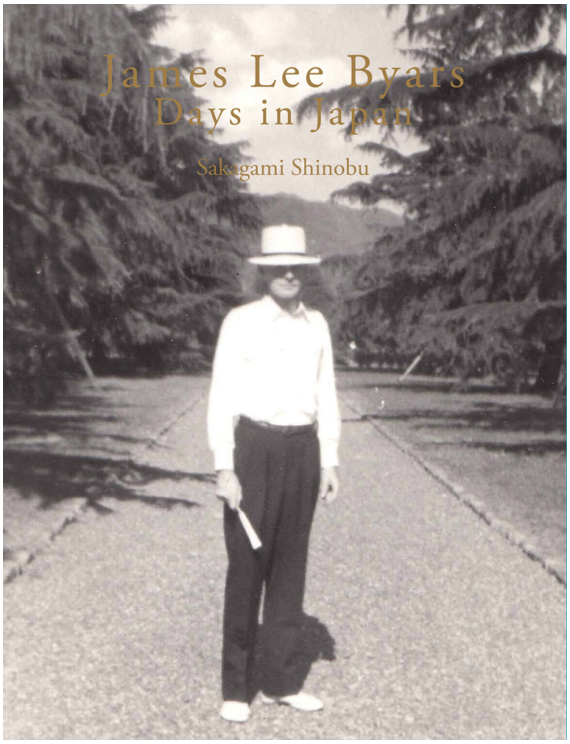
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Tel: +1 212 645 1111
Email: ussales@accartbooks.com
Web: https://www.accartbooks.com/us



James Lee Byars

Days in Japan

Sakagami Shinobu

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- There has been virtually no discussion of the formative decade in which Byars lived in Japan, nor the profound influence this country had on his artistic development - until now
- The first thorough examination of Byars's days in Japan, the evolution of his art there, and the experiences and relationships that shaped it

In the twenty years since the death of the artist and aesthetic heretic James Lee Byars, episodes from his life have taken on the aura of urban legend. Born in Detroit in 1932, he spent much of his adult life outside the United States and died in Cairo, Egypt in 1997. No country, however, influenced his development as an artist more profoundly than Japan, where he lived for most of the decade from 1958 to 1967. While there he immersed himself in Zen Buddhism, Shinto, Noh, the tea ceremony, calligraphy, and numerous other elements of Japanese aesthetic tradition. Yet virtually none of the literature written about Byars discusses that period of his life in depth, and it remains largely unknown to art critics and historians today.

This book is the first thorough examination of Byars's days in Japan, the evolution of his art there, and the experiences and relationships that shaped it as well as of his final days and death in Egypt. Written by an art historian who has spent fifteen years researching Byars's life and work, this is a seminal volume that satisfyingly elucidates the link between his art and Japanese culture.

Sakagami Shinobu is an art historian and curator at the Yamazaki Mazak Museum of Art in Nagoya, Japan. University of Arts. She specializes in the prewar and postwar history of the avant-garde art movement in Kyoto, and has published several books in Japanese on the subject, among them Hikosaka Naoyoshi: Three Events in Kyoto, 1972; Shiko-kai: Birth of the Ceramic Avant-garde in Kyoto, 1947-1956; and Kyoto Post-modernism in the Eighties.

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