

Robert Mapplethorpe
Retrospective

C/O Berlin, International Forum For Visual Dialogues is pleased to present the **Retrospective** of the work of photographer **Robert Mapplethorpe**. The exhibition will run from **January 22 to March 27, 2011**. The **opening** will be at 7 pm on Friday, January 21, 2011, at the Postfuhramt, Oranienburger Straße 35/36 in Berlin-Mitte.

„I never liked photography. Not for the sake of photography. I like the object.” Robert Mapplethorpe

Rigorously flawless, radically focused—the still-lives and portraits of Robert Mapplethorpe are quiet, formally consummate compositions set in an atmosphere of clinical purity. Movements are harmonized down to the last detail; flawless bodies turn into landscapes; and explicitly sexual acts and nakedness become cool, almost de-eroticized studies of the body, in which technical perfection takes the foreground. This extreme aestheticism strips the content of its severity. It isolates the essentials and opens them up to view. It is precisely this concentration and objectivity that imbues his photographs with a freshness and relevance to this day.

Robert Mapplethorpe's photographs are based on the norms and standards of the traditional canon of Western sculpture. In his still, calm portraits and pictures of muscular masculine bodies, sexual experimentation, and simple flowers, he draws from the repertoire of art history, positioning them precisely under the severe lighting of the studio. The body becomes an object; individuality yields to the surface and the pose, citing sculpture from classical antiquity and the Renaissance. In Mapplethorpe's search for perfection, content does not have priority. This is evident even in his early Polaroids. Indeed, all the subject matter to be found in his later work is present in these first photographic sketches, although the color image gives them a more direct impact. As he began the move toward classic black and white photography, Mapplethorpe simply refined his technique and composition. Beginning with the total concept, he moves ever more into the detail.

In this retrospective of his work, C/O Berlin presents 187 photos from the career of Robert Mapplethorpe. The exhibition focuses on the development of his photographic work, represented by examples from the early Polaroids up to the later still-lives and portraits of Andy Warhol, Debbie Harry, Grace Jones, and Patti Smith. From this work it also becomes clear that the scandalous aura surrounding his photographs can only be understood as an aspect of its historical setting, and is thus entirely a matter of the viewer's interpretation.

Robert Mapplethorpe was born in 1946 in Floral Park, Queens, NY, and became one of the foremost photographers of the twentieth century. He studied art at the Pratt Institute of Art in Brooklyn between 1963 and 1970. In 1967 he met singer Patti Smith, who became his close companion, and they moved together to the legendary Chelsea Hotel. Under the influence of curator John McKendry, Robert Mapplethorpe became interested in photography—first as a collector, then making photographic montage. He taught himself photography and began taking his first pictures in 1971, exhibiting his work in 1973 with Brigid Polk and Andy Warhol. In 1977 he had his first solo exhibition. In some circles, his photographs of men and sadomasochistic portraits were seen as transgressive and taboo, leading to the censorship or attempted censorship of his work in a few countries. The Whitney Museum staged the first retrospective of his work in 1988. Robert Mapplethorpe died of AIDS in 1989.

The exhibition draws from the collection of the Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation in New York and is being organized in cooperation with the NRW Forum in Dusseldorf.

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Retrospective

Exhibition January 22 to March 27, 2011

Opening Friday, January 21, 2011

Opening hours daily . 11 am to 8 pm

Admission 8 Euro . reduced 5 Euro

Organizer C/O Berlin . International Forum For Visual Dialogues

Location C/O Berlin at the Postfuhramt

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