

CARRY-ON

David Horvitz



BUT MR. HORVITZ, WHERE IS THE WORK?

What has to be noted about the works of David Horvitz is their ability to resist taking one single form and exist in one specific place at a certain time. I hate to say it, but at times it can even be hard to keep track. There is a point to that however – one that deserves to be explored further, taking Horvitz's exhibition at Galerie West as a point of departure.

Horvitz's work is often multi-artist projects, sometimes including works by himself, sometimes not. Furthermore, many works exist either solely or partly online, often deliberately inserted into various existing systems, and many times seemingly commenting on our perception of these systems. For me, it seems like Horvitz is less interested in what is true or untrue about those systems, than how they in themselves are attempts of constructing supposed truths. There is a certain element of prank involved in many of Horvitz's endeavours. However, it is more sincere and slightly romantic than such, less humorous, and one could even say a bit naïve; characterized perhaps best as a deliberate stumbling upon. Noticeably, many of his works, often photographs or publications, can be downloaded from his website ('Make your own prints. Click here for the files') and are accompanied by a suggested production method ('Take them to any photo lab in a drug-store') and his signature to add on the back ('Click here for a higher resolution of the above signature-image-file').

In 2006 the clip *Newly Found Bas Jan Ader Film* appeared on YouTube. The six second clip features a man bicycling into the sea. It is announced as a work by Bas Jan Ader found at UC Irvine, where Ader was teaching in the 1970s. The story is not unlikely. Bas Jan Ader, who was lost at sea in 1975 while undertaking an Atlantic crossing that was to be the second work in a series he entitled *In Search of the Miraculous*, left a small body of highly noticeable works, mostly short films and photographs. One of these works, *Fall II, Amsterdam* from 1970, is a short sequence showing Ader biking along and then into a canal. The newly found work could be a related iteration. As many of Bas Jan Ader's works show, he was interested in inserting his own body into a relationship with gravity, investigating phases of transition, the time and space between two locatable states, from standing up to falling down, from hanging from a tree to hitting the surface of the pond below.

It was revealed that Horvitz was in fact the author of this newly found

work. Assumingly on request from the gallery Patrick Painter who represents Bas Jan Ader's estate, Youtube removed the clip for 'copyright infringement,' only for it to reappear soon again posted on an account carrying the name of PatrickPainterGaller – most likely Horvitz's work. Currently you can find the clip as the first video appearing when googling 'Bas Jan Ader,' and also on the official Bas Jan Ader website under the section Homages. However tricksterish Horvitz's effort may appear, it does also expose a great admiration of Ader's work and kinship to the ideas he brought forth.

Newly Found Bas Jan Ader Film was not produced to be shown in a gallery space. It was rather a device that, circulating on the internet, triggered certain mechanisms and revealed how a number of parties reacted to the potential existence of a never before seen Bas Jan Ader work. Horvitz reveals how it is possible to insert new information into already existing narratives and shift their immediate appearance. A work by David Horvitz is today a very visible part of a Google search for 'Bas Jan Ader'. It is fair to say that he faked his way into this hierarchy of information, but the fact that he succeeded so well is worth our attention. It points to our unfounded reliance on whatever a Google search brings us, and comments on the potentialities of the fake as well as questions our relationship to the real.

Newly Found Bas Jan Ader Film is part of the exhibition at Galerie West. In this context the work takes on a new function. Exhibited as a work authored by Horvitz (online it is still partly credited to Ader) alongside a Bas Jan Ader installation entitled *Thoughts Unsaid, Then Forgotten*, it not only questions its own legitimacy, it also casts a different light on the after-life of the aforementioned installation.

Ader originally created *Thoughts Unsaid, Then Forgotten* in 1973 for a week-long exhibition at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design in Halifax. Ader did not construct the work himself but sent written instructions to be executed on site. In an article in *Art in America's* February 2004 issue, artist Wade Saunders brought to light that a new edition of three of this installation is being sold by Patrick Painter. This edition was apparently created after a photograph of the original installation from 1973 (not Ader's written instructions), and the instruction certificate accompanying the edition was also produced by Patrick Painter. This situation of course raises the issue of intentionality. The original installation was produced to exist for seven days. Consisting of writing on the wall, a light and a vase with flowers, the

Thurs. eve. Jan. 73

Dear Charlotte.

Tomorrow Bill and I will send off our work. He'll write you a note as well.

I would like to show the (now edited) tape of "Niagara Falls" and hope not to cause too much trouble having the instructions for the 2nd work carried out.

Hope all is well with you and since you wrote you were leaving your present post I would like to hear what you'll be doing next.

Will you be in Europe this summer? We probably will and would like to meet you then. Hearty greetings also from Mary Sue and of course Chopin. Max

Instructions for wall to be performed
at Nova Scotia College of Art & Design.
(Sketch enclosed).

1 On a large, white sparsely lit
wall paint ^(by hand) in light grey-blue
letters the following

THOUGHTS UNSAID.

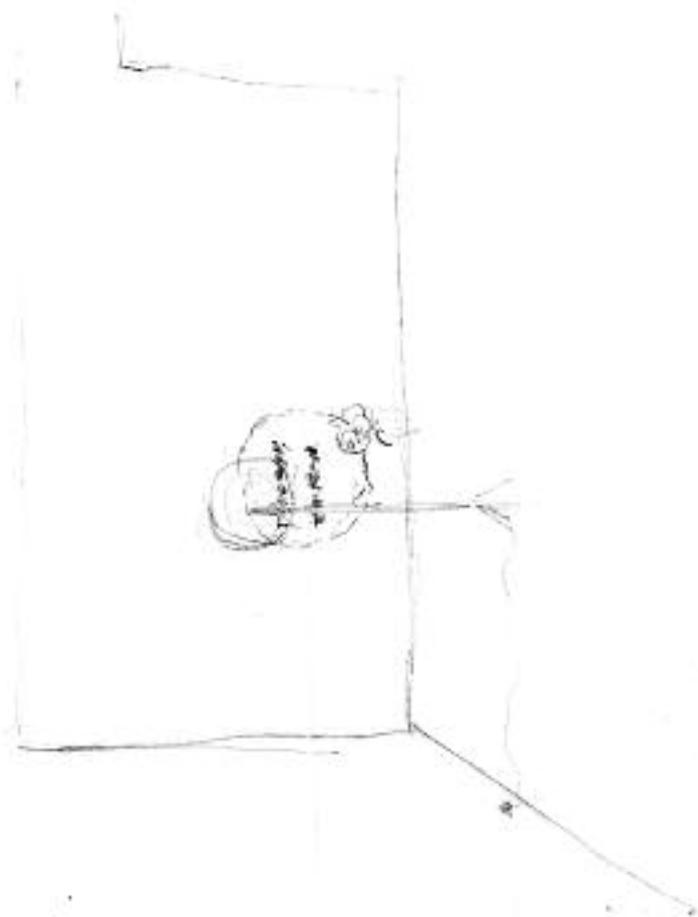
THEN FORGOTTEN.

The letters are approx. 5" high in
themselves.

The top line is approx 4'6" from
the floor, the space between the
two lines is approx. 1'6"

- 2 Place a simple vase of a few mixed flowers (no roses) below and little to the right of the 2 sentences in front of the wall.
- 3 Place a reflected light such a distance away from wall, that a circle of light is thrown on wall, just covering the writing in upper ~~right~~ left corner and top of flowers in lower right.
- 4 After a few days repaint wall in original former color, covering and obliterating printed words, but without disturbing light or flowers

musca scutellaris wal.



duration of the exhibition coincided with the flowers' withering. The writing on the wall also changed over this short period, as Ader's instructions say to paint it over after a few days.

For his exhibition at Galerie West, Horvitz has remade Ader's installation after the original hand-written letter with instructions, which Wade Saunders retrieved from the archives of Nova Scotia College of Art and Design. Horvitz has allowed for his own interpretation in the execution of the instructions, as must have been the case for the art student or installer of the original work. As the exhibition at Galerie West lasts four weeks *Thoughts Unsaid, Then Forgotten* is installed four times in total, each installation on view for seven days. Ader's written instructions are made available in the exhibition during the whole period.

It is obvious that Horvitz has set out to honor Ader's original intention as expressed in the written instructions. It however remains an open question what the status of both *Newly Found Bas Jan Ader Film* and *Thoughts Unsaid, Then Forgotten* in Horvitz's exhibition is. On the one hand they are both fakes, works that pretend to be associated to Bas Jan Ader, but whose status is questionable. Yes, Horvitz followed Ader's own instructions, but does this make the installation more genuine than the one Patrick Painter is selling? As noted by Saunders, there is nothing that points to Ader's intention of ever realizing *Thoughts Unsaid, Then Forgotten* more than once. Horvitz's installation of the two works questions not only the works in the exhibition, but points to the problematics of posthumous editions. In what ways do the editions produced by Patrick Painter differ from *Newly Found Bas Jan Ader Film* produced by Horvitz? Is Horvitz exhibiting two fake works by Bas Jan Ader or two real works by David Horvitz, or neither? Horvitz manages to make us question these differences, not only what we can legitimately locate as the work, but also what systems artworks today are distributed within and what space there is to manoeuvre within these systems.

For an exhibition at Light and Wire Gallery in 2008, Horvitz travelled first to Falmouth, on the Cape Cod Peninsula of Massachusetts, then secondly to Falmouth in Cornwall, England. This travel happened during the exhibition period. From each location he sent a postcard to the gallery, the exhibition becoming a marking of his travel. The visitor to the gallery was confronted with whatever material that had arrived, depending on how far Horvitz had traveled. The two locations happen to be where Bas Jan Ader sailed out in 1975 (Cape Cod) and where he intended to arrive (Cornwall).

Both locations, like Horvitz's postcards, mark the undertaking of a travel from one point to the other, the setting out and the expected arrival. In Bas Jan Ader's case, unfortunately an arrival that can only be imagined, as done in a photograph by Horvitz taken from the shore in Cornwall.

It is obvious that Horvitz is interested in travelling, a body moving from one place to the other, from one state to the other, setting out with or without a specific destination or merely wandering around. Whether it is one of Horvitz's ongoing online projects where you can pay him any amount and he will undertake a travel and send you documentation or artefacts, or his *Walking Partner* business cards where you can schedule a walk with him, or *Slow Disappearance*, a series of 5 photographs in which Horvitz gradually disappears as he walks along a shoreline – all of these works express an investment in every aspect of moving, everything that lies between the free and immediate movement and the conditioned and calculated movement.

A second part of the exhibition at Galerie West features a new multi-artist project entitled *Carry-On*. Fourteen artists, Horvitz included, have made works that were packed into a carry-on suitcase that Horvitz carried with him from Brooklyn to Den Haag. Horvitz asked each participant to contribute a work reflecting on the conditions and limitations of its travel as a carry-on item. Amongst the works are two small portraits of knives by Paul Branca (US), a flash drive containing videos of fireworks by Michael Bell-Smith (US), three little boxes by Joanne Cheung and Beau Sievers (US) (each with a crayon inside that colored its sides red, yellow and blue while in transit), a metal sculpture of a vaginal cavity by Colleen Brown (CA), newspapers used to wrap the other works by New York based design and publishing collaborative Dexter Sinister and a code orange terror alert T-shirt contributed by Marc Handelman (US). The works address both limitations (you can't bring knives or fireworks), conditions (the daily announced terror alert or the space in the human body often used for smuggling), but also the productivity of travelling (work produced or used along the way).

This project seems to be about location, and at the same time about the state of non-location (the two are necessarily connected). The works have little meaning when disregarding their site of origin, New York. But then again it is not this location that is their concern. When encountering these works in the gallery the viewer is led to a space and time beyond their

physical presence. Horvitz is playing a conceptual trick on the viewer, and it sets a stage for the works whose boundaries are hard to determine. Obviously the works exist in real time and space, but their subject matter takes us to the travel they underwent, the experience we have not had, but can start to imagine.

Returning to the difficulty of locating Horvitz's work, this is a good example. No doubt that the gesture of the project is how we understand its origin, and the works are in themselves entities that exist in their own right. At the same time Horvitz manages to direct our attention to what is not there, what you could call the non-location, the in between or the unpredictable. And this is where we easily take to turn and ask, but Mr. Horvitz where is the work? – At the same time recognizing that we just encountered it.

HELGA JUST CHRISTOFFERSEN, AUGUST 2010







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CARRY-ON

David Horvitz

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With work by Michael Bell-Smith, Paul Branca, Colleen Brown, Dylan Chatain, Joanne Cheung and Beau Sievers, Dexter Sinister, Marley Freeman, Marc Handelman and Prem Krishnamurthy, Tim Ridlen, Maxwell Simmer, Ed Steck and Penelope Umbrico

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