

For Immediate Release

**Final Program Announced for Mapplethorpe + 25  
A Symposium to Commemorate the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of  
*Robert Mapplethorpe: The Perfect Moment*  
Co-Presented by FotoFocus and the Contemporary Arts Center**

**at the Contemporary Arts Center in Cincinnati, OH  
October 23 and 24, 2015**



Robert Mapplethorpe, *Ken Moody and Robert Sherman*, 1984

**Cincinnati, OH – August 19, 2015** – FotoFocus and the Contemporary Arts Center (CAC) in Cincinnati, Ohio, are pleased to announce the final program for the symposium on the occasion of the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Robert Mapplethorpe's controversial exhibition, *The Perfect Moment*. Under the leadership of **Mary Ellen Goeke**, Executive Director of FotoFocus, Contemporary Arts Center Director, **Raphaella Platow**, and curated by FotoFocus Artistic Director **Kevin Moore**, the program includes an international roster of curators, critics, artists, and art world professionals—with keynotes by **Germano Celant** and **Catherine Opie**—who will all meet for a two-day event on October 23 and 24, 2015, at the CAC, to discuss the significance and implications of the exhibition and Mapplethorpe's career and legacy as these have evolved over the past 25 years.

*Robert Mapplethorpe: The Perfect Moment* opened on April 7, 1990, at the Contemporary Arts Center in Cincinnati in a climate of national cultural unrest. The exhibition immediately sparked controversy when politicians took offense to the show and the use of public funds provided by the National Endowment of the Arts (NEA) to support it, leading to the indictment of the CAC and Director Dennis Barrie on obscenity charges. Similar controversy had resulted in the cancellation of the

exhibition tour at the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., the previous year. The historic trial that followed—where for the first time a museum and its director faced criminal charges because of an art exhibition—brought national attention to the subject of public funding for the arts, as well as arts censorship.

Twenty-five years later, numerous reassessments of the artist's career have prompted fresh insights. The symposium, *Mapplethorpe + 25*, will revolve around this revitalized interest in Mapplethorpe as curators, artists, critics and others explore the broad question: what does Mapplethorpe's work tell us about the culture we have inherited and inhabit today?

"With the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Robert Mapplethorpe's exhibition, we wanted to revisit the past as it is the basis of history; it reminds us of where we come from and who we have become," says FotoFocus Artistic Director and Curator, Kevin Moore. "Mapplethorpe's work rather ambitiously proposes a far-reaching idea of universalism, of timeless values common to all of humanity across myriad cultural geographies. Yet his work is also idiosyncratic, personal, of a particular historical moment—the politically conservative 1980s and the height of the AIDS crisis. To comprehend his work as both timeless and timely, as an amalgam of a perfect world and an imperfect moment, is to grasp the essential need to make art, to write history, and to contemplate both."

"It's remarkable that it has been 25 years since Mapplethorpe's exhibition and the national uproar, and we are thrilled that the symposium is taking place right where it all started," said Contemporary Arts Center Director Raphaela Platow. "Showcasing Mapplethorpe's work elevated the CAC to a national platform as a place that fought for new projects and ideas. What many don't realize is at the time, that was a very risky statement for an institution to make."

**SYMPOSIUM PROGRAM AT THE CONTEMPORARY ARTS CENTER (CAC),  
CINCINNATI, OHIO:  
OCTOBER 23 and 24, 2015**

*Program subject to change*

**Friday, October 23**

Opening Film Montage

Welcome and Introduction by FotoFocus and CAC

**Keynote speaker: Germano Celant, Independent Curator, Milan-New York**

**Saturday, October 24**

Welcome and Overview

Panel: *The Exhibition, The Contemporary Arts Center, and Arts Censorship*

Moderated by Raphaela Platow, Director, Contemporary Arts Center, Cincinnati, with panelists: Dennis Barrie, Principal of Barrie Projects and former Contemporary Arts Center Director; Jock Reynolds, Director, Yale University Art Gallery; H. Louis Sirkin, Senior Counsel, Santen & Hughes, and former trial counsel to Dennis Barrie and the Contemporary Arts Center; and

Michael Ward Stout, President, The Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation

Comment by: Robert Reid-Pharr, Professor, The Graduate Center, City University of New York

Panel: *The Artist's Circle and Studio*

Moderated by Phillip Gelter, author and photo historian, with panelists: Robert Sherman, promoter, Chateau Marmont, Los Angeles; Judy Linn, artist, New York; and Carol Squiers, Curator, International Center of Photography, New York

Panel: *Curators Curate Mapplethorpe*

Moderated by Kevin Moore, Artistic Director and Curator, FotoFocus, with panelists: Jennifer Blessing, Senior Curator of Photography, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum; Britt Salvesen, Curator, Wallis Annenberg Photography Department, Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA); and Paul Martineau, Associate Curator, Department of Photographs, The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles

**Closing Artist Keynote speaker: Catherine Opie, artist**

**Oral History Reception Hosted by Sarah Douglas, Editor-in-Chief, ARTnews:**

Visitors are invited to share their stories of the 1990 Mapplethorpe exhibition, reflect on its impact, and comment on issues raised in the symposium. This commentary will be recorded and simultaneously broadcast during the symposium's final public reception at the 21c Museum Hotel.

### **About Robert Mapplethorpe**

Robert Mapplethorpe was born in 1946 in Floral Park, Queens. He studied drawing, painting, and sculpture at Pratt Institute in Brooklyn. Influenced by artists such as Joseph Cornell and Marcel Duchamp, he also experimented with various materials in mixed-media collages, including images cut from books and magazines. He eventually began producing his own photographs with a Polaroid camera and in 1973 received his first solo gallery exhibition titled "Polaroids" at the Light Gallery in New York City. Two years later he acquired a Hasselblad medium-format camera and began shooting his friends and acquaintances, some of which were involved in the New York S & M scene—by the late 1970s, he grew increasingly interested in documenting that scene. In 1986, he was diagnosed with AIDS. Despite his declining health, he continued to make strides in his career, including his first major American museum retrospective at the Whitney Museum of American Art in 1988. Mapplethorpe passed away in 1989, but his legacy lives on through his work, which is represented by galleries and in the collections of major museums around the world.

### **About FotoFocus**

FotoFocus is a non-profit arts organization whose mission is to present the finest in photography and lens-based art, and to produce programs that are artistically, intellectually, and academically rigorous yet accessible, educational and enriching to a large and diverse public. FotoFocus celebrates and champions photography as the medium of our time through programming that ignites a dialogue between contemporary photo-based art and the history of photography. FotoFocus has awarded more than 85 grants to regional artists and institutions since 2012 for the production and presentation of photography and lens-based art.

Launched in October 2012, the FotoFocus Biennial is a month-long regional photography festival based in Cincinnati. The second edition of the Biennial in 2014, included six original exhibitions

curated by Artistic Director Kevin Moore, the premier of the FotoFocus ArtHub, as well as exhibitions by over fifty participating venues throughout the region. The FotoFocus Biennial 2014 featured programming included five days of lectures, panel discussions, screenings, and performances with curators, critics, and art world professionals.

Further information about FotoFocus can be found at [www.fotofocuscincinnati.org](http://www.fotofocuscincinnati.org) and the FotoFocus Biennial 2014 at <http://www.fotofocusbiennial.org>.

Follow FotoFocus on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Instagram](#) via the hashtag [#FotoFocus](#)

## About The Contemporary Arts Center:

Founded in November 1939 as the Modern Art Society, the Contemporary Arts Center was one of the first institutions in the U.S. dedicated to exhibiting the art of our time. The CAC is a non-collecting museum that focuses on new developments in painting, sculpture, photography, architecture, performance art and new media presenting eight to 12 exhibitions and 20 to 40 performances annually. The CAC has displayed the works by Andy Warhol, Shilpa Gupta and JR, among many other renowned artists. In May 2003, the Center moved to its first free-standing home, the Lois & Richard Rosenthal Center for Contemporary Art, designed by Zaha Hadid. The Rosenthal Center for Contemporary Art was Zaha Hadid's first American project. Hailed by the New York Times Architecture Critic Herbert Muschamp as "the most important American building to be completed since the cold war." The Contemporary Arts Center is a non-collecting arts center with more than 16,000 sq. ft. of exhibition space, a dedicated black box performance space and the Sara M. and Patrica A. Vance UnMuseum, a 6,600 sq. ft. multi-generational exhibition and education space. The Contemporary Arts Center remains one of the nation's largest and most dynamic contemporary arts presenters.

Further information about the Contemporary Arts Center can be found at [www.contemporaryartscenter.org](http://www.contemporaryartscenter.org)

Follow Contemporary Arts Center on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#) via the hashtag [#cincycac](#)

## Other Upcoming Programming:

### ***After the Moment: Reflections on Robert Mapplethorpe***

November 6, 2015–March 13, 2015

The Contemporary Arts Center will consider the legacy of the artist Robert Mapplethorpe (and the events surrounding *The Perfect Moment*) through the lens of artists working today. Seven curators from across the tri-state region of Ohio, Kentucky & Indiana, will each select 5 artists who will present new work that measures how Mapplethorpe's photos, exhibition and censorship shaped the artistic landscape they navigate today.

A special subsection of *After the Moment* curated by William Messer gathers five photographers connected to Cincinnati's historic Images Center for Photography around the time of the Mapplethorpe controversy and Messer, the curator who brought those four artists' exhibitions to Cincinnati. The photographs selected by their makers as their contemporary responses to this historic anniversary include a never before published or exhibited 1989 homage to Mapplethorpe, a photograph exhibited at Images in 1990 which had earlier caused the entire exhibition to be cancelled at a university gallery, and other images with various histories of censorship, all but one to be exhibited for the first time in the US.

Co-Curated by Matt Distel, Dennis Harrington, William Messer, Steven Matijcio, Maria Seda-Reeder,



Yasmeen Siddiqui and Elizabeth Stirrat.

For more information about the exhibition *After the Moment: Reflection on Robert Mapplethorpe* visit: <http://contemporaryartscenter.org/exhibitions/2015/11/after-the-moment>

**FotoFocus Biennial 2016: *Photography, the Undocument*, Oct. 1-31, 2016**

The Undocument questions the documentary character of photography, exploring the boundaries between facts and fabrications. The FotoFocus Biennial 2016 will run through the month of October in Cincinnati at participating museums, galleries, organizations, and in the ArtHub. The FotoFocus Biennial will include four days of concentrated programming and events to be held October 6 - 9, 2016.

###

**Media Contact**

For further information, images, or to arrange an interview, members of the press may contact:

Pamela Hernandez  
Blue Medium, Inc.  
+1 212-675-1800  
[pamela@bluemedium.com](mailto:pamela@bluemedium.com)