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Tick, Tock, History's Clock



Felix Gonzalez-Torres, *"Untitled" (Perfect Lovers)* (1987-1990) © The Felix Gonzalez-Torres Foundation. Courtesy Andrea Rosen Gallery, New York and David Zwirner, New York/London

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Félix González-Torres, *"Untitled" (Perfect Lovers)*, (1987-1990)

One of the most important artists to emerge in the late 1980s and early 1990s, Félix González-Torres is said to have closely monitored the use of his personal biography and to have largely avoided being photographed—the better to escape having success and celebrity limit the interpretation of his work. And yet his untimely death from AIDS in 1996 has magnified the impact of González-Torres' use of everyday objects in his art as a metaphor for the process of dying and regeneration.

Known for minimal installations and sculptures, González-Torres used materials including lightbulbs, clocks, stacks of paper and packaged hard candies to create quietly conceptual and powerfully emotional works of art. In 1991, he portrayed his AIDS-afflicted lover as a 175-pound mound of shiny sweets, *"Untitled" (Portrait of Ross in LA)*, (1991). The cellophane-

wrapped candies were to be consumed by gallery visitors, so that the pile diminished steadily in quantity like his lover's dwindling body weight. Unlike his lover's health, the sweets could be regularly replenished—much as the human race repopulates every day.

Such logic animates "*Untitled*" (*Perfect Lovers*) (1987-1990), on view at David Zwirner's 20th Street gallery in a mini-survey of the legendary artist's career, "[Félix González-Torres](#)" (until 24 June). A work that features two commercial wall clocks installed side by side, it folds dime-store familiarity and metaphorical concision into a single poetic gesture.

Identical but independent, the clocks run in sync but will eventually fall out of time with one another. Because the artist specified that the clocks should be restarted when they stop, there is no mistaking his final message: life propels life, in imitation of the sustaining symbolism contained within González-Torres own creations.