

Robert Mapplethorpe: The Black Book

Ntozake Shange



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A classic, indeed perhaps the best of the Mapplethorpe books. And for many most certainly the most typical Mapplethorpe, now available once again thanks to this re-edition. The Black Book, first published in 1986, presents 96 formally stringent and highly erotic nudes, all of them photographs of black men, either as full figures, or staged as details, as fragments of their bodies. Stylized as classical statues or provocatively in all their presence and sensuous radiance. Black-and-white photography was Mapplethorpe's preferred medium. And his obsessive aesthetics was based on completely mastering it, as this enabled him to visualize any number of tonal gradations and penetrate deep into the very pores of the gleaming black skin. It is a method that reached a climax in these images. The Black Book, Mapplethorpe s homage to the black male body, has always been one of the most important visual contributions to the discussion on beauty, sensuality, and sexuality in photography.

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