

“Mapplethorpe: Look at the Pictures,” *Advocate*, March 2016.

## ADVOCATE

### Mapplethorpe: Look at the Pictures



Ken Moody and Robert Sherman, 1984

Randy Barbato and Fenton Bailey’s new documentary, *Mapplethorpe: Look at the Pictures*, is an unflinching look at Robert Mapplethorpe’s artistic life, which mirrors his unflinching images of nude bodybuilders, close-ups of erections, and objects inserted into bodily orifices. Mapplethorpe went into the dark, unlit recesses of consensual gay sex and coaxed it into the camera’s view. To wit, Mapplethorpe’s *Self Portrait* (1978), in which he wears leather chaps and a vest and stands crouched and curled, so that his face and buttocks both face the camera; a bullwhip handle has been inserted into his rectum. In an era before a handheld Internet, his images rocked multiple worlds: art, sex, and politics, to name a few.

Those only familiar with his more provocative and demanding works may be startled to see that he was also obsessed with still lifes — statuary, serene lilies — and portraits. His contemporaries, family, and celebrity subjects (Debbie Harry, Patti Smith, Fran Lebowitz) parse his personal and artistic appetites (sex, cocaine, perfection) in interviews, which are bookended by the conservative crusade against his work by U.S. Sen. Jesse Helms. Did Mapplethorpe’s flowering as an artist coincide with an increasingly conservative notion of acceptable art, or did he cause a backlash?

The film is a reminder of Mapplethorpe’s legacy as a groundbreaking artist — and of his wide shadow of influence on subsequent generations of photographers.

*Mapplethorpe: Look at the Pictures* premieres on HBO on April 4, 2016.

Above photo: Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation/Courtesy of HBO

Robert Mapplethorpe, American, 1946-1989. Gelatin silver print. Gift of the Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation to the J. Paul Getty Trust and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. Held at the Getty Research Institute, 2011.M.20.24 © Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation.

Due this March from the J. Paul Getty Museum and coinciding with a two-venue museum retrospective is Robert Mapplethorpe: The Photographs by Paul Martineau and Britt Salvesen. Drawing from the extraordinary collection jointly acquired in 2011 by the J. Paul Getty Museum and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art from the Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation as well as the Mapplethorpe Archive housed at the Getty Research Institute, the authors were given the opportunity to explore new resources and present fresh perspectives.

This publication is issued on the occasion of the exhibition "Robert Mapplethorpe: The Perfect Medium," on view at both the J. Paul Getty Museum and at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art from March 15 and March 20, respectively, through July 31; at the Musée des Beaux-Arts de Montreal from September 10 through January 15, 2017; and at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, from October 28, 2017, through February 4, 2018.

Additionally, during the run of "Robert Mapplethorpe: The Perfect Medium" the Getty Museum's Center for Photographs will also feature the exhibition "The Thrill of the Chase: The Wagstaff Collection of Photographs." Sam Wagstaff's impressive collection of photographs that was acquired by the Getty Museum in 1984 is one of the cores of the collection of the Department of Photographs. This exhibition and accompanying publication of the same name is an opportunity to focus on Wagstaff's collection and his role as one of the most important patrons and collectors of photography.

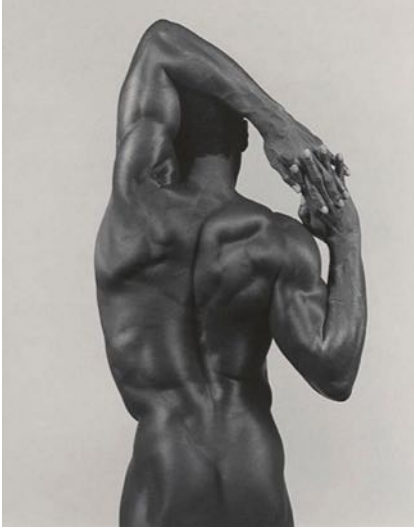


Identical self-portraits of Robert Mapplethorpe with trip cable in hand, 1974



Calla Lily, 1988

Robert Mapplethorpe, American, 1946-1989. Gelatin silver print. Jointly acquired by the J. Paul Getty Trust and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, with funds provided by the J. Paul Getty Trust and the David Geffen Foundation, 2011.9.26. © Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation.



Derrick Cross, 1983

Robert Mapplethorpe, American, 1946-1989. Gelatin silver print. Promised gift of the Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation to the J. Paul Getty Trust and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, L.2012.88.910 © Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation



Grapes, 1985

Robert Mapplethorpe, American, 1946-1989. Gelatin silver print. Jointly acquired by the J. Paul Getty Trust and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, with funds provided by the J. Paul Getty Trust and the David Geffen Foundation, 2011.7.20 © Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation.



Ken and Lydia and Tyler, 1985

Robert Mapplethorpe, American, 1946-1989. Gelatin silver print. Jointly acquired by the J. Paul Getty Trust and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, with funds provided by the J. Paul Getty Trust and the David Geffen Foundation, 2011.7.19 © Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation.



Lisa Lyon, 1982

Robert Mapplethorpe, American, 1946-1989. Gelatin silver print. Promised gift of the Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation to the J. Paul Getty Trust and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 2012.88.614. © Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation.



Bird of Paradise

Robert Mapplethorpe, 1981  
20" x 16", silver gelatin print

Having just ended March 5, "XYZ" at the Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac in the Marais, Paris, curator Peter Marino revisited the themes he believes fundamental: Mapplethorpe's XYZ portfolio (X for sex, Y for floral still lifes, and Z for male nudes). The photos going forward from this page were part of that exhibit.



Jim, Sausalito  
Robert Mapplethorpe, 1977  
20" x 16", silver gelatin print



Orchid and Hand  
Robert Mapplethorpe, 1983  
20" x 16", silver gelatin print



Jason  
Robert Mapplethorpe, 1983  
Gelatin Silver Print. 16" x 20"  
© Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation.



Lowell Smith  
Robert Mapplethorpe, 1981  
20" x 16", silver gelatin print



Phillip Prioleau  
Robert Mapplethorpe, 1980  
20" x 16", silver gelatin print