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preserving and carefully deploying available if degraded materials. Armstrong Six almost literally offered interwoven "sandals" for the muse in the form of cast rubber boots, some stuffed one into the next, their rimy forms "cobbled" together. But both artists, bound to ancient echoes and modern junk, made a virtue of their inescapable material(ist) constraints.

—Alison Syme

LONDON

Robert Mapplethorpe

ALISON JACQUES GALLERY

Alison Jacques has represented the estate of Robert Mapplethorpe in the UK since 1999 and has showcased his work many times, often with the help of guest curators who either played an important role in the artist's life or were influenced by his photographs. Among them was model David Croland, Mapplethorpe's first long-term boyfriend, who curated "Robert Mapplethorpe: Fashion Show" in 2013. Croland's portrait, enlarged to more than eleven feet high, welcomed visitors to this recent show, curated by another notorious photographer, eighteen years Mapplethorpe's junior, Juergen Teller.

Like Mapplethorpe, Teller is renowned as a portraitist, often capturing celebrities in an unexpected light, both literally and metaphorically. If we compare the practices of the two men, Mapplethorpe seems almost traditional in his chiaroscuro depictions of nudes photographed against a neutral background. His fascination with classical sculpture, expressed in several of his photographic series, was marked here by the presence of *The Sluggard*, 1978, showing a statue of a young man who stretches his arms as if he has just awakened. Teller, on the other hand, catches transitory motion using a strong flash, which creates his signature effect of overexposure. His art thrives not in the studio, but in hotel rooms or his subjects' apartments. What unites the two photographers is an unmistakable joie de vivre and the electrifying relationships they managed to establish with their models. A very rare energy saturates their photographs, and this is what seduces us.

It was his fascination with Patti Smith that first drew Teller to Mapplethorpe's work. For this show, Teller selected a black-and-white Polaroid, *Patti Smith*, 1973, showing Smith pressing her breasts against a window, with a playful spot of light on her upper lip. As I overheard someone saying at the opening of "Teller on Mapplethorpe," this could be one of the most erotic images of Smith ever to have been seen in public.

To make his selection, Teller worked closely with the Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation, gaining access to the artist's archives. He's chosen images that are characteristic of the artist's style, yet outside the canon of his best-known works. Gelatin silver prints of different sizes, as well as Polaroid pictures, were neatly framed in black and mostly displayed in trios. Towering over them all was another massive blow-up, this one showing Marty Gibson, a model, posing nude on a beach. Waves crash behind him. He stands with his arms spread and his penis erect, visibly at ease in front of Mapplethorpe's camera. On the opposite wall, Teller had placed a photograph of a small, naked girl, *Eva Amurri*, 1988, which offered a contrastingly different experience. This child, Susan Sarandon's daughter, today an actress and a mother herself, is seen covering her private parts with both hands. Her gesture turns her vulnerable figure into a perfect personification of demureness, a feature otherwise rarely seen in this photographer's world. Her image was flanked by *Pods*, 1985, and *Frogs*, 1984. This grouping showed not only that the photographer applied the same attention to the qualities of humans, animals, and plants—their various shapes and surfaces, soft, spiky, hairy, uneven—but also that his subjects can be seen as symbols. Teller's selection unveiled a mysterious quality to Mapplethorpe's seemingly blatant frontal depictions.

—Sylvia Serafinowicz

Imre Bak

CARL KOSTYÁL

The now-septuagenarian Hungarian painter Imre Bak describes 1968 as a pivotal moment. A visit to Documenta 4 showed him the radical changes taking place across the Atlantic. That, together with trips to London's Tate in the previous years and his work with a German gallery that exhibited American art, opened the young artist's eyes to innovations in abstraction—particularly what he called "the emerging American art scene, when the abstract versions of Pop Art appeared, such as Hard-Edge and Color Field Painting (Frank Stella, Ellsworth Kelly)." Offering a concise picture of the intellectual journey that Bak has since taken, via eight works ranging in date from 1968 through 2005, this exhibition, curated by the British artist Peter Peri, was Bak's first in the UK.

The show also gave a glimpse of the shifting intellectual currents in abstract painting across the decades. Despite moving from absolute abstraction to Conceptualism and structuralist shaped paintings, followed by a postmodern turn, Bak stayed true to the language of flat geometry. While Stella, for instance, has remained resolutely nonrepresentational, the Hungarian's brand of abstraction retains a hint of representation. One of the earliest paintings in the exhibition, *Orange*, 1969, shows two orange squares on each side either pressing into or being pressed out by a series of central white frames emanating from the center. With their heavy, black, Lichtensteinesque outlines, these white brackets or cornices cradle the orange forms. Is the image a side view or a plan view? Perhaps it could be a schematic depiction of a robot or insect head with bright orange eyes? As in the work of Nicholas Krushenick, a certain representational ambiguity—despite an apparent graphic clarity—runs through Bak's oeuvre.

Pattern and schematic representation play out in Bak's next group of paintings through evocations of landscape and reflection. For instance,



Robert Mapplethorpe,
Frogs, 1984, gelatin
silver print, 20 x 16".