

DANZIGER GALLERY

Project Room: Lloyd Ziff

Robert Mapplethorpe and Patti Smith. 1968-1969.

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Lloyd Ziff is best known as the award-winning art director of several national magazines, including *Vanity Fair*, *House & Garden*, *Condé Nast Traveler*, and *Rolling Stone*. However, throughout his life photography has been his great passion.

From the early 1960s onwards Ziff was rarely without a camera and among the many subjects he photographed were the young Robert Mapplethorpe and Patti Smith. As Ziff recalls:

“My last semester at Pratt Institute I happened to take a photography course although my major was graphic design. The magic of the dark room seduced me and I soon was shooting black and white photographs of Brooklyn, New York City, and of my friends. Robert and I were both in the class of 1967, and although we weren’t particularly close, I believe we recognized in each other something we probably couldn’t put into words at the time.

In 1968 Robert was living with Patti in a little apartment near mine in Clinton Hill, Brooklyn. They were always working, making paintings and drawings and sculptures, and the walls of their apartment were covered with their work. They were both very young and I found them very beautiful. I asked to come over to their place one day to shoot portraits of them. They were among the first double portraits I shot. Patti published two of them in her book, *Just Kids*, in 2010, and credits them as the first portraits made of the two of them.

In 1969 I was living in a basement apartment on Charles Street in the West Village. Robert wanted to make an animated movie with nude stills of himself and Patti, but as she writes in her book, he wasn’t yet a photographer. He asked me to do the series of them nude. They came over to my place, we attached a light to the back of a chair. He was planning to silhouette the figures so we didn’t worry much about the background. He knew exactly what he wanted: just single figures of himself, and then of Patti, sitting, kneeling, standing, praying, sometimes wearing a blindfold. I remember giving him the contacts, but again as Patti writes, he lost interest in making the film. After Robert died and his archives were bought by The Getty, included in his works were numerous paper doll type cut-outs Robert had made from the nude figures I had shot in 1969.”