’For Robert’ Last Address Tribute Walk Reading by Jack Walls

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Jack Walls’s hands as he reads in front of Robert Mapplethorpe’s last address at 35 West 23rd Street.
Photo by Elliot Luscombe

Jack Walls is an artist and poet who lived at 35 West 23rd street with Robert Mapplethorpe until the photographer’s death on March 9, 1989. Below, Jack shares the text from “For Robert”, his moving reading for this year’s Visual AIDS Last Address Tribute Walk.

“For Robert”

Robert and I lived here at 35 West 23rd street in the late 1980s.

Those years were very difficult years.

I was a heroin addict back then.

Robert was dying from AIDS, we did the best we could, during this time.

Robert slowly died here.

Although, he didn’t die here, he died in Boston on March 9 1989.

Our life together was far from perfect.

We spent seven tumultuous years together.

At the time of his death I had just turned 33 years old, he was 42.

These were very very dark times for me and for those who lived through them with me.

For it seemed as if the whole world was dying.

All my friends,

friends of friends

friends of friends of friends of friends.

Some of these people I'd never even met,

but in death we were all friends,

we felt one another's pain.

These were dark times, and everyone was dying.

Klaus Nomi, Peter Hujar, Bruce Chatwin, Cookie Mueller, Keith Haring, Phillip Prioleau, Donald Cann, Peter Reed, James Ford, Alistair Butler, Andrew Castro, Eddie Jones, Jim Nelson & Sam Wagstaff,

and on and on and on.

Now the years have passed.

Names are only memories.

Robert never got to see how famous he became.

Robert is more famous in death than he ever was in life.

When Robert died I felt all alone.

When Robert died I wept.

He will forever and always be a part of me.

For sacred is the night filled with true love and the beam that radiates in the heart full of precious memories.

The click of a shutter.

The flash of a strobe.

The profile of a flower.

The curve of a neck.

The magnificent majesty of a long drooping cock.

The crash of a wave.

A luminous smile.

All forever frozen in time.

The perfect moment.

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