

Tacita Dean
Bas Jan Ader//1997

On 9 July 1975, Dutch conceptual artist Bas Jan Ader set sail alone from Cape Cod in America to Falmouth in England. He was making an artwork: a trilogy, which he called *In Search of the Miraculous*. It was a journey from Los Angeles across the Atlantic to Amsterdam: one night in Los Angeles (part one), an estimated sixty days at sea (part two) and one night in Amsterdam (part three). He had completed the first part, wandering around LA with a torch, until he ended up on the edge of the ocean. Now, two years later, he set sail across the Atlantic in a thirteen-foot sailing boat, taking with him a camera and tape recorder. His boat was called *Ocean Wave*.

Earlier, in April of the same year, his show in LA opened with a small choir of students singing sea shanties, accompanied by a piano. The lyrics of the songs were hung on the wall. After the opening, slides of the choir were projected life size with a recording of the songs. Prior to departure, Bas Jan Ader had arranged for a similar exhibition with a Dutch choir to take place in Holland on his arrival there. Three weeks into his trip, he lost radio contact. It was not until April of the following year that his boat was eventually found by a Spanish fishing trawler, two-thirds capsized, a hundred and fifty miles off the coast of Ireland. The fishermen took it to La Coruna, where it was stolen. Bas Jan Ader's wife and family never saw the boat with their own eyes; their information came from the translations of official documents.

Like Tristan, Bas Jan Ader believed that setting sail alone in a small boat, surrendering himself up to the forces of the sea, was the highest form of pilgrimage. The sea was the last free place on Earth. He had told people his trip would take sixty days, or ninety days if he chose not to use his sail, and let the wind and the current carry him to Europe. He was an adventurer who wanted to survive alone, and died making a work of art.

Tacita Dean, 'Bas Jan Ader' (1997); reprinted in 'Artist's Writings' section of *Tacita Dean* (London and New York: Phaidon Press, 2006) 128.

Olafur Eliasson
The Weather Forecast and Now//2001

Think with me about your extension of now.

'Now' has been stretched to last longer and longer. Unlike most animals, we (the human race) have the ability to link one moment to the next, creating our sensation of presence. Time flows continuously in a single motion, so to speak, with each moment naturally relating to the next. Edmund Husserl added that our expectations of the coming moment and the memory of the one just passed are all part of our sense of 'now'. If this were not the case, our remarkable ability to orient ourselves would probably not have developed to the extent that it has. Husserl's assumption was that 'now' can only be linked to a subject whose expectations and memory set the parameters of experience and orientation – in a space.

So, if you are still thinking with me, we can say that my understanding of 'our' time is necessarily within my 'own' time; my 'now' is inside yours, or, your 'now' is my surroundings (and vice versa). So, since our 'now' has been extended in time, a discussion about 'here' must follow, particularly with reference to spatial issues such as what constitutes our immediate surroundings.

The familiar 'now and here' (also known as 'nowhere') might just as well be 'now and there'. Since the subject moves around (in a space), there should be no doubt regarding our ability to orient ourselves not only in the near past and future, but also in the space we will enter in a moment – or that exists on a map of yesterday's activities. Our society is laid out to cope with this extended orientation, organized in accordance with principles of predictability (think, for example, of traffic safety). Our surroundings are organized to be moved in without necessarily just being 'here' or 'there' but rather with a sense of having come from up there, now being here, and soon being down there.

Imagine if we were only to orient ourselves in relation to a Barnett Newman painting. Our brain would work intermittently like a strobe lamp, and we would experience our world as an infinite number of suspended, static moments. This does not, as Newman assumed, bring you closer to some shared primordial state whilst maintaining your strange sense of certainty. In fact there is nothing 'real' outside us, only cultural constructs. Your time, my time – even Einstein's attempt to encapsulate us in objective time – was nothing but a then-practical way to cultivate our surroundings. It was practical in the sense that we now know time is gravitational, so that when standing on top of the world's tallest building, so-called time is one second longer in a hundred million years than when standing

down in the street. The practicality of the collective cultivation of our surroundings is beyond discussion. Otherwise, we would be like Truman in the film *The Truman Show*, each living in our own separate reality.

So how long is 'now', and where does 'here' end? One frontier of 'now and here' is the weather forecast, with all its people and predictions. In feudal times meteorology was a matter of life and death. The prediction of the weather originated from a real need to prolong 'now' to include tomorrow's weather, taking our overly suspended reality for a joyride into the future. Like time travellers, weather predictions can draw a small part of the future back to be included in our cultivated sense of 'here and now'.

By turning farmers' needs into a science, the weather – the broadest of all sources of collective awarenesses – cultivates complexity and unpredictability. If anything is collective, it's the weather map; its only international competition is the rise and fall of the stock market. In the West, the significance of weather forecasts has decreased in proportion to the declining importance of an agricultural economy. On network newscasts, the stock market report (often shown immediately afterwards) has eaten its way into the ever-shortening, faster-spoken weather forecasts. The daily stock market update followed by the weather forecast forms a perfect (time)frame of reference, informing us 'officially' that the recent past and the recent future belong to your now. The recent past (the daily state of the stock markets) and the immediate future (the prediction of the weather) form today's perfect collective, cultivated Now. 'Now' is eating calendar pages and digesting the upcoming weather into the daily dump of stock-market rates.

Cultivation of a collective sense of time and space works, as we can see, through representation. The weather forecast is our mediated experience thermostat letting us know if we are freezing and in which direction the wind is blowing. Through these representational layers, our immediate, tactile sensation of time and space ('now and here') is evacuated, replaced by TV and thermostats. This enables us to orient ourselves more productively as long as we are aware of the level of representation at work. Our sense of cold is activated by the temperature reading on the thermostat, not by a chill on the skin. Such mediations can be infinite; they only form a threat when you mistakenly believe that time and space are objective. Like when you are elsewhere and assume that you are here. Just like Truman.

Olafur Eliasson, 'The Weather Forecast and Now', *Cabinet*, no. 3 (Summer 2001) 64–5; reprinted in 'Artist's Writings' section of *Olafur Eliasson* (London and New York: Phaidon Press, 2002).

John Berger Into the Woods//2006

The way I go is the way back to see the future
– Jitka Hanzlová

The forest in question is far away, near the Carpathian mountains, beside the Czech village where she lived as a child. The images could be of another forest, but not for Jitka Hanzlová. Over the years she has returned to hers. She goes into it alone, and if not alone does not take pictures.

Many nature photographs are like fashion photos. This is not to dismiss them; they record and admit pleasure. Mountaintops, waterfalls, meadows, lakes, beech trees in autumn, are asked to stand there, wearing themselves and giving the camera a moody look. And why not? They are reminders of the pleasure of at last arriving after hours in airports.

Nature as hostess.

In Jitka's pictures there is no welcome. They have been taken from the inside. The deep inside of a forest, perceived like the inside of a glove by a hand within it.

She speaks of the between-forest. This is because, in the same valley as her village, there are two forests that join. Yet the preposition *between* belongs to forests in general. It's what they are about.

A forest is what exists between its trees, between its dense undergrowth and its clearings, between all its life cycles and their different timescales, ranging from solar energy to insects that live for a day. A forest is also a meeting place between those who enter it and something unnameable and attendant, waiting behind a tree or in the undergrowth. Something intangible and within touching distance. Neither silent nor audible. It is not only visitors who feel this attendant something; hunters and foresters who can read unwritten signs are even more keenly aware of it.

'I went to the forest-hills early in the morning when the forest awakes. Standing there I breathed in the wind, the unruffled voices of the birds and the silence which I love. And then when I was concentrating on a picture, I stopped hearing the silence around me.

'It was as if I was somewhere else, like in a film. The forest started to move and, as I looked through the camera, I experienced fear. Maybe it was just the framing and the stillness of the evening. As if the birds and the crickets had stopped their singing, as if the wind had come to a stop in the valley. Nothing but nothing to hear. No birds, no wind, no people, no crickets.