



# Robert Mapplethorpe: Polaroids

*Sylvia Wolf*

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## **Robert Mapplethorpe: Polaroids** Sylvia Wolf

Robert Mapplethorpe's black-and-white Polaroid photographs of the 1970s--a medium in which he established the style that would bring him international acclaim--are brought together in this new paperback edition. Critically praised for his finely modeled and classically composed photographs, Robert Mapplethorpe remains intensely controversial and enormously popular. This book brings together almost 300 images from the Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation's archive and private collections to provide a critical view of Mapplethorpe's formative years as an artist, revealing the themes that would inspire Mapplethorpe throughout his career. Included is a selection of color Polaroids and objects incorporating his early "instant" photography. Some images convey a disarming tenderness and vulnerability, others a toughness and immediacy that would give way in later years to more classical form. The author traces the development of Mapplethorpe's use of instant photography over a period of five years, from 1970 to 1975, when the artist worked mainly in this medium. The images include self-portraits; figure studies; still lifes; portraits of lovers and friends such as Patti Smith, Sam Wagstaff, and Marianne Faithful; and observations of everyday objects. Marked by a spontaneity and creative curiosity, these fragile images offer an illuminating contrast to the glossy perfection of the work for which Mapplethorpe is best known, allowing us a more personal glimpse of his artistry.

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