WARHOL & MAPPLETHORPE: GUISE & DOLLS
Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art • Hartford, CT • wadsworth.org • Through January 24, 2016

With Cyndi Lauper exploring gender identification and fashion redefining in America, Hartford’s Wadsworth Atheneum plays to its strengths in chronicling a gender-bending era whose influence on art and culture seems inexorable, and whose edginess, as illuminated through the intertwined histories of Andy Warhol and Robert Mapplethorpe, still surprises.

Warhol & Mapplethorpe: Guise & Dolls, organized by Patricia Hackett, the Emily Hall Titcomb Curator of Contemporary Art, is an opportunity to revisit lower Manhattan in the 1970s and early 80s, when poet/musician Lou Reed was conjuring drug visions and hipsters wallking on the wild side. Warhol was filming, and photographing his circle of the avant-garde at his Factory, and Mapplethorpe was emerging in a downstairs porno shop, hired in 1972 as a photographer for Warhol’s Interview magazine. By 1973, he had Warhol workshop in which he was exhibiting Polaroid images alongside other artists. This is the first museum exhibition to give Warhol & Mapplethorpe their boundary-pushing approach to portraiture. In relationship to each other, creating a conversation between the older, master Warhol and the younger, Mapplethorpe: occupying similar turf, their lives encompassed antagonized visions and devastating tragedy. Highlights include four portraits of Warhol taken by Mapplethorpe, and one Polaroid of Mapplethorpe taken by Warhol. Mapplethorpe’s style playing self-portraits still work with intensity.

Warhol’s drag queen portraits from the Lutish and Gentlemen series and, Yugo Images, by photographer Christopher Makos, of Warhol in drag. Mapplethorpe’s posed studio shots of close friend Patti Smith in guises illustrating the feminine and masculine, and Mapplethorpe’s equally formal portraits of bodybuilding champions. Lisa Lyon assuming “masculine” poses, are powerful in new contexts.

Dandy andanning and young-stereotyping inside Met and Cindy Daling also appear in the approximately 360 pieces on view. The presentation of Polaroids, paintings, and videos, Warhol and Mapplethorpe are closely allied to the Wadsworth, where each has shown solo exhibitions. The museum stood firm in presenting Mapplethorpe’s controversial The Perfect Moment (1989), in lieu of an explicit image of a drugs, sex, and socializing, which made the show a critical test for both the artist and the museum. —SUSAN RAND BROWN

MIGGS BURROUGHS: LENTICULAR VIEWS
Lockwood-Mathews Mansion Museum • Norwalk, CT • lockwoodmathewsmansion.com • Through January 3, 2016

The magic of Miggs Burroughs’s new exhibition, Lenticular Views: Journeys through Time, Space and Emotion, is matching its namesakes as it captures the vision of the Lockwood-Mathews Mansion Museum – then and now. Approaching his images head-on, you see the magnificent National Historic Landmark as it appears today, beautifully restored. But move your eyes a few inches to the left or right, the lenticular photos reveals an earlier image of the mansion as it was back in the 1860s, when railroad tycoon LeGrand Lockwood hired dozens of European stone masons and skilled craftsmen to build the most significant United States mansion since the Civil War. Completed in 1886, it is considered one of the country’s finest examples of Second Empire architecture, although it had been under repair in the 1860s. After it was recast by a group of Norwalk citizens and restored to the guidance of the Junior League of Stamford-Norwalk today it is a lively cultural center with ongoing art exhibits, concert series and educational events for the community.

“The lenticular process allows you to travel through time and space and experience the contrast of seeing the old landmark being built, then in disrepair, and now transformed into its present restored elegance,” says Burroughs. “For all of my nether-mansion interior photos, I used a model dressed in Victorian garb. Although these beautiful empty rooms suggest a romantic idyll, I was inspired to add the human element by putting a living person into the scene—a mystery woman in white whose face you never see. You wonder if she is real or a ghost from the past.”

Also featured are unique images from Burroughs’s new installation in a parlor off Main Street in Westport, CT. The focus is on the “human connections” among various couples holding hands. “I love to explore the emotional and physical changes that we experience in our lives, even a period of minutes, or even decades,” says Burroughs, who is one of only 14 lenticular artists in the US in 2014 according to Artblog. “I always wanted to be a filmmaker and now, the lenticular process has enabled me to make these simple movies with only two figures, evoking the viewer as my collaborator, determining the speed, sequence, and ultimately, the meaning of these moving pictures.” —REBECCA BOLLE