

Meliksetian MB Briggs

Bas Jan Ader

Thoughts unsaid...

January 14 -February 25, 2023

Curated by David Quadrini

Opening Reception:

Saturday, January 14th 6-8pm



Anna Meliksetian and Michael Briggs are pleased to present **Bas Jan Ader: *Thoughts unsaid...*** the inaugural exhibition in the gallery's new Dallas location. Curated by artist and Dallas native David Quadrini, the exhibition brings together Ader's installations, films, photo works and ephemera, as well as a selection of early, never before seen paintings and works on paper.

Around the theme of the landscape, the physical, external world and the interior, psychological realm, the landscape of the mind, the works are re-contextualized to give new insight into the artist's practice.

The landscape is both the physical site of many of Ader's works exhibited, as well as a metaphor for emotional states. The influence of the philosophical thought of Wittgenstein, Camus and Kierkegaard, concepts such as determinism, free will and the absurdity of human existence, and the expression of emotional states such as loss, sadness, longing and forgetting, come to the fore and are made concrete in Ader's works.

The centerpiece of the exhibition is the 1973 installation *Thoughts unsaid then forgotten*, first

exhibited at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, a hotbed of Conceptual art in the early 1970s. Melancholy and poetic, deploying text, light and sculptural, durational elements, specifically a vase containing cut flowers that slowly decay over the course of the exhibition, the work emphasizes many of the above themes. This presentation will be the first time that this work has been installed according to the artist's original hand written instructions.

Another key work in the exhibition, *Untitled (Swedish fall)*, 1971, one of the artist's most tragic and poignant works, is a two-part photo piece embodying the internal and the external. One part depicts Ader in a pine forest standing next to a tree and the other, the artist in a prone position next to several felled trees. Ader's father, a minister who provided safe haven for the Jewish community, was executed in a forest as a collaborator by the Nazis during World War II. Although Ader was only two years old at the time, this event certainly had a profound impact on his psyche growing up. Here, the comical aspect of earlier Fall works is missing. Without being overly anecdotal, the Fall in this work is emphasized as tragic and absolute. With this in mind, the striking landscape, and the artist's position within it, has an ominous specter looming over it and takes on an atmosphere of pain, loss and fatality.

Romantic notions of the Sublime run through many of the works in the exhibition, where powerful emotions, both awe and dread, engendered by the landscape, are internalized on a personal, emotional and subjective level, unable to be easily expressed or comprehended in purely rational terms.

A selection of never before seen early works of Ader's, including paintings and works on paper are also featured. The works show the artist's creative trajectory and the transition from Modernist

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embrace of the new conceptual approach to art making that was coming to the fore in the late 1960s and of which Ader was a seminal part.

Bas Jan Ader (b. 1942 Winschoten, Holland - 1975 missing at sea) is a key artist of his generation, his work fusing European and Californian conceptual positions. Major solo exhibitions include shows at the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, the Kunsthalle Basel, the Camden Art Center, London, the Centro Galego de Arte Contemporánea / CGAC, Santiago Compostela, Spain and the Museo d'Arte Moderna di Bologna / MAMBO, Italy as well as the Venice and São Paulo Biennials in 2017 and 2012 respectively. Recently his installation *Light vulnerable objects threatened by eight cement bricks, 1970* was presented for the first time in Europe at Verein By Association in Zurich, former documenta curator Adam Szymczyk's new Kunstverein, and in 2019 his work was featured in a major three-person exhibition at The Modern Fort Worth, *Disappearing - California c.1970 Ader, Burden and Goldstein* (catalog available).

Recently Ader's work has been exhibited in group exhibitions at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the Barbican Art Gallery, London, Martin-Gropius-Bau, Berlin, FRAC Nouvelle-Aquitaine MÉCA, Bordeaux, France, Foundation Louis Vuitton, Paris, the Castello di Rivoli, Turin, the Hamburger Kunsthalle, Hamburg and the National Gallery of Australia among many others.

Ader's work is in important institutional collections worldwide, including in the US, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the Museum of Modern Art, New York, the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. and the Art Institute of Chicago.

For further information, please contact the gallery.