

ROBERT MAPPLETHORPE

LISA, MILTON, THOMAS & KEN

PARIS DEBELLEYME

06 Tuesday - 07 Saturday



Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac is pleased to announce an exhibition by Robert Mapplethorpe that brings together the portraits of four of his most important models, Lisa, Milton, Thomas and Ken. The oeuvre of the American artist has become known the world over through his iconic images of black and white nudes, sensual flowers and portraits of celebrities and friends.

Lisa Lyon, who won the 1979 First Women's World Bodybuilding Championship, was Mapplethorpe's most photographed female model, culminating in the publication of a seminal book *Lady: Lisa Lyon* (1983). Through this extensive body of work, Mapplethorpe not only creates formally beautiful studies of the human form, but also calls into question the gender roles and female stereotypes of the 1980s.

Mapplethorpe was fascinated by the nude black man rendering many images of Milton's, Thomas's and Ken's muscular bodies in poses reminiscent of sculpture from classical antiquity (subject of the joint exhibition *Robert Mapplethorpe and the Classical Tradition*, organized by the Guggenheim Foundation, New York and the State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg). In many images, Thomas and Ken clearly convey the Eros that informs Mannerist art of the 16th century. The portraits of these three men exemplify the other studies of statuesque male and female bodies; concentrating on contours, tones, darkness and light, making them at once precise and erotic. Milton Moore, or Mr. Polyester, as he became known after the famous photograph *Man in Polyester Suit* (1980), was his lover and model.

Robert Mapplethorpe was born in 1946 and grew up in a Roman Catholic family on Long Island, New York. He received a B.F.A. from Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, where he studied painting and sculpture and first made art that integrated photographic images from magazines and books. He took his first photographs using a Polaroid camera and in the mid-1970s began using photography as his medium of expression. The artist died of AIDS in 1989 at the age of 42.