

# METRO PICTURES

Cotter, Holland. "Art in Review," *New York Times* (July 8, 2016): C18.

## The New York Times



Bas Jan Ader's "Thoughts Unsaid, Then Forgotten," a 1973 work at Metro Pictures.

The Dutch-born artist Bas Jan Ader (1942-1975) had a minor international following in the 1970s, disappeared from the radar in the 1980s, and reappeared in the 1990s as a myth. The myth is based on a relatively small body of work, much of it on view now in a Metro Pictures show that amounts to a rough-cut career survey. Mostly, though, the artist's reputation rests on the facts of his life, as elucidated in Alexander Dumbadze's 2013 book, "Bas Jan Ader: Death Is Elsewhere."

In 1944, the artist's father, a Protestant minister and member of the Dutch Resistance, was executed by a Nazi firing squad for sheltering Jews. Bas Jan Ader himself, in his work, had an investment in the subjects of danger and loss. As a teenager, he alternated art study with risky adventure, as when he signed on as one of a two-man crew sailing a small boat from Morocco to California. He settled in Los Angeles, and there, and on trips back to Europe, he created a series of photographed and filmed performances. In one, he rolled off the roof of a two-story house. In another, he rode a bicycle into a canal. In a third, he simply wept, with grief actual or staged, for the camera.

There's something half-comedic, half-Romantic about all of this: part Buster Keaton, part Shelley and Keats. And the concluding element in his last project, "In Search of the Miraculous," began on a larky-heroic note when, on a bright June day in 1975, he set sail alone from Cape Cod in a 12-foot boat, headed for England. The boat was recovered nearly a year later, but the artist was never seen again.

Three years earlier, Helene Winer, co-founder of Metro Pictures, had given Mr. Ader his first American show in a gallery at Pomona College in California, and now she brings her association with him full circle. There isn't much work: a video compilation, the photographic series, a few recreated installations. But there's the rock-star-style dying-young myth — a continuing performance, you might say — and it floods and fills everything.