

## Robert Mapplethorpe and the continued appreciation for his body of work

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**A look into the late American photographer's works that are still being referenced and talked about today.**



'Self-portrait' (1974), by Robert Mapplethorpe.

The influence of Robert Mapplethorpe's works on today's art and fashion is indisputable. His focus on the queer experience has continuously challenged what was acceptable in the '70s to '80s. He also paved the way for queer artists to interpret their own sexuality into art, instilling a renewed appreciation of the human body.

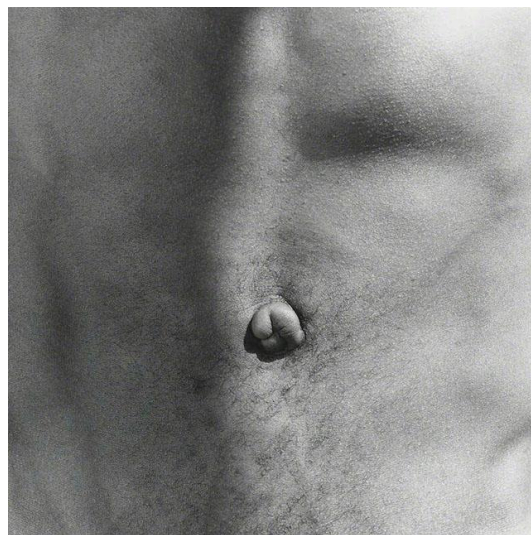
Today, Robert Mapplethorpe's works can be seen exhibited on the walls of the Saint Laurent Rive Droite Paris and Los Angeles boutiques. This is not the first time Anthony Vaccarello has proclaimed his love for Mapplethorpe. In 2019, he curated six pieces of Mapplethorpe's work and displayed them in Saint Laurent's Rive Droite Paris boutique. An ode to the signature high contrast lighting that is seen in his work, Vaccarello christened the exhibition *Dark Shadows*.

This time, however, Vaccarello's curatorial scope has expanded to give life to Mapplethorpe's work outside of his original medium. In conjunction with the exhibition, a capsule collection—that includes bags, leather goods, clothing, pillows and even porcelain—is available for purchase in both Rive Droite stores.

Closer to home, a collection of Mapplethorpe's works can be seen displayed at Appetite, a multidisciplinary space that brings together gastronomy, music and the visual arts. The exhibition titled *Staging: Mapplethorpe* focuses on the photographer's work created at the height of his career. It was during the period of 1979 to 1984 that America was experiencing a turbulent shift in its political landscape. Conservative ideals and a desire to uphold traditional societal norms were at their peak. Mapplethorpe's focus on queer bodies challenged everything the majority stood for at that time. His work displayed within Appetite speaks volumes about the sensual facets of the queer experience, showing the epitome of the masculine form by drawing parallels to the full bloom of flowers.

Provocative and subversive, Mapplethorpe's influence has made sex a recurring exploration in the realms of art, fashion and architecture. As celebrations of his work continue globally, we detail some of his most notable photographs.

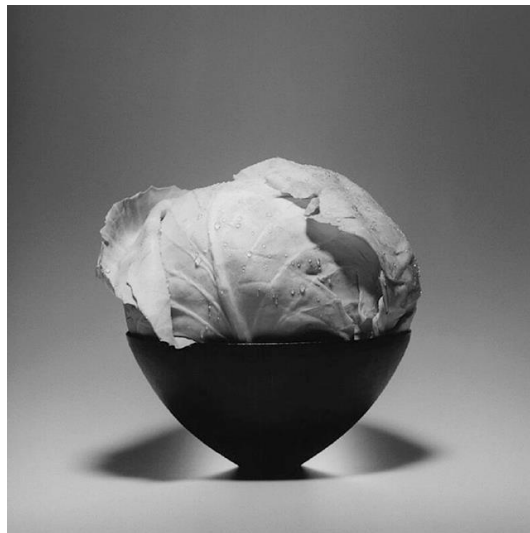
### **'Belly Button' (1986), by Robert Mapplethorpe**



'Belly Button' (1986), by Robert Mapplethorpe.

This evocative photograph encapsulates Mapplethorpe's mastery over capturing the human form. The belly button of the subject emulates a flower bud, displaying a visual parallel between flowers and the human form.

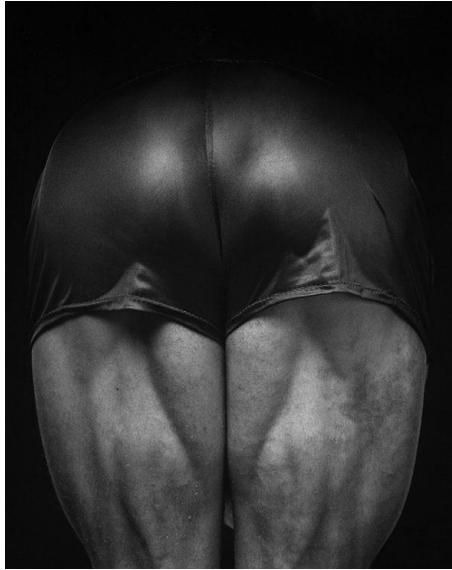
**'Cabbage' (1985), by Robert Mapplethorpe**



'Cabbage' (1985), by Robert Mapplethorpe.

Another trope of Mapplethorpe's work was to change how one views the mundane. Set in heavy shadow and high-contrast lighting, 'Cabbage' instills a sense of hyperawareness of detail into the viewer. One can't help but notice how the textures of the cabbage possess similarities with the vascularity of the human body from Mapplethorpe's perspective. Mapplethorpe sends a message that you can see the body anywhere, even in environments or objects that are devoid of any humanity.

**'Milton Moore' (1981), by Robert Mapplethorpe**



'Milton Moore' (1981), by Robert Mapplethorpe.

While not the first photographer to use body landscaping as a visual leitmotif, Mapplethorpe's perspective is both sensual and sculptural. In this photo of Milton Moore, Mapplethorpe displays a deft use of textures with a touch of fetishism. Smooth, veneer-like latex is juxtaposed against the hyper-masculine, showcasing beauty from the fusion of the two.

Staging: Mapplethorpe *is open to the public from now to 9 April 2022. Book a timeslot online here.*