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JAMES LEE BYARS: FIVE POINTS MAKE A MAN
7 FEBRUARY - 29 MARCH 2008

Michael Werner Gallery is pleased to present *Five Points Make A Man*, a special two-part exhibition of American artist James Lee Byars (Detroit, 1932 - 1997, Cairo). Part one of the exhibition is *Five Points Make A Man*, performed here for the first time and presented daily in the gallery from 7 February to 1 March. This is followed from 3 to 29 March by an installation of Byars's sculpture *The Diamond Floor*, exhibited for the first time since 1995. *James Lee Byars: Five Points Make A Man* is accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue featuring a text by Brenda Richardson.

The concept of "five points make a man" is an idea Byars became increasingly fascinated with toward the end of his life: given an arrangement of five points of any kind, the mind of the viewer would construct the human figure. This idea is rooted in the minimal, vestigial human forms present in his earliest sculptural works. It later took form in several related sculptures, drawings and "death" performances Byars created in the last ten years of his life. *Five Points Make A Man* is directly related to two important "death" works of 1994, *The Death of James Lee Byars*, performed at Galerie Marie-Puck Broodthaers in Brussels, and *The Death of James Lee Byars - Five Points Make A Man*, performed in public in Venice. In the Brussels work the artist lies in state in the gallery and, upon rising, places five crystals to indicate the body's extremities; in the Venice work Byars substituted drops of water for the crystals.

Byars envisioned a more ephemeral version of the Brussels and Venice works in *Five Points Make A Man*, a performance he conceived of during his lifetime as a work for the gallery but which was never realized until now. A woman serenely sits on a gondola chair in the gallery. At some moment she rises to place five drops of water on the gallery floor in the form of a "man", each drop representing the head, two arms and two legs. The woman returns to the chair and waits until the drops have evaporated, at which time she rises again to repeat the action. Part two of the exhibition, *The Diamond Floor* (1995), presents a work Byars originally created for Fondation Cartier pour l'art Contemporain, Paris. *The Diamond Floor* is a sculptural incarnation of the underlying concept of "five points make a man" and is clearly related as well to the "death" performances. For *The Diamond Floor* five large crystal diamonds are placed on a black lacquer floor in an arrangement that mirrors the "drawing" created during the water drop performance. *Five Points Make A Man* and *The Diamond Floor* are dramatic and exquisite manifestations of Byars love for ephemeral beauty and perfect form.

James Lee Byars: Five Points Make A Man is accompanied by a catalogue with a scholarly text by Brenda Richardson, *James Lee Byars Lives In Your Head*. Ms. Richardson's in-depth essay traces the origins of *Five Points Make A Man* and *The Diamond Floor*, placing the works in the context of Byars's early sculptures and performances, and his experiences in Japan beginning in 1958.

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James Lee Byars was recently the subject of several important exhibitions, including *James Lee Byars: The Rest Is Silence*, presented concurrently in six New York galleries in 2006 and the most comprehensive survey of the artist's work ever undertaken in the U.S.; and *James Lee Byars: The Perfect Silence*, curated by Chrissie Iles for the Whitney Museum of American Art in 2005. These exhibitions placed Byars in the context of more recent American art and were met with wide critical acclaim. *Life, Love and Death*, a major retrospective curated by Klaus Ottmann, was exhibited at Schirn Kunsthalle, Frankfurt and the Musée d'Art modern et contemporain de Strasbourg in 2004. Other important exhibitions include the Venice Biennale in 1980, 1986 and 1999; Documenta V, VI, VII and VIII in Kassel; Busch-Reisinger Museum at Harvard University; De Appel Foundation, Amsterdam; Stedelijk Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; IVAM Centre del Carme, Valencia; Castello di Rivoli/Museo d'Arte Contemporanea, Turin; The Henry Moore Institute, Leeds; Fundação de Serralves, Porto; The Arts Club of Chicago; Kestner Gesellschaft, Hannover; SITE Santa Fe and Barbican Centre, London.

The gallery is open Monday through Saturday from 10 AM until 6 PM.
Please contact the gallery for more information.