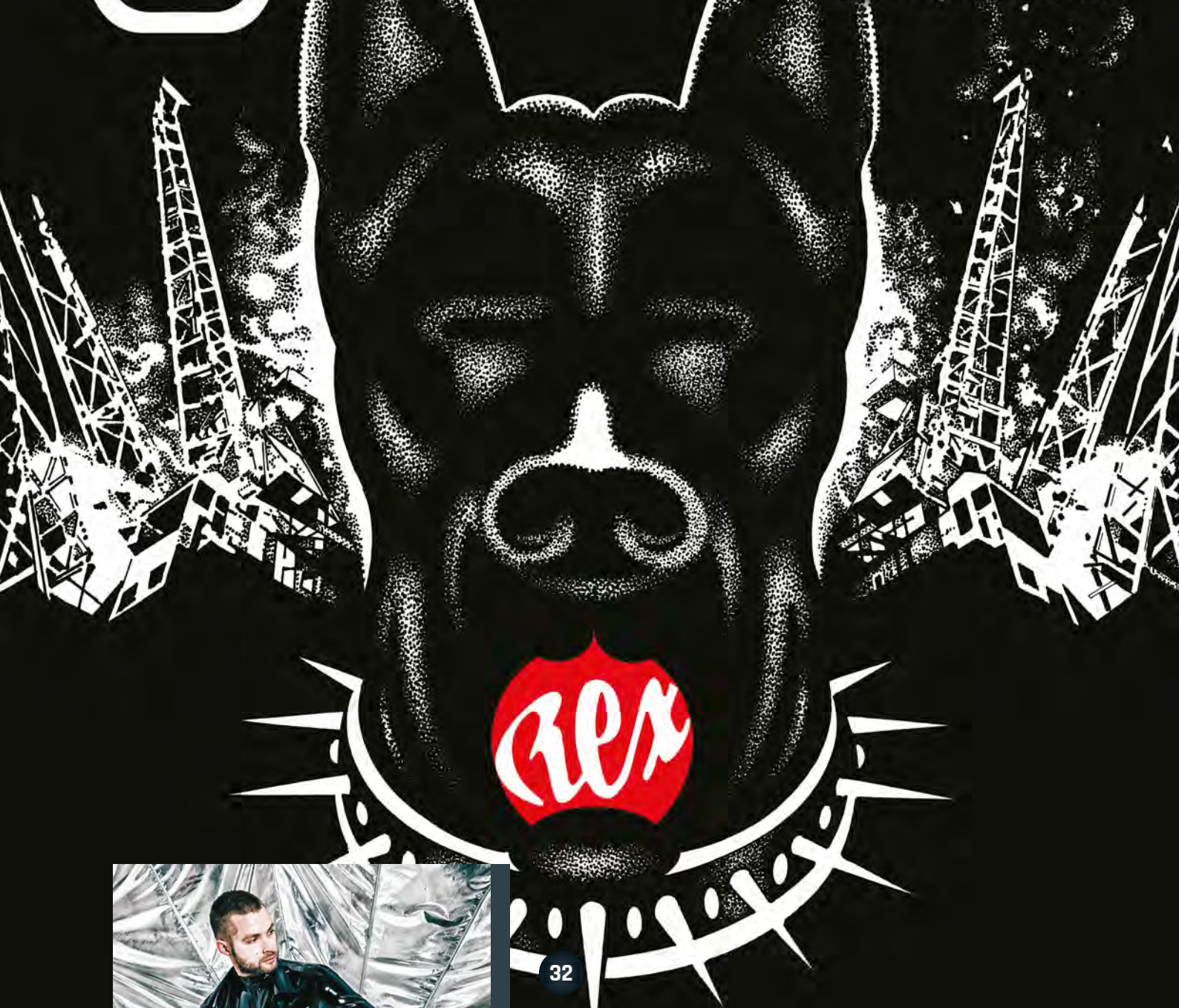




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MICHAL NEIGHBOUR MR INTERNATIONAL RUBBER 21

Michal led Poland to victory at the Mr International Rubber Election in Chicago.

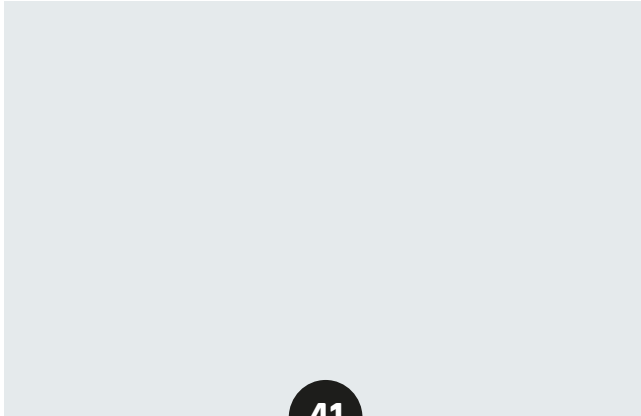
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ALPHATRIBE MAGAZINE / ALSO IN THIS ISSUE: CLAW, HANDCUFFS, MR BEAR EUROPE, LEATHERPRIDE AMSTERDAM, MR LEATHER EUROPE, REXWORLD, A LEATHERMAN'S JOURNEY, ELECTRO SEX, GAME OF THRONES, ROBERT MAPPLETHORPE, FRANCOIS SAGAT, TOM OF FINLAND VODKA, ...

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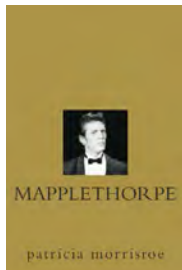
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EDITORIAL

THE FUTURE OF OUR FETISH COMMUNITY

A question I'm often asked is how our community will evolve, or even survive, in the future. Old-guard leathermen especially talk about its impending demise. The number of true 'Tom of Finland leathermen' seems to decrease with every fetish event that takes place. And parties with a strict leather-only dress code do not fill bars the way they used to ten years ago.

Knowing where we're heading starts by knowing where we've come from. When the need for a masculine image arose in the 50s and 60s in the US, it was as a response to society's perception of gay men as feminine. It didn't take long for gay men to adopt a strong look to show off their masculinity. Military uniforms and leather were their answer. The macho appearance those gay men

adopted mimicked the most obvious masculine traits in society at the time.

Knowing this, it becomes clear why the style was adopted. And it also explains why that style isn't common today in society, or our community. It's simply not necessary to make that statement anymore. Today we dress in leather to show our fascination, affection, and love for a material and the community behind it.

That brings me to a Mr Leather election I was asked to judge some time ago. From the five candidates, one stood out for me. He was a young guy, in his late twenties. Ripped leather shirt and a leather baseball cap with puppy ears. Not the typical look you would expect from a potential leather titleholder.

His fellow contestants all presented themselves in true leatherman style, the way we're used to. But not only was this guy's look different, he also had a story to tell. He was very new to the scene, but he was about to leave his mark on the scene. At least, that was the gut feeling I had.

He didn't win the election, one of the other great candidates did. The reason he didn't make it was because the American judge didn't see a real leatherman in this guy, and scored him accordingly. I gave him a nine, but only because nobody is perfect enough to deserve a ten. When he left the room, I couldn't stop myself from loudly expressing my admiration for this guy. In my opinion, he personified the future of our community.

Coming back to the topic of my editorial, it is not difficult to see where our community is heading. It is already happening right under our noses. Look at the younger generations. They're puppies, they're superheroes, and they mix any, and all, fetishes in one outfit. The rules of the

game have changed. You either play by those new rules or get overtaken by your fellow players.

Enjoy the game!

Jeroen



JEROEN VAN LIEVENOOGEN SENIOR EDITOR

Jeroen is publisher of Alphatribe and Cerebral magazine and organises Leather & Fetish Pride Belgium.



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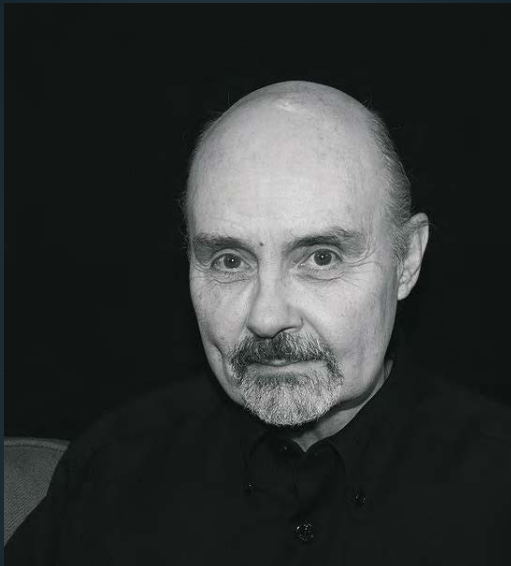
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JUST MEN

MAPPLETHORPE AND ME

By Jack Fritscher

Guest Writer
Jack Fritscher



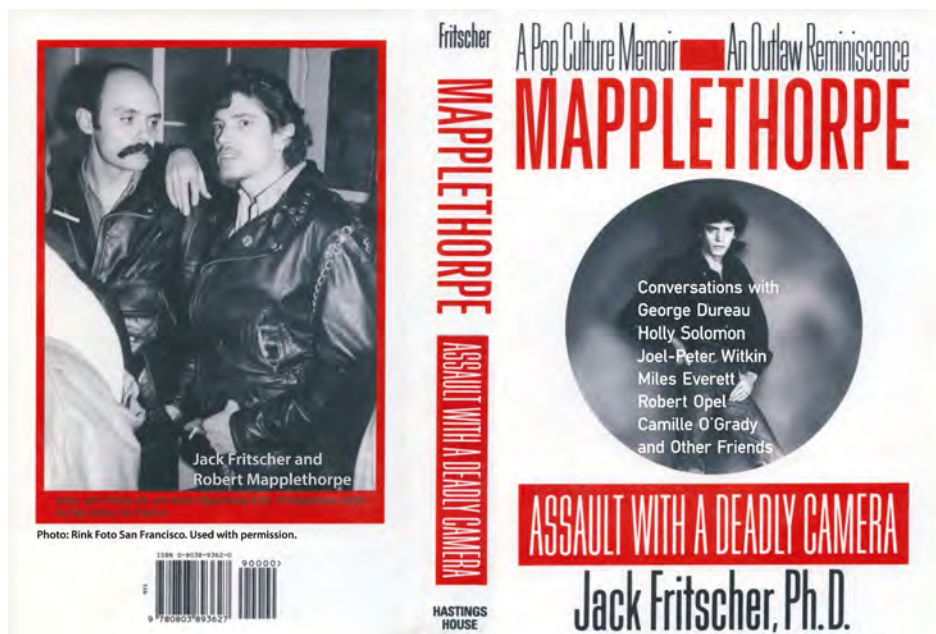
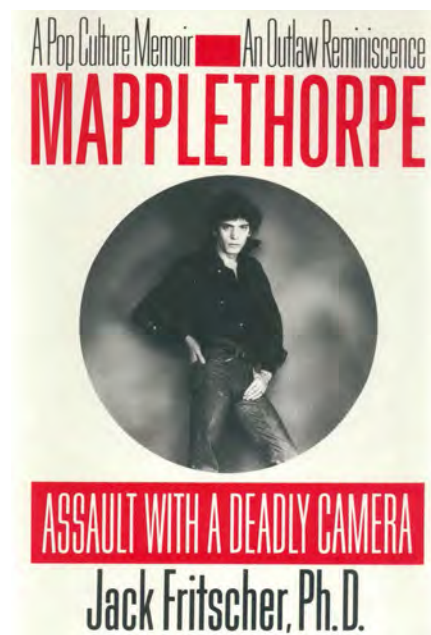
Jack Fritscher - pic by Steven Dansky

Jack Fritscher is the author of the memoir, "Mapplethorpe: Assault with a Deadly Camera," English, Italian, and Spanish editions. JackFritscher.com

One hundred days after Robert Mapplethorpe's celebrity-studded funeral, the gun-loving conservative politician Jesse Helms stood on the floor of the US Senate and waved a photograph in the faces of his fellow representatives. The black-and-white shot of two men clad head-to-toe in leather was called "Larry and Bobby Kissing." "Look at the pictures!" screamed Helms screaming Hellfire. He was outraged that government tax money had helped fund "The Perfect Moment," a Mapplethorpe retrospective in Washington DC. "Pictures!" A perfect moment for censorship.

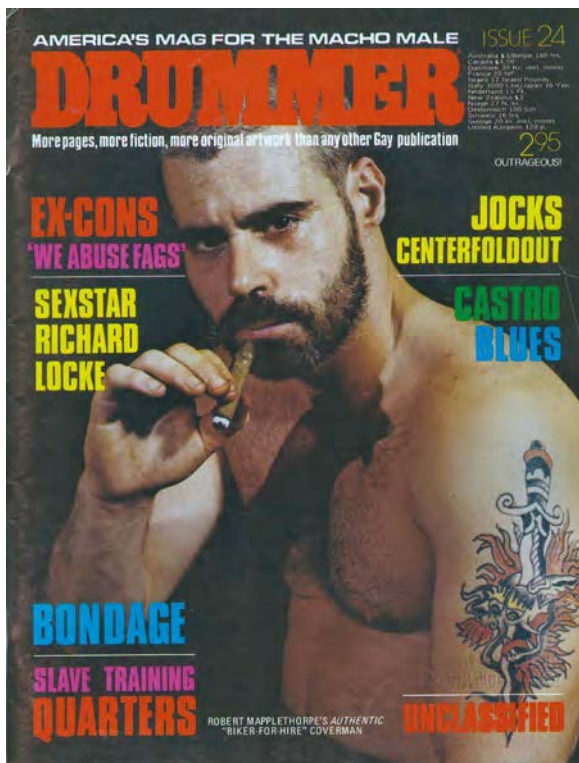
Robert left a legacy of thousands of beautiful photographs of faces, flowers, and fetishes when he died of Aids on 9 March 1989 at the age of 42. He assaulted American concepts of race, sex, gender, and morality. Born in Floral Park, New York, in 1946, he was on trial all his short life. Anti-gay legislation made him a sexual outlaw. His work too was on trial: it ran gauntlets of homophobia to hang today in international sanctuaries such as the Tate in Britain and the J Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles. In 1990, at the height of US hysteria over Aids, a witch hunt in Cincinnati put seven of his frames on trial, aiming to sort art from obscenity. Robert's photos won.

He changed popular culture. The sort of sex pictures he dared shoot are now snapped every day by millions, minus his style, on Snapchat and Grindr. It is a humanist victory against fundamentalism that he is constantly being celebrated worldwide in major retrospectives like the current museum hit, "The Perfect Medium." On screen, director Ondi Timoner's feature film, "Mapplethorpe" (2018), presenting "Doctor Who" star Matt Smith as Robert dramatizes the facts Fenton Bailey and Randy Barbato, producers of "RuPaul's Drag Race," sussed out in their smart HBO documentary, "Mapplethorpe: Look at the Pictures" (2016). Robert's muse Patti Smith recently sold her "pentimento" memoir, "Just Kids," to Showtime TV for a limited mini-series.



A FINE BROMANCE, "DRUMMER," AND THE DEVIL

The romantic comedy of our bromance bloomed the instant Robert opened his gorgeous portfolio, mind, and body at my desk when I was editor of "Drummer," the San Francisco magazine for masculine gay men with an interest in leather and kink. It was the "Titanic 1970s" when the first-class party sped on innocent of the iceberg of Aids that lay dead ahead. Everyone was polyamorous. He was more beautiful than the pouty Botticelli rock star Jim Morrison. We became bi-coastal lovers for more than two years and remained friends forever. We fricated our edginess together. We were both re-quivering Catholics mixing the sacred and the profane. An acolyte of Rimbaud, he was keen on my book about Anton LaVey, founder of the Church of Satan. It was sex, love, art, letters, phone calls, and business. It was life.



He described ideal passion as "intelligent sex." One night, during stoned pillow talk, he exhaled a stream of Kool Menthol smoke: "I want to be a story told in beds at night around the world." We both giggled.

In San Francisco in the late 1970s, Robert lived a free life shooting some of his most famous leather photographs. Liberated from the controlled environment of his Manhattan studio, and unobserved by critical New York eyes, he found joy in gonzo locations. We went talent scouting on Folsom Street at the Brig, the Ambush, and the Eagle bars. I watched

him at work in the Twin Peaks condo, high above famous Castro Street, where he shot my other lover, physique champion Jim Enger. I drove him in my 1969 Land Cruiser across the Golden Gate Bridge to scout the abandoned missile silos and cement bunkers on the Marin Headlands for the "piss-in-mouth photo" shoot of "Jim and Tom, Sausalito." I vouched for him when he wanted to shoot the dominatrix founder of the Society of Janus, Cynthia Slater, in the dark dungeon of the Catacombs fisting palace.

His pictures seduced me. In 1978, I gave him his first "Drummer" cover, casting my friend Elliot Siegal as his model. I published nine of his fetish photos and profiled him in what was his first coverage in the gay press: "His camera eye peels faces, bodies, and trips. He photographs princesses like Margaret, bodybuilders like Arnold Schwarzenegger, rock stars like his best friend Patti Smith, and night trippers nameless in leather, rubber, and ropes."

Monthly "Drummer" needed the passion of his homomale photos of leathermen as urgently as he needed its 40,000 subscribers—to grow his brand and fan base when people still thought his last name rhymed with "apple" rather than "may pole." He was drawn to "Drummer" because, at age 16, the Irish-Catholic boy from Long Island had a shivering epiphany while looking at beefcake photos of leathermen in gorgeously gritty Times Square porn shops on 42nd Street—currently on sexy show in James Franco's HBO series, "The Deuce." He scissored and glued these "found" photos into the collages that were his first artworks, before he picked up his first camera, a Polaroid, in 1970.

PIONEER ARCHETRIPE PHOTOGRAPHERS

The homomale power of those "dirty pictures"—often shot by superbly talented and heroically outlaw gay photographers like Bob Mizer ("Physique Pictorial"), Chuck Renslow ("Rawhide"), and Bruce of LA ("The Male Figure")—excited him so viscerally that he swooned with a gut-punch of carnal mysticism. The forbidden photos also outed his sadomasochistic core identity in exactly the way that some Catholic boys suddenly discover that the muscular bearded Jesus hanging stripped and crucified over the altar is hot. He laboured throughout his career to inject that sex rush, that religious feeling, that existential frisson, into his holy pictures of leather sex saints, black men, celebrity women, and flowers brilliant as night-blooming sex organs. His calla lilies hanging in a collector's dining room gain a paraphilic palpitation because of the fisting photo hanging in the collector's bedroom.

He was 29 when we first met, and he immediately gave me my favourite photo of himself. It is perhaps his only smiling selfie: a faun with tousled hair, his bare torso verging into the frame, one nipple revealed, his right arm outstretched horizontally across the white background, his right palm open, awaiting the rosy crucifixion he so desired.

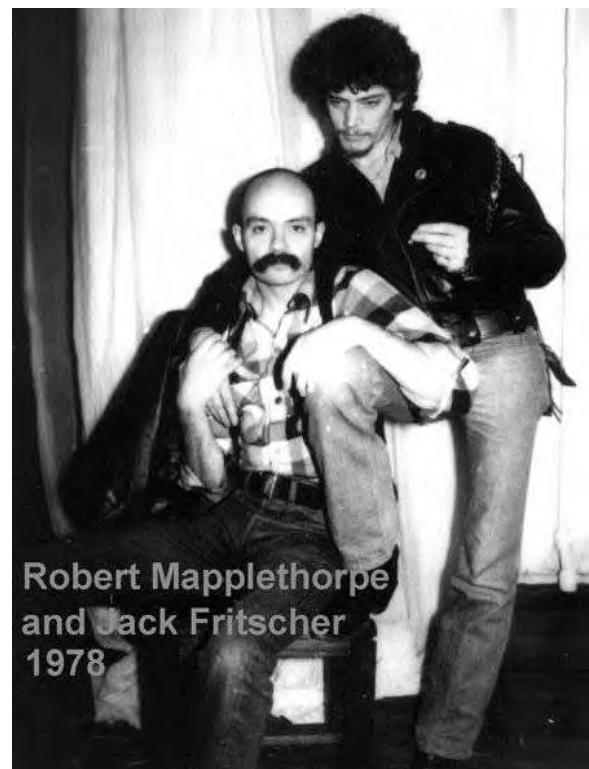
Letters bonded us. On 10 April 1978, he wrote to me from Colorado. The "London Times" had sent him to photograph Allen Ginsberg "who's had so many pictures taken already." He moaned: "Ginsberg was a Jewish drag." The poet made Robert sit through his lecture on William Blake. "Ginsberg did say (still in the lotus position) that he was getting into S&M. No blood, however. I'm going to turn out the lights and try to muster enough energy to 'Jack' off. Love, Robert."

Robert was not just a photographer. He was an artist who was a photographer. He came alive, he said, after the Stonewall riot against the New York police that began modern gay liberation in June 1969. He sped into the 1970s on charm, poppers, and MDA. He made it his job to rub elbows and plow the pertinent at Warhol's Factory, Max's Kansas City, Studio 54, and the Mineshaft.

TUXEDO ELEGANCE, LEATHER ATTITUDE, AND CASH

The bad boy had tuxedo elegance and leather attitude perfect for the jet set. He often wore a princely green velvet jacket for dressing like a rock star at drop-dead soirees in London, New York, San Francisco, and Mustique with friends and faces he shot: Princess Margaret, Lord Snowden, Carolina Herrera, David Hockney, Doris Saatchi, Bruce Chatwin, Lady Rose Lambton, Julian Sands, Marianne Faithful, Yoko Ono, Keith Haring, Susan Sarandon, Thom Gunn, Philip Glass, and punk Princess Gloria von Thurn und Taxis. When he shot Katherine Cebrian, the elderly San Francisco "grande dame," the bright silver studs on the back of his big leather belt spelled SHIT.

He was a hustler who did far more than shoot his own face and run into his darkroom to develop himself. In 1972, his first gay lover David Croland introduced him to the wealthy Manhattan art collector Sam Wagstaff. Robert told me Sam said: "I'm looking for someone to spoil." Robert said: "You've found him." The new lovers shared the same November 4 birthday 25 years apart. Robert gave his benefactor as good as he got. He introduced shy Sam to the leather underworld at Manhattan sex clubs like the Mineshaft. He educated Sam about 19th and early 20th-century British, French,



and American photographers. He caused Sam to change commercial art history, persuading him to use his aristocratic authority and social prominence to convince reluctant connoisseurs and critics and buyers that photography is as legitimate an art as painting and sculpture.

Sam bought Robert his first Hasselblad to shoot photographs for the new art market Sam had prompted by the late 1970s. When Robert introduced me to Sam in the restaurant at One Fifth, the elegant art deco building in New York, I watched him take Sam's hand and pull back in surprise at the diamond ring Sam had slipped him. "Welcome back from San Francisco," Sam



said. Robert, swear to God, bit the diamond with his teeth. Sam laughed and whisked us up, up, and away to his immense all-white penthouse atop One Fifth where we sat on the tile floor chatting about the hundreds of photos by early masters spread out around us.

BLACK MEN, THE OSCAR STREAKER, THE MAPPLETHORPE CURSE

When the white photographer began cruising gay black bars, he turned race into a personal sex fetish. He also hired professional black models like his lover Milton Moore, whose penis he made exquisite in the now world-famous 1981 photo, "Man in Polyester Suit." He told editor Boyd MacDonald of the "Manhattan Review of Unnatural Acts" that his favourite movie was the camp blaxploitation film, "Mandingo." He sweated with white guilt trying to make his quest for black beauty keep him from the mortal sin of racism. He dedicated the last decade of his life to documenting famous black men, like the dancers Gregory Hines and Bill T. Jones, while continuing to iconicize unknown black models. He was an existential comedian. He knew that the most frightening thing in the world is a photo of a penis. He knew pictures of black men could add another level of racial and sexual terror to his work. So he upped the anxiety for his white liberal patrons and made the penises big and black. Provoking American paranoia, he took a side-on shot of a black model holding a gun just above his horizontal erection: "Cock and Gun" (1982). When his patrons blanched, he would double-dare them: "If you don't like my pictures, perhaps you're not as avant-garde as you think."

Straight and gay East Coast history forgets that Robert also exhibited under the radar in the fabulous Fey-Way Studios founded in San Francisco by the Oscar-streaker Robert Opel, who ran his nasty bits past David Niven and Elizabeth Taylor and a billion viewers on the live telecast of the 1974 Academy awards. At the opening, Opel exhibited one of Robert's leather models, Larry Hunt, tied in a cage near Robert's photo, titled "Larry Hunt: Boots and Bench." In July 1979, four months later, Opel was shot dead in his gallery, and Larry was abducted from a Los Angeles leather bar and killed. An urban legend about a "Mapplethorpe curse" arose, fed by the film "Cruising" with its S&M murders. And then the curse of Aids began.

Learning the worst, Robert sped up the quantity and quality of his work to express his soul and build his legacy of more than 120,000 pictures. As his healthy beauty time-lapsed fast into the transcendent beauty of the dying, he did not like eyes looking back at him through the camera. So he shot flowers and statues

and objects that obeyed his direction and made no demands.

BRITISH DIRECTOR DEREK JARMAN: "HEAVEN" @ CHARING CROSS

In 1984, Robert went to "Heaven," the gay disco under the arches at Charing Cross in London, where he ran into his frenemy, film director Derek Jarman, who famously described Robert's life as "the story of Faust." Derek was going down one stairway as Robert, who did indeed say he had sold his soul, was climbing up another. Robert shouted: "I have everything I want, Derek. Have you everything you want?"

I intuited he would die young and wrote that prediction about him in "Drummer" in 1978. I knew from the first to hold him fast. As I sit in my California garden among my tall calla lilies where Robert once sat, I miss his sweet face, his green eyes, his thin body, and his quiet ironic voice: "Aw, Jack." Late one night in bed, the photographer licked my eyeball as if to anoint my vision. His aura remains vivid—in his photos and letters, in my memories of our late-night phone calls.

"Jack," he wrote on 26 July 1979, "if you're not free for dinner tomorrow night, I'm going to beat you up. Love, Robert." I told him he had a touch of paraphilia. In his left-handed slant, he wrote on 20 April 1977: "I think you're right about me needing a psychiatrist. I'm a male nymphomaniac. I'm never satisfied." On 21 May 1978, as he was shooting photos of himself as both Satyr and Satan with horns on his head that would illustrate a luxurious leather-bound edition of Rimbaud's "A Season in Hell," he wrote to me: "I want to see the devil in us all. That's my real turn-on." It was a lover's private remark written in his own hand that echoed what the provocative Catholic boy once said to give gravitas to his flower photos: "Beauty and the devil are the same thing."

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