



Flowers

M A P P L E T H O R P E

\$50.00
\$60.00 in Canada

Flowers

ROBERT MAPPLETHORPE

FOREWORD BY PATTI SMITH

"He came, in time, to embrace the flower as the embodiment of all the contradictions reveling within."

—Patti Smith, from the foreword

Flowers is a breathtaking collection of flower photographs by celebrated photographer Robert Mapplethorpe. All in color, it features some of his final work.

The theme of flowers wove throughout Robert Mapplethorpe's oeuvre, coming to signify some of his deepest concerns as an artist. While to date his best-known flower images are in black and white, *Flowers* reveals his genius in color. The photographs included range from images of the early 1980s to many taken in the months before his death. The latter, in particular, are astounding in their intensity; here one finds both erotic drama and absolute clarity of composition—Mapplethorpe's gift at its most bold and uncompromising.

Accompanying the portfolio is a sensitive foreword by Mapplethorpe's close friend, poet Patti Smith, who lends insight to our vision of these luminous blooms that "have been plucked and fastened forever by the hand of one with an unflinching perception of the color, form and personality of the flower."

Only a fraction of Robert Mapplethorpe's color flowers have been published or exhibited. This book, exquisitely designed and produced, is destined to become a crucial part of his legacy.

50 color illustrations

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Flowers
MAPPLETHORPE

Foreword by
PATTI SMITH

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A Final Flower

PATTI SMITH

It is by the grace of God that our fields and hothouses are filled with blooms that can be arranged and exchanged in the act of giving.

It is through another gesture of grace that certain blooms have been plucked and fastened forever by the hand of one with an unflinching perception of the color, form and personality of the flower.

Robert was born on Monday, November 4, 1946, the third of six children. Raised in Floral Park, Long Island, he was a happy, mischievous boy whose carefree days were delicately tinged with a fascination for the unusual, the beautiful. The lure of a jeweled rosary, the rich cloth dressing an altar, a gold-toned saxophone or a field of blue stars.

He felt, at an early age, a stirring and the desire to stir. And his young eyes stored each play of light that struck him and each strange sensation that unnerved him.

As a youth he was gracious and shy with a dual but precise nature. I can see him now, a boy of twenty, with his deft movements, his slightly bowed gait and his green and troubled gaze as he'd circle to survey his handiwork. He could produce, with color pencil, a universe in the devotional entwining of a single word. He could produce, with the spray can, a sunset behind a sailor.

He dwelled, in dream, where grandeur dwelled, and he sought
to magnify those dreams within a body of work and to offer
into the scheme of things new eyes:
a new way of seeing.

And he moved from world to world in the pursuit and prying
of those eyes. Obsessively, wholeheartedly as he extracted the
essence, the mystery of each world. Image upon image passing
through his shooting gallery. Another perfect shot.
Another work of art.

He came, in time, to embrace the flower as the embodiment
of all the contradictions reveling within. Their sleekness,
their fullness. Humble narcissus. Passionate zen.

He found them to be worthy conspirators in the courting and
development of conflicting emotions. He also found it was as
easy to hurl beauty as anything else. Often they were symbolic
of him; his processes. Modeled in geometric shade. Modified
in a famous vase and inevitably turned in the realm of their own
simplicity—the blossoming of the mystifying aspects of the pure.

And the eye became a body, the murky heart of a rose.
The sinister shadow of an orchid. Or the indolent poppy
balanced behind the ear of Baudelaire.

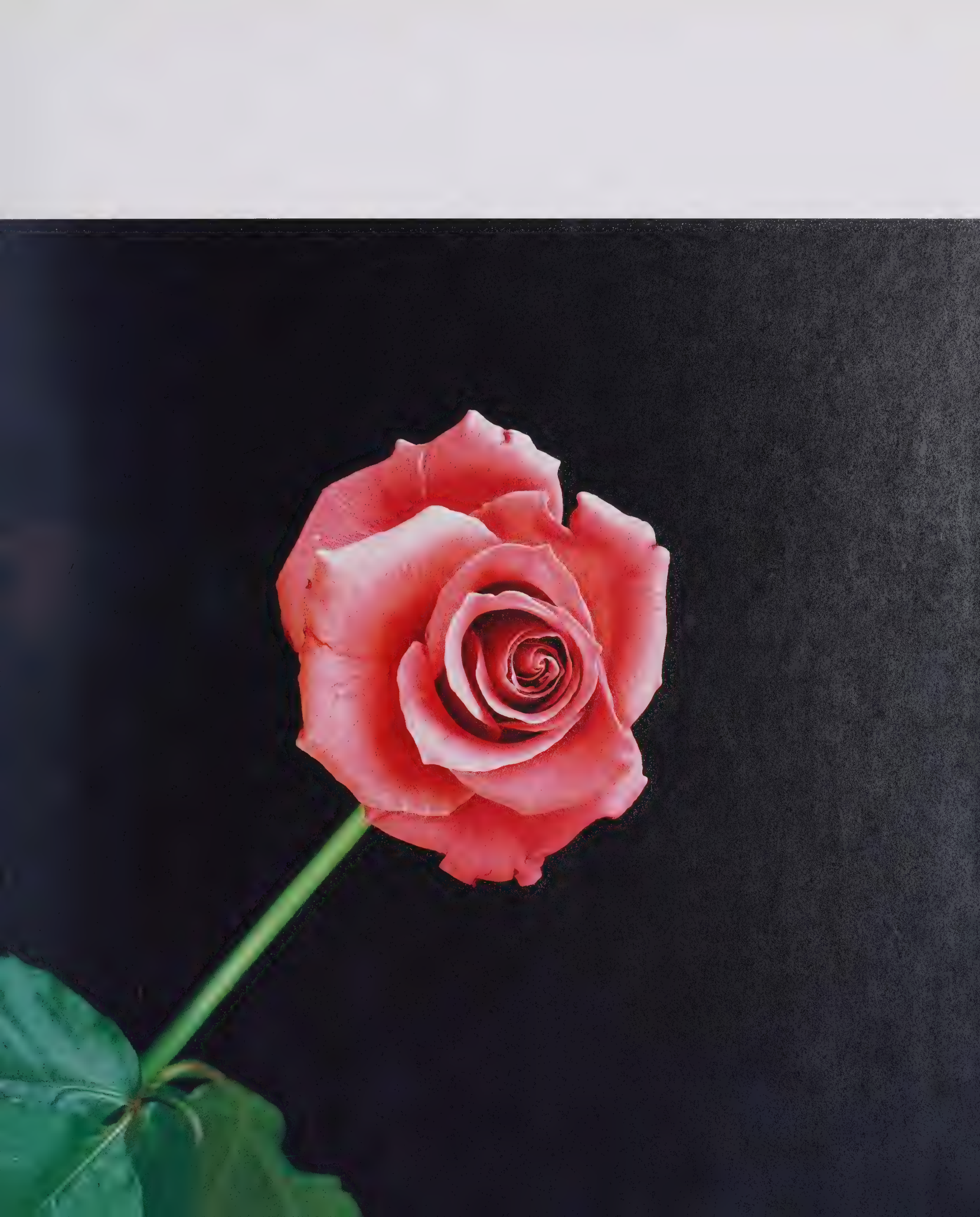
All the finery, all the flame, distilled in the burning veins of the jack-in-the-pulpit, the blood of the spike surging upward into a buttery crown. In the foreskin of a lily. In another lily military, erect. In victory stems asymmetric, exact. In the head of a tulip, the curve of a staff or in the unfolding flower's face.

And poking the corner of a comic wilderness, the last rose, stoic and sublime. Selected by his youngest brother, it was approved then arranged, and Robert, with an air of recognition, drew up close and bequeathed what he saw to all. Febrile, full of love, he pried into the heart of his own eye and found, a revelation, the bitter humor of man's end.

Possessing the slightly bemused expression of the Artist the eye-rose salutes life before seamless black. A black mastered by one who was already examining the edges of light.

A flower that grew from years of flowers.
By one who caused a modern shudder
and was favored by his mother.

It is the wall that conceals all the tears of a relatively young man with nothing but glory in his grasp and what he would be grasping is the hand of God drawing him into another garden.



































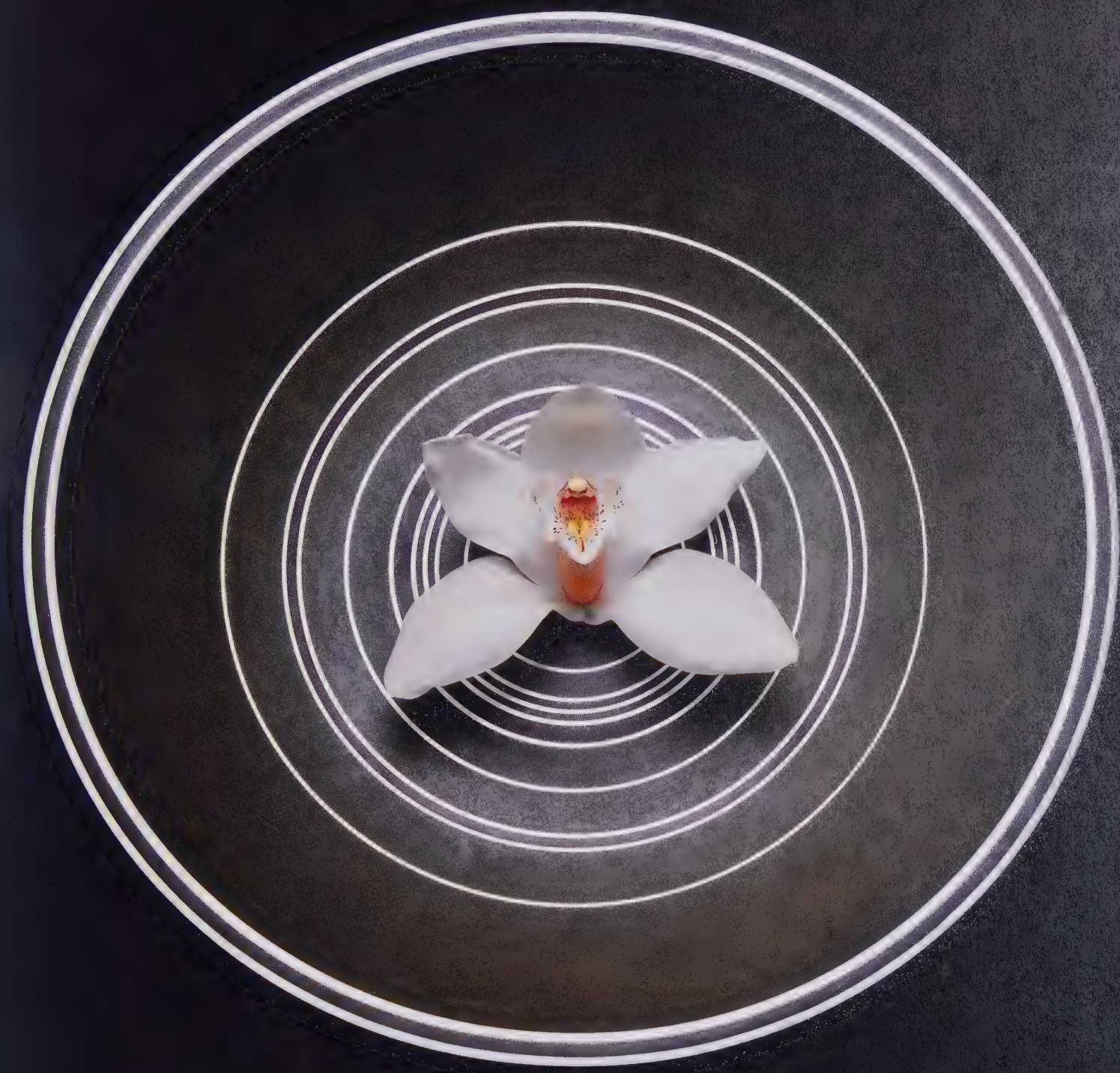




































































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First Edition

Designed by Dimitri Levas

Some of these photographs have been previously published in books by Robert Mapplethorpe and in catalogs of exhibitions of his work.

Plates numbered 14, 16, 24, and 35 are part of a series commissioned by Christina and Bruno Bischofberger documenting their glass collection.

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Robert Mapplethorpe was born in New York in 1946 and received a B.F.A. from Pratt Institute in 1970; he died in March 1989. His portraits, self-portraits, and photographs of nudes, sculptured objects, flowers, and still lifes have had an undeniable impact on the art world. In 1988, his dye transfer prints of flowers were exhibited to much acclaim at the Robert Miller Gallery, and he further achieved the greatest recognition of any photographer of the 1980s in two major independent retrospectives: at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York and at the Institute of Contemporary Art in Philadelphia.

Mapplethorpe's photographs have appeared in nearly two hundred solo and group exhibitions and hang in major collections worldwide. His publications include *Lady: Lisa Lyon* (1983), *Certain People* (1985), *Black Book* (1986), *Robert Mapplethorpe* (1988), and *Some Women* (1989).

Patti Smith's close friendship with Robert Mapplethorpe began in 1967. They collaborated on a number of works, including the film, *Still Moving*, *The Y Portfolio*, for which she wrote the text, and a joint show of his photographs and her drawings at the Robert Miller Gallery in June 1978. She is also the author of two books of poetry, *Witt* and *Babel*, and has recorded five albums on the Arista Records label, most recently *Dream of Life* in 1989.

Jacket illustration: *Calla Lily*, 1988

Jacket design by Dimitri Levas

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