

A white, long-sleeved button-down shirt is the central focus of the image. It is laid flat against a dark background. A necklace with a black cord and several gold-colored pendants is draped around the collar. A single red rose is pinned to the right side of the shirt. The entire scene is framed by a thick red border.

AFTER THE MOMENT
REFLECTIONS ON
ROBERT MAPPLETHORPE



**BETSY STIRRATT &
CATHERINE ANN JOHNSON-ROEHR**

We selected five artists who are very different in their methodology, yet each has a distinctive connection with some aspect of Robert Mapplethorpe's work. Several seem to have approached the creation of the work for this show with this aesthetic and formal link in mind, while others tackled the question from the conceptual and narrative perspective. Others still made images related to the political nature of the controversy and the ensuing effects on the art world and culture in general. Laura Hartford has produced a portrait that is beautiful but contains painful tinges of reality. There is no sugar coating on this image; it is simply the way a human being looks. Mark Sawrie's photograph *Lily* contains a simple doll torso on a chair, lit in such a way that we cannot help but think about the clarity and simplicity of Mapplethorpe's work. Michael Bill Smith has produced an intimate yet not wholly understandable image. It is obvious that the activity in the picture is erotic (or is it?); it remains unclear exactly what we are looking at. This ambiguity is exactly what the artist strives for. The image of flags from religions, nations and political parties is a statement by Kevin T. Kelly about the diminished human spirit imposed by these entities. The fundamental idea of freedom of expression is the underlying theme. Jeffrey Wolin's image is probably the closest connection to the controversy behind Mapplethorpe's work. His story *Mapplethorpe and Me* highlights the similarities of his own upbringing with that of Mapplethorpe's and the controversy that surrounded the show in Cincinnati.

YASMEEN SIDDIQUI

I took my cues from the argument David Joselit built in *The Perfect Moment* catalog and reasserted in his keynote address at the Institute of Contemporary Art in Philadelphia, "Imperfect Moments: Mapplethorpe and Censorship Twenty Years Later." He spoke passionately about the political and social reverberation of what he called the "Beauty Defense," articulating Mapplethorpe's absolute and continual play with pleasure and power and the multitude of ways these unstable forces impact our own singular understandings of prevailing social constructions. As a means of orienting ourselves and elucidating the zeitgeist of the 1970s and 80s, Barbara Crawford's never before shown photograph, *Embrace* (1976/2015) recalls a contemporaneous art context. Crawford's expansive portfolio, exhibition record and critical reception reveal uncanny parallels to Mapplethorpe. Similarly, the late Stephen Irwin plays a pivotal role. Although not a contemporary, he shared Mapplethorpe's interest in sexuality and specifically pornography. *Stroke 4* (2009) is comprised of four sheets torn from a pornographic magazine and painstakingly worked through erasure of the image. Mary Carothers' strong roots in social practice manifest in public art, sculpture, and photography. *Jamila* (2015) is the result of her decision to engage a female model and a cone-shaped bullhorn that funnels voice into open space. Joel McDonald's drawings, quilts, installations, and on this occasion photography, allow him the opportunity to grapple with topics unspoken be they social or political. *As Ahead, So Behind* (2015) reflects his irreverent attitude towards perfection. Leslie Lyons work traverses photojournalism, sculpture and social practice. Her picture *The Motherfucking First Amendment* (2015) of an underwhelming subject, Cincinnati cause celebre Forest Thomer, is her reaction to the state of contemporary discourse on free speech.

Left: Mark Sawrie, *Lily*, 2015. Pigment inkjet print. Courtesy of the Artist.

Right: Mary Carothers, *Jamila*, 2015. Digital print. Courtesy of the Artist.

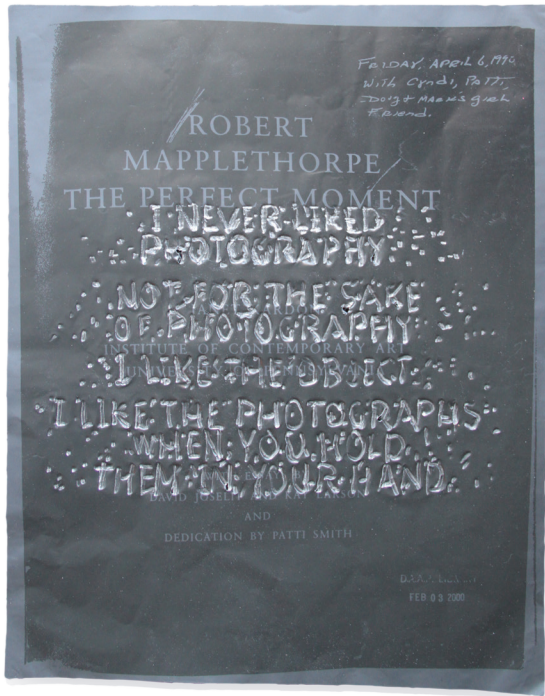
Far right: Peter Huttlinger & Tony Walsh, *Persimmon Tree and Hose (Orchard Discipline)*, 2015. Black and White Digital Photograph. Courtesy of the Artists.



MATT DISTEL

It felt important for me to select artists for this exhibition that may have had a similar proximity as I to *The Perfect Moment* and its aftermath. Peter Huttinger and Tony Walsh were already established artists working in Cincinnati during the trial. For this project, Huttinger collaborated with photographer Tony Walsh to produce an image that sardonically references bondage, though in this instance, for the purposes of "training" the branches of a persimmon tree. Merrilee Luke-Ebbeler was attending the Art Academy of Cincinnati in 1990 and witnessed many of the demonstrations outside of the courthouse during the trial. Coinciding with the invitation to this exhibition, she had made a significant break from that work to build a deeply personal, psychological and formal exploration of her own body. Kristin Rogers was attending school in West Virginia and moved to Oxford, Ohio in the early 1990s to attend Miami University. This work relates to his continuing interest in the pliability of language and its ability to carry multiple meanings and insights. Todd Pavlisko grew up in Oxford, Ohio and also attended Miami University in the early 1990s. His submission is a sincere and straightforward portrait of attorney Louis Sirkin, a less visible figure than the others in *The Perfect Moment* but, in many ways, the voice of the trial on the side of free speech. Terry Berlier was in high school on the west side of Cincinnati during the exhibition and early part of the trial. Her image balances humor and drama with the scene depicted suggesting the absurd action that took place just moments ago. Though the work references a specific photograph by Mapplethorpe, it also perfectly provides an illustration of what has happened *After the Moment*.





STEVEN MATIJCIO

The artists I selected for *After the Moment* wrestle with the legacy of Mapplethorpe as a man, artist and mythology. They do so through a lens that combines autobiographical affiliations and reminiscences with some of Mapplethorpe's signature motifs. Yet these are motifs, which, over the course of repeated iterations and exaggerations, can often verge on caricature. As a case in point, Jordan Tate's kaleidoscopic collage *13 D.P.I (Stacked)* implicitly asks whether marble or multiplicity makes a phallus venerable in the museum. Mark Harris employs *The Perfect Moment* catalog to further deconstruct the theatrical classicism Mapplethorpe simultaneously invites and suffers. By darkening the "front door" of this book and roughly inscribing one of the artist's more unexpected and confounding quotes, Harris undercuts the catalog's attempted sublimation and returns Mapplethorpe to more radical status. The contested question of legacy also informs *Lotus for Mapplethorpe* by Emily Hanako Mohomara, which recasts the artist's signature flowers from phallic metaphors to emblems of the afterlife. Joey Versoza and Jenny Fine pay homage to the way Mapplethorpe's legacy lives, breathes and evolves in their personal memories of *The Perfect Moment*. Channeling recollections of their respective families through the artist's circle of loved ones and portrait subjects, they return some of the sensitivity and familial yearning to work that is so often overdetermined by Mapplethorpe's more graphic desires. He is everything and nothing suggested by these artists, and all the artists in this show, because Mapplethorpe's story is ultimately one in which we see ourselves, and one another.

MARIA SEDA-REEDER

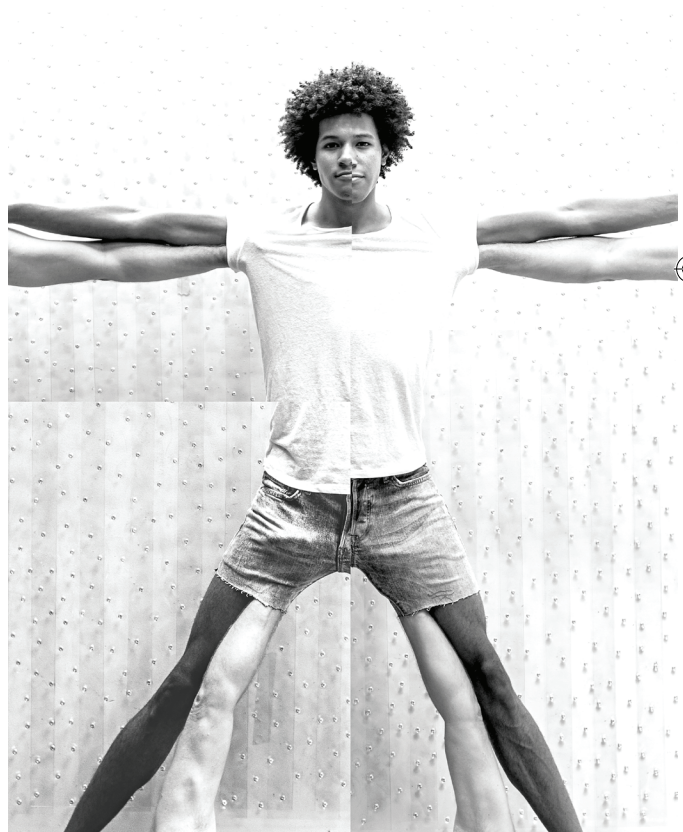
Artwork that joyfully and unabashedly engages with that most primary instrument of human expression—our bodies—will always be a potential threat to existing power structures because dominion over the individual requires legal restrictions upon the body. The five artists I've included in *After the Moment* each engage the corporeal—like Mapplethorpe did—in ways that reject the shame that comes from an externally inscribed "otherness." Iranian-American artist Sheida Soleimani cut up found and re-contextualized imagery she sourced from gay men who were tortured in Iran—a country where homosexuality is a crime punishable by imprisonment, corporal punishment, and often execution. Molly Donnermeyer's contribution reflects her interest in religious iconography and she poses not unlike a saint in her light-filled image. Inspired by Mapplethorpe's lesser-known jewelry works, she adds an assemblage of locks of hair from her own personal pantheon of art muses to create a shrine-like installation. As a gay artist, printmaker and muralist, Matthew Dayler has long looked to Mapplethorpe as a role model. His screen-print directs the viewer outside of the museum in order to carve out public space for queer expression. Photographer Brad Austin Smith has been photographing the male nude for nearly thirty years in Cincinnati, and this exhibition affords him a long overdue platform to showcase his interest in photographing intimate voyeuristic scenes of real people celebrating their bodies in unconventional ways. Jesse Fox's pietà-like image of a man holding a deflating blow up doll plays with religious as well as art historical tropes.





DENNIS HARRINGTON

In selecting artists for *After the Moment*, I was fortunate to have a large pool to select from having worked with so many here in Cincinnati (as well as the surrounding region) through nearly 200 exhibitions and twenty years of programming. Tony Luensman's recent photographic investigations address issues of sexual desire and identity and forefront the human figure as both landscape and intersection of human politics. For this exhibition Alison Crocetta submitted a beautiful black and white photograph of a field of poppies: a mesmerizing image referencing Mapplethorpe's portraits of flowers, but ultimately revealing the more sinister and controversial origins and production of heroin. Mark Flanigan is a performer and writer who for many years lived on rough-and-tumble Main Street, long before its current gentrification. His astute and entertaining observations in his long-running column *Exiled on Main Street* provided a perfect springboard to dive into the Mapplethorpe phenomena. Since he is not a visual artist, Flanigan enlisted the considerable talents of painter Joseph Winterhalter to visually enhance his written piece. Diana Duncan Holmes and her late husband Timothy Riordan have combined their collective talents of photography and poetry for many years in numerous art projects that allow for the creative interweaving of their artistic disciplines. Cal Kowal, a seasoned and venerable photographer who taught at the Art Academy for more than thirty years, has a long and distinguished career with an extensive exhibition history in Cincinnati and the region. His inventive use of collage and montage in his photographs, often visually skewering political viewpoints, affords another perspective on the exhibition.



Opposite Top: Mark Harris, *Untitled*, 2015. Photo Silkscreen. Courtesy of the Artist.

Opposite Bottom: Jesse Fox, *My Pietà*, 2015. Digital inkjet print. Courtesy of the Artist.

Top: Diana Duncan Homes & Timothy Riordan, *Justice*, 2015. Digital image. Courtesy of the Artists.

Bottom: Tony Luensman, *Sleeves*, 2015. Black and white photograph mounted on aluminum. Courtesy of the Artist.

"I knew Robert for many years. I believe he expressed his personal beliefs as photographs in the honest and sincere aesthetic. I applaud him for that then and now because I believe that there should be no limits to express ones deepest beliefs."

- Joel-Peter Witkin

WILLIAM MESSER

When asked to serve as a co-curator for *After the Moment* (really we are more like selectors; the artists are their own curators), I understood Mapplethorpe to be the principal focus of the exhibition and so considered various aspects his work encountered when presented here in 1990. I thought about his portraits and self-portraits, his love of the body, his still lifes and his construction of images, issues of context and his sexual frankness, which for many was extreme and shocking. As the lone photography curator participating, I decided to select only photographers for the exhibition and thought of five whose work, as I knew it, was consistent with those investigations. Some produced work for this exhibition which more or less confirmed my expectations and others surprised me. In each instance I am excited to help bring attention to these deserving regional photographers.

For the historical section of this exhibition, I am pleased to report that Joel-Peter Witkin is offering *Leda, L.A., 1986*, one of the pictures from his exhibition withdrawn from presentation at Images 25 years ago; Sally Mann is giving us *The Wet Bed*, pulled from her *Cincinnati* exhibition; Rosalind Fox Solomon is providing *Catelin Valentine's Lamb*, the photograph which cancelled her exhibition at the Phoenix Art Museum but was included in her *Images* exhibition and Arno Minkinen is presenting *The Glass Penis*, a photographic homage to Robert Mapplethorpe he made in 1988 (as Mapplethorpe was dying of AIDS), never exhibited or published until now. While I, although proposed by co-curator Matt Distel to be one of the regional contemporary photographers in the exhibition, have decided to instead join the historical section with a photograph made in the early 1970s, published in the UK in 1980 but censored from an exhibition in Spain ten years later and also never before exhibited or published in the US. I hope these five images provide provocative perspective.





OPEN CALL

To expand the reach of *After the Moment* beyond familiar names and inevitable curatorial blindspots, the CAC sent out an open call for submissions in the region. Artists of any age, background or level of experience were encouraged to submit a proposal, and the winning work would be displayed alongside the other works commissioned for this exhibition. Thirteen entries were received, and the overall quality was so considerable that the CAC ultimately decided to name two winning entries. Anna Wu is a Cincinnati-born, San Francisco-based documentarian and portrait artist who has taken on national clients as a wedding photographer. Her image *Twenty-Three Years* documents an act that would have not only been "obscene," but impossible twenty five years ago: the wedding of a same sex Cincinnati couple. Katy Rucker is a graduate of the Art Academy of Cincinnati and a self-described graphic designer, photographer and pin-up girl who specializes in "all things vintage and retro." Her untitled image confronts the historical exploitation of the female form in popular media while simultaneously arresting the gaze with a seductive, self-directed perspective. Directing her lens coyly across the landscape of an anonymous body, she provokes as much with what is seen, as what is suggested and withheld.



Opposite Top: Arno Rafael Minkinen, *The Glass Penis, Foster's Pond*, 1988. Silver Gelatin print. Courtesy of the Artist and Edwynn Houk Gallery, New York.

Opposite Bottom: Joel Whitaker, *Playing With the Edge, page 70 Elliot and Domick, 1979*, 2015. Archival Inkjet Print. Courtesy of the Artist.

Top: Anna Wu, *Twenty-Three Years*, 2014 Inkjet Print. Courtesy of the Artist.

Bottom: Katy Rucker, *Untitled*, 2015 Inkjet Print. Courtesy of the Artist.

CONTEMPORARY ARTS CENTER

AFTER THE MOMENT

Reflections on Robert Mapplethorpe

November 6, 2015 - March 13, 2016

Co-curated by Matt Distel, Dennis Harrington, Steven Matijcio, William Messer, Maria Seda-Reeder, Yasmeen Siddiqui, Elizabeth Stirratt and Catherine Ann Johnson-Roehr.

Featuring the work of

Terry Berlier, Mary Carothers, Barbara Crawford, Alison Crocetta, Matthew Dayler, Molly Donnermeyer, Anita Douthat, Diana Duncan Holmes and Timothy Riordan, Jenny Fine, Jesse Fox, Mark Harris, Laura Hartford, Peter Huttinger and Tony Walsh, Stephen Irwin, Mark Flanigan and Joseph Winterhalter, Kevin T. Kelly, Cal Kowal, Anthony Luensman, Merrilee Luke-Ebbeler, Leslie Lyons, Sally Mann, Maurice Mattei, Joel McDonald, William Messer, Emily Hanako Momohara, Todd Pavlisko, Arno Rafael Minkkinen, Kristin Rogers, Katy Rucker, Mark Sawrie, Brad Austin Smith, Michael Bill Smith, Sheida Soleimani, Rosalind Fox Solomon, Tim Stegmaier, Jordan Tate, Joey Versoza, Joel Whitaker, Michael Wilson, Joel-Peter Witkin, Jeffrey Wolin, Anna Wu and Robert Mapplethorpe

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Cover: Anita Douthat, *A Catholic Boy from Queens: After R.M.*, 2015. Courtesy of the Artist.

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