

Meliksetian MB Briggs

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Opinion

Bas Jan Ader: Flower Arranging as the Master Art

THE DAILY PIC: In this year's White Columns Annual, a Bas Jan Ader video throws esthetic bouquets.

Blake Gopnik, February 17, 2017



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THE DAILY PIC (#1735): This is a still from a 1974 video by Bas Jan Ader called *Primary Time*, and you could say that it stands for all the other works in “Looking Back,” the eleventh Annual at White Columns art space in New York. In fact you could say the video stands for all the rest of the art made in modern times, or possibly ever made at all.

At least that’s how I read the piece, which is nothing more than 25 minutes of Ader arranging a bouquet of flowers chosen for their primary colors – first he presents all the red ones, then the blues, then the yellows. What could be a more basic and suitably “disinterested” (ie, useless) esthetic act than flower arranging? It dates back to Neolithic times. And I like the idea that that most humble of creative gestures might stand for all the other, grander ones that we’ve made.

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