

Galleria **Franco Noero**

## Robert Mapplethorpe

and a selection of Polaroids curated by Ricard Flood  
in cooperation with The Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation and Museo Casa Mollino

4 June - 27 July 2013

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Galleria Franco Noero has the honor of hosting, in its new premises, its first exhibition of works by Robert Mapplethorpe. The show includes a selection of about fifty images taken from the American artist's stunning body of work.

This solo exhibition continues the collaboration with The Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation, which started in 2012, when Galleria Franco Noero began representing the artist's work in Italy.

This is an exciting opportunity in the Gallery's program for it gives Mapplethorpe's work new relevance, by creating interaction with a generation of artists who are younger than him but who are embarking on the same radical quest. This is a generation on whose works the American artist continues to exert an unparalleled influence.

Robert Mapplethorpe, the extraordinary, controversial proponent of the American avant-garde remains an anti-conformist symbol of a timeless form of the contemporary. He managed to embody an extreme sense of freedom, and this consistently emerges in the interactions between his artistic practice, the private and intimate aspects of his personal life, his circle of friends, celebrity and the public.

It comes out most forcefully in the photographs in this exhibition, which is also designed to bring out some less well-known aspects of this artist's work, on a journey through images he created between 1977 and 1988, in which we find some of his best-loved themes and genres in a dialectic sequence: portraits, still lifes, interiors, landscapes, and male and female nudes – be they of the American dancer Alistair Butler, featured in an extraordinary suite of images, or the pictures of Mapplethorpe's obsessive search for perfection in the statuesque body of Lisa Lyon, or the almost abstract anatomical details of the model Livingston's black skin.

In all these photographs we find the characteristics that made Mapplethorpe one of the most important artists of the twentieth century: his relationship with classicism, both in his compositions and in his search for a sculptural quality in the contrast between light and shade, his passion for adopting unusual viewpoints in his choice of themes, which are often decidedly unconventional and transgressive, and an extreme formal and stylistic precision which contrasts with his ability to capture the unexpected, creating a sense of mysterious awe.

*"I don't like that particular word 'shocking.' I'm looking for the unexpected. I'm looking for things I've never seen before ... I was in a position to take those pictures. I felt an obligation to do them." (Robert Mapplethorpe, ARTNews, 1988)*

Galleria Franco Noero is also particularly grateful to Richard Flood – Director of Special Projects and Curator at Large of the New Museum in New York – for his project in collaboration with The Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation and the Museo Casa Mollino: a selection of Polaroids by Mapplethorpe and those of Carlo Mollino, the eclectic architect from Turin, which are exhibited as though in a dialogue.

*"What fascinates me about Polaroids is the promise of instant gratification. What fascinates me about Mapplethorpe and Mollino is how little they cared about the speed of delivery. What they share is an intense affair with the poetry of illusion. The absolute oneness with which their subjects inhabit the Polaroids has less to do with portraiture than it does with the still-life tradition. Everything is arranged as one would a buffet, the reality of the models is not sociological but rather gustatory – not rational but sensational." (Richard Flood)*

**Robert Mapplethorpe** (New York 1946 – Boston, MA 1989), studied drawing, painting and sculpture at the Pratt Institute in Brooklyn before embarking on a career as an artist and photographer. His work has appeared in countless solo exhibitions in institutions around the world, starting with the great retrospective devoted to him by the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York in 1988, one year before he died. That same year Mapplethorpe established the Foundation that bears his name, in order to promote photography, support Museums that exhibit photographic art, and to raise funds for medical research to combat AIDS/HIV and related diseases. The artist's work can be found in the collections of the greatest international museums and his historic and social importance continues to be the subject of prominent exhibitions around the world.

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