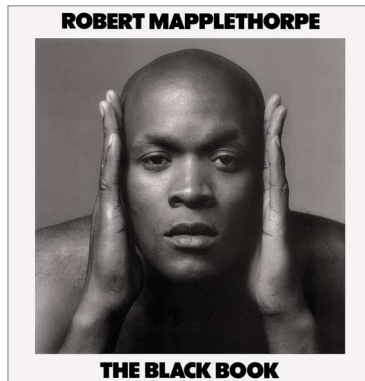


Munich, February 2010

PRESS RELEASE

The return of a classic:

***The Black Book* by Robert Mapplethorpe**



Robert Mapplethorpe

The Black Book

With a poem by Ntozake Shange

108 pages, 96 duotone plates

ISBN 978-3-8296-0460-4

(German/English)

Soft cover

US\$ 39.95; Can.\$ 49.95; EUR 39.80; CHF 65,-

A classic by American photographer Robert Mapplethorpe (1946–1989), perhaps his best, in the eyes of many certainly the "most typical" Mapplethorpe, is available again in this new edition. *The Black Book*, first published in 1986, shortly before Mapplethorpe's untimely death, fascinates and shocks people today as much as it did at the time—all that has changed is the emphasis. Issues that were the concern of censors in the 1980s are now addressed by museums; they no longer form part of legal disputes but have become a subject of sociological and formal-aesthetic analysis. In his radical and uncompromising aestheticization of social taboos, Mapplethorpe's photographic oeuvre has its finger on the pulse of the day. Notions such as art and public mores had to be revised in the wake of his leaving the world of subculture in the 1970s and presenting "impossible" pictures of an outstanding artistic quality.

Robert Mapplethorpe was born in 1946 in Floral Park, Queens/New York. Even when studying painting and sculpture he experimented with the medium of photography. He initially used a Polaroid camera before, in the 1970s, beginning to portray artists, musicians, porno film stars, and members of the New York SM scene with a Hasselblad medium format camera. He designed numerous record covers, such as for Television and Patti Smith, with whom he was involved for a while. Over the years the celebrities he photographed included Andy Warhol, Richard Gere, Peter Gabriel, Grace Jones, Isabella Rossellini, and many more.

Mapplethorpe himself, however, became famous primarily for his photographs of the homosexual underground, the contents of which were shocking but the technical brilliance fascinating. In 1977 his work was displayed at the documenta 6 in Kassel. At the age of just 42 Mapplethorpe died in March 1989 in a Boston hospital of an HIV infection.

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Even twenty years after his death Mapplethorpe's homage to the black male body is one of the most important visual contributions to the discourse on beauty, sensuality, and sexuality in photography. Award-winning American playwright and poet Ntozake Shange has written an introductory poem to this edition.

In a major retrospective of the artist (February 6 – August 15, 2010) NRW Forum Kultur und Wirtschaft in Düsseldorf is celebrating all aspects of Mapplethorpe's creative output, such as early Polaroid pictures, portraits, self-portraits, homosexuality, nude photography, flower still lifes and photographs of sculptures. On display are 150 images taken between 1973 and 1988, including famously notorious icons such as “Man in a Polyester Suit” and late self-portraits taken shortly before his death .

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