

***BILL BRANDT: SHADOW AND LIGHT* AT THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART  
PRESENTS A MAJOR REEVALUATION OF THE ARTIST'S CAREER**

***Bill Brandt: Shadow and Light***

March 6–August 12, 2013

The Robert and Joyce Menschel Photography Gallery and The Edward Steichen Photography Galleries, third floor

**Press Viewing:** Tuesday, March 5, 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., with *Henri Labrouste: Structure Brought to Light*

**NEW YORK, January 24, 2013**—The Museum of Modern Art presents ***Bill Brandt: Shadow and Light***, a major critical reevaluation of the heralded career of Bill Brandt (British, b. Germany, 1904-83) from March 6 to August 12, 2013. A founding figure in photography's modernist traditions, Brandt ranks among the visionaries who, in the diversity of their approach, established the creative potential of photography based on observation of the world around them. Brandt's distinctive vision—his ability to present the mundane world as fresh and strange—emerged in London in the 1930s, and drew from his time in the Paris studio of Man Ray. His visual explorations of the society, landscape, and literature of England are indispensable to any understanding of photographic history and, arguably, to our understanding of life in Britain during the middle of the 20th century. *Bill Brandt: Shadow and Light* is organized by Sarah Meister, Curator, with Drew Sawyer, Beaumont and Nancy Newhall Curatorial Fellow, Department of Photography.

The impressive breadth of Brandt's career, which suggests his restless experimental impulse, and the dramatic transformations of his printing style have often confounded those seeking to understand the link between the highly celebrated and seemingly unrelated chapters of his oeuvre. The exhibition brings together more than 150 works divided into six sections, each corresponding with a distinct aspect of Brandt's achievement: London in the Thirties; Northern England; World War II; Portraits; Landscapes; and Nudes. Beginning with a highly selective display of albums and prints made around the European continent as Brandt was forming his artistic identity, the exhibition presents an opportunity to understand Brandt in a new light: one that establishes a chronological trajectory of his career, with an expanded consideration of his activity during World War II. In addition, a closer look at his printing methods with the finest known prints from across the range of Brandt's career will clarify how the artist, whose early work is characterized by the muted, wistful portrait of a young housewife scrubbing the threshold to her home (*East End Morning*, 1937), would come to create a bold and unpredictable series of nudes on the rocky English coast (*East Sussex Coast*, 1957).

Brandt established his reputation before the Second World War with the publication of *The English at Home* (1936) and *A Night in London* (1938), books that distilled his early photographic studies of life in Britain. Noted works from this period on view include: *Parlourmaid Preparing a Bath before Dinner* (c. 1936); *Soho Bedroom* (1934); *Street Scene, London* (1936); and *Losing at the Horse Races, Auteuil, Paris* (c. 1932), which Brandt later re-titled *Racegoers in Sandown Park* in order to present it in the context of his English pictures, an expression of his disdain for slavish adherence to facts.

During this same period, Brandt ventured to several industrial towns in northern England to witness firsthand the impact of the Depression. Striking images from this group, including *A Snicket in Halifax* (1937), *Coal-Searcher Coming Home from Jarrow* (1937), and *Northumbrian Miner at His Evening Meal* (1937), bear unequivocal witness to the devastating unemployment that plagued the region at the time, but there is a subtle ambiguity to many of these images that suggests Brandt found the artistic potential of these soot-blackened structures and faces competing for his attention.

Brandt's activity during the Second World War—long distilled by Brandt and others to a handful of now-iconic pictures of moonlit London during the Blackout and improvised shelters during the Blitz—are presented for the first time in the context of his assignments for the leading illustrated magazines of his day, establishing a key link between his pre- and postwar work. In addition to photographs such as *Liverpool Street Underground Station Shelter* (1940) and *Deserted Street in Bloomsbury* (1942), this section includes lesser-known works from the period such as: *Bombed Regency Staircase, Upper Brook Street, Mayfair* (c. 1942); *Packaging Post for the War* (c. 1942); and a suite of extraordinary wartime portraits.

Brandt's assignments for *Picture Post* and *Lilliput* magazines, as well as *Harper's Bazaar* (UK and US), led variously into extended investigations of portraiture and landscape photography, with a strong emphasis on contemporary literary figures in Britain and the country's rich literary heritage. A solemn, vaguely distracted expression became a hallmark of Brandt's portraiture, and notable examples on view include Dylan Thomas, Norman Douglas, Evelyn Waugh, Reg Butler, Harold Pinter, Martin Amis, Tom Stoppard, Vanessa Redgrave, Barbara Hepworth, Henry Moore, and Francis Bacon.

Brandt's crowning artistic achievement—published as *Perspective of Nudes* in 1961—is a series that is both personal and universal, sensual and strange, collectively exemplifying the “sense of wonder”, to quote Brandt, that is paramount in his photographs. His extended investigation of the female nude remains his most original and memorable work, defying preconceived notions of the genre with his choice of settings (inhospitably barren seashores or prim Victorian interiors that conflated the domestic and the sexual in lieu of sterile, but safe, studios), as well as the extreme exaggeration of his distortions, cropping, and printing styles, rendering what might otherwise have been hopelessly clichéd aspects of the female form unfamiliar and surprising. On view are over 40 photographs from this period, including four prints

of his iconic *London* (1952), which together suggest Brandt's willingness to reinterpret even the most supremely resolved images in his oeuvre.

Through a rigorous analysis of each chapter of Brandt's career across a half century of work, the exhibition clarifies the achievement of this towering figure in photography's modernist tradition.

#### **SPONSORSHIP:**

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#### **PUBLICATION:**

Published in conjunction with the exhibition, *Bill Brandt: Shadow and Light* presents the photographer's entire oeuvre, with special emphasis on his investigation of English life in the 1930s and his innovative late nudes. Rich tritone illustrations highlight the special characteristics of Brandt's prints, and an essay by curator Sarah Hermanson Meister sets Brandt's life and work in the context of 20<sup>th</sup>-century photographic history. Lee Ann Daffner, the Museum's Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Conservator of Photographs, contributes an illustrated glossary of Brandt's retouching techniques, enhancing the appreciation of his printing processes. The book also includes a generously illustrated appendix of Brandt's photo-stories published during the Second World War, clarifying the photographer's career as never before. 9"w x 10.5"h; 208 pages; 254 tritone illustrations. Hardcover, \$50. Published by The Museum of Modern Art and available in March at MoMA Stores and online at MoMAStore.org. Available to the trade through ARTBOOK | D.A.P. in the United States and Canada. Published and distributed by Thames & Hudson outside the United States and Canada.

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#### **Public Information:**

**The Museum of Modern Art**, 11 West 53 Street, New York, NY 10019, [\(212\) 708-9400](tel:2127089400), [MoMA.org](https://www.moma.org).

**Hours:** Wednesday through Monday, 10:30 a.m.–5:30 p.m. Friday, 10:30 a.m.–8:00 p.m. Closed Tuesday.

**Museum Admission:** \$25 adults; \$18 seniors, 65 years and over with I.D.; \$14 full-time students with current I.D. Free, members and children 16 and under. (Includes admittance to Museum galleries and film programs). **MoMA.org:** No service charge for tickets ordered on MoMA.org. Tickets purchased online may be printed out and presented at the Museum without waiting in line. (Includes admittance to Museum galleries and film programs).

**Film and After Hours Program Admission:** \$12 adults; \$10 seniors, 65 years and over with I.D.; \$8 full-time students with current I.D. The price of an After Hours Program Admission ticket may be applied toward the price of a Museum admission ticket or MoMA Membership within 30 days.

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