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Sterling Ruby & Robert Mapplethorpe

10 December 2009 – 14 January 2010

Xavier Hufkens is pleased to present the exhibition, *Sterling Ruby & Robert Mapplethorpe*. For his first solo exhibition at the gallery, Sterling Ruby engages with the photography of Robert Mapplethorpe. The artist visited the Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation in New York to personally select the photographs. Ruby will present a new body of works, including a suite of collages, ceramics, and poured urethane sculptures. In this installation, Ruby uses the Mapplethorpe photographs as another element in his assemblage.

Originally attracted to Mapplethorpe's subject matter, marginal subcultures, the flowers and still lives, Ruby began to ask a more complicated set of questions. Can one have a conversation with an artist who is no longer living? What are the natures of autobiography and biography? Why is psychoanalyzing Robert Mapplethorpe so compelling? Did he seek to distance himself from his subjects? Was Robert Mapplethorpe's formalism a mask intended to hide his subjectivity, which he would then allow us to see?

Ruby's work strives towards a transgression of fixed identities. His *Transcompositional* collages incorporate images of pre-operative and post-operative transsexuals and splatterings of nail varnish on a mirrored background. Although traversing similar ground to Mapplethorpe, the relationship of Sterling Ruby with his subject matter is far from clear. He often exploits abject or marginalized subject matter to breach preformed dichotomies such as liberation and repression, conformity and marginality, passivity and aggression. The inclusion of Robert Mapplethorpe's works into this massive installation seeks to open up new and irrational readings of the work of Sterling Ruby and the work of Robert Mapplethorpe.

Sterling Ruby (1972) lives and works in Los Angeles, California. His solo exhibitions include *The Masturbators* at Foxy Production, New York (2009), *Supermax 2008* at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (2008), *CHRON* at the Drawing Center, New York (2008) and *Grid Ripper*, Galleria d'arte Moderna e Contemporanea, Bergamo, Italy (2008). Recent group exhibitions include *New Photography*, Museum of Modern Art, New York (2009), *Beaufort 03. Art by the Sea*, Ostend, Belgium (2009), *New York Minute*, Depart Foundation, Macro Future Museum, Rome, Italy (2009), the *Moscow Biennial* (2007), the *California Biennial* (2006) and *Red Eye: LA Artists at the Rubell Family Collection*, Miami (2006).

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