

GLADSTONE GALLERY

Robert Mapplethorpe

Curated by Roe Ethridge
515 West 24th Street
March 3 – April 14, 2018
Opening March 3, 4 – 6pm

Gladstone Gallery is pleased to present an exhibition of historic works by Robert Mapplethorpe, curated by artist, Roe Ethridge. This marks the gallery's first solo presentation as the New York representative of the Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation. Barbara Gladstone showed his work once before when she published the seminal *Flowers* portfolio in the early 1980s. Ethridge brings his own perspective as a contemporary artist who works in the same genres of portraiture and still life that are touchstones of Mapplethorpe's well-known oeuvre. Drawn from the extensive archive of the Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation, Ethridge has selected both iconic images—including self-portraits, flowers, and scenes of frank sexual provocation—and those exhibited for the first time to evoke his own experience of understanding the breadth of Mapplethorpe's mastery of process and composition. This show offers a compelling new look at Mapplethorpe's distinctive practice: rather than focusing on a specific time or subject, it explores less familiar images and themes that highlight the innovation of his work, still astonishing almost three decades after his death.

Ethridge's take on a figure who has loomed large since he began studying the medium, highlights Mapplethorpe's focus on classical and baroque, intimate and public, and restraint and licentiousness. Ethridge states – "Mapplethorpe didn't make pictures of daily life; his daily life was making pictures." He approached the body of work with an eye to contextualizing iconic poses and erotically-charged compositions of Mapplethorpe's friends, lovers, and the world around him within a larger scope of his aesthetic interests and perceptive vision. Precisely posed photographs of his lover, Milton Moore, are accompanied by more candid portraits of Moore's niece and nephew—a nod to the intimate familiarity Mapplethorpe shared with many of his subjects. Ethridge's presentation reveals mannerist expressions, unexpected subjects, and humorous moments: Patti Smith's entranced gaze with prophetic vision, the televisual appeal of actress Morgan Fairchild, and the shock of Baby Larry, all encompass Mapplethorpe's incisive eye for beauty and perversity.

Roe Ethridge surveys Mapplethorpe's legacy and sees the work afresh in a contemporary light. In this way, he presents these works to show both its historical significance and its potential to enthrall and surprise audiences in new ways. Mapplethorpe's freedom to experiment and make pictures of his daily life continues to inspire Ethridge, who states: "I had a secret trust with Mapplethorpe's work; it was giving me license to do what I was doing as a photographer."

Robert Mapplethorpe (1946–1989) was born and raised in Queens, New York. Mapplethorpe attended the Pratt Institute in Brooklyn from 1963 to 1969, where he majored in Graphic Arts and worked primarily in painting, sculpture and collage. It was not until the 1970s when the artist Sandy Daley gave Mapplethorpe a Polaroid camera that he began to experiment with photography, which he originally used as a means to document his mixed-media artworks, and develop his signature style. During his lifetime, Mapplethorpe had impressive solo exhibitions at some of the most acclaimed institutions around the world, including the Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia; the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; the National Portrait Gallery, London; the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. After his untimely death from AIDS in 1989, Mapplethorpe has been the subject of solo exhibitions at major international museums, including the Galleria dell'Accademia, Florence, Italy; Grand Palais, Paris, France; Musée Rodin, Paris, France; Moderna Museet, Stockholm, Sweden; Musée des beaux-arts de Montréal, Canada; and State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, Russia. Mapplethorpe is currently the subject of a major touring retrospective, *The Perfect Medium*, which opened at the J. Paul Getty Museum and Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), Los Angeles in 2016, and has recently toured to Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, Canada and the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia, on view through March 4, 2018.

Cyprien Gaillard
530 West 21st Street
Through April 14, 2018

Robert Bechtle
130 East 64th Street
March 10 – April 28, 2018

Roe Ethridge
12 Rue du Grand Cerf
April 17 – June 16, 2018

For further information, please contact Andrew Huff: ahuff@gladstonegallery.com
New York gallery hours: Tuesday–Saturday, 10am–6pm
Brussels gallery hours: Tuesday–Friday, 10am–6pm and Saturday, 12pm–6pm