

# GALERÍA ELVIRA GONZÁLEZ

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ROBERT MAPPLETHORPE

## *Robert Mapplethorpe. Elogio a la Sombra*

Opening November 10, 2022



Robert Mapplethorpe. *Michael Reed*, 1987  
©The Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation, Nueva York

Galería Elvira González is pleased to present *Robert Mapplethorpe. Elogio a la Sombra*, the fourth exhibition dedicated to the American artist at the gallery. In collaboration with The Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation, the 34 selected photographs display a variety of subjects—portraits, flowers, and nudes—which revolve around the deliberate play of light and shadow. This selection offers a compelling insight into Mapplethorpe's distinctive practice: rather than focusing on a particular moment or subject, the artist explores forms and compositions through light and shadow, which reveal his remarkable technical and formal mastery.

The photographs in the show were predominately taken in New York between 1977 and 1987. These artworks are an invitation to travel through an unexplored field invaded by an idyllic and enigmatic atmosphere in black and white, where the shadow can become even more important than the subject or the object.

As in Junichiro Tanizaki's essay *In Praise of Shadow*, Mapplethorpe exalts the shade; he uses it as a dominant visual metaphor, both concealing and unveiling in equal measure. He is drawn to beauty and always finds ways to explore new forms and elements. From his earliest black and white photographs, the composition, the pose, and the objects are as deliberate as the tension between what is hidden and what is exposed to the light.

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**Robert Mapplethorpe** (New York, 1946-  
Boston, 1989) grew up in Queens, New  
York in a Catholic environment, with no  
ties to the art world. Between 1963 and  
1969 he was enrolled at Pratt Institute, in  
Brooklyn, where he studied drawing,  
painting, and sculpture, and began to  
learn about the work of artists such as  
Joseph Cornell and Marcel Duchamp. In  
1970 he acquired a Polaroid camera from  
artist and filmmaker Sandy Daley. He took  
his first photographs, which he began to  
incorporate into his collages. Eventually,  
he abandoned collage to focus on  
photography, which resulted in his first  
solo exhibition, *Polaroids*, at the Light  
Gallery in New York. During these early  
years Mapplethorpe expanded his social



Robert Mapplethorpe. *Orchid*, 1977  
©The Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation, Nueva York

*milieu* and, at the same time he developed and expanded his photography based art through portraits of his acquaintances in the artistic, nightlife, and underground circles of New York City. He combined his artistic development with commercial projects and commissions working with *Interview* magazine, Italian *Vogue* magazine and others. Mapplethorpe immersed himself in the whirlwind of New York's art world and cultural scene. Eventually he found his place and achieved enormous recognition. He died on March 9, 1989.

Robert Mapplethorpe is certainly one of the most influential visual artists of the late 20th century. The innovation and timeless beauty of his artworks have transcended time. During his lifetime, he had several solo shows at institutions of major relevance, such as the Institute of Contemporary Art in Philadelphia, the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago, the National Portrait Gallery in London, the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, and the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York. After his untimely death, his work has been the subject of solo exhibitions at leading museums internationally. They include many among others, the Galleria dell'Accademia in Florence (Italy), the Grand Palais in Paris (France), the Musée Rodin in Paris (France), the Moderna Museet in Stockholm (Sweden), the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Montréal (Canada), the State Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg (Russia), Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum (USA). From 2016 to 2018, a major traveling retrospective, *The Perfect Medium*, opened at both the J. Paul Getty Museum and Los Angeles County Museum of Art, LACMA (USA). It traveled to Canada, the Netherlands, and Australia.



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