



**PRESS RELEASE**  
Contemporary Art

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

**The Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit presents  
“I'M FULL OF BYARS”  
James Lee Byars – An Homage**

Detroit, MI - The work of Detroit-born sculptor and performance artist James Lee Byars has been exhibited around the world, but a retrospective of his career has never before been shown in the United States. The Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit will present the first U.S. retrospective exhibition of his work with “I'M FULL OF BYARS” James Lee Byars - An Homage, which will be on display September 11th through December 27th 2009 and will include a career-spanning selection of drawings and sculptures, as well as video presentations of the artist's performances.

A significant figure in twentieth-century art, Byars combined Asian influences with elements of Conceptual art and Minimalism to create hybrid art in the spirit of the Fluxus movement of the 1960s. His work grapples with issues of philosophical investigation and the quest for perfection, and mixes the whimsical with the profound, the permanent with the fleeting. Use of elemental forms and luxurious materials characterize his drawings and sculptures, while his performance work explores impermanence, the art of happenstance and art as social activity.

Perhaps best known for his performance “plays,” Byars considered all artwork a kind of performance in which individual forms play as actors and he often “performed” his sculptures and installations, blurring the line between media. He was known as an eccentric character whose persona was so inextricably tied to his art that he once proclaimed, “I cancel all my works at death.”

Born in Detroit in 1932, Byars studied art, philosophy and psychology at Wayne State University before relocating to Kyoto, Japan. He found inspiration in Japanese culture, particularly the abstraction and symbolism of Noh theater. He first gained recognition in the late 1950s for his ink drawings and later moved into other media. Some of Byars' best-known works include his performative sculpture *The Giant Soluble Man*, which he staged in New York in 1967, and the installation *The Death of James Lee Byars*. During his lifetime, Byars' work was exhibited widely

across Europe and in New York. While he achieved some notoriety in the United States, he garnered greater fame abroad. He lived in cities around the world, including Venice and Berne, and died in Cairo in 1997.

*The Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit is located at 4454 Woodward Avenue in Detroit, Michigan, and is open 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday; 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. Thursday and Friday. Admission is free unless otherwise indicated. For more information about MOCAD, call (313) 832-6622 or visit [www.mocadetroit.org](http://www.mocadetroit.org).*

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