

BLACK WHITE

Edged.

An Ode to Mapplethorpe

Black White Gallery is proud to present the *Edged: An Ode To Mapplethorpe*, an exhibition of five artists on display at Unit 16 at 39 Gransden Avenue from Friday 11th - Thursday 17th August 2023. Featuring the work of Amir Chasson, Verde, Harry Freegard, Matt Macken, this exhibition draws influence from the oeuvre of late twentieth-century American photographer Robert Mapplethorpe (1949-1989). Situated at the intersection of queerness, subversion, resilience, and truth, the featured artists come together through their shared usage of diverse media and Mapplethropean influence.

Mapplethorpe, as a central figure in the emergence of downtown New York as an artistic destination in the late 1970s and early 1980s, is an artist renowned in both art and queer histories alike. Mapplethorpe's name is widely recognized, instantly evoking connotations of homoeroticism and a rejection of heteronormativity. The surname now carries an inherent provocation, exuding a deeply sultry and seductive quality. Characterized by his neo-classical curls and slender physique, Mapplethorpe is an iconic figure forever linked with Patti Smith. Adorned with a multitude of necklaces featuring skulls and teeth pendants nestled at the base of his collarbones, he remains within the realms of the infamous downtown queer socialites.

Art Historian Arthur Danto explains how Mapplethorpe described his practice as '[playing] with the edge'. Danto cleverly repurposed this phrasing, emphasising in his writing how Mapplethorpe *edged* the line between art and pornography. *Edged: An Ode To Mapplethorpe* takes Danto's linguistic witticism one step further in this exhibition of emerging international talent. We are extremely proud and grateful to be showcasing such burgeoning creatives all of whom, in one way or another, have taken a holistic influence by this New York legend.

Amir Chasson employs a photomontage style in his practice, reappropriating distinctive homoerotic imagery and transforming this into captivating and intricate collages. Within Chasson's work, there is an element of the uncanny, leaving viewers uncertain about the true nature of what they are witnessing. His adept manipulation of materials creates a deceptive effect, drawing us into an at once enchanting and alluring experience. Chasson has exhibited internationally including at Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery and the Saatchi Gallery.

Although not common knowledge, Mapplethorpe's early work used a similar collaged technique: Sylvia Woolf confirms that in the summer of 1963 Mapplethorpe was caught stealing a magazine of gay pornography from a newsstand in Times Square. Patti Smith too fondly recalls their apartment in Room 1017 of the Hotel Chelsea, which was smattered by an abundance of magazine cuttings. Chasson's has swapped Chelsea for Berlin where he produces his compelling images.

BLACK WHITE

Harry Freegard is a director, designer, and artist. Following a degree in Fashion Design from Central Saint Martins in 2018, he has published work with the likes of Interview, LOVE, Man About Town, Re-Edition, and Replica. In 'Edged', Freegard presents a collection of series that draw parallels to the artistic essence of Mapplethorpe. Notably, his 'Flicky Haired Boys' series, comprised of A4 drawings, bears a resemblance to Mapplethorpe's distinctive profile, while his Polaroids pay homage to Mapplethorpe's initial artistic medium which were instrumental when solidifying and manifesting his creative sensibility.

Matt Macken is a Leicester based artist who has recently come to know and appreciate Mapplethorpe. In *Edged*, Macken is exhibiting numerous works of abstracted queer figures, including *Imitation of Life*, a work created specifically for the show which directly responds to his Mapplethorpean awakening. The work is highly referential, peppered with easter eggs of a well researched art historical understanding. Macken's works are owned by various collectors and collections around the world, including the Soho House permanent art collection.

Inès Michelotto is a figurative painter who portrays herself and her close friends using a gentle oil palette and even gentler brush stroke. Like Mapplethorpe, who often used himself as a muse, her self-portraits are some of her most compelling pieces. 'Dear Davide', an intimate image of the artist's friend sitting topless at the edge of his bed while smoking, exudes a sense of stillness and evokes a moralistic exchange, creating a quiet peace that is bound to make you pause.

Verde's paintings mirror Mapplethorpe's playful expressions of sexualities, such as her exhibited piece 'Come through. Let's be each other's oracles'. The use of the tightly cropped frame creates an extreme closeness resulting in an uninterrupted picture frame saturated with flesh and flirty frivolity. Through her work, Verde strives to understand the world's dynamics which she is involved in, such as gender identity and intimacy. Verde recently graduated from her MA at the City and Guilds of London Art School, and has exhibited across Italy and the UK.

Curated by Henrietta Scrine and Will Ferreira Dyke.

VISITOR INFORMATION:

Black White Gallery advocates a contemporary approach that challenges the traditional institutionalised art market. We strive to build genuine relationships with both emerging and established artists, providing a safe space that promotes constructive and empowering dialogue. Black White Gallery was established in 2022 by Charles Leffler and Henrietta Scrine.

Private view: Thursday 10th August 2023, 6 - 9pm

Address: Unit 8, 39 Gransden Avenue, London E8 3QA

Exhibition runs: Friday 11th - Thursday 17th August 2023

Opening times: Appointment Only

www.blackwhitegallery.co.uk

@blackwhitegallery__