In Search of the Miraculous: Bas Jan Ader and Conceptual Art
In Search of the Miraculous

Began as series of photographs of Ader walking roads of LA, captioned with lyrics from The Coasters’ song “Searchin’”.

- American pop culture
- Solitude
- Religion

What is the miraculous? How does this search find shape?
Shipwrecked in America

Born in Nazi-occupied Netherlands in 1942.

Father was a minister, executed for sheltering Jews.

At 19, Bas Jan hitchhiked to Morocco and enlisted on an American-bound ship.

The ship wrecked off the Californian coast.
Here Is Always Somewhere Else

Sold a painting to Jacqueline Kennedy.

Meanwhile found little acclaim in the Netherlands.

Several of his works suggest isolation, detachment from American culture, and possibly the loss of a sense of place in the world.

The Boy Who Fell Over Niagara Falls, 1972
All My Clothes, 1970
Gravity and Freefall

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jXN5vqqEn9w
Gurdjieff & Ouspensky
An interesting stranger

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jXN5vqqEn9w
Still searchin’’ (for an answer)

• Unclear if Bas Jan’s performances were genuine displays or works of artifice

• His humor and lack of pretense or meaning makes interpretation all the more complicated

• His work is nonetheless emotionally resonant and affecting
THOUGHTS UNSAID

THEN FORGOTTEN