

Fortes D'Aloia & Gabriel

Galeria

Rua Fradique Coutinho 1500 | 05416-001 São Paulo Brasil

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Alair Gomes and Robert Mapplethorpe

August 03 – September 16, 2017

The exhibition **Alair Gomes and Robert Mapplethorpe** at Fortes D'Aloia & Gabriel presents an unprecedented juxtaposition between the work of Alair Gomes (1921-1992) and Robert Mapplethorpe (1946-1989). This is Mapplethorpe's third exhibition at the Galeria and the first in which the work of the celebrated American photographer is seen side by side with a Brazilian artist.

The starting point of this dialogue is the desire – expressed by both artists through texts and interviews – to evidence in their works the experience of the transcendence of sex. The exhibition explores this relationship through the artists' gaze, which seek the perfection of classical sculpture in the human body; in the notion of theatricality that is present in Mapplethorpe in opposition to the naturalness of the body in Gomes; and finally on the beach as an idealized place of pleasure as portrayed by both artists. In this way, the works are interspersed forming thematic groups, without chronological order. Although the photographs presented are from a similar period, from the late 1970s to the early 1980s, the juxtaposition is also able to highlight some fundamental differences in the production of both artists. For example, it is curious to note that while Mapplethorpe names his characters, not only showing their faces, which endows them celebrity status, Gomes opts for total anonymity.

Along the largest wall of the gallery, a heterogeneous group of Mapplethorpe's images shows the beach as a place of hedonism and pleasure. The human body seems to integrate itself to the landscape in poses that imitate bas-reliefs, photographed in the sunlight. Other lesser-known photos reveal the artist's gaze upon the unadorned landscape. These images are interspersed by Alair Gomes' *Sonatinas, Four Feet* (1970-1980), photographed with a telephoto lens from the window of his apartment in Ipanema (Rio de Janeiro). Although allowing a greater range, the use of this type of lens reduces the sharpness of the images, so that the *Sonatinas* privilege the geometric composition of the bodies in relation to the sand texture and the exercise apparatuses. The artist's distant gaze seeks a rigid geometric structure in the spontaneous action, while at the same time making explicit the unspoken codes of masculinity, interaction, and intimacy between two men in public.

At the back of the gallery, Mapplethorpe's studio photos depict parts of the human body in precise, carefully posed and lit details to highlight the body's sculptural qualities – volume, weight, and surface are all in evidence. The body of bodybuilder Lisa Lyon converses with the male nudes of this sequence, denoting the artist's concern with issues of gender representation. Gomes's *Beach Triptychs* (c. 1980) are displayed alongside these images, which, despite their spontaneous nature, capturing the unposed moment, express the same concern with the classical representation of a body-sculpture.

A third group links Mapplethorpe's S&M images (such as *Leather Crotch* and *Frank Diaz*, both from 1980) with others where male roles and race issues are evidenced through clothing. *Hooded Man* (1980), for instance, shows a black man totally naked wearing only a hood. This group of images is displayed side by side with *Sonatinas, Four Feet No. 32*, perhaps the most explicitly homoerotic in the series.

Robert Mapplethorpe (New York, USA, 1946 – Boston, USA, 1989) is one of the most important American artists of the twentieth century. His production, cataloged and organized during his own lifetime, continues being shown and reexamined in the light of contemporary discussions on gender. With the support of the Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation, established in 1988, his work has been the subject of retrospective exhibitions in various

institutions. His recent shows include: Kunsthal Rotterdam (Rotterdam, 2017), The Getty Museum of Art (Los Angeles, 2016), LACMA (Los Angeles, 2016), Montreal Museum of Fine Arts (Montreal, 2016), Kiasma Museum (Helsinki, Finland, 2015), Bowes Museum (Durham, UK, 2015), Tate Modern (London, 2014), Grand Palais (Paris, 2014), Musée Rodin (Paris, 2014). Mapplethorpe is present in several important collections around the world, including: MoMA (New York), Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum (New York), Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York), Whitney Museum of Modern Art, SFMOMA (San Francisco), Tate (London), National Portrait Gallery (London), Center Georges Pompidou (Paris), Stedelijk Museum (Amsterdam), Museum of Contemporary Art (Tokyo).

Alair Gomes (Valença, Brazil, 1921 – Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 1992), although celebrated by a select audience, remains relatively unknown and under studied, both in Brazil and abroad. His work has been gradually rediscovered, especially since the success of his exhibition at Fondation Cartier, Paris, in 2016. His recent exhibitions include: *Young Male*, Casa Triângulo (São Paulo, 2016), *Muito Prazer*, Biblioteca Nacional (Rio de Janeiro, Brazil), *Percursos*, Caixa Cultural (São Paulo, 2015), 30. São Paulo Biennial (2012), *A New Sentimental Journey*, Maison Européenne de la Photographie (Paris, 2009).

Exhibition details

Exhibition: "Alair Gomes and Robert Mapplethorpe"

Fortes D'Aloia & Gabriel | Galeria: Rua Fradique Coutinho, 1500 | Vila Madalena | 05416-001 | São Paulo, Brazil

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Opening: Thursday, August 03, 2017 | 7 pm – 10 pm

Exhibition period: August 03 – September 16, 2017

Hours: Tuesday – Friday: 10 am – 7 pm | Saturdays: 10 am – 6 pm

Notice: This exhibition is unsuitable for children under 16 years of age

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