

For summer, Michael Werner Gallery, New York, is pleased to present *The Figure of Death and The Moon Column*, an exhibition of sculptures by James Lee Byars. This exhibition is one of three James Lee Byars shows simultaneously on view this summer, alongside *The Diamond Floor* at Michael Werner Gallery, London and *The Poetic Conceit and Other Works* at VW (VeneKlasen/Werner), Berlin.

Throughout his prolific career Byars pursued with tireless curiosity his life-long obsessions with ideal form and a personalized notion of “perfect”. Death and the eternal are related concepts Byars explored in several important performances and sculptures. These recurrent themes are given particularly poignant expression in the works on view at Michael Werner.

“*The Figure of Death*” (1987) is a monumental sculpture comprising ten marble cubes, stacked vertically to a height of nearly nine feet. Its austere form evokes the human figure, echoing many diverse works from throughout Byars' career, notably his performances *The Play of Death* (1977) and *The Death of James Lee Byars* (1994). Though radically different in execution, these and other "death" works posit death as an idealized state given literal form through the body.

Similarly, *The Moon Column* (1990) echoes Byars' interest in states of beauty manifest in figures of perfection. This crescent-shaped monument is sculpted from Thassos marble, a favored material of the artist because of its near-perfect whiteness and simultaneously dense and ethereal presence. As in *The Figure of Death* Byars balances intensely tactile materiality with evocative and idealized form to locate potential manifestations of perfection.

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