

Arm (Self Portrait), 1976

There are no straight lines in
Mapplethorpe's arm—

just hillocks and dry
lakes, his fingers cascading

eighth notes on a staff
opposite under-

arm hair. He is pinned
by the lens, redeeming

as the Barbados
threadsnake that sits

on a quarter. It evolved
to fill the centipede's

shoes without
proof of the species'

ecological import.

The Partitioned Task

The first worker harvests
the seed, then hauls

her load along the trail
until she meets an

unladen ant. I learn
that this is optimal,

like a bucket brigade
transporting water versus

straining yourself.
As *Figure 1* shows,

she gives her seed without
hesitation to the next

available ant, who becomes
informed and doesn't steal it.

Portrait of an Artist (Pool with Two Figures)

[The pool paintings] were about the surface of the water, the very thin film, the shimmering two-dimensionality.

—David Hockney

As the artist's former lover watches
the swimmer with an intensity only
rivalled by chromium oxide,
the toe of his loafer inches
toward the pool's edge, bowed
head sloping like the mountains
that fade to lavender smoke-filled
sand. Where the patio might have
extended, banana leaves issue
a threat: sword tips backed by
mountain peaks, two redwood dagger trees—
even the onlooker's sun-
kissed coiffure shields the swimmer's
horizontal body from becoming
a loner ousted from the scenery.

Lophelia pertusa

A wall of coral has
nothing to do

with rigs and wrecks,
or the war tanker

torpedoed by a U-
boat while delivering

90,000 pounds of
fuel oil. But the biologist

explains any hard
substrate provides

a firm base when
oases are rare. Imagine

a cauliflower
florete untouched

by trawlers
blooming white on

white, uncut.

Mutation

After the skin cancer
was removed, I became a

pink waxy lump
cut into sections, coded

with dyes and frozen
like a layer cake.

I controlled how I
saw myself stand out:

on the sand, watching
boogie boarders

glisten with salt, different
as the spotted seatrout

that disintegrated
in the beach parking lot.