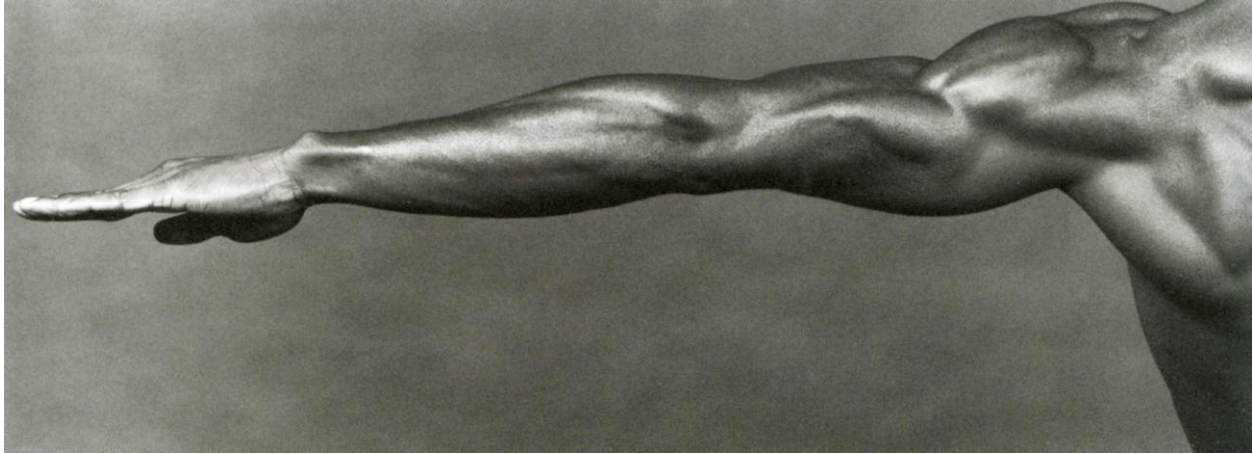


THE ROBERT MAPPLETHORPE FOUNDATION, INC.

THE GALLERIA DELL'ACCADEMIA, FLORENCE, EXTENDS *ROBERT MAPPLETHORPE: PERFECTION IN FORM* EXHIBITION

Extraordinary Presentation of the American Photographer's Works in the Company of Michelangelo's Sculptures Will Remain on View Through January 10, 2010



NEW YORK, NY, July 27, 2009 – The Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation today confirmed that the Galleria dell'Accademia in Florence, Italy, has extended the dates of its groundbreaking exhibition *Robert Mapplethorpe: Perfection in Form*. The first exhibition to present the photographs of Mapplethorpe in a museum dedicated to the Renaissance tradition, where they are being shown in the company of Michelangelo's sculptures, *Robert Mapplethorpe: Perfection in Form* is also the first exhibition dedicated to a post-Renaissance artist in the history of the Galleria dell'Accademia, the first major photography exhibition to be presented in the Florentine State museums and their first major show dedicated to an American artist. After opening the exhibition on May 26, 2009, with the intention of presenting it through the summer, the Accademia has now responded to popular demand by extending the exhibition to January 10, 2010.

Robert Mapplethorpe: Perfection in Form is being presented on the 20th anniversary of the artist's untimely death from AIDS. Following this unique presentation in Florence, the exhibition will be shown at the Museo d'Arte della Città di Lugano – Villa Malpensata in Lugano, Switzerland, from March 20 to June 13, 2010. Additional presentations in other cities may be announced at a future date.

Robert Mapplethorpe: Perfection in Form is curated by art historian Jonathan K. Nelson, chairman of the Art History Department at Syracuse University in Florence, and Franca Falletti, director of the Galleria dell'Accademia. Nelson was inspired to organize this exhibition by

musical artist Patti Smith, Mapplethorpe's first muse and companion, who explained on a 2007 visit to the Accademia how deeply the photographer had admired the work of Michelangelo.



“Our challenge was to create a conversation between the past and present,” said Nelson. “When you put a Mapplethorpe next to a Michelangelo, you see more than one work plus another. The juxtaposition changes how you see both artists, and creates something new: a visual dialogue.” By showing Michelangelo’s *David* flanked by Mapplethorpe’s *Ajitto* series, or Michelangelo’s *Prisoners* next to Mapplethorpe’s photographs of the model Thomas in a circle, the exhibition brings to the fore the combination of equilibrium and dynamic muscular tension in the work of the Renaissance master that inspired Mapplethorpe, as well as the striving of both artists for perfection by means of the geometric rigor of volumes as defined by line and sculpted by light. Designed by Eugenio Martera for Contemporanea Progetti of Florence, the installation creates a dynamic dialogue between the two artists in the main hall and rotunda of the Accademia, and includes a dramatic display of

Mapplethorpe works in jewel-box-like special exhibition rooms that have been theatrically lit to emphasize the repeating forms explored by the artist and that include a rarely viewed film and video. Also on view is a new work created specially for the exhibition by the leading Italian artist Ettore Spalletti.

Mapplethorpe himself stated, “I look for perfection in form ... I am trying to capture what could be sculpture.” According to Michael Ward Stout, President of the Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation, “Mapplethorpe’s real love had been for Old Master works. He had strived to capture in his photography the perfection of form that he perceived in the works of Michelangelo and other Renaissance masters.”

The 111 works in the exhibition include Michelangelo’s sculptures from the Accademia, four drawings and a wax model by Michelangelo, and 93 works by Mapplethorpe that span his entire career and represent the three main genres defined by the artist: nudes (male and female), portraits (including Patti Smith, Philip Glass and Andy Warhol), and still-lives (especially flowers). Several are very rare and many have never been exhibited in Italy. All but two come from the Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation in New York. Also on view are works by modern

masters Andy Warhol, Man Ray and Brice Marden that address similar themes of form and repetition that Mapplethorpe explored throughout his career.

The exhibition offers visitors a direct comparison between works in different genres (sculpture and photography) and cultures (Renaissance Florence and 1970s-80s New York). As Falletti explains, “The material is grouped into four sections: Geometry of Form, Fragment as Form, Repeating Form, and Sculptural Form. These address different aspects of one great theme. Form is understood as a value in itself, distinct not only from the objective content, that is, the subject matter represented, but also by the subjective content, that is, the baggage of personal experience transmitted through the image.”

“Right from the start, the exhibition has attracted a new audience to the Galleria dell’Accademia. Mapplethorpe is introducing the masters that inspired him to the artists of tomorrow,” said Falletti.

Robert Mapplethorpe: Perfection in Form is presented by the Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali; the Soprintendenza Speciale per il Patrimonio Storico, Artistico ed Etnoantropologico; the Polo Museale della città di Firenze; the Galleria dell’Accademia; Firenze Musei; Ente Cassa di Risparmio di Firenze; and the Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation. A fully illustrated catalogue of the exhibition, edited by Franca Falletti and Jonathan K. Nelson and published by teNeues Publishing Group, presents new art historical scholarship and a previously unpublished interview with Mapplethorpe.

For further information, the public may visit www.unannoadarte.it/mapplethorpe and www.mapplethorpe.org.

About the Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation

Robert Mapplethorpe established the not-for-profit Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation in May 1988, some ten months before his death, to protect his work, to advance his creative vision and to promote the causes he cared about. Serving as the first president on a five-person board of trustees, he established an initial mandate of furthering the recognition of photography as an art form of the same importance as painting and sculpture. He directed that the net revenues from the sale and licensing of his works be used to benefit museums and other artistic institutions that had shown particular interest in establishing photography departments or expanding existing ones through acquisitions, publications and exhibitions. During the last weeks of his life, he added the second mandate of supporting medical research in the area of HIV/AIDS.

In keeping with the artist's wishes, the Foundation has funded numerous publications and exhibitions of photography at a range of institutions, including the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, where a major grant established the photography department and created the Robert Mapplethorpe Gallery; has contributed millions of dollars to medical research in HIV/AIDS (including significant grants to the American Foundation for AIDS Research) while establishing facilities and programs such as the Robert Mapplethorpe Laboratory for AIDS Research at Harvard Medical School in Boston, the Robert Mapplethorpe AIDS Treatment Center at Beth Israel Medical Center in New York, and the Robert Mapplethorpe Center for HIV Research at St. Vincent's Hospital and Medical Center of New York; and has maintained Mapplethorpe's artistic legacy by preserving his works and by organizing or lending photographs to exhibitions at institutions around the world.

Robert Mapplethorpe: Perfection in Form

May 26, 2009 – January 10, 2010

Galleria dell'Accademia, via Ricasoli, 60, Florence

Hours: Tuesday – Sunday, 8:15 a.m. – 6:50 p.m. Extended hours to 9:00 p.m. on Tuesdays (until September 29) and Thursdays (until September 10).

Admission: €10 general; €5, 18-25 years old; free, under 18 and above 65. Until September 10, free for all on Thursday, 7:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.

Information and reservations: (011) 39-55-265-4321

#

Press contacts:

Jennifer Essen

Ruder Finn Arts & Communications Counselors

(212) 593-5881

essenj@ruderfinn.com

Amanda Domizio

Ruder Finn Arts & Communications Counselors

(212) 583-2798

domizioa@ruderfinn.com

Image Credits:

Robert Mapplethorpe, *Derrick Cross* (1982), gelatin silver print, 16 x 20 in (40.6 x 50.8 cm), copyright © 1982 Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation

Michelangelo, *David* (1501-1504), marble, 203½ in (517 cm), Galleria dell'Accademia, Florence