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Endpapers: detail of Cuckmere River, Sussex, 1963 (see page 143)


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Modern Art and Members

of the Committee on Photography
The Museum of Modern Art is proud to present this major reconsideration of the work of Bill Brandt, the artist who defined the potential of photographic modernism in England for much of the twentieth century and whose remarkably broad oeuvre endures as a landmark in the history of the medium. Brandt achieved early acclaim for his characterizations of the British social structure and life in London in the 1930s; three decades later, he published the fruits of an extended investigation that yielded some of the most innovative and coherent path by which one can follow the trajectory of Brandt's development as an artist, particularly during the transformative period coinciding with the end of World War II, and her attention considerate of the dramatic evolution of Brandt's printing style stands as an indispensable resource for future assessments of Brandt's art. It is fitting that this important exhibition would take place at MoMA, as the Museum's relationship with Brandt dates back to when the Department of Photography was less than a year old and the artist was not yet forty, when MoMA first exhibited Brandt's photographs in the exhibition Britain at War in 1943 (the work itself was unattributed, a practice that was not uncommon at the time). Several years later, Edward Steichen, the newly appointed Director of the Department of Photography, presented a cross-section of Brandt's work to date within Four Photographers (1948). Steichen would go on to include four photographs by Brandt in his landmark exhibition The Family of Man, which opened at MoMA in 1955 and subsequently circulated to thirty-seven countries on six continents, and at the conclusion of his tenure in 1961, Steichen exhibited forty-two photographs from Brandt's groundbreaking series of postwar nudes—the series' first institutional embrace, concurrent with the publication of Brandt's collection, Perspectives of Nudes. By the next year when John Szarkowski succeeded Steichen in the Department of Photography, the Museum owned fourteen Brandt photographs; four landscapes acquired in 1959 and ten nudes following the 1961 exhibition. A few more trickled in, and MoMA purchased forty of the 125 prints made by Brandt for his 1969 retrospective (for £25 each). Until recently, these prints—the vast majority of which were printed decades after the original negatives—for the core of MoMA's Brandt collection. Recognizing the fundamental significance of Brandt's achievement to the history of twentieth-century photography, the Museum identified Brandt's work as a strategic priority for acquisition in 2006, and since then MoMA has acquired seventy vintage prints, which have allowed for a more comprehensive understanding of the radical transformations of the artist and his technique. Peter Galassi, then Chief Curator in the Department of Photography, was the first to articulate this need, and his enthusiasm was matched, and occasionally surpassed, by the efforts of Sarah Meister and David Dechman, a long-time Brandt enthusiast and a Member of the Board of Trustees and the Museum's Committee on Photography, who was instrumental in this initiative. This exhibition and catalogue reflect the culmination of that effort, which has not only more than doubled the number of Brandt prints in MoMA’s collection but now, for the first time, allows each chapter of Brandt's sweeping career to be represented in the way the artist had originally intended it to be seen.

Alfred H. Barr, Jr., the Museum's founding director, had a vision for the institution that would "expand beyond the narrow limits of painting and sculpture," encompassing modern art in all media, and not long after opening its doors in November 1929, the Museum was collecting and exhibiting film, photography, architecture, and industrial design, highlighting the connections among them in a way that would find echoes in Brandt's work. Like many contemporary artists, Brandt drew inspiration from (and, in turn, inspired) an array of media more broad than the medium with which he chose to create. His close attention to the cinematography of Gregg Toland in Citizen Kane had a profound effect on the way in which he approached his early nudes, for example, and the anatomical distortions in the sculptural forms of Henry Moore resonate strongly with the extreme and unfamiliar perspectives of the photographer nascent nudes. Brandt's achievement had a significant impact on artists as disparate as Ansel Adams, Robert Frank, R. B. Kitaj, and David Hockney, a fact to which they attest in their writings. A quick perusal of his bibliography suggests how the luminaries of twentieth-century British literature felt compelled to comment on Brandt's work, which itself drew inspiration from theirs. With the appointment of Quentin Bajac, who will become Chief Curator of the Department of Photography in January 2013, the Museum will begin a new chapter in the acquisition, publication, and display of photographs, and in exploring the role those photographs play within the broader context of modern and contemporary art. While MoMA remains keenly attuned to the future and to the critical role of photography within the visual culture of the twenty-first century, the Museum is equally and actively committed to a deeper understanding of key figures in photography's history, exemplified by this reconsideration of the work of Bill Brandt. On behalf of the staff and trustees of the Museum, I would especially like to thank Gregory Annenberg Weingarten, Peter Schub, The Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation, Heidi and Richard Rieger, and Ronit and William Berkman for their generous support of the exhibition, as well as The International Council of the Museum of Modern Art for its research and travel support. The John Szarkowski Publications Fund has made this book possible, and I would also like to thank the library and archives of the Department of Photography whose contributions fittingly established this fund in honor of John Szarkowski.

Director's Foreword

Glen D. Lowry
Any exhibition at the Museum and its accompanying catalogue require the essential involvement of dozens of dedicated individuals, and this project is no exception. My first thanks are to Glenn Lowry, Director; Peter Reed, Senior Deputy Director for Curatorial Affairs; and Ramona Brockett Rasmussen, Senior Deputy Director, Exhibitions and Collections, for their critical and steadfast support. I am grateful to Diana Pulling, Chief of Staff, for her encouragement and diplomatic guidance, and to Leah Dickerman, Curator in the Department of Painting and Sculpture, for her constructive feedback. My project was also significantly contributed to by Anne Daffner, Andrew W. Mellon Conservator of Photographs, whose deep commitment to furthering our material understanding of photographs manifests itself in the illustrated glossary she had contributed to this project. Mary A. Garrard, Assistant Curator of Photography, is responsible for the skilful treatment of several photographs reproduced on these pages, work that is as invisible to most viewers yet as vital to best appreciate Brandt’s active retouching with true individuality of the prints and his meticulous attention to the quality of the book’s printing, balancing the individuality of the prints and the potentially distracting appearance of Brandt’s active retouching with true sensitivity. I am also grateful to Mitra Abbaspour, Associate Curator for the Thomas Walther Collection Research Project, for her enthusiasm and, in particular, for her helpful commentary on my catalogue essay. This project has enjoyed the focused attention of three people within the Photography Department without whose involvement the project would have been impossible: Dan Leers, Beaumont and Nancy Newhall Curatorial Fellow (2008–10), Drew Sawyer, who holds that position today, and Marley Blue Lewis, Research Assistant. In distinct and significant ways, these three have made this book and exhibition possible, and I owe each of them an enormous debt of gratitude. Not surprisingly, given the project’s long gestation period, the list of interns who have provided important assistance with a variety of tasks is long: Grayson Cowing, Amy Craghten, Kristen Gaylord, Laura Guerrini, Andrine Hackman, Sarah Jamison, Emily Klippenberg, Seyoung Lee, Sarah Montross (who deserves special mention for her instrumental research, both during her time at the Museum and after), Sarah O’Keefe, Allison Pappas, Noah Pritikin, Kristen Ross, and Juannita Solano. In the Department of Publications, my thanks begin with Christopher Hudson, Publisher, whose stalwart support began even before the project had been announced. The wise counsel of David Frankel, Editorial Director, has been as welcome and needed here as ever, and for it I am deeply grateful. Kara Kirk and Chul (Charlie) Kim, past and present Associate Directors of Publications, expertly managed the project both internally and externally. Susan Sagor, Production Director, and Matthew Pinn, Production Manager, are responsible for the unfailingly high quality of the book’s printing, balancing the individuality of the prints and the potentially distracting appearance of Brandt’s active retouching with true sensitivity. And I thank Hannah Kim, Marketing Coordinator, for helping to ensure all this hard work receives the considerable attention it deserves. For the invaluable help with the imaging for this book, my appreciation extends to Erik Landberg, Director, and Robert Kazler, Production Manager, both from the Department of Imaging and Visual Resources, and David Allison, who photographed the majority of the objects that appear in this catalogue. My thanks as well to Martin Senn for his skill in making the color corrections. That Beverley Joel of pulp, ink, developed a design for this book that is a fitting foil to Brandt’s art will no doubt become apparent to anyone reading these pages: I deeply appreciate her creativity, good humor, hard work, and the distinctive elegance of this finished product. Jason Ber’s extraordinary talent as an editor might be less evident but has been no less critical to ensuring the quality of the finished product. To both these talented individuals I extend my heartfelt thanks, and the three of us together commend Elizabeth Smith for her attentive proofreading.

Half of the reproductions in this catalogue are made from prints that are not in the Museum Collection, and I am indebted to those who provided access to their exceptional collections of Brandt’s work and their attendant assistance: John-Paul Kernot at the Bill Brandt Archive; David Dechman, Edwynn Houk, Julie C. Mohr, Christopher Przybysz, Charles Metzeavor, and John-Paul Kernot, Brandt’s step-grandson and director of the Bill Brandt Archive. My sincerest appreciation as well goes to Nouję Brandt, Brandt’s wife from 1972 and a champion of his work before and after his death in 1983, for sharing her personal insights with me; it is fitting that the first person to contribute significant assistance to the Museum’s collection of Brandt’s photographs was given her honor. It has been a pleasure and a privilege to get to know each of these individuals better through this project.

Acknowledgments

Sarah Hermanson Meister
I believe this power of seeing the world as fresh and strange lies hidden in every human being. In most of us it is dormant. Yet it is there, even if it is no more than a vague desire, an unsatisfied appetite that cannot discover its own nourishment. Vicariously, through another person’s eyes, men and women can see the world anew. It is shown to them as something interesting and exciting. There is given to them again a sense of wonder.

Bill Brandt is a founding figure of photography’s modernist traditions whose 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 twentieth century. Although perhaps not as well-known as some of his contemporaries—Henri Cartier-Bresson and Walker Evans, for instance—he 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. With a variety of cameras (from the handheld Leica to large-format view cameras) and sensibilities (from engaged to dispassionate, poetic to clinical), these photographers distilled life into art through the camera’s lens. Brandt’s distinctive vision—his ability to present the mundane world as both fresh and strange—reveals traces of the influence of Eugène Atget, Man Ray, and Brassaï (an unusual combination of egos and approaches), drawing almost capriciously, and often simultaneously, from each across a career that is impossible to reduce to a particular genre or style.

Brandt established his reputation before the Second World War with the publication of two books that featured his early photographic studies of British life, The English at Home (1936) and A Night in London (1938), and he expanded upon this social documentary work during the war and in the decades that followed with assignments for some of the leading illustrated magazines of his day, a path that led variously into extended investigations of portraiture and landscape photography with a strong emphasis on contemporary cultural figures in Britain and the country’s rich literary heritage. His crowning artistic achievement—developed primarily from 1945 to 1961—is a series of nudes that are both personal and universal, sensual and strange, collectively exemplifying the “sense of wonder” paramount to Brandt. Considered against the achievements of his peers, Brandt’s work is unpredictable, not only in the range of his subjects but also for his printing style, which varied widely throughout his career. It is, in part, this wide-ranging approach that makes Brandt such a compelling figure; yet the difficulty it presents in arriving at a comprehensive understanding of his life’s work has also long complicated critical appraisals of him. Brandt’s unfettered approach to his art extended to his life as well. Born to a prosperous German family, he lived comfortably, if modestly, in England throughout his adulthood, blending easily with his affluent relatives there after spending most of his twenties drift ing about continental Europe. Handsome and reserved, he often enjoyed the attention of more than one woman simultaneously, suggesting an unconventional aspect of his personality, if not quite bohemian. He had a delicate constitution (suffering from tuberculosis in childhood and diabetes as an adult), a wry sense of humor, and a unique capacity to transcend (or ignore) either label. With characteristic ambivalence, Brandt suggested through his work that photographic “truth” simply didn’t matter or, perhaps, given the political landscape in which he formed his artistic identity, that it had been manipulated beyond the point where it had meaning. Much has been written of Bill Brandt’s mystery, of his willful evanescence on the subject of his own life, of the incongruity of his creating such a personal photographic vision while working often on assignment, and of the difficulty of naming a single subject or style that approaches an adequate characterization of his life’s work. Since his death in 1983, every major book and exhibition that has attempted to represent his career has done so with a number of carefully chosen thematic divisions—indeed, in Brandt’s own attempt to summarize his oeuvre, a book titled Shadow of Light (1966), he did the same, and the chapters he chose have formed the backbone of Brandt retrospective s ever since. In that respect, this book is no exception, for its structure respects Brandt’s desire to have his work organized thematically, not simply according to some formal likeness. This book,

Shadow and Light
The Life and Art of Bill Brandt

Sarah Hermanson Meister
During World War II, a survey that goes beyond the pictures he made of the Blitz and the moonlit scenes of the city during the Blackout that have long stood as a synecdoche for his work during that period. The organization of this essay itself seeks to provide a fresh analysis of Brandt’s art, with critical issues of his artistic development addressed for perhaps the first time in a chronological, rather than thematic or project-based, context.

Bill Brandt: Balloon Flying over the Northern Suburbs of Paris, 1936. Galerie silver print, 9 x 6 ⅞" (22.9 x 17.5 cm). Courtesy Edwynn Houk Gallery, New York.

Bill Brandt: Ezra Pound, 1928. Gelatin silver print, 7 ⅞ x 6 ⅞" (21 x 16.6 cm). The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston.
its success notwithstanding, this portrait bears little in common with the hundreds that would define Brandt’s contribution to the genre during and after World War II, where he would capture his sitters in their homes or other familiar surroundings, and where their expressions would often suggest a dreamlike aura (see, for example, pp. 104–5). It was in Austria that Brandt made the acquaintance of two women with whom he would remain close for decades. Just after leaving the sanatorium, he met Lyena Barjansky, a sixteen-year-old of Russian descent who attended Schwarzwald’s school for girls, and, in the fall of 1928, Eva Boros, whom Kolliner had taken on as another apprentice in her studio. Eva was Hungarian and four years older than Lyena, but these two young women became Brandt’s constant companions, traveling and living together throughout continental Europe. The scrapbook albums kept by Eva and Lyena, filled with photographs of and by Brandt, are extraordinary records of this generative period in Brandt’s life and are revealing in terms of his interests and travel, as well as his very casual and personal nature of his early explorations with a camera—a distinct counterpoint to his studio experience (facing). The nature of Brandt’s romantic, or physical, relationship with each woman is unclear, so this arrangement may not have been as radical as it seems, but it speaks to his magnetism and to his willingness to defy social conventions, by appearance if nothing else. In April 1930, during a trip to Spain, Eva became Brandt’s wife, but it was several years before they lived under the same roof, which suggests a third possible factor in this unusual arrangement: a fear of being reinfected with tuberculosis, from which Eva continued to suffer periodically throughout her life. The trio moved to Paris in 1930, although they continued to travel throughout the continent. Brandt started working in an informal apprenticeship in the studio of Man Ray, the American expatriate photographer and painter and fourteen years his senior who had become a key figure in both the Dada and Surrealist movements. It was at this time that Brandt developed his Surrealist sensibility—his obvious delight in the uncanny aspects of the everyday that permeates much of his work. Even if Man Ray was not actively instructing Brandt, from his work Brandt could not have failed to notice his printing experimentation, particularly with the female nude, which would later find echoes in Brandt’s own practice. The French photographer Eugène Atget, whose “documents” of Paris had captured the imagination of the Surrealists shortly before his death in 1927 and whose first monograph (required reading for any aspiring photographer) appeared in 1930, was another defining influence. Inspired by Atget’s simultaneously methodical and poetic exploration of Paris, particularly its mannequins and shop windows, Brandt wandered through the city with his camera. One of the best of his resulting images was featured in Minotaure (the Surrealist-oriented magazine that had succeeded La Révolution surréaliste), at the center of an article by René Crevel in 1934 (right). First published in 1924, Minotaure was one of the best of his resulting images was featured in Minotaure (the Surrealist-oriented magazine that had succeeded La Révolution surréaliste), at the center of an article by René Crevel in 1934 (right).19 Pats in 1930 was teeming with photographers of extraordinary talent, but it was the Hungarian-born Brassai who managed to make his name synonymous with the city, most emphatically with the publication of Paris de Nuit (“Paris by Night”), which would later find echoes in Brandt’s own practice. 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So I learnt a great deal, but what I learnt from you directly. But what I learnt from you directly. But what I learnt from you directly. But what I learnt from you directly. But what I learnt from you directly. But what I learnt from you directly.” (Eva Boros and Lyena in Vienna, 1928–29. Lyena Barjansky Collection, courtesy of Pryor Dodge.) 9. Man Ray used the term “rayograph” to refer to his cameraless photographs, but more specifically to the technique of exposing paper to light, which Man Ray called “Ray’s process” (facing). 10. Man Ray used the term “rayograph” to refer to his cameraless photographs, but more specifically to the technique of exposing paper to light, which Man Ray called “Ray’s process” (facing). 10. More specifically to the technique of exposing paper to light, which Man Ray called “Ray’s process” (facing).
Night”) in 1933. Brassaï was Brandt’s only contemporary with a similarly fluid approach to photographic realism, and Brandt paid close attention to his example. Brassaï’s photograph of a prostitute in Hamburg’s red-light district is a direct homage, although Brassaï’s subjects were factual, and they rang true whether real or not he had arranged the scene. He was fascinated by the British social hierarchies, and he worked diligently to create a visual inventory of distinctly English types: palace guards, “bobbies,” tailors, miners, homemakers, schoolchildren, nurses, professors, hustlers, racegoers, and more. Brandt’s attentiveness to the distinctions of social class, “that most British of preoccupations,” helped cement his identity as a British photographer, even while he was, rightly, also considered a foreigner. He had the advantage of seeing this world as “fresh and strange” but with access typically not afforded to outsiders. His favorite subject was undoubtedly his uncle’s parsonmaid, known to the family as Pratt, and he photographed her repeatedly, once even arranging her so that he could appear with her (facing, right). The art of these photographs lies in their ability to present each subject with an air of transparency, asking viewers to “stand and stare” but without judgment: the miners returning to daylight and the racegoers at Ascot are seen with an impassivity that is often overlooked by those seeking to establish a political position for Brandt.

Less than two years after moving to London, Brandt published his first book, *The English at Home*, in February 1936. It wasn’t easy to find a publisher, but Brian Batsford, who had published the English edition of Brassaï’s *Paris de Nuit* in 1933, thought its subject in a novel-sized format had the potential for commercial success. Perhaps based on his 1935 publication of Paul Cohen-Pothen’s *The Spirit of London*, *The English at Home* would become Brandt’s calling card. His familial connections to affluent, if not aristocratic, social spheres in England provided an intimate look at their costumes and habits in a way that had eluded Brassaï, who photographed the Parisian elite almost surreptitiously, from a distance or through a window. But Brandt was careful to balance this work with images from across the social spectrum, and there is an equipoise to his approach that imbues *Bill Brandt: The Men’s Room* (c. 1934; p. 62) with the dignity of the Clubmen’s...
Such as in his rendering of the Billingsgate of strangeness that persists throughout, despite Brandt's success in that provide the backdrop for the book characterized as describing the class contrasts there are a handful that might be characterized to elaborate a narrative sequence, although the picture in its proper orientation. The publication of Brandt's second book, A Night in London, in June 1938 cemented his artistic alliance with the city. The distinctively neutral sensibility remained consistent with his earlier work, although here the sequence of pictures unfolds chronologically, beginning with twilight and ending just after dawn. It is a signal of Brandt's growing confidence as an artist (and the parallel confidence of his publishers) that he could capture the nocturnal life of London at Brassai had done in Paris. There were several unique aspects of Brandt's book, most notably his ability to weave together images from across the social spectrum. Brassai's particular talent for capturing illicit, marginalized, or unconventional activity stands in stark contrast to the normalcy of Brandt's imagery—the routines of the upper and working classes unfold across the pages (facing, bottom). And yet despite the absorbing impression these five live of Brandt roaming through the London night and capturing his subjects unaware, a significant number of the images feature his family members playing particular roles: the apparent artifice taking place in Soho Bedroom (1934, p. 53) or the ambiguous exchange in Street Scene, London (1936, p. 3) are all staged for Brandt's camera. This artifice was irrelevant for Brandt so long as the pictures rang true, which they did without exception. There are no horizontal photographic angles in A Night in London, only gently vertical rectangles, which hints that Brandt
For decades now, two iconic series of work have stood as synonymous with Bill Brandt’s activity during World War II: his photographs of London by moonlight during the Blackout and of makeshift underground shelters during the Blitz. The reality is that his wartime production was much more varied, which is key to understanding the overall evolution of Brandt’s work. By 1939, Brandt could expect regular assignments from the illustrated press, although his editors also drew liberally from work he had pursued independently. Lilliput published a sequence of Brandt’s pictures of London during the Blackout in December 1939, and again in August 1942. Brandt described the appeal of this nocturnal work: “Night photography is often a very leisurely way of taking pictures. The main thing you need is patience. But you also have plenty of time. After midnight, in particular, there is hardly anybody about, you can do almost anything without being disturbed. There are rarely any watchers, and you are seldom troubled even by passing cars. Night photography can indeed be a quiet and pleasurable sort of game.”

Brandt was commissioned by the British Ministry of Information to take pictures of the improvised shelters that had appeared in the wake of the first German air raids on London in September 1940. In early November, Brandt photographed in Tube stations, wine cellars, shop basements, and crypts—anywhere Londoners sought protection. This project was the antithesis of his moonlit nocturnes, using artificial lighting to document crowded, cramped spaces. The artist Henry Moore had received a similar commission, and his drawings appeared opposite several of Brandt’s photographs in Lilliput. Moore’s and Brandt’s shelter pictures were also included in the exhibition Britain at War, which was presented at MoMA from May to September 1941.

Virtually every retrospective consideration of Brandt’s work distills his wartime activity to these two bodies of work, a decision initially made by Brandt himself in his first retrospective book, Shadow of Light (1966). The remainder of the plates in this section, considered with the stories listed and reproduced on pages 195–203, tell a decidedly more complicated story: almost without exception these photographs were made for Lilliput, Picture Post, or Harper’s Bazaar. Brandt, like every inhabitant of London, was profoundly changed by the war, and the same was true of the city itself. He used these assignments to expand his oeuvre: through his portrait commissions and his photographs of the British landscape, in particular, he found new ways to position himself as a British photographer.
Crowded, Improvised Air-Raid Shelter in a Liverpool Street Tube Tunnel. 1940

Liverpool Street Underground Station Shelter. 1940
If it was Brandt’s images of London in the 1930s that established his reputation as a photographer, it was the series of nudes he made in the decades after the Second World War that solidified his reputation as an artist. The disembodied breasts, knees, and elbows are at once sensuous and surprisingly chaste, as if the female form were needed for its graphic beauty, its gender almost accidental. Lawrence Durrell described this quality when he wrote, “one forgets the human connotation as if one were reading a poem.” For all their flesh, these nudes are not about desire, although they flirt with fetish. There is an ambivalence that is typical of Brandt, concerned with neither passion, love, nor hate. Their position in the history of the genre is unique.

Brandt made a handful of female nudes before Lilliput published his first in February 1942, but these adopt tropes that Man Ray (and others) had explored in the late 1920s. The earliest works that Brandt chose to include in his groundbreaking Perspective of Nudes, (1961) date from 1945 and feature nudes in incongruously domestic interiors at twilight. With a large, wide-angle, fixed-focus mahogany-and-brass Kodak camera designed to inventory estates and crime scenes, Brandt placed his models in a Victorian wonderland, delighting in his camera’s ability to present the world in a way the eye could not see. He then moved closer—the space and the figures become more distorted, and one senses a disquieting proximity when one recalls these are, in fact, pictures of real women. Finally, in the late 1950s Brandt found that he could use his “modern” camera to achieve his desired effects on the rocky beaches of England and France.

On the occasion of the retrospective he organized of Brandt’s work in 1969, John Szarkowski wrote of the nudes: “These pictures—at first viewing, strange and contorted—reveal themselves finally as supremely poised and untroubled works…. In photography only Edward Weston has made nudes of equal power. A comparison is instructive. The models in Weston’s pictures retain a degree of their identity; they remain, in part, specific women seen in the sunlight of specific fine mornings. Brandt’s late nudes in contrast seem to be no women and all women, as anonymous and as moving as a bleached and broken sculpture, fresh from the earth.” Reference to the sculptural quality of Brandt’s nudes is an apt one. The connection between Brandt and Henry Moore was first established by their shared fascination with sleeping figures in the makeshift underground shelters during the Blitz, and their friendship grew from there. Brandt photographed the sculptor more than any other artist, and the resonance between their biomorphic forms in two and three dimensions enhances the appreciation of both artists’ work.

2 Brandt’s late nudes, made between 1977 and 1980, which are not included here, might be considered an exception.
3 In Perspective of Nudes, Brandt arranges his images into six loosely thematic suites, but with few exceptions, his work from this fifteen-year period can be divided into the three groups classified here.
Micheldever, Hampshire. 1948

Nude. 1953
Taux d’Aval, France: 1958

Seaford, East Sussex Coast: 1957
Additive Techniques

Additive techniques are marks added to the surface of the photograph to modify the image. Marks can be added with a brush, graphite, or porous pointed pen. They can be dabs or spots, linear or in patches of black, blue, white, or gray. Some inks or dyes may fade over time, rendering the retouched area more visible than when the marks were first applied. Washes were a particularly favorite medium for Brandt, found on forty percent of the prints examined at MoMA; he employed graphite and porous pointed pen as well.

Opaque black washes were frequently used by Brandt. He added heavily pigmented black washes, either a gouache or an opaquing medium specifically formulated for use on photographs, to create dense shadows. In a detail of Galt’s Causeway; Antrim, for example, Brandt has applied the black wash to reinforce the checkerboard pattern of the rock formations, in some areas creating shadows where there were none. In Bermond at the Crooked Billet, Tower Hill, he used several patches of black wash to add depth and uniformity to the shadowy background. He applied the passages thickly, so much so that brushstrokes can be seen by the naked eye above close inspection, while particles of pigment are visible as sandy texture under magnification. In addition to black washes, a white opaque wash could hide dark spots, or it could add highlights to a darker area. In Jean Dubuffet, Brandt applied white gouache to the iris and whites of the eye to lighten and brighten the details.

Graphite

Readily available and easy to use, graphite is sold in grades of hardness. Brandt used this medium in two ways: to outline or enhance compositional elements in sharp, clean lines, such as the eyebrows and facial features of the title subject in Barmaid at the Crooked Billet, or applied in a circular motion to create mid-tone shadows, such as in the background of Vasterival Beach, where the marks mimic the rounded composition of the rocks. This style of marking was cited in the instructional guides of the day alongside cross-hatching and parallel linear marks.

In later years Brandt expanded his tool kit to include porous pointed pen, also known as felt-tip marker. Marked to artists as early as 1946, these pens with their semi-transparent color were used to similar effect as a wash but were remarkably convenient, which likely appealed to Brandt, in addition to their ready adherence to the water-resistant emulsion. Identifiable in specular light by its iridescence and even, fluid line, the dye in these ubiquitous pens may have faded or shifted over time, now appearing light blue in color.
Bill Brandt's increasingly regular contributions to illustrated publications during the years that spanned World War II proved to be highly productive and generative for his career. While Brandt's wartime work has become synonymous with his images of London during the Blackout and the Blitz, his output during these years was in fact much more diverse and would lay the groundwork for the wide range of genres he would explore in the decades that followed.

Artists frequently contributed to illustrated publications during the early half of the twentieth century, a particularly common practice among the modernist photographers working on the continent; such an opportunity could offer an artist a platform and an audience, as well as a source of income. While Brandt had a photograph published as early as May 1932 in the German magazine Der Querschnitt, with others published in 1934 in Weekly Illustrated and Minotaure, it was not until the late 1930s that he began to carve out a place for himself within the field. What began as a chance to publish photographs taken in and around London would blossom during the war years into assignment-driven work, undertaken primarily for Lilliput, Picture Post, and Harper's Bazaar, that would become the impetus for Brandt to expand his subject matter and to begin photographing, in earnest, landscapes, architecture, portraits, and nudes.

Lilliput and Picture Post were both founded by the visionary publisher Stefan Lorant, who was lauded for his contributions to modern photojournalism and, specifically, for his emphasis on picture essays and intuitive layouts and designs, a skill he honed in Munich during his tenure as the editor of Münchner Illustrierte Zeitung. Lorant worked briefly as the founding editor of Weekly Illustrated before launching Lilliput (in July 1937) and Picture Post (with Edward G. Hulton, on October 1, 1938). Tom Hopkinson, who first met Brandt in 1936 while working as an assistant editor at Weekly Illustrated, followed Lorant to Lilliput in 1938; he assumed the position of editor there in July 1940 when Lorant, a Hungarian national and former German resident, was denied British citizenship and emigrated to the United States. With Lilliput's niche as a sophisticated cultural magazine and Picture Post's strong populist bent, Brandt was given the opportunity to photograph the people and places around the United Kingdom as he saw fit, in addition to his war-specific assignments.

The photo-stories reproduced below, organized chronologically, suggest the breadth of Brandt's activity leading up to and throughout the war, complemented by citations for major articles not illustrated. Unless relevant to his postwar practice, individual pictures or stories consisting of previously published material are not mentioned. Images reproduced as plates are noted with the page number on which they appear.

For the publication. The opening image in Lilliput is a slightly cropped version of Rainswep Roof (p. 30), and the last in Evening in Kenwood (p. 69). Brandt's first article for Lilliput, "London Night," appeared in June 1938 and featured eight photographs, seven of which were included in his collection A Night in London, which appeared that same year.

Bill Brandt's Published Photo-Stories 1939–1945

Sarah Hermanson Meister and Marley Blue Lewis
Daybreak at the Crystal Palace
PICTURE POST
February 11, 1939: 54–55

A series of eight photographs taken in the gardens of the Crystal Palace. In these pictures, Brandt experimented with perspective and cropping to create a surreal effect for the overgrown and decaying statues.

Spring in the Park
PICTURE POST
May 18, 1941: 18–21

A love story narrated by eight photographs and accompanying text about a young woman seeking an adventure who happens to meet a young soldier while walking in a local park.

Blackout in London
LILIPUT
December 28, 1939: 50–53

For Brandt’s first war assignment, he was commissioned by Lilliput to document the “spirit of the blackout” in London with this photo-story of eight cityscapes. A number of the images published in this issue have since become some of Brandt’s most iconic photographs. In the first edition of Brandt’s retrospective collection, Shadow of Light (1966), the second image from this story appeared with four street lights shining brightly, underscoring Brandt’s willingness to adapt. His printing from a particular negative, a daytime view of the same street appears on page 65.

Nightwalk—a dream
photography in photographs
CORNET
January 1941: 47–54

The female model for this photo essay is Mayroe Beckett, Brandt’s companion for more than thirty years; the bearded man is Rolf Brandt. Here, Brandt attempts to depict one woman’s dreams throughout a night’s walk. While much of Brandt’s work has a dreamlike quality and surrealist undertones, in no work following this story would Brandt attempt such a literal representation.

England at War: Life Goes On in the Dark
LIFE
January 1, 1940: 40–41

Brandt’s first photo-story in an American publication; four of the images from “Blackout in London” are reproduced (at left, the first, sixth, seventh, and eighth pages).

Autumn in a Forgotten Wood
LILIPUT
October 1940: 343–45

Three early landscape photographs taken by Brandt, and his only photo-story for Lilliput in 1940, although a number of his images were published singly.

The first of four Picture Post “Day in the Life of…” features for Brandt. The “surrealist commercial artist,” whom we see painting the artist’s model, is Rolf Brandt. His brother. This story would be followed by “Nippy: The Story of Her Day…” (March 4, 1939) (a “nippy” being a nickname for waitresses who worked in J. Lyons & Co.—brand tea houses around England), “A Barmaid’s Day” (April 8, 1939), featuring Alice, the barmaid at the Crooked Billet pub in Stepney (see pp. 14–15 for two unpublished pictures from this story), and “The Perfect Petticoat” (July 25, 1939), which followed Pratt, the parlormaid in the home of Brandt’s uncle. Variant images from the feature on Pratt appear on pages 45, 46, and 47. Brandt’s self-portrait with Pratt, the final image in the article, is on page 47. Perhaps wanting to retain control over images he deemed more successful, Brandt frequently supplied variants of what would come to be his best-known images to Picture Post, although this was not the case with Lilliput.

A simple story about a Girl
LILIPUT
September 1941: 237–42

Here Lilliput adopts the chronological sequencing of A Night in London from the previous year, following a formula that Picture Post had used.

Billet pub in Stepney (see pp. 46–47). The final image in the feature on Pratt appears on page 48; the image from this story would come to be his best-known images to Picture Post, although this was not the case with Lilliput. This was the War-Time Derby!

PICTURE POST
July 5, 1941: 15–17

A love story narrated by eight photographs and accompanying text about a young woman seeking an adventure who happens to meet a young soldier while walking in a local park.
Thank you for downloading this preview of *Bill Brandt: Shadow and Light*. To continue reading, purchase the book by clicking here.

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