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 **Flesh for fantasy: Articulation of identities in Robert Mapplethorpe's portraits**

Died in 1989 from AIDS, US photographer Robert Mapplethorpe left three full format portfolios and more than a thousand polaroids mostly unpublished during his life. Focusing on his selected self-portraits (the early polaroids 1970-1976) and on portraits of others (Lady Lisa Lyon (1983) and X Portfolio (1978), my research regards his photography from the queer perspective and rises the following questions: What does self-fetishization mean for the gender binary? Did Mapplethorpe manage to escape the binary opposition? Using contemporary gender and queer theory of Judith Butler and Nikki Sullivan, my research explores non-normative representations of gender identity in Mapplethorpe's photography. In the first part, I regard how queer identity and gender binary are represented in his polaroids and link them with self-fetishization. Nevertheless, I mainly focus on his self-portraits, by analyzing his works in the second part, I prove that he imposed his own personality on his sitters and this way the portraits of others might be considered to be his self-portraits as well. Thus, this chapter traces the role of gender performativity in the selected images and answers the question of how they challenge normative representation of identities. In total, my work sheds a new light on some famous series of Mapplethorpe's as well as discusses his unpublished photographs by regarding them from the gender and queer angles.

Here is a link to the video: <https://www.dropbox.com/sh/qfbjwzn7no0bunf/AAD7bX5I0FXhA9ywPXwhU7oda?dl=0>