

# G L A D S T O N E

## Spanning a decade, Robert Mapplethorpe's solo exhibition features rarely seen varied media works

Organized in collaboration with the Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation, the exhibition offers new insight into the artist's development and mastery of form

In collaboration with the Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation, Gladstone presents an exhibition of rarely seen three-dimensional objects, photographic assemblages, and mixed media collages. Spanning from 1971 to 1984, the works in this special presentation offer a compelling new perspective into the artist's deeply intertwined life and practice. Through an exploration of less familiar imagery and juvenilia significant to Mapplethorpe's artistic development, the exhibition examines the artist's innate mastery of form evident across his oeuvre, revealing a deeper understanding of both his work and his world. Mapplethorpe began his artistic endeavors at the Pratt Institute in Brooklyn where he studied graphic art and design from 1963 to 1969.

Mapplethorpe's education spanned various mediums including sculpture, drawing, painting, and graphic design, introducing the young artist to formalist principles that would be influential to a lifetime of aesthetic sensibilities. Mapplethorpe's discerning eye for symmetry and composition, developed through his studies, is evident in the graphic identity of his earlier works known for their geometric motifs and iterative presentation. This is shown in the artist's photomontage *Champagne* (1975) where Dom Pérignon bottles are arranged in a triangular pattern following the rule of thirds. Self-portraits, in a photo booth strip format, and arrangements of colorful dollar bills also engage ideas of sequencing; the imagery is presented in multiples, with slight adjustments made in each iteration, whether that be the expression made on Mapplethorpe's face or the hue overlaid onto George Washington's. Mapplethorpe's long-standing interest in formal perfection and experimentation can be traced throughout the artist's practice, influential from his studies and early works to his later classically composed studio photographs.

Mapplethorpe's work shares a distinctive visual language of familiarity that can be attributed to the connections the artist had with his subjects and the objects he presented. Photographed by Mapplethorpe in 1988 for *House & Garden*, the artist's Chelsea apartment functioned as both a home and a studio, displaying a remarkable collection of art and decorative objects of his time while serving as the backdrop for his radical practice. The pleasure Mapplethorpe took in curating the belongings in his home accompanied a sophisticated eye for elegance and design, exemplifying the artist's belief that, "the whole point is to try to integrate your life into your work if you're an artist."<sup>1</sup> Expanding upon the relationship between form and familiarity, the works on view at Gladstone's Upper East Side townhouse share similar sculptural sensibilities and stylistic rigor to those that resided in the artist's own apartment. Presenting this exhibition in a gallery setting reminiscent of a domestic interior blurs the boundaries between personal possessions and artwork. A coat rack, topped with an exposed light bulb, is shown both as an assemblage on view and in a photograph featuring a nude figure posing dramatically with the piece – in both instances, the works exude a rawness with the human body and light source laid bare. Although individual details about these objects remain elusive, collectively they offer valuable insight into

---

<sup>1</sup> Filler, Martin. "Robert Mapplethorpe," *House and Garden*, June 1988, p.158–63.

# GLADSTONE

Mapplethorpe's artistic practice, underscoring the thematic importance of form, contrast, and composition.

## **About Robert Mapplethorpe**

Robert Mapplethorpe (1946–1989) was born and raised in Queens, New York. Mapplethorpe attended the Pratt Institute in Brooklyn from 1963 to 1969, where he majored in Graphic Arts and worked primarily in painting, sculpture, and collage. It was not until the 1970s when the artist Sandy Daley gave Mapplethorpe a Polaroid camera that he began to experiment with photography, which he originally used as a means to document his mixed-media artworks, and develop his signature style. During his lifetime, Mapplethorpe had impressive solo exhibitions at some of the most acclaimed institutions around the world, including the Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia; the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; the National Portrait Gallery, London; the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. After his untimely death from AIDS in 1989, Mapplethorpe has been the subject of solo exhibitions at major international museums, including the J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles; Los Angeles County Museum of Art, California; Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, Canada; Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia; Galleria dell'Accademia, Florence, Italy; Grand Palais, Paris; Musée Rodin, Paris; Moderna Museet, Stockholm; Musée des beaux-arts de Montréal, Canada; and State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, Russia.

## **Exhibition Details**

*Unique constructions*

March 19 – April 20, 2024

130 East 64th Street

New York, NY 10011

## **About Gladstone Gallery**

Gladstone Gallery is known for its commitment to artists whose prescient approaches and experimental practices have defined the contours of contemporary art. The gallery has long been an active partner in the cultivation of iconoclastic careers, fostering a roster of artists recognized for their ground-breaking contributions. Headquartered in New York and including outposts in both Brussels and Seoul, Gladstone's impact extends globally, enabling both the presentation of new bodies of work, and an amplification of the international reach of its artists. Alongside its work with contemporary artists, the gallery is steward to the legacies of pivotal historical artists and serves as an advocate for the enduring power of art. Gladstone is led by a team of partners who spearhead its long-term vision and program, building on the values of its founder Barbara Gladstone.

## **Press Contact**

[press@gladstonegallery.com](mailto:press@gladstonegallery.com)