

Alec Soth's Archived Blog

October 23, 2006

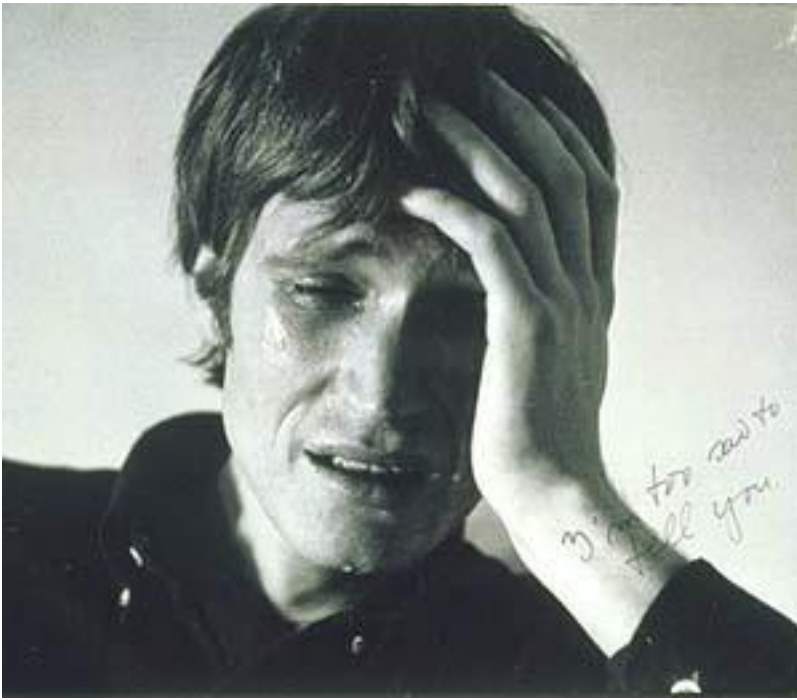
Jesper Just & Bas Jan Ader

Filed under: [filmmaking](#) — alecsothblog @ 12:46 am



still from *Something to Love*, 2005, by Jesper Just

Earlier today I saw an exhibition by [Jesper Just](#) entitled *Black Box* at the [Hirschhorn Museum](#) in D.C. The show included two of his films, *No Man is an Island II* and *Something to Love*. I particularly enjoyed *No Man...*, but thought *Something to Love* was also worthwhile. This was my first time seeing Just's work in the flesh. As the New York Times stated last Friday in a [review](#) of his current exhibition at [Perry Rubenstein](#), "Mr. Just's work has rightly been celebrated for its high production values and seductive noirish ambience." What was peculiar was seeing such production values in a museum context. While I've seen high-end Mathew Barney videos, they always include the requisite props, carpets, flags, etc. But Just's exhibition, like the title of the show, is simply a black box. I couldn't help wondering why I wasn't watching these films in a theater. When I entered the gallery one of the films was nearing completion (thus spoiling the suspense when watching the beginning of the film ten minutes later). I was also aware of visitors (myself included) stumbling through the dark looking for a seat. While I'm not asking for popcorn, the experience would have been better if it had been given start times and the routine of the cinema.



I'm too sad to tell you, 1970, by Bas Jan Ader

This is, of course, an old gripe about video art. I guess it is on my mind because of something else I encountered last week. Someone sent me a [link](#) to a lecture and documentary movie by [Rene Daalder](#) on the film art of [Bas Jan Ader](#). In the lecture, Daalder says (I'm paraphrasing):

You walk into these shows and its just atrocious how all these art institutions deal with the moving image. Unless there are big installations – that is the only way they can deal with it – it can't be commodified. I have by and large given up on the art world. It is completely absurd. Every artist has to resort to weird installation framing because that will give it value. That way you can charge \$30,000 for your DVD. Not everybody has always done this wrong. A lot of people know Brahkage, Kenneth Anger and the New American Cinema. These guys said to hell with the art world, we're going to distribute our movies like movies.

Another of the Daalder's frustrations is that it is so difficult to see Bas Jan Ader's films. Fortunately you can see a tiny RealPlayer version (along with Daalder's film) by clicking [here](#).

4 Comments

1. Alec,
That your in D.C. and probably gonna visit the Corcoran as you have a piece hanging there, would there be any chance you could come talk to one of the classes underneath the museum at the Corcoran College? Your work has been discussed alot in the past weeks, and it would be great to here some if not alot more about it. Also don't miss the amazing Eggleston/Christenberry room in that same exhibit at the Corcoran.
Colin.

Comment by [colin loughlin](#) — October 23, 2006 @ [11:35 am](#)

2. I saw the Just piece at the Hirschhorn this past Sat and commented to my friend (his first time seeing video art) that the presentation was far from ideal. The Rubenstein gallery presentation of his most recent work was much much better. Although I stumbled for quite some time while my eyes adjusted, the short black hallway at the Perry Rubenstein gallery served as a nice buffer to exit the outside world and enter into Just's. Even though the space was not ideal, I am happy the Hirschhorn did present these two works and is offering a chat with Just next month.

Comment by [Jason Hanasik](#) — October 23, 2006 @ [12:02 pm](#)

3. Sorry Colin, I was at a wedding in the Shenandoah Valley and only had a couple of hours in the city before catching my plane.

Comment by [Alec Soth](#) — October 23, 2006 @ [12:22 pm](#)

4. All is falling – Bas Jan Ader (1970)

Comment by [Frank van Eykelen](#) — October 23, 2006 @ [4:11 pm](#)