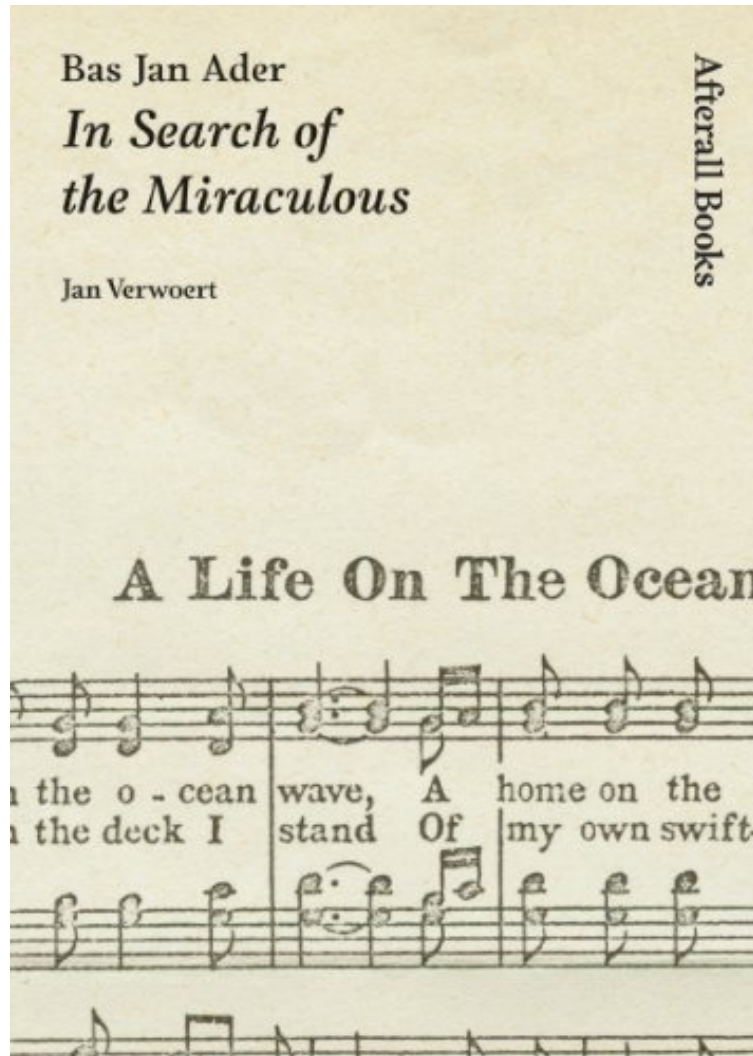


Bas Jan Ader: In Search of the Miraculous (Afterall Books / One Work)

Jan Verwoert

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Jan Verwoert : Bas Jan Ader: In Search of the Miraculous (Afterall Books / One Work) before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Bas Jan Ader: In Search of the Miraculous (Afterall Books / One Work):

18 of 19 people found the following review helpful. That's me in the photograph...By Jim Tsutsui Jr.I had to rate this book 5-stars because it so accurately and precisely captured the Art and way of Bas Jan Ader AND because I found myself in a photo in this book; at 23-years-of-age, as one of his students, performing in his final performance piece, "In Search of the Miraculous." The cover was haunting, because it was a copy of the photo-copied music sheets Bas handed out to the ten of us who were his performers at the Claire Copley gallery in Los Angeles. For the year I knew

Bas Jan, he was very secretive about his Art. He had destroyed most of his visual Art, and had lost all of his slides of his early work too. All we had to go on was his conversations about the meaning and purpose of Art. He had us all read photocopied pages from a philosophy book by Hegel. As a teacher, Bas Jan forever altered my sensitivities, and perception of Art and the world and of human beings. The direction of my life was dramatically altered as I discovered the depth and power of integrity and truth in life. This was Bas Jan's life-long search. Ironically, his search allowed me to discover something I would have loved to have talked with him about had he returned to our school. "You don't have to search for the miraculous, when it is where you come from..." I would not have the life I have, had I not crossed paths with this amazing Artist and teacher.

In 1975 Bas Jan Ader disappeared at sea while trying to sail from the East Coast of the United States to Europe as part of a project titled *In Search of the Miraculous*. Ader's considerable influence on later conceptual artists stems from the way in which he used the cool analytic and antisubjective aesthetics of conceptual art to explore experiences that would seem definitively subjective--the emotional intensity of tragedy and the romantic quest for the sublime. *In Search of the Miraculous* was conceived as a three-part project: a lonely nighttime walk from the hills of Los Angeles down to the sea, documented in photographs; the Atlantic crossing; a night walk through Amsterdam, mirroring the LA photographs. The circumstances of his disappearance have led many interpreters to identify Ader (as a person) with the role of the tragic romantic hero. The cult status of the artist as a hero whose work is authenticated through his death, however, has obscured the fact that Ader's art was a critical investigation of precisely those romantic motives his persona has now come to be identified with. This book unpicks these ties in Ader's work in order to highlight the specific and unique way in which Ader explores the existential and emotional with an artistic approach that is as conceptual and analytic as it is poetic and personal. Afterall Books are distributed by The MIT Press.

"The fulsome documentation of Ader's *In Search of the Miraculous*--a multipart project that ultimately involved the Dutch-born, Los Angeles-based artist's Quixotic and fatal attempt, under the sign of art, to traverse the Atlantic in a small sailboat--is splendidly presented in a little volume published by the British art magazine Afterall." Eric Banks Bookforum

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About the Author Jan Verwoert lives in Hamburg and works as a freelance writer. He is a member of the advisory board of the Kunstverein Munich and Guest Professor of Contemporary Art and Theory at the Academy of Umeå.

Bas Jan Ader (1942-1975) was an active member of the Los Angeles art scene from 1963 until his death, exhibiting widely and teaching at the University of California, Irvine.