unique pieces.) They had saved what Ader had finished. They refused to act in his stead by imagining what else he might have finished. But this meant that there was a strictly limited number of works to sell, so art dealers would be little interested in showing Ader's work, and the potential financial value of the estate was modest.

Andriesse represented the Bas Jan Ader estate for five years. On May 26, 1993, Andersen, the owner of the estate, sent Andriesse a letter telling him that she was withdrawing it from his care and entrusting it to Patrick Painter, who publishes artists' editions in Vancouver. In 1997, Painter opened Patrick Painter, Inc., an art gallery in Los Angeles. There he has exhibited Ader, as well as such other artists as Mike Kelley and Paul McCarthy. In her letter to Andriesse, Andersen mentioned that Painter was interested in editioning posthumous works bearing Ader's name.

Patrick Painter Editions, Inc., of Vancouver and Hong Kong, has made a specialty of publishing old material in new formats, creating primary market pieces from works generally being bought and sold in the secondary market. For instance, in 1997, Painter Editions released a suite of nine 16-by-16-inch color photographs that are the images Ed Ruscha included in his book *Nine Swimming Pools and a Broken Glass* (1968). In 1999, they published an edition comprising 30 15-by-15-inch black-and-white photographs, printed full negative, which Ruscha had used, generally cropped, in his book *Thirtyfour Parking Lots in Los Angeles* (1967). Ruscha approved and made money from these editions. He presumably was pleased to see his images go from being the contents of an artist's book to being independent artworks.

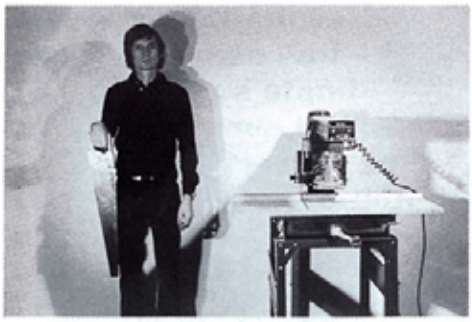
Ader presented his body mastered by gravity in several pieces. I remain struck by how real his actions were. Nothing was faked or simulated. He and the wooden chair he had been seated on rolled down the roof of his house, Ader tumbling into the shrubbery in front of it (*Fall I, Los Angeles*, 1970, a 24-second—including 6 seconds of title—black-and-white silent 16mm film shot by William Leavitt). He rode a bicycle, with a bouquet of flowers held between left hand and handlebar, into the Reguliersgracht, a canal in Amsterdam (*Fall II, Amsterdam*, 1970, a 19-second—including 6 seconds of title—black-and-white silent 16mm film shot by van Elk). In 1970, Ader published *Fall—Bas Jan Ader,* a 48-page, 7-by-7-inch book showing selected stills from these two films.

Broken Fall (Organic) Amsterdamse Bos, Holland (1971) is a 104-second—including 18 seconds of title—black-and-white silent 16mm film in which we see Ader fall from a tree. The film was shot by Peter Bakker. Several 35mm black-and-white still negatives were made simultaneously with the filming. Ader chose an image from among those negatives for the announcement and the poster of his 1972 show at the Kabinett für Aktuelle Kunst, in Bremerhaven, Germany; he cropped the picture differently in the two instances. *Broken Fall (Organic) Amsterdamse Bos, Holland* (1971/1994) is this image printed full frame as a stand-alone, 18-by-25-inch black-and-white photograph. It was approved by the Ader estate, post-Andriesse, and published by Patrick Painter Editions. I saw it in Paris.

In the picture, we first notice a tree in a bucolic park and then see Ader's vertically stretched body in midair, perhaps 3 feet below a tree branch and 10 feet above a small canal. The print is very grainy, and his body seems of the same order as the leaves and branches of the tree. Falling has had a bad rap since Genesis, and many of us have woken with a start from falls in our dreams. Yet managed falls—facilitated by playground slides, roller coasters, diving boards—figure among life's pleasurable releases. While Yves Klein, in his *Leap into the Void* (1960), remains suspended for eternity in the space before a window, Ader's body here seems to be just passing through, like Icarus plunging into the sea in Bruegel's painting, and Auden's poem.

The image is very moving and, as an announcement, would have made me want to see Ader's Bremerhaven exhibition. In that show, I could have watched his film *Broken Fall (Organic)*, which was the work Ader exhibited. While the fall is the most spectacular part of the film, it is very brief, concluding his struggle to stay suspended. Andriesse did note that the film was also "intended for execution as a photographic work, as illustrated on the poster." Although Ader never printed this photograph as a stand-alone work, and we can't know what size or cropping he would have chosen, it was the most visually resolved of the posthumous pieces on view, and was less problematic than the others, as regards Ader's possible intentions.

The original of the film *Broken Fall (Organic)*, like the originals of Ader's other 16mm films, is now at the Museum Boijmans. The working group and the estate didn't feel competent to sort, conserve and establish definitive versions of Ader's films, which were a jumble of original positive and negative film stock, projection prints, variously edited versions of



Sawing, *1971/2003, triptych, gelatin silver prints, 11 by 14 inches each. Courtesy Patrick Painter Editions.*

works, etc., dumped together in a cardboard box. So in 1992, when Schampers purchased the seven photographic works by Ader, he also agreed to preserve the films at the Museum Boijmans.

Elbrig de Groot, now curator of modern and contemporary art at the Boijmans, had, as a student, been involved with the preparation of the 1974 exhibition "Film als beeldend Medium" ("Film as a Visual Medium"), organized by the Nederlandse Kunststichting. That show included Ader's films *Fall I, Los Angeles*; *Fall II, Amsterdam;* and *I'm Too Sad to Tell You*. At the Boijmans, de Groot has devoted herself to cleaning, researching and meticulously organizing the material the museum was tendered, a complicated and time-consuming task.

Sawing (1971/2003) was the second posthumous photo work shown in Paris. (Andriesse notes that the origin of the piece may go back to 1969, since the negatives are from the same roll of film as the negatives used for *All My Clothes* and *Please Don't Leave Me.*) It consists of three deadpan 11-by-14-inch black-and-white images. In the first, Ader faces us standing next to a radial arm saw; his right hand holds up an ordinary handsaw by its handle, as an angler might a caught fish. The lighting is jarringly amateurish. In the second photo, where the lighting is less obtrusive and the image is a close-up, sparks fly as he crosscuts the wood saw with the electric saw. The third picture reprises the framing, pose and garish lighting of the first except that, while his right hand holds the shortened saw by its handle as before, his left hand now holds the cut-off part.

People who work with their hands often animate certain tools, feeling them to be bodily extensions, coddling them as though alive; is Ader making fun of this fetishism? Should we rather see *Sawing* (1971/2003) as a parable of dharma run amok? Or are we to think that the electric saw, the present, has rendered the handsaw, the past, obsolete, destroyed its utility and ravished its meaning? Is he sad after his act and showing us the evidence of his misdeed, or is he happy like an angler who has two fish rather than one?

I was a bit puzzled by *Sawing* (1971/2003), so I phoned Patrick Painter Editions in Vancouver. I spoke at length with Damian Moppett, the production manager there who handles the Ader estate. I called him six more times as I went forward with my research. He sometimes checked facts by looking in Andriesse's monograph, which he seems to consider authoritative.

Ader shot these three photographs and some similar ones, but he only printed two copies, at 11 by 14 inches, of a slightly different negative of the second image, that of the electric saw sawing the handsaw. (The two pictures can be distinguished by the pattern of the flying sparks.) Ader's *Sawing* (1971), the single image, was reproduced in Christopher Müller's *Bas Jan Ader* (Cologne, Walther König, 2000). Müller's text is a condensed version of his master's thesis, and the exhibition he organized in 2000 for three German *kunstvereinen* is the most thorough yet done on Ader. The center image of the posthumous triptych, credited courtesy of Patrick Painter, Inc., was printed, mistakenly, as *Sawing* (1971) in Brad Spence's *Bas Jan Ader* (Irvine, the Art Gallery, University of California, 1999), which also includes essays by Thomas Crow and Jan Tumlir. I've gleaned information from these catalogues and their texts.

When I asked Moppett about the triptych, he told me that Ader's notes indicated that he intended to present *Sawing* in two versions, as the existing, artist-signed vintage single image and as the newly issued, three-part work. (I don't have access to the one 6½-by-4-inch notebook, only 14 pages of which Ader wrote on, and the dozen loose-leaf pages of his that belong to the estate.) Ader left an unsigned three-part version of the piece in a 5-by-7-inch format, described as a "second version (or sketch) with no written comment" in Andriesse's 36-item list. For Andriesse, *Sawing* (1971) was the work Ader had chosen to embody his idea, since Ader invariably made 8-by-10-inch (or larger) prints of works he considered finished. Van Elk, who was present in L.A. when Ader was making the piece, remembers Ader talking about the work, trying to decide between "documentation"—the single image—and "dramatization"—the triptych. According to van Elk, Ader chose the single image at that time.

Ader could have made the triptych exhibited in Paris for about $20, had he wished to. But he did not. At least four years passed without his printing an 8-by-10-inch or an 11-by-14-inch version of the work now credited to him. He was an artist of essences, and his *Sawing* (1971) is taut and clear. For me, *Sawing* (1971/2003) feels like a first draft or rough cut: it is slack and anecdotal. Ader manifestly preferred the single-image *Sawing* (1971), since he printed it twice, writing the title on the back of one of those prints. When Ader struggled with an idea, as in the multiple incarnations of *I'm Too Sad to Tell You*, each variant he issued added to the larger conceptual whole; this is not the case with the posthumous *Sawing* (1971/2003), which in my view actually diminishes *Sawing* (1971).

The Artist as Consumer of Extreme Comfort (1968/2003) was the third posthumous photographic piece exhibited by Galerie Crousel. The dark 16-by-20-inch black-and-white print resembles a Cindy Sherman-style movie still *avant la lettre*. (Ader arranged to have the scene shot in 1968; all the negatives are underexposed.) Ader is seen from the side, seated in an armchair. His head is turned slightly away from us; his legs are crossed. A book is open on his lap; he holds a sherry glass and seemingly contemplates the fire burning in the fireplace. A medium-size, short-haired dog, Ader's pooch Lhoopie, to whom he was very attached, lies next to the chair and looks alertly toward the camera.

In his monograph, Andriesse wrote: "Ader works out an idea for a work with the title, *The Artist as a Consumer of Extreme Comfort*. He must have abandoned this project, however, as there are no prints of this in existence." Andriesse printed one of the negatives and included the picture as background material in his monograph. But he pointedly didn't include the work in his 36-item list. Since we can't know Ader's reasons for never having printed this piece—and he had years to change his mind—wouldn't it have been better to honor his judgment and not issue it as a posthumous work in his name?

I found the two "re-created" installations shown at Galerie Crousel even more problematic than the posthumous photographic works. *Please Don't Leave Me* (1969/2003) re-creates, at real scale, the image of *Please Don't Leave Me* (1969), a unique vintage black-and-white photograph that belongs to Ger van Elk. The estate has used the negative of van Elk's picture to reinvent what Ader photographed. Van Elk was never informed about Painter's plans to remake his photo in three dimensions and market it as an editioned installation.

Ader worked in his rather low-ceilinged garage studio space to produce the tableau he photographed. He painted the words of the title phrase as three lines in caps on the wall: PLEASE / DON'T / LEAVE ME. He hung a tangle of white electric wire and about five clear lightbulbs roughly aligned with the baseline of PLEASE and photographed the wall, taking in the ceiling joists, the concrete floor and part of the two sidewalls. (The glaring light so washes out the center of the picture that it is hard to count the bulbs.) Ader also lit the phrase with a reflector-bearing clip light attached to a stepladder and shot the scene that way as well. (One vintage print from this negative belongs to the Museum Boijmans; the other was purchased by the collector Jay Chiat.) The two versions are like

close variations on a theme. Ader signed the photograph with the tangle of lights and annotated it in pencil, "(studio installation)." Studio work is private and temporary work. He never publicly showed this piece as an installation.

To create the installation *Please Don't Leave Me* (1969/2003) as it was shown in Paris, a slide was made from Ader's negative so that his crudely rendered letters could be exactly repainted and his tangle of wire and lights roughly re-created. (Ader's particular ceiling and floor are not considered to be part of the "original" installation.) The newly painted letters felt false, and, seen in person, the glaring bulbs made it hard to read the phrase and hurt the viewer's eyes. The bright light rendered the pleading of the text aggressive, in a sense encouraging us to leave, despite the contrary wish expressed by the words. And in the installation at Galerie Crousel, those words seemed to be addressed to the viewer.

For Ader, *Please Don't Leave Me* (1969) was a photographic work, not an installation. (He may have first conceived it as an installation; if so, he presumably moved past that idea. He presumably also judged—rightly, in my view—that it is best as a photo.) As a picture, *Please Don't Leave Me* (1969) is impersonal, in the past, distanced. We don't know to whom the idea is addressed. The image does not record a specific reality, but rather becomes a reality itself. Ader didn't document an installation; the scale of the vintage prints confirms that these pictures were intended as artworks, not documentation. Rather, he staged two related photographs. If one doesn't understand the difference, one doesn't understand Ader's singularity. The distance and dislocation he managed in *Please Don't Leave Me* (1969) became leitmotifs for him. This is the earliest photographic work on Andriesse's list, and it remains a gem.

The second installation on view in Paris was *Thoughts Unsaid, Then Forgotten* (1973/2003). Until last year, *Thoughts* existed as a nearly evanescent trace: a 3½-by-5-inch black-and-white Polaroid that had been mailed to Ader as documentation of a piece realized in 1973 following his written instructions at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design in Halifax. NSCAD, was a clearinghouse for Conceptual art in the early '70s; many Conceptual artists showed there, and a number visited, taught or studied there.

Ader and William Leavitt had concurrent shows at NSCAD in 1973. Both artists worked by correspondence. This was common practice with Conceptual artists, who often sent instructions for pieces through the mail, and for whom ideas could be more important than their embodiments. (Consider Lawrence Weiner's ever apposite statement beginning: "1: The artist may construct the piece. 2: The piece may be fabricated." Etc.) Neither Ader nor Leavitt went to NSCAD for their exhibitions, which took place in the Mezzanine Gallery, Apr. 1-7, 1973. (Ader also showed his videotape *The Boy Who Fell over Niagara Falls*, 1972, which he had just finished editing.)

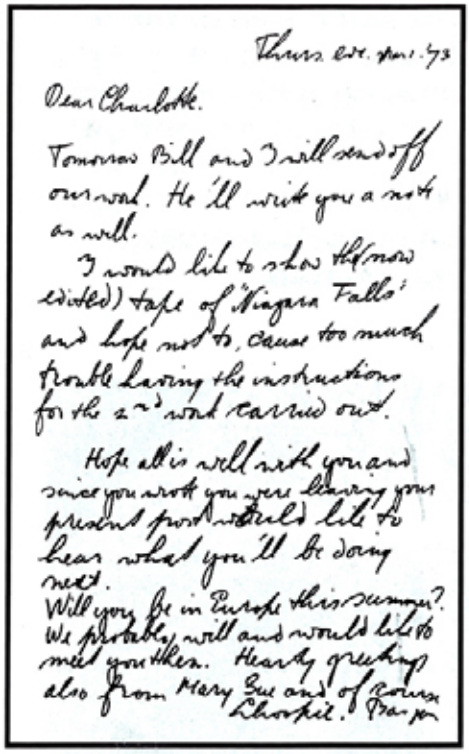
To make *Thoughts Unsaid, Then Forgotten*, that two-line phrase, in caps, was hand-painted in light gray-blue on a white wall. The letters themselves were approximately 5 inches high. The top line was approximately 54 inches from the floor, and the space between the two lines was approximately 18 inches. A simple vase of a few mixed flowers (no roses) was placed below and a little to the right of the written words, in front of the wall. A reflector-bearing clip light attached to a light stand was set at such a distance away from the wall that a circle of light just spotlighted the writing in the upper left corner and the flowers in the lower right. After a few days the wall was repainted in its original white, obliterating the painted words, but the light and flowers were not disturbed.

Ader's work was designed to last a week, the length of his exhibition at NSCAD. The piece juxta-

For Ader *Please Don't Leave Me* was a photographic work, not an installation, and yet it is as an installation that the work has now been posthumously "re-created."

Please Don't Leave Me, *1969, black-and-white photograph, 11⅛ by 14 inches. Courtesy Ger van Elk.*

Please Don't Leave Me, *1969, black-and-white photograph, 11⅛ by 14 inches. Courtesy Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen.*



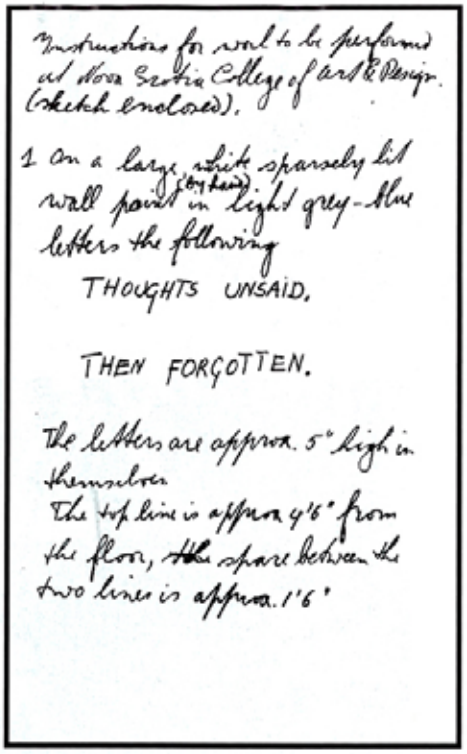
Thurs. eve. Jan. 23

Dear Charlotte.

Tomorrow Bill and I will send off our work. He'll write you a note as well.

I would like to show the (now edited) tape of "Niagara Falls" and hope not to cause too much trouble having the instructions for the 2nd work carried out.

Hope all is well with you and since you work you were leaving your present post would like to hear what you'll be doing next.
Will you be in Europe this summer? We probably will and would like to meet you then. Hearty greetings also from Mary Sue and of course Charlie. Brian



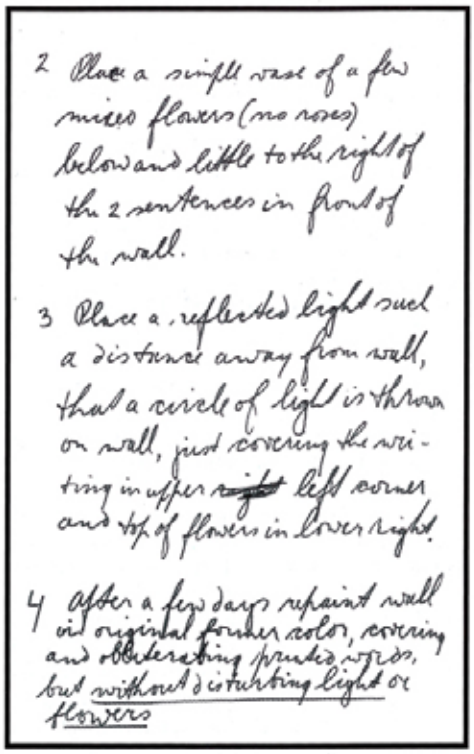
Instructions for work to be performed at Nova Scotia College of Art & Design. (sketch enclosed).

1 On a large white sparsely lit wall paint (by hand) in light grey-blue letters the following

THOUGHTS UNSAID.

THEN FORGOTTEN.

The letters are approx. 5" high in themselves
The top line is approx 4'6" from the floor, the space between the two lines is approx. 1'6"



2 Place a simple vase of a few mixed flowers (no roses) below and little to the right of the 2 sentences in front of the wall.

3 Place a reflected light such a distance away from wall, that a circle of light is thrown on wall, just covering the writing in upper ~~right~~ left corner and top of flowers in lower right.

4 After a few days repaint wall in original former color, covering and obliterating pencil traces, but without disturbing light or flowers

posed two sorts of timelines, one linked to human consciousness, the other to biological decay. I think thoughts, but I don't say them, and then I forget them. Flowers typically are offered to mark a moment. While flowers may slow down the forgetting of the moment of their being given, they wane, in their turn, like unsaid thoughts.

Ader imagined his piece for an art school where people might view it several times—we usually visit commercial-gallery or museum shows only once. It was deft: if you saw the piece twice, you might appreciate the disappearance, which was first described, then enacted. If you saw it once, you might think about loss: either because of the text (first state) or from seeing the lit but empty wall and the wilting flowers, both suggesting absence (second state).

Should you purchase *Thoughts Unsaid, Then Forgotten* (1973/2003), an installation in an edition of three, price $100,000, you will receive a light stand, but not exactly like the one in the Polaroid; a clip light differing somewhat from the one used at NSCAD; a vase quite unlike the "original"; black (not light gray-blue) oil-paint sticks and a slide which functions as a template, so that you can place, trace and fill in the letters; and a set of summary how-to instructions. The props and the instructions allow you to make approximately what appears in the photographic trace of the 1973 project. A certificate of authenticity, signed by a representative of the Ader estate, is included.

Moppett was generally forthcoming when we spoke. When I asked him who had written the instructions for *Thoughts Unsaid, Then Forgotten* (1973/2003), he replied, "Why would it make a difference?" I pressed on, and it was then that he told me that the instructions had been based on the Polaroid and written at Patrick Painter Editions. The instructions are not the artist's.

I started writing about Ader's Paris show with Christopher Müller's and Brad Spence's catalogues as source material. I wanted to know more about *Thoughts Unsaid, Then Forgotten* (1973), so I got in touch with Spence. He suggested I speak with William Leavitt. Leavitt said I should contact Richards Jarden, the artist who had proposed Ader and him to NSCAD's exhibition committee. Jarden referred me to Gerald Ferguson, who had taught at NSCAD around that time. Ferguson sent me e-mail addresses for the artist David Askevold and for Charlotte Townsend Gault, who had been the director of the Mezzanine Gallery in 1973. Askevold suggested e-mailing Ian Murray, who had been a student at the time but was already professionally active and involved in exhibitions at NSCAD. Murray replied that he had installed Ader's piece in 1973. Gault got in touch with Peter Dykhuis, who is the administrative director of the Anna Leonowens Gallery at NSCAD. Dykhuis looked in the files, found Ader's original four-page handwritten letter, scanned it and sent me the resulting computer image. My search had involved three weeks and around eight hours of phone and keyboard time; I appreciate the generosity of all in this chain.

I have described *Thoughts Unsaid, Then Forgotten* from Ader's instructions. The installation created by Painter Editions and shown at Galerie Crousel is wrong. Ader's piece called for gray-blue letters, included a comma and a period in the text, was conceived for an art school and had two states. Painter's piece has black letters, no punctuation, was shown in an art gallery and, crucially, does not change in the ways Ader specified. In Paris the letters were in place for the whole show—exit the time-based aspect of the piece. And the flowers were replaced twice a week—exit our seeing them wilt.

Ader was invited to exhibit at an art school, came up with a sweet idea, mailed his instructions across the continent, received a Polaroid documenting the work and put it away. His piece was conceived for a particular set of circumstances. He never issued the documentary photo as a work and never repeated the installation. If *Thoughts Unsaid, Then Forgotten* (1973) can be imagined still to exist as a work of art, its "DNA" is Ader's handwritten instructions; they are part of NSCAD's archive. I am not competent to judge who "owns" the instructions; that is an issue of intellectual property rights and the nature of the license Ader accorded NSCAD to produce the piece.

As an artist, Ader explored pathos in a number of works and their titles: *Please Don't Leave Me, I'm Too Sad to Tell You, All My Clothes*. It would appear that Patrick Painter Editions has issued an inaccurate, posthumous version of a temporary Ader installation without reference to his original instructions. In them, Ader called the piece "nova scotia work." He also described the text as being "2 sentences" and wrote that the piece was to be "performed."

As noted above, Painter began working with the Ader estate in 1993. According to Moppett, Patrick Painter Editions, Inc., and Mary Sue Andersen jointly own the estate. While I don't know when Patrick Painter Editions acquired its share of the property or what exactly the financial arrangement is, the company acts as the managing partner and is issuing editions based on the material in the estate. It seems clear that Patrick Painter Editions largely ignores the careful classification done by Andriesse and the working group with Andersen's approval, which I've described above.

Since I couldn't find a phone listing or electronic address for Andersen, I sent Moppett an e-mail to forward to her inquiring if she and I could speak by

Ader's written instructions (left) to Charlotte Townsend Gault for creating the installation Thoughts Unsaid, Then Forgotten, *1973, at Novia Scotia College of Art and Design (NSCAD), Halifax. Courtesy NSCAD Archives. Reproduction (above) of a 3½-by-5-inch black-and-white Polaroid sent to Ader as documentation of* Thoughts Unsaid, Then Forgotten, *1973. Courtesy Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris.*

The moral status of posthumous works may be imagined as a point on a gray scale ranging from light to dark, with the lighter zones closer to the artist's known practice and preference.

phone. He replied by e-mail, "Mary Sue has asked that you direct all questions to her through me. Probably via e-mail is best. Once you've sent it to me I'll direct it to Mary Sue and inform you of the answer as soon as I have it." I was surprised by this indirect communication. However, Andersen provided me with shooting details concerning *In Search of the Miraculous (One Night in Los Angeles)*, 1973. She no longer remembered the street address of the Claremont house where she and Bas Jan had lived for six years. In a second message that Moppett confirmed having passed along, I asked if there were any significant errors of fact or understanding that I should be aware of in Andriesse's monograph and Müller's and Spence's catalogues. More than two months passed without a reply, so I assumed that I could count on the published information.

The Ader archives are kept at Painter's Vancouver facility. When I inquired about access, Moppett said the archives were closed to researchers, though, exceptionally, Thomas Nordenstad, who ran an art gallery in Stockholm from 1987 to 1992 and in New York from 1991 to 1998, has been promised full access. Nordenstad is preparing a 20-minute-long film on Ader. (The Dutch-born, L.A.-based filmmaker Rene Daalder is also making a documentary about Ader; his hour-long work will be shown on Dutch television in spring 2004.)

Moppett told me that Patrick Painter Editions, in consultation with Andersen, decides which slides, negatives, photographs, films and documents are actually artworks that death prevented Ader from releasing and/or editioning. They next determine what form those works should take—photograph (single or multipart), installation, DVD, etc. Patrick Painter Editions then realizes the posthumous productions, and the Ader estate certifies their authenticity. But since Patrick Painter Editions is part owner of the estate, the two entities are effectively one. Moppett told me that Painter, his collaborator, Wendy Chang, and Andersen each have equal authority to sign the certificates of authenticity that accompany the posthumous pieces. Neither Painter nor Chang ever met Ader.

I've mentioned the four Westkapelle photographic pieces that Ader appears in and that van Elk shot one weekday in 1971, two of which were shown in Paris. According to Moppett, Patrick Painter Editions is now editioning a diptych of color prints from two other 2¾-by-2¾-inch negatives made that day. I know of no evidence that suggests that Ader was planning a fifth work from this material. When I asked Moppett about the title of the diptych, there was an awkward and prolonged pause, and I couldn't get him back to the subject. As this article was going to press, I learned that the new diptych, *Untitled (Westkapelle, Holland)*, 1971/2003, was released by Patrick Painter Editions in time for the December 2003 Art Basel Miami Beach fair.

I asked Moppett how Patrick Painter Editions had made and marketed DVDs (editions of three) of eight of Ader's silent 16mm films (seven black-and-white, one color) and of two videos. Moppett said that, in the case of the films, they had worked from a compilation print, since they haven't had access to the original 16mm negatives. Ader made films and cared about that medium. We can't know what he would have thought of DVDs, especially ones made under less than optimal technical circumstances. (Three of the eight films Patrick Painter Editions has released as DVDs were judged by Andriesse and the working group to be either unfinished or, worse, rejected by Ader.)

In speaking with people in the U.S. before I ever contacted Moppett, I had been told that Patrick Painter, Inc., and the Ader estate want the now cleaned and organized original films returned to them by the Museum Boijmans, and that they might undertake legal action if persuasion failed. Therefore, I asked Moppett about the ownership of the films. He asserted that they belong to the estate, and that the estate wants them back.

Ader's films now exist in a pristine and archival state because of the Museum Boijmans's pro bono work. The films may or may not belong to the estate, legally speaking. But I think the physical pieces of celluloid should be in a museum. They are in one now. In Rotterdam, Ader's films can be seen together and in forms that best represent what appear to have been his intentions. Researchers are welcome at the Boijmans, and the museum lends prints to exhibitions. In my dealings with the Boijmans staff, their understanding of deontology has been exceptional, and their commitment to Ader's esthetic choices unfailing.

Artists spend a lot of time deciding how to decide. When they do choose, they alone know what is right. In those singularly intense moments their discrimination is their being. Good artists are good artists because of their choosing. Ader elected in a variety of ways: he decided not to realize certain pieces he had thought of; he selected one version among several conceived; he chose not to re-create or preserve the installations that he had made.

When artists are alive, they choose for themselves. But when they are dead, we must choose for them. It can be hard to know whether we choose in their interest or our interest. While the dead want for nothing, the living can want for many things.

In the '80s, Andriesse and the working group, in concert with Andersen, construed Ader's oeuvre strictly: they judged, to the best of their insights and consciences, which pieces had been realized or specifically planned by Ader, and limited his corpus to those pieces. Three of these people had known Ader well, and, in reaching the consensus represented in Andriesse's 36-item reference list, they remained mindful that he had been an unusually critical and rigorous artist. At that time the Ader estate was in Holland, and there was a common understanding among all the parties concerned. As Erik Ader wrote, there were "'works of art,' and the rest."

In the 15 years since Andriesse's monograph appeared, Ader's reputation has grown, as has the demand for his work. But the facts concerning his art-making have not changed. In Amsterdam, the working group made its decisions about Ader's artistic legacy free of any personal economic stake.

Occam's razor is defined as a "scientific and philo-

sophic rule . . . which is interpreted as requiring that the simplest of competing theories be preferred to the more complex" (*Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*). It is simple to argue that, year by year, Ader completed what he wanted to complete as an artist. It is much more complicated to conjecture that Ader considered his raw material, rejects, tryouts and temporary projects to be finished and permanent pieces, and to further imagine that he planned to eventually release as artworks things he had previously put aside. This second theory, concerning Ader's relation to his own practice, fails the test of Occam's razor and of common sense. Yet that comes close to describing how Ader's legacy is apparently being handled in Vancouver.

Andriesse and the working group felt that it was wrong to decide in Ader's stead, because his intentions had vanished with him in the North Atlantic. And they worried that posthumous inventions could swamp the vintage works. They were right. We do risk losing touch with the wonderful pieces Ader left—fewer than two dozen, to my eyes—if we must always pause to ask, "Did Bas Jan Ader intend this to exist? And exist in this form?" He knew, and his choices repeatedly showed us he knew, that his art depends on stringency.

An artist's estate is usually considered authoritative concerning the authenticity of artworks, whether vintage or posthumous. Thus the five posthumous productions shown at Galerie Crousel are legally Ader's pieces, as are the other works of his that Patrick Painter Editions has published, as will be the forthcoming releases. (For reasons of space, I haven't described all the posthumous editions.)

Broken Fall (Geometric) and *Pitfall* are genuine works and looked terrific in Paris. I find the status of a couple of the posthumous editions highly debatable. For me, the other posthumous editions are not works by Ader, despite the accompanying certificates. They don't affect me the way the artist-made pieces I've seen and remember do. In consulting Andriesse's list, I note that the working group shared my opinion, since the source material for almost all the posthumous creations was already "asterisked" in varying ways in 1988; some works were not listed at all. These editions do allow a new public to know of Ader, and they give him the commercial career he himself little pursued. And his exhibition in Paris did provide me the occasion to write this article.

Ader alive made exceptional art. But the posthumous editions I saw at Galerie Crousel aren't exceptional. Worse, they seem robbed of the immediacy that characterizes his best work, with the result that they feel not only simulated but safe—a quality foreign to Ader's art as I've known it and foreign also to his character.

Bas Jan Ader's vintage works remain fresh and singular, in principle and effect. He took a great risk and was lost at sea. But through generous and concerted effort, a good part of his photographs and films reached safe harbor in Rotterdam. That work affects me deeply. □

1. Inteviewed by Willoughby Sharp and Liza Bear, *Avalanche*, summer 1976, pp. 26-27.

"Bas Jan Ader" was on view at Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris [May 22-June 28, 2003]. Ader's works were also presented recently in solo shows at Index, Swedish Contemporary Art Foundation, Stockholm [Mar. 19-Apr. 17, 2003], and at Portikus, Frankfurt am Main [Aug. 16-Sept. 14, 2003]. The exhibition "Wish You Were Here—The Art of Adventure," co-curated by David Carrier and Cathleen Chaffee, was inspired by and includes Ader's work; it was on view at the Cleveland Institute of Art [Oct. 30-Dec. 30, 2003]. Ader's work is also included in the exhibition "The Last Picture Show: Artists Using Photography, 1960-1982," curated by Douglas Fogle, which debuted at the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis [Oct. 11, 2003-Jan. 4, 2004]; the show is now on view at the UCLA Hammer Museum, Los Angeles [Feb. 8-May 9, 2004], and will travel to the Fotomuseum Winterthur, Switzerland [Nov. 26, 2004-Feb. 13, 2005]. A film of Ader's is included in "Geometry of the Human Face," at the National Museum of Photography, Copenhagen [Oct. 10, 2003-Feb. 7, 2004]. There will be a solo show of Ader's work at the Museo Rufino Tamayo, Mexico City, in spring 2004, and two of his pieces will be in "The Big Nothing," co-curated by Ingrid Schaffner and Bennett Simpson at the Institute of Contemporary Art, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia [May 1-Aug. 1, 2004].

The Dutch-born, Los Angeles-based filmmaker Rene Daalder is preparing an hour-long English-language documentary on Ader for broadcast on VPRO Television in the Netherlands in spring 2004. Daalder is focusing on Ader's philosophical interests and exploring the ways his work connected to the quite different art scenes in Amsterdam and Los Angeles in the late 1960s and early '70s. Thomas Nordanstad's documentary film on Ader, with the working title Falling out of the Water, *is scheduled to be completed by spring 2004.*

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