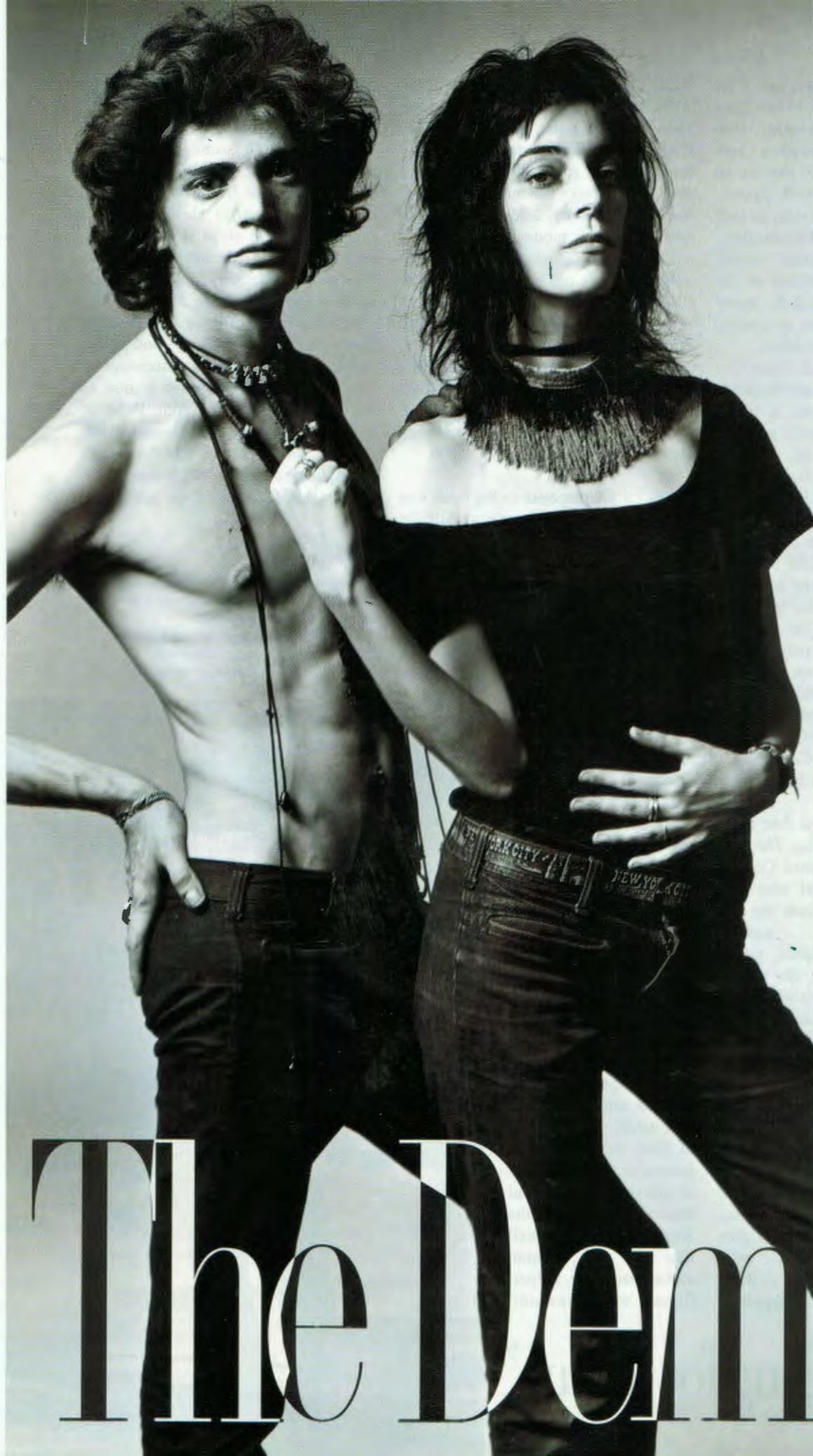



DOPPELGÄNGERS

Robert Mapplethorpe and Patti Smith, *left*, in 1969, when they shared a room in the Chelsea Hotel. Both of them viewed the other as a separate half. The androgynous images he shot of her for her first album, *Horses*, in 1975, including the one at right, shocked Clive Davis, the head of Arista Records, who felt a female singer needed to look sexy, but *Horses* made Smith a star.



The Demon

A black and white photograph of Patricia Morrisroe, a woman with dark, wavy hair and bangs, wearing a white button-down shirt with a dark tie. She is looking directly at the camera with a serious expression. Her right hand is raised near her head, and her left hand is holding a dark, thin object, possibly a pen or a small stick, which is positioned diagonally across the lower right portion of the image.

When a Cincinnati museum was charged with obscenity for showing Robert Mapplethorpe's photographs, his name became synonymous with "deviant" art. In an excerpt from her new biography, PATRICIA MORRISROE untangles the Gordian knot of Mapplethorpe's work and his sexuality, and examines his relationship with punk-rock poet Patti Smith—a perverse mix of love, jealousy, and ambition

Romantics

Robert Mapplethorpe met Patti Smith in the spring of 1967, when he was a senior at the Pratt Institute, living on St. James Place in Brooklyn. She was searching for another Pratt student, Kenny Tisa, a friend from New Jersey, and someone had mistakenly given her Mapplethorpe's address. She wandered into the brownstone and found Mapplethorpe asleep in his bed. Startled, Mapplethorpe wondered if he was dreaming, for the intruder was one of the most curious-looking women he had ever seen. She had a pale, elongated face out of a Modigliani painting, piercing blue eyes, straggly black hair, and a 90-pound body so sharp and angular that Salvador Dalí later described her as a "Gothic crow." Mapplethorpe thought she resembled a "creature from another planet," and escorted her to Tisa's apartment without saying a word.

Their introduction was followed, several months later, by an encounter in the East Village during the height of the Summer of Love. Smith had accepted a dinner date with a stranger, and was in the awkward position of rebuffing his sexual advances when she saw Mapplethorpe's familiar face amid the carnival of pot-smoking hippies in Tompkins Square Park. He was tripping on LSD, and in his sheepskin vest and love beads he impressed her as the consummate hippie. Smith ran over and whispered, "Pretend you're my boyfriend." To the other man she said, "Thanks for the dinner, but I've found the person I've been looking for."

Excerpted from *Mapplethorpe: A Biography*, by Patricia Morrisroe, to be published this month by Random House; © 1995 by Patricia Morrisroe.

What Mapplethorpe found in Patti Smith was a doppelgänger, someone whose love and intuitive understanding made him feel complete for the first time in his life. They were exactly the same age—20—and they suffered from many of the same problems concerning their parents and their sexual identities. Mapplethorpe had grown up with five siblings in a middle-class Catholic family in Floral Park, Queens; Smith had spent her early childhood in Philadelphia, where her father, Grant, worked the night shift as a machinist, and her mother, Beverly, cared for Patti and three younger children. When Grant Smith wasn't working, he would lose himself in the Bible or in U.F.O. literature. At the age of seven, Patti developed scarlet fever and was beset by terrifying visions that plagued her for years. She hallucinated regularly and used these recurrent episodes as grist for her creativity.

She majored in art education at New Jersey's Glassboro State College, but in her junior year she became pregnant, and after dropping out of school she lived in seclusion with friends until the baby was due. For someone who felt uncomfortable as a woman, who always wished she had been a boy, the pregnancy was a devastating blow. Distraught, she gave the baby girl up for adoption and moved to New York. Eventually she found a job at the Brentano's bookstore on Fifth Avenue—Mapplethorpe, coincidentally, was working at the Brentano's in Greenwich Village—and then came that sultry summer evening in Tompkins Square Park.

Smith followed Mapplethorpe home to Brooklyn, where he was now sharing an apartment on Waverly Avenue with two other students. "Patti was like nobody else I'd ever met before," Mapplethorpe said. "If she hadn't discovered art, she would have wound up in a mental institution. But she had a lot of magic in her." He believed he had stumbled upon a true genius, and he assumed the responsibility of protecting her talent. "I didn't believe in myself until I met Robert," Smith explained. "He gave me confidence as an artist."

She in turn helped bolster his poor self-image. Mapplethorpe interpreted his attraction to Smith as evidence that

he wasn't homosexual, and he attributed his previous sexual confusion to not having found the right woman. Smith, however, came to the relationship with gender problems of her own, and perhaps the reason they bonded so quickly was that both viewed the other as their missing half. "It was difficult to tell where Robert began and Patti left off," said Pratt student and photographer Judy Linn.

In November, Mapplethorpe and Smith moved to a brownstone on Hall Street. It was the happiest period of his life, for he was desperately in love with her. They were now working at F. A. O. Schwarz, the Fifth Avenue toy store, where she was a cashier and he a window trimmer. When they returned to Brooklyn at night, they would spend the evening on their various art projects. Smith did not use drugs, but Mapplethorpe couldn't work without getting high on marijuana, amphetamines, or LSD. "When I work, and in my art, I hold hands with God," he once wrote in Smith's notebook. She sparked his interest in the occult, and he often accompanied her to a bookstore on Astor Place to buy manuals on witchcraft and astrology.

Mapplethorpe complained that his job at F. A. O. Schwarz was depleting his strength, so Smith, who had been hired by Scribner's bookstore on Fifth Avenue, agreed to support him. Once Smith began serving as Mapplethorpe's patron, his life was perfect; he would draw to the sound of Motown records while she sat next to him, sketch pad on her lap, creating quirky little characters she described as "bad-seed children." These were usually naked little girls, their genitalia exposed and almost painfully accentuated. Eventually she began to scribble poetry around the edges of her drawings, which she now described as "drawlings."

Robert was so worried that his strict father, who was an engineer, would discover that he and Patti were living in sin that he sent his parents an announcement of their "marriage." Robert celebrated their unofficial union by presenting Patti with a small sapphire engagement ring and a gold wedding band. "In a way," Mapplethorpe insisted, "we were married."

Mapplethorpe had never breathed a word about his homosexual inclinations to Smith, but their sexual relationship was less than satisfactory, and while she loved him, she didn't feel passionate about him. Despite the couple's long-range plans to move to Manhattan together, Smith had been secretly wooing another man, a blond abstract painter named Howie Michels. "Patti wasn't attractive in a classic way," Michels said, "but she had incredible charisma." No matter how crazy his friends acted under the influence of drugs, he found Smith to be more "far out even without drugs," but against his better judgment, they decided to share an apartment.

When Smith told Mapplethorpe she was leaving him, he reacted as though the earth had splintered beneath his feet. "Please don't go," he pleaded. "*Please!* If you go, I'll become gay." She didn't take his threat seriously, but when she returned to the apartment to pick up her clothing she found him surrounded by pictures of naked men that he had clipped from gay pornographic magazines.

"It was like it happened overnight," explained Smith, who, despite living with Howie Michels, continued to see Mapplethorpe nearly every day. "The gay thing wasn't there, and then suddenly it was." His fascination with gay pornography led him to make collages from the pictures in the magazines. Mapplethorpe's most-talked-about piece at the time was a sculpture he created by taking a pair of his blue jeans, stuffing the crotch with several socks, and wiring the pants so that the groin pulsed.

Mapplethorpe was a work in progress himself, and he began to craft another identity. His pendulum swung to such an extreme that Judy Linn, accompanying him to the beach on Fire Island, was astonished when he slipped off his blue jeans to reveal a studded black leather bikini. Linn recalled, "It was like suddenly Robert had this secret life that I wasn't going to be part of." Soon he began dressing like a cowboy and contacted a callboy service. He was set up with five different men, and while

he described the experience as "interesting," he became physically ill after each encounter.

Mapplethorpe was scheduled to graduate from Pratt in June 1969, but he failed his psychology final. He walked away without a diploma and moved to a loft on Delancey Street on Manhattan's Lower East Side.

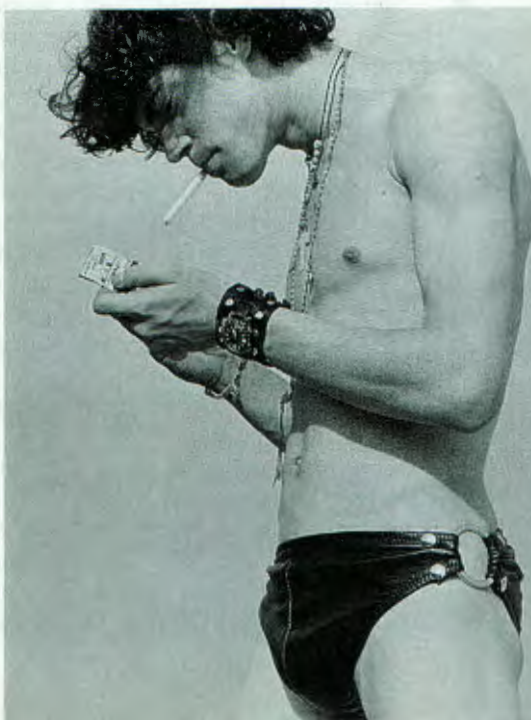
Meanwhile, Patti Smith was suffering her own growing pains. She was still in love with Howie Michels, but he was having difficulty coping with what he described as her "weird and trippy" personality. She had recently become attached to a wolfskin, which she insisted had magical properties, and she wouldn't go anywhere without it. She was equally attached to Mapplethorpe, whom Michels pegged as an "untalented artist with an edge of darkness about him." He was annoyed that Smith could not shake herself loose from him. In April she and Michels agreed to live separately, and she moved from Brooklyn to an apartment on West 12th Street in Greenwich Village. One afternoon Michels passed a scowling Mapplethorpe on the staircase to Smith's building, and when he entered the living room Michels saw the wolfskin dangling from a noose attached to the ceiling. "Robert and Patti had gotten into a fight," Michels explained, and "Robert had hung the wolf." Soon after that, Michels made a swift retreat.

Smith fell apart, and Mapplethorpe was not supportive. Instead, he cruelly flaunted his relationship with a young man he had become involved with, as

if to exact penance for her deserting him. "If I had been going out with another woman, it would have been different," Mapplethorpe explained. "But Patti couldn't compete with a man." Smith described this period of her life as "unbelievably painful," and according to Janet Hamill, who was then her roommate, she suffered a nervous breakdown and tried to kill herself.

Mapplethorpe wasn't in much better shape himself, as he had long neglected his dental hygiene and had ulcerative sores on his gums, and the infection had affected his lymph nodes. They needed each other badly, and to appease Smith, Mapplethorpe ended his affair with the young man. "It was sexually successful," he explained, "but he wasn't any replacement for

"Please don't go,"
he pleaded.
"*Please!* If you go,
I'll become gay."



**THE SHY
PORNOGRAPHER**
Mapplethorpe
reveals his secret self to
photographer friend
Judy Linn on
Fire Island in 1969.
As Smith said,
"The gay thing
wasn't there, and then
suddenly it was."



Smith and Shepard's affair was marked by a theatrical frenzy that was too intense for real life.

Patti." Smith moved back in with Mapplethorpe.

In July, after a neighbor was murdered across the hall, they fled to the Allerton, a run-down hotel on West 22nd Street. Mapplethorpe's infection worsened, and his temperature climbed to 105 degrees. Neither of them had any money for a doctor's visit, and she couldn't take him to an emergency ward, because if she left the hotel she might be denied re-entry, having been unable to pay the bill.

After five days, Smith devised a plan of escape. She lifted Mapplethorpe in her arms and carried him down the fire escape. She hailed a cab and named the only place she knew that might be hospitable to a pair of destitute artists, the Chelsea Hotel.

When they arrived, Smith helped Mapplethorpe into a chair in the lobby. Then she marched into the office of the hotel manager, Stanley Bard. Over the years Bard had amassed a substantial art collection in lieu of rent, and Smith hoped to barter with him for a room. "Hi," she said. "My name is Patti Smith, and I've got Robert Mapplethorpe outside. You don't know us, but we're going to be big stars one day, only we don't have any money. . . . Robert's sick . . . nothing serious, just trench mouth." She then presented Bard with her portfolio, urging him to use it as "collateral." Bard finally said "O.K., O.K." and handed her the key to one of the smallest rooms in the hotel.

Smith was triumphant. She helped Mapplethorpe into the elevator and up to Room 1017, where they both collapsed on the small single bed. Huddling close, they made a solemn pact to stay together until they were both strong enough to stand alone.

The Chelsea Hotel was a psychedelic Coney Island for creative geniuses and freaks. Pimps, transvestites, and junkies strolled the hallways; rock musicians such as Jimi Hendrix, Janis Joplin, and the Jefferson Airplane crowded the lobby. Mapplethorpe and Smith soon developed a reputation for their eye-catching costumes, which, at the Chelsea, was no mean accomplishment. Mapplethorpe purchased a sailor's uniform at an army-navy store in Greenwich Village, and he swaggered around the hotel in tight bell-bottom trousers, a white cap slanted seductively on his forehead. Smith, recently enamored of the cancan dancers in Toulouse-Lautrec's paintings, took to wearing a purple skirt and green tights.

The Chelsea resident most infatuated with the pair was a filmmaker and photographer named Sandy Daley. "I knew Robert and Patti were brilliant right off the bat," Daley said. Since Smith worked full-time at

Scribner's, it was Mapplethorpe who derived the benefits of Daley's tutelage. Every morning at 11:30, they had breakfast in her apartment; then, after smoking some hash, they would look through her photography books. Daley urged Mapplethorpe to try her Polaroid, and he shot his first flower photographs in her stark white apartment.

Daley was a regular at Max's Kansas City, and soon Mapplethorpe and Smith were also heading to Mickey Ruskin's celebrated bar-restaurant at Park Avenue South and 17th Street. "Max's was the place where Pop art met Pop life," Andy Warhol wrote in *POPism*. And indeed the place attracted an amazingly diverse clientele—celebrities, such as Mick Jagger, Jim Morrison, and Warren Beatty, as well as politicians, Park Avenue socialites, drug addicts, and artists, including John Chamberlain, Robert Rauschenberg, and Larry Rivers.

Night after night, week after week, Mapplethorpe and Smith sat alone at a table and ordered a green salad and a Coke to share. Returning to the Chelsea in the early morning hours, they would analyze their progress in "gaining connections." A major breakthrough occurred when rock promoter and writer Danny Fields invited them to join his table. Fields managed Iggy Pop and Detroit's MC5, whose guitarist Fred (Sonic) Smith would later become Patti's husband. Fields compared Robert and Patti to a "leather version of Sigmund and Sieglinde," the incestuous twins of Wagner's "Ring" cycle. The back room attracted a gay population, and Mapplethorpe exuded sex appeal. "Everybody wanted to know, 'Who's that cute boy with the girl who looks like him?'" Fields recalled.

Mapplethorpe's exposure to the Dionysian atmosphere of Max's made him even more determined to use gay pornography in his art, and the outward trappings of the S&M subculture also held great appeal. He began frequenting the leather bars in the Village. "There was no going back," he later said. "I had found my form of sex." He had found his subject matter, too. Soon his art and his sexuality would become so thoroughly entwined that no one, least of all Robert, could untangle the Gordian knot.

LEFT, BY DAVID GAHR; RIGHT, BY EBET ROBERTS

Mapplethorpe and Smith's room at the Chelsea was too small to serve as anything more than a crash pad, so they rented the front part of a loft in a building several doors away from the hotel. At Pratt, Mapplethorpe had transformed his bedroom into a psychedelic church; now he was adding S&M totems to religious ones. A Devil's head poked out from the crotch of a pair of blue jeans; pictures of naked men hung on a clothing rack. He even made art by stretching a pair of his pale-blue briefs over a white frame.

One of Smith's first contacts at the Chelsea was Bob Neuwirth, a prominent downtown figure who was friendly with Smith's idol, Bob Dylan. He introduced her to Janis Joplin and to the Minimalist painter Brice Marden, with whom she had a brief affair; Marden created a painting for her titled *Patti Smith, Star*.

She also met the poet Jim Carroll, who at 16 had become a literary cult figure when *The Paris Review* published an excerpt from his book *The Basketball Diaries* (the film of which, starring Leonardo DiCaprio, appeared this year). It was an account of his high-school days at New York's exclusive Trinity School, where he played basketball and hustled homosexuals to subsidize his heroin habit. Carroll, who was then 19, was handsome in an ethereal way that appealed to Smith. "Patti was one of the few women I met who actively encouraged my addiction," Carroll said. Ultimately, he moved his belongings into the front part of the loft. "Robert was living in the weirdest space I'd ever seen," he recalled. "It was as if some Hell's Angels had sailed through Miss Havisham's room and landed in her bridal suite." Mapplethorpe reacted with surprising equanimity to Carroll's invasion of their privacy. He and Smith had grown accustomed to leading separate sexual lives.

Smith began giving impromptu poetry readings at the Chelsea, and at a record store on Bleecker Street she met Lenny Kaye, who would become a member of the Patti Smith Group. He was writing rock criticism and earning extra money by working part-time as a salesclerk. Kaye and Smith began experimenting with the idea of



CHELSEA GIRL

Patti Smith with her boyfriend Sam Shepard, *opposite*, on a balcony of the Chelsea Hotel in 1972, and, *above*, Smith performing at Max's Kansas City in 1978.



adding musical accompaniment to her poetry readings. "Looking back," he said, "the seedlings of some of our songs were in those poems."

Mapplethorpe celebrated his 24th birthday on November 4, 1970, with his first one-person show, at Stanley Amos's gallery in the Chelsea. The main focus of the exhibition was not gay pornography but 12 "freak collages"—pictures of fat women and Siamese twins combined with pieces of Mylar that simulated mirrors.

About this time, Smith met the playwright Sam Shepard at the Village Gate, where he was playing drums with the Holy Modal Rounders, a cult band from Vermont. Shepard was only 25, but he had already written 20 plays and won six Obie Awards from *The Village Voice*. He had narrow blue eyes, straight brown hair, a lean, rangy build, and, even then, a movie star's magnetism. Shepard had been married to the actress O-Lan Johnson for only a year and had a six-month-old son when he became involved with Patti Smith. "Me and his wife still even liked each other," Smith explained. "I mean, it wasn't like committing adultery in the suburbs." In fact, Shepard and Smith regarded themselves as partners in crime, and often when they went to Max's they would drink too much and start fights. "We'd have a lot of rum and get into trouble," Smith admitted. "We were hell-raisers."

Smith fell deeply in love with Shepard, and although Mapplethorpe was involved with a model and illustrator named David Croland, he was jealous. Shepard represented more of a threat than Jim

Carroll or any of the other men with whom Smith had had affairs, and Mapplethorpe never lost an opportunity to criticize him. But Smith was so infatuated with the playwright that she staged a public *rite d'amour* by having an Italian Gypsy give them both tattoos while Sandy Daley made a film of it.

Smith and Shepard's affair was marked by a theatrical frenzy that was too intense for real life. The most accurate picture of their rela-

tionship is *Cowboy Mouth*, a play they wrote together in two nights by showing an old typewriter back and forth between them. Smith's character, Cavale, is a deranged woman who kidnaps Slim from his wife and baby and attempts to turn him into a "rock 'n' roll Jesus with a cowboy mouth." Slim accuses Cavale of ruining his life by continually tempting him with seductive dreams of stardom. "You're twisting me up," he screams, "you're tearing me inside out!"

When *Cowboy Mouth* opened at the American Place Theater on April 29, 1971, Smith and Shepard played the starring roles. But the merry-go-round of life imitating art was becoming too much for Shepard, and he left the show after a few performances to join the Holy Modal Rounders in Vermont. Not long afterward, Shepard took his wife and son with him to London, where he gave up drugs and distanced himself from the chaotic life he had known in New York.

"Patti was devastated by Sam's departure," said Ann Powell, who worked with Smith at Scribner's. "It completely ripped her apart."

On July 3, 1971, David Croland unwittingly introduced Robert Mapplethorpe to his next patron, at a medieval feast hosted by Maxime de La Falaise and John McKendry in their apartment at 190

Riverside Drive. Maxime was the food editor at *Vogue*, and the McKendrys' parties were a magnet for a stylish crowd that included fashion editor Diana Vreeland, Andy Warhol, Metro-

politan Museum of Art curator Henry Geldzahler, socialites Nan Kempner and Mica Ertegun, and a host of British bluebloods, including the Tenants and the Guinneses.

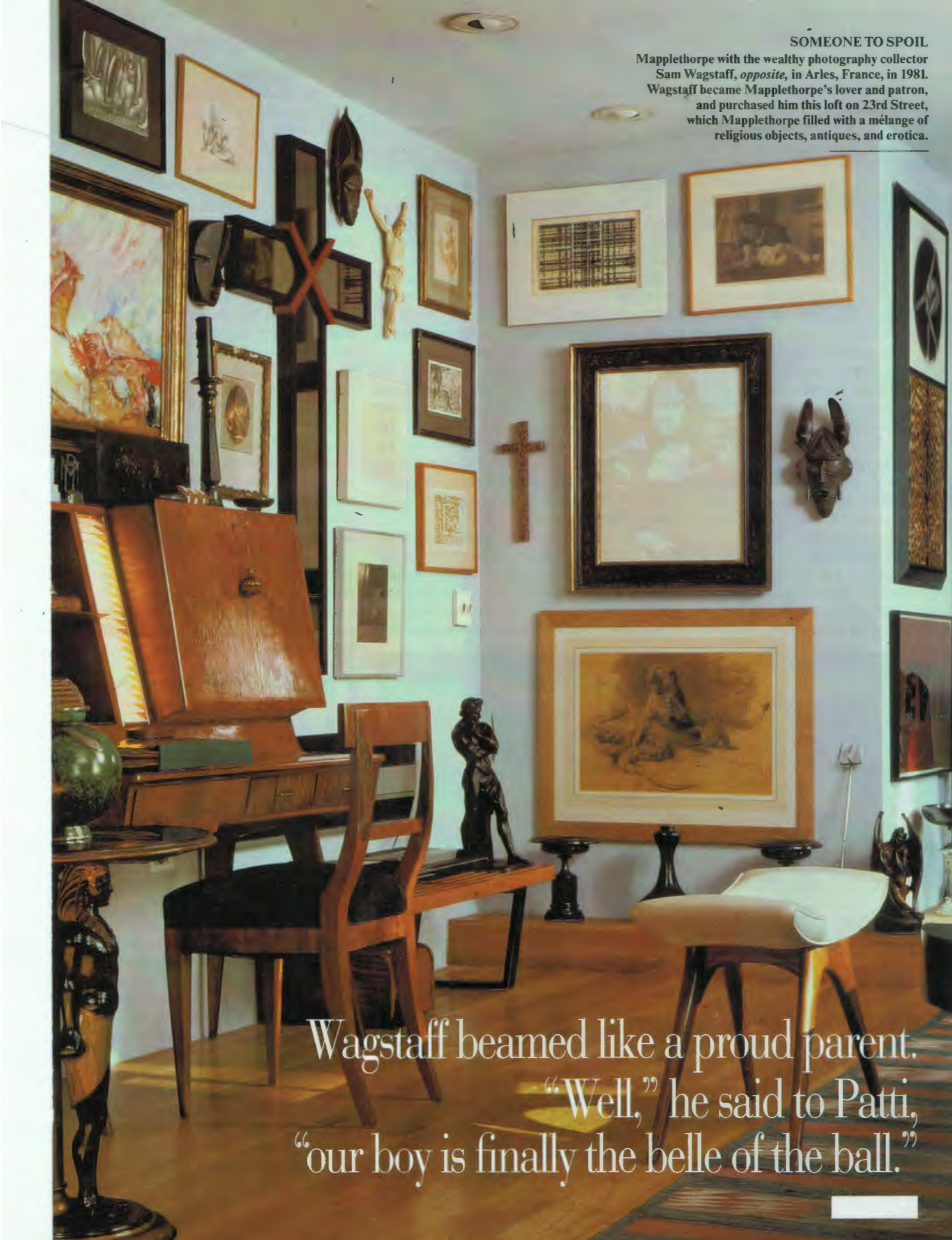
John McKendry, who was 38 and bisexual, held the prestigious position of curator of prints and photographs at the Metropolitan Museum, but his primary vocation was fabricating the myth of John McKendry. He dressed in silk shirts, harem pants, and a long velvet coat. Mapplethorpe wasted no time striking up a friendship with him. When Maxime returned from Europe at the end of the summer, she discovered that her husband was madly in love with the young man, who had dinner at the McKendrys' apartment two or three times a week. Occasionally he brought Patti Smith with him, but Maxime dismissed her as a "prima donna," and a "dirty" one at that.

In September, John McKendry was going on a trip to London, and he offered to take Mapplethorpe with him. When Mapplethorpe broke the news to David Croland, he said, "You're crazy! You hardly know John." With a nervous catch in his throat, Mapplethorpe explained that over the past few months he and McKendry had become "very good friends." Croland was stunned. He had been seeing Mapplethorpe steadily for more than a year now. How could he suddenly go off with John McKendry, who was married to his friend Loulou de La Falaise's mother? "But then I woke up pretty quick," said Croland. "It was, like, 'Now I get it. . . . Robert will do anything for his career.'"

On November 24, Sandy Daley's movie *Robert Having His Nipple Pierced* had its premiere at the Museum of Modern Art. It starred Mapplethorpe having his chest punctured by the Chelsea's resident physician; afterward he swooned in Croland's arms, like Michelangelo's "dying slave." Even more interesting than the movie was the fact that John McKendry, Maxime de La Falaise, and David Croland were all sitting together in the audience to watch Mapplethorpe, whom John adored and Maxime detested, make love to ex-boyfriend Croland. Patti Smith added another twist by providing the voice-over to the film: while Mapplethorpe and Croland tenderly kissed, Smith blamed Mapplethorpe for giv-

SOMEONE TO SPOIL

Mapplethorpe with the wealthy photography collector Sam Wagstaff, *opposite*, in Arles, France, in 1981. Wagstaff became Mapplethorpe's lover and patron, and purchased him this loft on 23rd Street, which Mapplethorpe filled with a mélange of religious objects, antiques, and erotica.



Wagstaff beamed like a proud parent.
“Well,” he said to Patti,
“our boy is finally the belle of the ball.”

ing her a venereal disease. At the end of the movie, as the arty, uptown audience gave Daley a standing ovation, one man shouted, "You people need psychiatrists!"

By the end of 1971, rock musician Allen Lanier had moved in with Patti Smith. Tension was building between Mapplethorpe and Smith due to their poor living conditions in the loft, which had no shower or heat. Patti was tired of having to go through Robert's room in order to use the bathroom, and the last vestige of privacy was destroyed when a building inspector tore a hole through the partition dividing their rooms because it violated the fire code.

By the summer of 1972, Mapplethorpe had replaced John McKendry with a more powerful patron. It was well known among gay men in the art world that Sam Wagstaff was searching for "someone to spoil." Wagstaff was a brilliant collector with an eye for extraordinary objects and a recent inheritance from his stepfather. At 50, he was so good-looking that anyone who met him in-

variably described him as the handsomest man on earth.

Ironically, David Croland, who had still not forgiven Mapplethorpe for his relationship with McKendry, helped introduce him to Wagstaff. On a visit to Croland's apartment to view his work, Wagstaff spotted a Polaroid of Mapplethorpe in a French sailor hat, and when he asked who it was, Croland experienced a sense of déjà vu. "It was like I gave them to each other," he explained. "When Sam walked out the door, I said to myself, This is it."

Wagstaff immediately telephoned Mapplethorpe and opened the conversation by asking "Is this the shy pornographer?" Mapplethorpe, who already knew of Wagstaff's reputation, was so happy to hear from him that when he hung up the telephone he leapt through the hole in the plasterboard to tell Smith the good news. "Yippee!" she shouted, jumping up and down. "You've been saved!"

Several days later, Wagstaff visited the loft, where he was greeted by the unmistakable sounds of people engaged in sexual activity. When he walked into the room, he realized the noise was coming from an audiotape of a pornographic

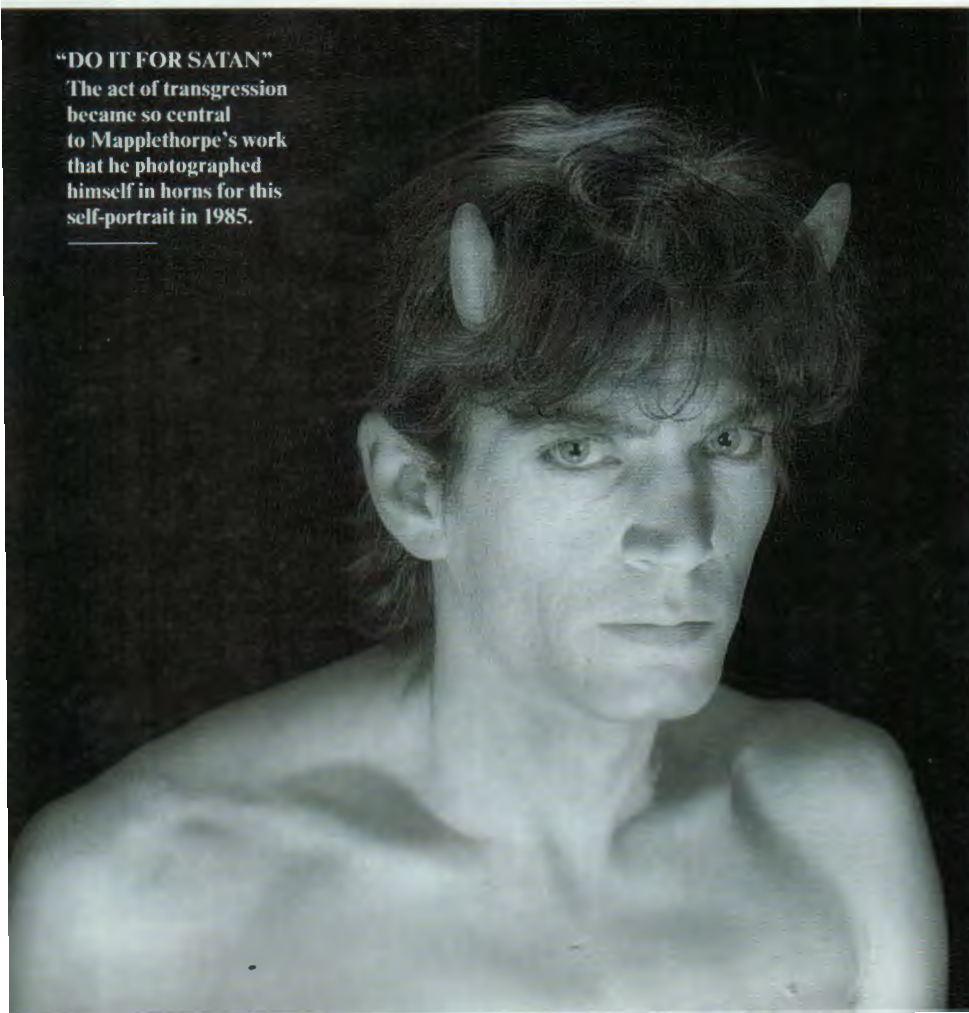
movie, which was playing on a tape recorder hidden inside the pocket of a black motorcycle jacket. The jacket was hanging on a clothing rack next to a pair of leather pants with a loaf of French bread protruding from the fly. Mapplethorpe wanted to impress Wagstaff with his versatility, so, in addition to the constructions, he showed him his collages, jewelry, and Polaroids.

Wagstaff made it clear to Mapplethorpe that he was willing to help him. They spent the night together, and by the next morning Mapplethorpe was thoroughly smitten; for years he had wondered if he would ever find someone to love as much as he had loved Smith, and in Wagstaff he had finally found the right man. "It was love at first sight," he said. "After that, everything turned around for me."

Mapplethorpe hoped Wagstaff would buy him a place to live, for Patti Smith had made it clear that she and Allen Lanier wanted to move to an apartment in Greenwich Village. In October, Wagstaff gave Mapplethorpe \$15,000 for a loft on Bond Street a dozen yards from his own. Several weeks before Mapplethorpe's 26th birthday, he and Smith moved from 23rd Street. Better days had arrived.

"DO IT FOR SATAN"

The act of transgression became so central to Mapplethorpe's work that he photographed himself in horns for this self-portrait in 1985.



The month of January 1973 marked Mapplethorpe's first photography show, at the Light Gallery on Madison Avenue. The gallery had been established two years earlier by lawyer Tennyson Shad to showcase contemporary photographers. But when Shad found himself face-to-face with Mapplethorpe's sexually explicit Polaroids, he was flabbergasted. Shad was equally astonished by the crowds of people who came to the opening, and by the sheer force of the "Wagstaff-Mapplethorpe machine."

Smith was now reading her poetry to the accompaniment of a toy piano at the Mercer Arts Center, the home of glitter rock. With the help of her new manager, Jane Friedman, she began performing "Rock 'n' Rimbaud" concerts—"a little rock, a little poetry"—at various hotels and clubs around the city. In June 1974, Mapplethorpe gave her \$1,000 to record two songs at the Electric Lady Studios with a novice band that included her old friend Lenny Kaye.

That summer Smith played Max's Kansas City, where she attracted the attention of *New York Times* music critic John Rockwell, who compared her to poet-rocker Lou Reed in her "absorption with demonic, romantic excess." Smith's success soon revolved around CBGB, the seedy Bowery bar that nurtured punk rock in New York. Music critic Stephen Holden, who was then at RCA, thought Smith was the best new solo artist since Bruce Springsteen. It was Clive Davis at Arista, however, who eventually signed Smith to his label and gave the band a seven-record deal worth \$750,000.

Smith and her four-piece band spent much of the late summer of 1975 recording the album *Horses*. Her lyrics touched upon sadomasochism, lesbianism, suicide, U.F.O.'s, and Wilhelm Reich. Smith had devised the band's catchy slogan herself—"Three-chord rock merged with the power of the word." What she needed for the cover of *Horses* was a photograph that captured her intriguing ambiguity, and she asked Mapplethorpe to take the picture.

Sam Wagstaff had purchased a new penthouse at One Fifth Avenue in the Village, and since the apartment was bare and painted white, Mapplethorpe occasionally used it as a photography studio. He had recently noticed that midway through the afternoon the sun formed a perfect triangle on the wall.

On the day of the shoot Mapplethorpe and Smith spent several hours drinking coffee at the Pink Teacup on Bleeker Street. Then Mapplethorpe looked at his watch and panicked. "Let's get out of here," he told Smith. Smith had no idea what was happening, but she followed him as he sprinted down the street. "The light," he called out. "We can't lose the light."

When they reached Wagstaff's penthouse, the triangle of light was still on the wall, but Mapplethorpe spotted an ominous patch of clouds in the distance. He was so agitated that he had difficulty setting up his tripod. Meanwhile, Wagstaff was in the kitchen making hot chocolate for Smith, and when Mapplethorpe saw her drinking a huge cup of it, he threw up his hands. "Great," he groaned. "Now your teeth are going to be all brown for the picture." Smith



told him she wasn't smiling anyway, so it didn't matter. "Don't you even want to use a comb?" he asked, staring at her unruly black hair, but she refused to touch it. Instead she flung an old secondhand jacket over one shoulder in a Frank Sinatra pose. Mapplethorpe made sure to line up her body so that the tip of the triangle jutted out from her collarbone, like an angel's wing.

Clive Davis did not share Mapplethorpe's enthusiasm for the image. One of the unwritten rules of the record business was that "girl singers" were supposed to look sexy and pretty. Davis understood that while Smith's music might not be for everyone, it was commercial suicide to place a black-and-white photo of an androgynous woman on an album cover. Furthermore, Smith even had a trace of dark facial hair on her upper lip. Davis wanted to scrap the image entirely, but when Smith had signed her deal with Arista she had been given artistic control of her albums, and she refused to change the cover. "I remember the art department wanted to change my hair into a bouffant," she said. "I told them 'Robert Mapplethorpe is an artist, and he

PARTING SHOT

The cover for Smith's 1987 album, *Dream of Life*, was one of the last two portraits Mapplethorpe took of her. "Robert knew it was the image I wanted."

"It was everything we had ever hoped for," Smith said. "The two of us together in an art gallery."

doesn't let anyone touch his pictures.'"

Years later, when *Rolling Stone* composed a list of "The 100 Greatest Album Covers of All Time," *Horses* ranked 26th.

Wagstaff soon grew to accept Mapplethorpe's promiscuity, and ultimately, perhaps, he was even titillated by it. Mapplethorpe often telephoned Wagstaff the morning after his latest debauch to describe his experience. Sex, however, had never been their primary bond; Wagstaff was a surrogate father to Mapplethorpe the way Smith was a sister.

Through John McKendry and now Wagstaff, Mapplethorpe met more and more social subjects for his portraits, both in England and America. In addition to S&M callboys, he was also photographing Isabel and Rose Lambton, the daughters of a former British Cabinet minister; writer and art dealer Guy Nevill in his riding gear; Lady Astor's granddaughter Stella; and John Paul Getty III.

Toward the end of the summer of 1976, Mapplethorpe's biggest career break resulted from a fleeting sexual liaison with a young man who worked at the Holly Solomon Gallery in SoHo; the man persuaded the dealer to look at Mapplethorpe's work. Solomon knew that Mapplethorpe carried Wagstaff's imprimatur, and that considerably enhanced her admiration for him. "Sam was considered the great photography collector," she explained. "I wouldn't have touched Robert without Sam." Nevertheless, Solomon was impressed, and promised Mapplethorpe an exhibition early in 1977.

Exactly a year after Patti Smith recorded *Horses*, she was back in the studio with *Radio Ethiopia*. In late January 1977, Smith's convulsive energy reached a climax when she opened for Bob Seger and the Silver Bullet Band at Curtis Hixen Hall in Tampa, Florida. She was performing "Ain't It Strange," spitting out the lyrics and miming X-rated sexual acts with Lenny Kaye before she began spinning like a top. "Go,

go on, go like a dervish," she shouted. "Come on, God, make a move." She twirled faster and faster until she tripped over a monitor and fell to the concrete floor 14 feet below the stage. Blood spurted from a large gash in her head, and she had broken several vertebrae in her neck.

"When I fell off that stage," Smith explained, "it was like God said, 'If you keep bugging me, this is what's going to happen.' I began to realize that maybe I was mortal after all."

When Smith returned to New York, she experienced paralysis in her legs and double vision. Doctors worried that she might never be able to perform again. In addition, *Radio Ethiopia* was a commercial and critical flop, and she could not help boost the album's sales by touring with the band.

Mapplethorpe had watched Smith's career surge ahead of his, and he often teased her about becoming famous before he did. Now she was temporarily sidelined, and he was about to score his first major success with a show of portraits at the Holly Solomon Gallery. Realizing that Solomon didn't fully appreciate what she called his "dirty pictures"—images of men gagged, blindfolded, and hog-tied—he had arranged to exhibit those at the same time at the Kitchen, an alternative space in SoHo. Consequently, he had two openings on February 4, 1977—"Portraits" at Solomon (including photographs of Princess Margaret and Arnold Schwarzenegger) and "Erotic Pictures" at the Kitchen.

Before he went downtown for the openings, he stopped by One Fifth Avenue to pick up Sam Wagstaff and to see if Patti Smith, who had bought an apartment in the same building, felt well enough to accompany them. An ophthalmologist had assured Smith that she would regain her normal vision, but her legs were still partially paralyzed. In the meantime, he had prescribed total bed rest for three months, and so even though Mapplethorpe persisted in trying to persuade her to rent a wheelchair for the openings, she declined the offer.

After making an appearance at both openings, Mapplethorpe returned to Wagstaff's apartment to change into a velvet dinner jacket, then took the elevator down to the restaurant on the first floor to greet the 200 guests

arriving at a party for him. These included Diana Vreeland, the writer Fran Lebowitz, the heiress Catherine Guinness, and the designers Halston and Fernando Sanchez. He was so excited that he took the elevator back up to Smith's apartment to share the good news. "I'm a success!" he exulted.

Smith was in bed eating a bowl of couscous, a gray sombrero covering the 22 stitches in her head. A cat named Ashley was picking its way through the books and clutter surrounding her. "Everybody in New York is here," Mapplethorpe continued. "You've got to see it for yourself." Smith sent him away, but he was back almost every half-hour. "I'm the toast of the town!" he announced at one point. Gathering Smith up in his arms, he headed for the door, but he stumbled from the drugs and the champagne and put her back down on the bed.

Soon Wagstaff arrived upstairs. He had had his fill of the "smarty-pants set" and wanted to keep Smith company. He was beaming like a proud parent. "Well," he said, "our boy is finally the belle of the ball."

Mapplethorpe's "S&M period" reached its peak during 1977 and 1978, when he produced 13 graphic images that were later packaged and sold as the "X Portfolio." The severity of the pictures, which included scenes of bodily mutilation, was shocking by nearly anyone's standards, but Mapplethorpe's explorations had taken him so far into the netherworld of sexual deviance that almost nothing shocked him anymore.

He was fully aware that he was breaking taboos, and the act of transgression was central to his work. He pushed his sexual partners to transgress their own boundaries by repeating the phrase "Do it for Satan." Once he had succeeded in breaking down their reserve, he often photographed the "secrets" and made them public.

In a rare moment of self-reflection, he confided that his goal in sex, and in art, was to stop himself from feeling: "When I have sex with someone, I forget who I am. For a minute I even forget I'm human. It's the same thing when I'm behind a camera. I forget I exist."

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When Robert Mapplethorpe and Patti Smith's joint exhibition, *Film and Stills*, opened at the gallery of Robert Miller, Mapplethorpe's new dealer, in June 1978, it drew huge crowds and TV cameras. Smith had made a stunning comeback from her accident 17 months earlier; *Easter*, her new album, had received the best reviews of her career, and she had a top-10 single with "Because the Night," which she had co-written with Bruce Springsteen. Smith clearly was the star of the event, but the show itself celebrated her decade-long friendship with Mapplethorpe. The poster for the exhibition featured a photograph of Patti by Robert and a drawing of Robert by Patti, and the first image confronting viewers when they entered the gallery was a 1968 snapshot of the two artists taken in Coney Island. "It was everything we had ever hoped for," Smith later explained. "The two of us together in an art gallery."

Smith became increasingly frightened by what she considered the psychotic strains of punk rock; what had started out as an exhilarating musical adventure had ended in punk's symbolic breakdown when Sid Vicious of the Sex Pistols stabbed his girlfriend, Nancy Spungen, to death in the Chelsea Hotel. Two months later, free on bail, Vicious slashed Smith's brother, Todd, in the face with a broken beer bottle.

Still, Smith might not have removed herself so quickly from punk violence had she not become involved with a man who roused her fantasies of un-

conditional love like no other boyfriend before him. Fred (Sonic) Smith had been the rhythm guitarist for the MC5, the Detroit-based group managed by White Panther leader John Sinclair. When the MC5 lost its recording contract, Smith formed the Sonic Rendezvous Band, but while he had a reputation as a first-rate guitar player, the group's performances were limited mostly to Detroit. Patti met him there in March 1976 at a record-company party given in her honor. She conducted a secret affair with Fred for two years; then, in the summer of 1978, she made the final break with Allen Lanier.

Mapplethorpe's friendship with Patti Smith reached a temporary impasse when Fred entered their lives. Mapplethorpe worried that Fred held too much influence over Patti, who seemingly needed to ask his permission for every move she made. Now that she was Fred's girlfriend, she declined to pose naked for Mapplethorpe and affected an air of modesty, which some old friends found difficult to accept.

When *Wave*, Smith's fourth album, was released in April 1979, it featured a Mapplethorpe portrait of the singer on the cover. The picture had been taken in Sam Wagstaff's apartment, against the same bare white wall that had served as the backdrop for *Horses*. This time, however, Smith wore a chaste white dress and balanced a pair of doves on her finger.

At the end of the summer the band toured Europe. Its final concert, in Florence, Italy, attracted a massive crowd of 80,000—the largest Smith had ever played for—and she pulled

herself together to give one of the most rousing performances of her career. Later that evening, she made a stunning announcement: she was abandoning the group.

Smith's decision prompted speculation about her health, and it was widely assumed that she had a drug problem, but it was mainly her addiction to Fred Smith that resulted in her defection from the band. In the end Patti traded her public life for a private one in Detroit, and in March 1980 she and Fred were married in a church ceremony with only their parents in attendance. For the first year she kept in touch with Mapplethorpe and other friends by telephone. By the time she gave birth to her son Jackson in 1982, however, the phone calls had stopped; when friends tried to reach her, they discovered that she had changed her number to an unlisted one. Letters were returned: "Addressee Unknown."

The Robert Mapplethorpe who turned 39 in November 1985 was a considerably more respectable figure than the one who had first terrorized the art world with pictures of gay S&M sex. His birthday coincided with the publication of *Certain People: A Book of Portraits*, which earned high marks from no less an Establishment newspaper than *The New York Times*. Five years earlier the paper had denounced him for "redrawing the boundaries of public taste"; now *Certain People* was mentioned in its *Book Review* as a possible gift idea for Christmas, and the photographer was trumpeted by critic Andy Grundberg as "the best portrait photographer to emerge in the last 10 years."

At the publication party for the book, Mapplethorpe unveiled his new, \$500,000 loft, which had been purchased for him by Wagstaff. The loft was located at 35 West 23rd Street, two blocks from the Chelsea Hotel.

In October 1986, Smith was in the kitchen of her home in St. Clair Shores, Michigan, when she received a call from her lawyer, Ina Meibach, informing her that Mapplethorpe was in the hospital with AIDS-related pneumonia. He had passed the word through his lawyer, Michael Stout. That Mapplethorpe and Smith were now communicating through their lawyers

showed how estranged they had become.

Ironically, when Smith heard the bad news, she was in the process of planning a trip to New York to record her comeback album, *Dream of Life*. Fred had granted his permission for Mapplethorpe to shoot the album cover, and she was just about to call him to arrange their reunion, and to share a secret: at 40, she was happily pregnant again. She telephoned Sam Wagstaff to learn more details of Mapplethorpe's condition, but since she hadn't spoken to either man since 1982, their conversation left her feeling like Rip Van Winkle. "How's Robert doing?" she asked Wagstaff, who would soon be hospitalized himself for the second time. "He's doing better than I am," he replied. "I've got it . . . everybody's got it."

On December 11, Mapplethorpe took a cab to the Mayflower Coffee Shop on Central Park West for his reunion with Patti Smith. Of all the pictures he had ever taken of her, the image that remained in his mind was the *Horses* cover from a decade earlier. It must have been a shock, then, when he saw the middle-aged woman seated at the corner table. Smith's waist-length hair was now streaked with gray, and her eyes were hidden behind glasses. She was flanked by Fred and their son Jackson. She was relieved to see Mapplethorpe looking surprisingly fit, and he explained that with AZT and his weekly vitamin-B₁₂ shots he felt better than he had in years.

During the shoot Mapplethorpe's assistant Brian English fussed endlessly with the lights while a hairstylist and makeup artist stood ready with crimping irons, lipsticks, and powder brushes. After an hour of preparation, Smith finally stepped in front of the camera.

Mapplethorpe's eye immediately noticed a tiny brown spot on her right hand; when he asked her about it, she told him the mark had mysteriously surfaced right after her son was born. Smith noticed that Mapplethorpe was unusually quiet during the shoot, and she wondered if he was thinking the same thing, that one day the only evidence of their relationship would be the photographs they had created together. "Oh, Robert," she sighed, and he looked up briefly

at her face. "I know," he said. "I know."

The photograph was disappointing, and Mapplethorpe, though gravely ill, insisted on reshooting it. Technically, even the final portrait wasn't up to his high standards; her face was washed out and the background was blurry, yet she loved it all the more because it wasn't perfect. Mapplethorpe had even refrained from airbrushing out the brown spot on her right hand. "Certainly it's not a glamorous picture," Smith said. "But Robert knew it was the image I wanted. It was his gift to me."

The opening of the Robert Mapplethorpe retrospective at the Whitney Museum was one of the most eagerly anticipated events of the summer of 1988. It was Mapplethorpe's night, and he was determined to enjoy it.

He had to remain seated, and his fingers burned from the neuropathy caused by his illness, yet he shook hands with every important person who was whisked to his side, and throughout the evening he could be seen chatting with artists Francesco Clemente, Ed Ruscha, Robert Rauschenberg, Brice Marden, Barbara Kruger, and Louise Bourgeois. Sadly, the people who mattered most weren't in attendance. Sam Wagstaff had been dead for more than a year, and Patti Smith didn't feel she could leave her family.

"Mapplethorpe mania has arrived in New York," Andy Grundberg wrote in his review of the show for *The New York Times*, and hardly a day went by without Mapplethorpe's name appearing in the papers. Yet the photographer derived his true solace from the knowledge that sales of his prints were reaching a record high. After the Whitney show and the subsequent articles about Mapplethorpe's illness, Howard Read, his dealer, sold several million dollars' worth of prints. "It was like Wall Street," Read said, "except in this case people were buying against death."

Smith hadn't seen Mapplethorpe since June, but she spoke to him several times a week on the telephone, and their conversations invariably cheered him up. Restrained by her responsibilities to Fred and their children, she had opted against touring to promote *Dream of Life*, and the album was a commercial failure. In February 1989, when Smith heard that Mapplethorpe would soon be leaving for treatment in Boston, she asked Fred

to drive her to New York so she could personally wish him good luck.

As they sat dreamily in his studio, Mapplethorpe was seized with gastric pains, and a nurse led him to the bathroom. When he emerged a few minutes later, his eyes were glassy and feverish, and he could barely maintain his balance. "Patti," he said, "I'm dying."

Smith looked down at his hands, which had once been so beautiful, and saw that his arthritic-looking fingers had retracted into something resembling a baby's fists. She began sobbing and couldn't stop until Mapplethorpe suggested they go into the living room. He took a seat in his favorite chair while she sat opposite him on the couch. "There's nothing more to say, is there?" Mapplethorpe said. Smith began crying again, and he got up from his chair to sit next to her on the couch. Resting his head on her shoulder, he tried to comfort her, but a few minutes later she realized that he had fallen asleep. For the next two hours she sat very still and listened to his labored breathing and the faint beat of his heart. She retraced their lives together, flashing back to Max's Kansas City and the Chelsea Hotel, and finally to that day in Brooklyn when she first saw him sleeping in his bed. They had come full circle. "I'd never felt so young," she said, "and so old."

Robert Mapplethorpe died on March 9, 1989, three weeks after Smith's final visit. He became even more famous after his death, when, in June, the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., canceled a retrospective of his work. When the exhibition arrived in Cincinnati, the Contemporary Arts Center and its director were ordered to stand trial on obscenity charges—the first time a gallery in the United States had faced prosecution for the art it displayed. The jury was unanimous in deciding that although Mapplethorpe's pictures appealed to a prurient interest in sex and were patently offensive, they were, nonetheless, "art."

Patti Smith still lives in the Detroit suburbs with her two children, and is writing a book of poems honoring her deceased friends and lovers. Her husband, Fred, died of a heart attack on November 4, 1994, the date of Mapplethorpe's birthday. "Now," she said, "all my favorite guys are gone." □