

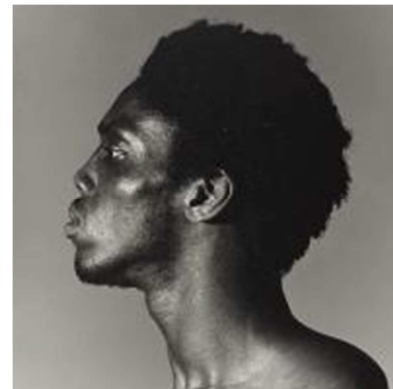
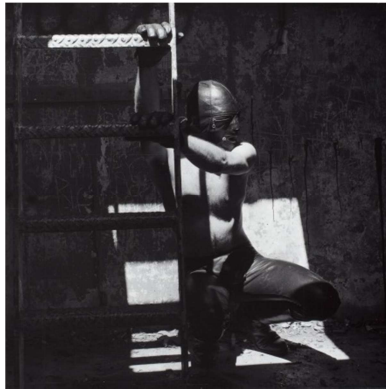
LACMA FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

EXHIBITION: ROBERT MAPPLETHORPE: XYZ

ON VIEW: OCTOBER 21, 2012-FEBRUARY 3, 2013

LOCATION: AHMANSON, LEVEL 2

LACMA PRESENTS THE X, Y, AND Z PORTFOLIOS BY AMERICAN PHOTOGRAPHER ROBERT MAPPLETHORPE



(IMAGE CAPTIONS ON PAGE 5)

EXHIBITION CELEBRATES THE 2011 JOINT ACQUISITION WITH LACMA, THE J. PAUL GETTY MUSEUM, AND THE GETTY RESEARCH INSTITUTE

(Los Angeles-October 11, 2012) The Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) presents three portfolios created by American photographer Robert Mapplethorpe (1946-1989). The exhibition, *Robert Mapplethorpe: XYZ*, features a total of thirty-nine black-and-white photographs, exploring three subject matters: homosexual sadomasochistic imagery (*X*, published in 1978); flower still lifes (*Y*, 1978); and nude portraits of African American men (*Z*, 1981). LACMA's presentation will showcase the works in three rows—*X* above, *Y* in the middle, and *Z* along the bottom—an idea which was suggested by Mapplethorpe in 1989.

"Robert Mapplethorpe is among the most important photographic artists of the twentieth century," comments Britt Salvesen, Department Head and Curator of the Wallis Annenberg Photography Department at LACMA. "The X, Y, and Z portfolios not only defined the artist's career, but also played a role in an important moment of American cultural politics that is still pertinent to us today."

This is the first presentation of Mapplethorpe's work since last year's widely publicized joint acquisition by LACMA, The J. Paul Getty Museum, and The Getty Research Institute of Mapplethorpe's art and archives—including over 1,900 editioned prints and over 1,000 non-editioned prints, 200 unique mixed-media objects, over 160 Polaroids, 120,000 negatives, and extensive working materials, ephemera, and documents. The majority of the acquisition originated as a generous gift from the Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation, and the remainder of the funds provided by the David Geffen Foundation and the J. Paul Getty Trust.

Concurrent with the LACMA exhibition, The J. Paul Getty Museum presents *In Focus: Robert Mapplethorpe*, on view October 23, 2012-March 24, 2013. This single-gallery exhibition reviews the artist's work from the early 1970s to the late 1980s, and features editioned prints, rarely seen mixed-media objects, and Polaroids that depict a wide range of subject matter including self-portraits, nudes, and still lifes. A larger Mapplethorpe retrospective, jointly organized by LACMA and the Getty, is planned for 2016.

About the Artist

Born in 1946, Robert Mapplethorpe grew up in the suburban area of Floral Park, Queens. As a student at the Pratt Institute in New York, he studied drawing, painting, and sculpture and experimented with various materials in mixed-media collages. When Mapplethorpe acquired a Polaroid camera in 1970, he began incorporating his own photos into his constructions. His first solo gallery exhibition, *Polaroids*, took place at Light Gallery in New York City in 1973.

Two years later he transitioned from the Polaroid to a Hasselblad medium-format camera and began shooting his circle of friends and acquaintances. His subjects—artists, musicians, socialites, pornographic film stars, and members of the S & M underground—came from a variety of backgrounds. Mapplethorpe's interest in documenting the New York S&M scene was strongest in the late 1970s, when he produced photographs with shocking content but remarkable technique and formal mastery. In 1978, the Robert Miller Gallery in New York City became his exclusive dealer. Throughout the 1980s, Mapplethorpe produced images that challenged and adhered to classical aesthetic standards including stylized compositions of male and female nudes, delicate flower still lifes, and studio portraits of artists and celebrities. He explored and refined different techniques and formats—including color 20" x 24" Polaroids, photogravures, platinum prints on paper and linen, Cibachrome and dye transfer color processes—but gelatin silver printing remained his primary medium.

In 1986, Robert Mapplethorpe was diagnosed with AIDS. Despite his illness, he accelerated his creative efforts, broadened the scope of his photographic inquiry, and accepted numerous commissions. The Whitney Museum of American Art mounted his first major American museum retrospective in 1988, one year before his death in 1989. Beyond the art historical and social significance of his work, his legacy lives on through the work of Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation, which he established in 1988 to promote photography, support museums that exhibit photographic art, and to fund medical research in the fight against AIDS and HIV-related infection.

Exhibition History

Mapplethorpe's work has historically provoked strong reactions, most notably during the so-called Culture Wars of the 1980s, a period of conflict between conservative and liberal factions. The traveling retrospective, *The Perfect Moment*, opened at the Institute of Contemporary Art in Philadelphia in 1988. Among the 150 photographs and objects in the show were the sadomasochistic imagery of Mapplethorpe's X portfolio, as well as the Y and Z portfolios; the

show appeared in two venues without any incident. When it was due to open at the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., during the summer of 1989, politicians who opposed federal funding for the arts became alarmed. The Corcoran canceled the exhibition, resulting in a protest against the gallery's withdrawal of the show. Controversy ensued further at a subsequent venue, the Contemporary Arts Center in Cincinnati, where charges of obscenity were brought against director David Barrie. In this high-profile trial, five images from the X portfolio were used as evidence. Barrie was acquitted, and Mapplethorpe has been linked to debates about censorship ever since.

Related Programming:

The Mapplethorpe Effect

Sunday, November 18, 2012 | 2pm

Brown Auditorium | Free, tickets required

In this talk, Richard Meyer, a professor of art history at Stanford University, places Robert Mapplethorpe's X, Y, and Z portfolios within two linked contexts: the formal logic of Mapplethorpe's photography and the culture wars over homoeroticism and federally funded art in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

About LACMA

Since its inception in 1965, LACMA has been devoted to collecting works of art that span both history and geography and represent Los Angeles's uniquely diverse population. Today, the museum features particularly strong collections of Asian, Latin American, European, and American art, as well as a contemporary museum on its campus. With this expanded space for contemporary art, innovative collaborations with artists, and an ongoing *Transformation* project, LACMA is creating a truly modern lens through which to view its rich encyclopedic collection.

Location and Contact: 5905 Wilshire Boulevard (at Fairfax Avenue), Los Angeles, CA, 90036 | 323 857-6000 | lacma.org

Hours: Monday, Tuesday, Thursday: 11 am-5 pm; Friday: 11 am-8 pm; Saturday, Sunday: 10 am-7 pm; closed Wednesday

General Admission: Adults: \$15; students 18+ with ID and senior citizens 62+: \$10

Free General Admission: Members; children 17 and under; after 3 pm weekdays for L.A. County residents; second Tuesday of every month; Target Free Holiday Mondays

Images (page 1)[left to right]

Left: Robert Mapplethorpe, *Jim, Sausalito (X Portfolio)*, 1977, Gelatin silver print, The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, Jointly acquired by the J. Paul Getty Trust and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. Partial Gift of the Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation; partial purchase with funds by the David Geffen Foundation and the J. Paul Getty Trust, © Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation

Center: Robert Mapplethorpe, *Iris*, N.Y.C. (Y Portfolio), 1977, Gelatin silver print, The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, Jointly acquired by the J. Paul Getty Trust and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. Partial Gift of the Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation; partial purchase with funds by the David Geffen Foundation and the J. Paul Getty Trust, © Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation

Right: Robert Mapplethorpe, *Alistair Butler*, N.Y.C. (Z Portfolio), 1980, The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, Jointly acquired by the J. Paul Getty Trust and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. Partial Gift of the Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation; partial purchase with funds by the David Geffen Foundation and the J. Paul Getty Trust, © Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation

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