

Maccarone is pleased to present *I Can't Stand to Look at The Earth*, an exhibition of works by James Lee Byars, from the collection of Mr. Bob Landsman and Mrs. Sandra Lang, on view from June 7 - July 19, 2013.

The ungraspable American artist James Lee Byars' conceptual practice can be most plainly defined as sculpture, painting, and performance. His manifold output remained interchangeable with his identity, rendering the boundary between art and life indiscernible. Byars' tireless pursuit of "the perfect" can be considered a quest for an essential truth, evidencing the core of his worldview and personal ideologies. With this consideration, what we experience as Byars' "work," the atmospheres in which he created, is merely the outline of a reality, a glimpse into the parallel dimension in which he spent his time. This version of reality stands as the real work, which remains invisible to us all.

*I Can't Stand to Look at The Earth* focuses on the ever present and ever changing relationship between the miniature and the monumental that permeates nearly all of Byars output by way of grandeur, opulence, magic, and invisible gestures. His sharp-witted employment of scale, whether for an act or an object, served to disrupt the expectations and conventions of daily life, transforming our world into his. Byars met Bob Landsman in Japan in the 1960s and, as he did with many friends and colleagues, nurtured their life long friendship with a steady stream of mysterious gifts and mailed correspondence ranging from art works, to elaborately and sometimes convolutedly written and packaged letters, artist books, postcards and found objects.

Within this exhibition, these objects of delicacy serve as both reliquaries of Byars as legend and more specifically as a record of his fascination with significance of scale. His large early paintings executed in Japan depict solid black shapes eclipsing the vast majority of white backgrounds, grand yet never heavy. More minute relics demonstrate the elaborate production processes that Byars developed collaboratively with different fabricators, notably the use of microscopic text (so small that at first glance appears as a flaw or imperfection) printed on surfaces ranging from pieces of confetti to a single glass marble-sized ball and a large plate glass disc quietly reminiscing on "a drop of black perfume".

We are left with Byars mystical messages, traces, and unanswerable questions of existence in their myriad of formations. Some of the smallest things, functionless and perfect, possess the grandest of energy. Perhaps for what is considered such an enigmatic life, this is the most palpable, what Dave Hickey once referred to as the Byarsian "abbreviated opera", called up here in a ouija board of tissue papers, string, collected leaves, and so on, once again reclaiming the universe as his own.

This exhibition is organized in collaboration with NYU Steinhardt Visual Arts Administration MA program graduates led by Cristina Tafuri. Special thanks to Ellen Langan, Jonathan Berger, Klaus Ottman, 80 Washington Square East Galleries, and Michael Werner Gallery.

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