

Meliksetian MB Briggs

# ARTFORUM

Critic's picks

**Bas Jan Ader**

GALERIE CHANTAL CROUSEL

10 rue Charlot

May 22, 2003–June 28, 2003



*Please don't leave me*, 1969. Installation.

Presentations of Bas Jan Ader's work are always tinged with absence. The Dutch-born "existential Conceptualist" disappeared at sea in 1975 at the age of thirty-three while attempting to cross the Atlantic in a thirteen-foot sailboat

# Meliksetian MB Briggs

for a piece called *In Search of the Miraculous II*. At Chantal Crousel's modest exhibition, installations as well as vintage and reprinted photographs come across as relics. The plaintive entreaty "PLEASE DON'T LEAVE ME" is painted on a wall, bare light bulbs glowing in the middle of the phrase; another wall-text installation, *Thoughts unsaid, then forgotten*, is accompanied by a wilting bunch of lilies. Additional works include photographs of the artist falling (a key gesture) and *Sawing*, a triptych that shows Ader using a radial saw to cut a handsaw in half. These records of his actions are fragile monuments to the quixotic absurdity underlying certain of Ader's artistic endeavors (and, maybe, those of his LA-Conceptualist compatriots). His self-portraits walk the line between mockery and seriousness, undercutting the maudlin effects of hindsight and enabling us to go beyond the notion of the artist as a tragic hero or modern-day Icarus.

— Vivian Rehberg