

Robert Mapplethorpe

26 February – 20 April 2019

Galleria Franco Noero is pleased to present the third solo show by Robert Mapplethorpe, in the spaces in Via Mottalciata, in collaboration with The Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation.

The solo exhibition comes at the same time as two extraordinary shows devoted to the artist in two Italian Museums, the first – on display until 8 April – at MADRE, Museo d'Arte Contemporanea Donnaregina in Naples and the second, from 15 March, at the Gallerie Nazionali di Arte Antica, Galleria Corsini in Rome.

This is a magnificent opportunity to examine Mapplethorpe's great diversity as an artist and to immerse oneself in his art and experience the countless unusual points of view he captures in his photographs. His work remains in constant and relevant dialogue with the contemporary world, while also making and breaking links with history and the past.

In the exhibition in Naples, tangible affinities emerge in an empathic relationship with the city. The exhibition explores the performance-based origins of Mapplethorpe's work, and thus also a relationship with dance, theatre, and stage production. The theme of the body becomes a means to achieve remarkable affinities with the sculptures and paintings loaned for the occasion from the Museo e Real Bosco di Capodimonte and the National Archaeological Museum in Naples. In Rome, the arrangement of the works in the eighteenth-century Corsini picture gallery helps shed new light on the artist's work, creating an unprecedented relationship between the setting, the works, and the visitors, in a physical and conceptual space of collecting.

The evocative harmony of the gallery's post-industrial atmosphere, which recall those where Mapplethorpe and his contemporaries lived and worked, the selection of photographs on display in Turin looks at those aspects that capture the frenetic pace and zeitgeist of an age. They reveal an overwhelming desire to race through time with a thirst for experimentation, together with an all-devouring curiosity that was suddenly shattered by the unexpected death of Mapplethorpe in 1989, and with him the untimely disappearance of an entire generation.

The exhibition opens, with a colour photo showing the Archbishop of Canterbury in conversation, sitting on a bench on a lawn in the open air. This image might subliminally hark back to Mapplethorpe's religious education and his interest in its associated pageantry.

The wish to assert one's identity and a charismatic way of imposing oneself is the underlying theme in a series of portraits of the years immediately after. They are taken with raw immediacy against uneven white walls, with no studio backdrop, and no retouching or artifice, clearly capturing the personality of the sitters, their way of presenting themselves, and sometimes provoking simply by being there.

What follows forms a stark contrast, with photos from the 1980s completely created in the studio, with headless female bodies suspended against a uniform white background, with soft, suffused outlines. The hedonistic exaltation of body care and perfection was typical of those years, with a veneration of the gym not as a place where athletes are formed but where muscles are sculpted. A long, modulated sequence of works plays on shades of grey, with less contrast, freely ranging along many of the artist's lines of research: sensuality, sex, movement, torsion, the hieratic qualities of the pose, and a search for expressiveness.

Another colour picture, this time of a coin, marks a break, introducing a series of photographs of objects in solid silver that combine the blaze of glittering ceremonial triumph with static solemnity, followed by the image of a master of ceremonies captured in penitent anticipation while waiting to oblige his guests, like a latter-day Charon, by the door of a New York brasserie.

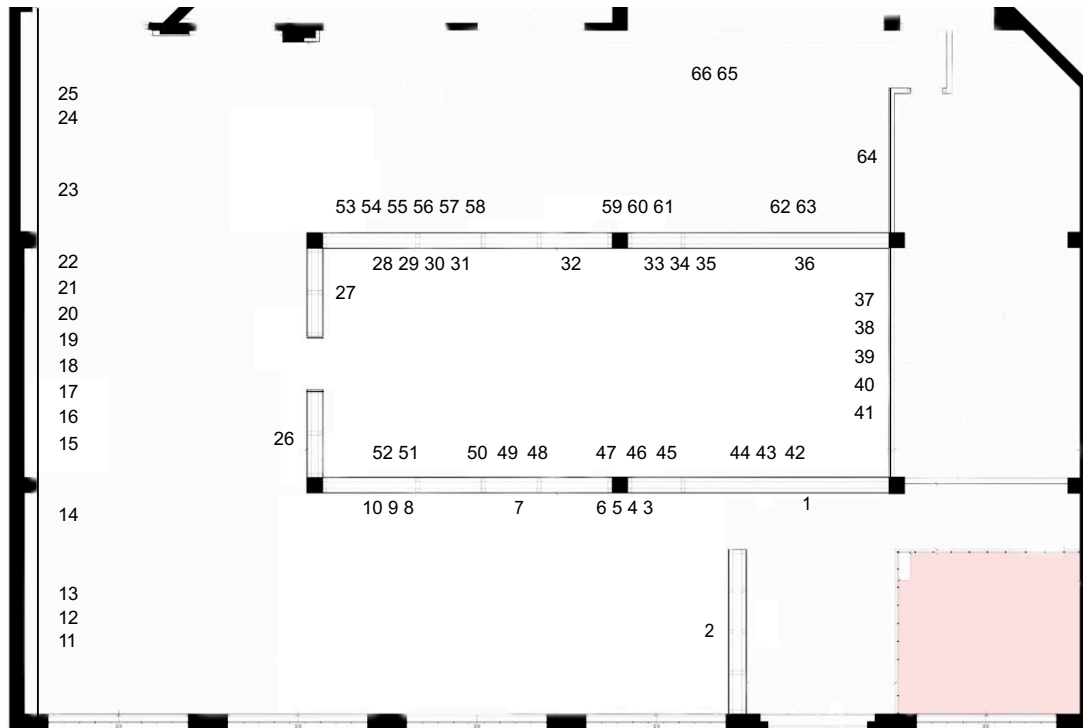
A series of photos of a rockabilly band points to some of what were to become distinctive traits of today's social identity, such as covering one's body with tattoos, which at the time were a clear symbol of transgression and unconventionality, and they remain so in the portraits despite the current habit of branding one's own body.

A selection of portraits in which the faces are more accentuated in black and white – viewed head on, with the eyes looking straight out at the photographer, and thus also at the viewer – aims to understand and reveal the personality of the sitters, conveying their appeal, whether or not they are famous.

Throughout the exhibition, the fame of some of the sitters, which is an undeniable and natural source of attraction, is deliberately never emphasised, in order not to give prominence over others to any of the aspects that Mapplethorpe aims to convey. Like this, a gourd is equivalent to a nude body in terms of its form, as a set of silver objects is to a headwaiter in a restaurant, as ebony bodies are to those of milky paller, as sensual nudes are to a still life, as an artist is to a dish of frogs.

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, in order 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. In addition to the two exhibitions now on display in Italian Museums, in Naples and Rome, an important retrospective is currently being devoted to the artist at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York, following on from the recent ones in the United States at LACMA and the Getty Museum in Los Angeles.

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|---|--|---|--|--|
| 1. <i>The Archbishop</i> , 1975
MAP#DT52 | 15. <i>Molissa Fenley</i> , 1984
MAP#1352 | 29. <i>Gorham 1870 Centerpiece</i> , 1988
MAP#1923 | 43. <i>Bruce Chatwin</i> , 1979
MAP#254 | 57. <i>Thomas Woodruff</i> , 1980
MAP#419 |
| 2. <i>Lisa Lyon</i> , 1982
MAP#741 | 16. <i>Lisa Lyon</i> , 1982
MAP#701 | 30. <i>Whiting and Co. Water Pitcher</i> , 1988
MAP#1922 | 44. <i>Thomas Woodruff</i> , 1980
MAP#400 | 58. <i>Sybil Walker</i> , 1979
MAP#356 |
| 3. <i>Robert Wilson</i> , 1981
MAP#556 | 17. <i>Veronica Vera</i> , 1982
MAP#922 | 31. <i>Sphinx</i> , 1988
MAP#1926 | 45. <i>Orchid</i> , 1980
MAP#396 | 59. <i>Michael Roth</i> , 1983
MAP#1207 |
| 4. <i>Clarissa</i> , 1976
MAP#33 | 18. <i>Gourd</i> , 1983
MAP#1162 | 32. <i>One 5th Avenue</i> , 1979
MAP#284 | 46. <i>Untitled</i> , 1981
MAP#629 | 60. <i>Peter Berlin</i> , 1977
MAP#200 |
| 5. <i>Peter Farndon</i> , 1980
MAP#513 | 19. <i>Mike Spencer</i> , 1982
MAP#875 | 33. <i>Dennis Morgan</i> , 1980
MAP#366 | 47. <i>Jennifer Jakobson</i> , 1980
MAP#407 | 61. <i>Michael Roth</i> , 1983
MAP#1194 |
| 6. <i>Francesco Clemente</i> , 1983
MAP#1119 | 20. <i>Arnold Schwarzenegger</i> , 1976
MAP#72 | 34. <i>Jill Chapman</i> , 1983
MAP#1205 | 48. <i>James Nelson</i> , 1978
MAP#122C | 62. <i>Lisa Lyon</i> , 1982
MAP#819 |
| 7. <i>Peter Berlin</i> , 1976
MAP#211 | 21. <i>Lisa Lyon</i> , 1982
MAP#817 | 35. <i>Phillip Prioleau</i> , 1982
MAP#784 | 49. <i>Julian Schnabel</i> , 1983
MAP#1019 | 63. <i>Lydia Cheng</i> , 1987
MAP#1764 |
| 8. <i>Lydia Cheng</i> , 1984
MAP#1421 | 22. <i>Ron Stevenson</i> , 1978
MAP#206 | 36. <i>Ganymede with Jupiter's Eagle</i> , 1988
MAP#1967 | 50. <i>Lawrence Weirner</i> , 1979
MAP#1982 | 64. <i>James Ford</i> , 1979
MAP#344 |
| 9. <i>Lydia Cheng</i> , 1984
MAP#1422 | 23. <i>Lisa Lyon</i> , 1982
MAP#692 | 37. <i>Tim Scott</i> , 1980
MAP#521 | 51. <i>Flower</i> , 1981
MAP#563 | 65. <i>Andes</i> , 1979
MAP#323 |
| 10. <i>Lydia Cheng</i> , 1984
MAP#1423 | 24. <i>Milton Moore</i> , 1980
MAP#540 | 38. <i>Tim Scott</i> , 1980
MAP#491 | 52. <i>Frogs</i> , 1984
MAP#1918 | 66. <i>Richard Gere</i> , 1982
MAP#1584 |
| 11. <i>Lisa Lyon</i> , 1982
MAP#767 | 25. <i>Nadia</i> , 1987
MAP#1774 | 39. <i>Smutty</i> , 1980
MAP#490 | 53. <i>Clifton</i> , 1981
MAP#599 | |
| 12. <i>Milton Moore</i> , 1981
MAP#615 | 26. <i>Ajitto</i> , 1981
MAP#544 | 40. <i>The Rockcats</i> , 1980
MAP#489 | 54. <i>Bill King</i> , 1980
MAP#1586 | |
| 13. <i>Susan Sarandon</i> , 1983
MAP#1983 | 27. <i>Coin</i> , 1988
MAP#DT1969 | 41. <i>Smutty</i> , 1980
MAP#669 | 55. <i>Phyllis Tweel</i> , 1979
MAP#278 | |
| 14. <i>Diane de Beauvau</i> , 1977
MAP#114 | 28. <i>Gorham Seafood Servers</i> , 1988
MAP#1925 | 42. <i>Hans-Gerd</i> , 1979
MAP#350 | 56. <i>Tennant Twins</i> , 1976
MAP#44 | |