

PRESS RELEASE

**ROBERT MAPPLETHORPE
FASHION SHOW**

11 SEPTEMBER – 5 OCTOBER 2013

PRIVATE VIEW TUESDAY 10 SEPTEMBER: 6 – 8 pm

'For his birthday in Paris on Nov 4, 1971 Yves Saint Laurent and Pierre Bergé took Robert to dinner and then to the Rive Gauche boutique and let him pick out anything in the store. He chose a simple black shirt. He said it was the cheapest thing in the store, but that's what he wanted... Later that night Loulou de la Falaise took him to a strip show, and they drank champagne and talked until 5:00am. In the letters and postcards he sent me, these and other details of his trip were unveiled. Most of the time he was broke and missed Patti and me, but he stuck it out and learned ways to survive to reach some of his goals. He also learned a great deal about European style and fashion. Robert always responded to real elegance.'

David Croland, New York, July 2013.

Alison Jacques Gallery is proud to present a groundbreaking show of work by Robert Mapplethorpe, many photographs being shown for the first time. For *Fashion Show*, Alison Jacques has collaborated with Mapplethorpe's first long-term boyfriend, model and artist David Croland. Croland, photographed by David Bailey, Duffy and Bill King became the subject of a number of Mapplethorpe works including Polaroids and unique works. He first met Mapplethorpe in 1970 and as his boyfriend was instrumental in ensuring Robert got to know and socialise with some of the most inventive figures in the fashion world. Silver Gelatin and Polaroid portraits of people such as Karl Lagerfeld, Yves Saint-Laurent, Ossie Clark, Loulou de la Falaise, Marisa Berenson and Grace Jones form an important facet of this exhibition by giving insights into these icons at important moments in their careers.

Mapplethorpe's role as artist as opposed to purely a photographer is evident throughout the show and in particular in the wearable sculptures/jewellery he made in the '70s of which a small group will be shown together for the first time in London.

"Then there was the jewelry. Robert loved jewelry. Usually the lily needs no gilding. In Robert's case, more was perfection. Rings, necklaces, bracelets. Skulls, crosses, horseshoes, dice, etc. Robert started making his own jewelry. He wore it and looked exquisite. He gave me unique pieces. Provocative and sentimental. We went out one night and both had on a number of his creations. The fashion gang was intrigued. Loulou and Maxime de la Falaise, Marisa and Berry Berenson, John McKendry and a number of others commissioned their first Mapplethorpe originals."

David Croland

At the core of *Fashion Show* are photographs Mapplethorpe shot for publications such as *Italian Vogue*, *French Vogue* and *L.A. Style* in the mid- to late-1980s, most of which haven't been exhibited before. Beyond his instantly recognisable mastery of relaying beauty and perfection, in these commissioned works Mapplethorpe employs strong geometric elements and constructed contexts to generate elegant but unusually charged narratives. As such, these scenes feel strikingly contemporary – precursors to developments in fashion photography over the ensuing three decades.

"In the next decade with new cameras, Robert did wonderful portraits of our friend and muse Dovanna. The elegance of mind and body resulted in some of Robert's best images that turned fashion into art. I believe he was one of the first modern artists to cross the line drawn firmly in that territory."

David Croland

Many of the photographs reveal Mapplethorpe's love of high-fashion fabrics and garments. In some, he photographed his better-known muses with their backs to the camera so that the viewer's attention is focused entirely on the materials, cuts and forms of their dresses, zebra striped fabric, luxurious fur or crushed silk. In others he created intensity through fusing apparently discordant elements like a male muscle-bound thigh in fishnet stockings or his black model Ken Moody about to devour a stiletto shoe. Mapplethorpe's love and understanding of high-fashion materials is epitomised with the legendary self-portrait he shot in 1980, showing him in profile in drag wearing fur. This is alongside unknown works focusing on conventional female beauty or the more underground world of sexual experimentation. This includes the portrait of drag artist Nikki Starnes standing tall in an exotic headdress and nipple tassels hung alongside a series of three portraits of Grace Jones in wire breastplates and camouflaged in Keith Haring body paint.

Fashion Show focuses on an aspect of Robert Mapplethorpe, which was key to his work and life: glamour and beauty; but never from an obvious point of view. Several decades on, and nearly 25 years after this death, these images seem as current as ever:

"Robert was always in Fashion. Classic and timeless. Then and Now."

David Croland

Robert Mapplethorpe (b. New York, NY, 1946; d. Boston, MA, 1989) studied for a B.F.A. from The Pratt Institute, before embarking on a career of over 50 solo exhibitions during his life, including numerous museum shows in the USA, Europe and Japan. Recent UK solo shows include the touring Artists Rooms project that included the *Robert Mapplethorpe: Photography and Sculpture*, Towner Art Gallery, Eastbourne (2010). In 2008, Tate and the National Galleries of Scotland jointly acquired one of the largest single acquisitions of Mapplethorpe photographs through The d'Offay Donation with assistance from the National Heritage Memorial Fund and the Art Fund.

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