

MORAN BONDAROFF

Robert Mapplethorpe: Dark and Light

Curated by Vince Aletti

May 21 – June 25, 2016

Moran Bondaroff is pleased to announce *Robert Mapplethorpe: Dark and Light*, the gallery's second exhibition of Mapplethorpe's work, curated by Vince Aletti. Comprised of approximately 40 gelatin silver prints, ranging from portraiture to still-life, this exhibition compliments the comprehensive and historic retrospectives currently on view at LACMA and the Getty Museum, who jointly own the most complete collection of Mapplethorpe's work.

Invited to organize an exhibition from the holdings of the Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation, I jumped at the opportunity to see photographs I'd never seen before and to build a show around them. By far the largest group of unfamiliar images was of black men—a subject Mapplethorpe made his prime focus early on and returned to throughout his career—and those pictures constitute the bulk of the show. One of the great photographers of the male body, Mapplethorpe understood and appreciated it from all angles, in images whose approach ranged from classical restraint to sensual abandon. Because some of his most arresting pictures of men are portraits, the show is also full of beautiful, imposing heads, both sculptural and fiercely alive. So, given my taste and his, the selection is predominately male, but not exclusively, and it's the other pictures that help define Mapplethorpe's hungry and brilliantly idiosyncratic eye: a vase of flowering branches in the dappled sun, Fran Lebowitz with a half-finished cigarette, a fish on a bed of newsprint, a magnificently pregnant belly. - Vince Aletti

Vince Aletti reviews photography exhibitions for the New Yorker's Goings on About Town section and writes a regular column about photo books for Photograph. He contributes reviews and articles to Artforum, Aperture, and W magazine. He is the winner of the 2005 Infinity Award in writing from the International Center of Photography, where he was an adjunct curator in 2009. Aletti co-curated "Weird Beauty: Fashion Photography Now" with Carol Squiers and is the curator of "This Is Not a Fashion Photograph," both at ICP; he and Squiers worked together on "Richard Avedon Fashion," the museum's summer 2009 exhibition, as well as on its Abrams catalog. "Male," a book of photographs and other artwork from Aletti's collection, was published by Andrew Roth's PPP Editions at the end of 2008; Roth published more photographs from Aletti's collection in the 2015 book "Untitled Anonymous."

Robert Mapplethorpe is one of the most widely recognized American photographers of the 20th century, known best for his stylized images, including portraiture, nudes, and still life. After studying drawing, painting, and sculpture at Pratt Institute in the mid-60s, he began experimenting with various materials and assemblage, later incorporating Polaroid prints into his collages. During the 70s, Mapplethorpe became primarily focused on photography, using a medium-format camera, increasingly interested in documenting New York's subculture scene, as well as the friends, artists, musicians, and various people he was acquainted with. Throughout the early and mid-80s, he produced a wide collection of images that simultaneously challenged and exemplified classical aesthetics, while introducing different techniques and formats, including large Polaroids, photogravure, Cibachrome, platinum, and dye transfer prints.

Exhibitions of his work in the late 80s, often controversial in content, sparked debates about public funding for the arts, censorship, First Amendment rights, and broadly, what defines art. His work continues to be the subject of numerous gallery and institutional exhibitions, and is included in the public collections of major museums throughout the world, such as the Guggenheim Museum, The Whitney Museum of American Art, LACMA, and the Getty Museum. Robert Mapplethorpe was born in Queens, NY in 1946, and died in 1989 in Boston, MA.

Moran Bondaroff works with The Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation, and Sean Kelly Gallery, NY.