

Robert Mapplethorpe

22 September – 26 October 2022

Via Mottalciata 10/b, Torino

Galleria Franco Noero is pleased to present Robert Mapplethorpe's fourth solo show, in the spaces of via Mottalciata and in collaboration with The Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation.

The new selection of photographs, which exceeds a hundred, is a journey that traces all the phases of the artist's career from his beginnings to his death, curated in sequences that do not look to chronology, a genre, or any type of hierarchy.

In fact, the photographs have an underlying sense that unites them, sometimes a constructive congruence in the compositional lines, other times it is narrative suggestions, still others are the grain, the mixture and the tones of white, black and the range of grays to dictate law.

As has already happened on other occasions, it is possible to reconstruct some sequences of photographs taken in the same session, variations on the same theme: it is particularly interesting in these cases to see how the models interpret a particular posture, for example deduced from the study of ancient statues, or to express the exuberance and the almost malleable elasticity and sculptural quality of the musculature of dancers, another recurring 'topos' in Mapplethorpe's research.

The romantic tone of the photographs of his early works, often taken outdoors during his first trip to England and possibly inspired by an admiration for European painting and its quality of being linked to the landscape, combine with the fascination for art and for Italian and European culture in general: a bronze statue taken in front of a photographic reproduction of a Roman glimpse inside the ancient Forum; the ebony-colored body of a model portrayed in a pose most likely deduced from the famous 'Spinario' of the Capitoline Museums, one of the best-known statues in the 'catalog' of the Grand Tour; hooded men like friars of the best Baroque tradition such as those of Zurbarán; a discus thrower in a plaster display case, a delightful bronze statue of Spartacus in chains, a black man sitting on the ground with a fern beside him as in nineteenth-century genre painting, an Art Deco-style marble panther, paired with a Japanese kimono, a gardenia at the center of the paisley embroidered shawl, in short, a whole series of suggestions and quotes from disparate times in history that perfectly portray the atmosphere of cultural solicitation of a city like New York in the years in which Mapplethorpe lived it.

And again the contrasts: a hairstyle of braids in front of a tapestry, a head of Pan kissed by an anthurium, Lisa Lyon as an angel with blond curls or with the head covered by a cloak as in the representations of the Virgin Mary, the essential lines of a female face by Matisse in a loft in New York, a wonderful silver with a small elephant by Gorham on a deep black background, and so on...

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 focused on his photographic practice, which led him to show his works in countless solo exhibitions in institutions around the world. One of the most important was the immense retrospective devoted to him by the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York in 1988, one year before his death. That year Mapplethorpe set up the Foundation that bears his name, to promote photography at the institutional level, and to raise funds for medical research to combat AIDS and HIV. The artist's work can be found in the collections of the world's leading museums and his historical and social importance continues to be the subject of major solo exhibitions around the globe.