

BILL  
BRANDT  
SHADOW  
&  
LIGHT

MoMA





# BILL BRANDT SHADOW & LIGHT

Sarah Hermanson Meister

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

Frontispiece: Bill Brandt. *Hungary*, c. 1930. Gelatin silver print, 10<sup>7</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 8<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub>" (26.2 x 21.2 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Acquired through the generosity of Ronald A. Kurtz

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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 would publish the fruits of an extended investigation that yielded some of the most striking and inventive studies of the female nude ever produced. In the intervening years, Brandt trained his lens on a variety of subjects, ranging from the Depression-stricken industrial towns of Northern England to portraits of some of the leading literary figures in Britain of the time, working both by his own inclination and on assignment for several of the most widely read illustrated magazines of his day. A number of his images of the Blackout in London and the impact of the Blitz on the city's residents during World War II remain iconic.

Even as many of Brandt's photographs became instantly recognizable and the photographer himself (a natural-born German) acquired enormous popularity in his adopted country and abroad, critical appraisals of Brandt have often been confounded by one of the very aspects that made his career so unique: its impressive breadth. Brandt ranged widely; he had neither a signature subject nor printing style. As such, his body of work has typically been considered not as a whole but as separate and distinct parts marking disparate accomplishments. This exhibition is the first attempt since the

retrospective organized by John Szarkowski at the Museum in 1969 to present the various aspects of Brandt's career as the sum of a single oeuvre, the singular product of one artist's dynamic fifty-year engagement with the photographic medium. The fresh scholarship produced by Sarah Meister, Curator in the Department of Photography, has resulted in a more nuanced 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 Second World War, and her attentive consideration 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 examination 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 1941 (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's first institutional

embrace, concurrent with the publication of Brandt's collection, *Perspective 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—formed 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 longtime 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 for 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 artistic milieu broader 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's late 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 Committee of Photography and the many other enthusiastic and dedicated friends of the Department of Photography whose contributions fittingly established this fund in honor of John Szarkowski.

## Director's Foreword

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 D. Lowry, Director; Peter Reed, Senior Deputy Director for Curatorial Affairs; and Ramona Bronkar Bannayan, 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 early feedback. My profound appreciation goes to Lee Ann 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 book. Both she and Hanako Murata, Assistant Conservator of Photographs, are responsible for the skillful treatment of several photographs reproduced on these pages, work that is at once invisible to most viewers yet is vital to best appreciate Brandt's prints, and her work with Ana Martens, Associate Conservation Scientist, also contributed tremendously to our efforts to illuminate Brandt's career through contemporary conservation analysis. I am grateful as well to the Museum's outstanding team of professionals who ensure the high quality of our exhibitions, and in particular I would like to thank Jerry Neuner, Director, and David Hollely, Manager, Exhibition Design and Production; Ellen Conti, Assistant Registrar, Collections; and Jessica Cash, Assistant Coordinator of Exhibitions.

The origins of this project reach back to 2006, when Bill Brandt was first identified as a strategic priority for acquisition. Peter Galassi, Chief Curator in the Department of Photography from 1991 through 2011, articulated this need with characteristic passion and intelligence, and his influence on my understanding of Brandt and the directions in which this initiative has unfolded cannot be underestimated. I have also enjoyed the support of my extremely dedicated and talented colleagues in the Department of Photography, beginning with Roxana Marcoci, Curator, and Eva Respini, Associate Curator, who have each provided welcome insights throughout. Marion Tandé, Department Manager, has expertly managed the complexities of this ongoing acquisition effort and so much more, and Megan Feingold, Department Coordinator, has ensured that the internal and external presentations related to this project are both elegant and without error. I have repeatedly relied on Karen Van Wart, Preparator, to care for the physical well-being and presentation of the prints considered for acquisition and exhibition. Tasha Lutek, Cataloguer, has handled countless research tasks regarding the history of Brandt and his work at the Museum with creativity and persistence. 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 I cannot imagine drafting these words: Dan Leers, Beaumont and

Nancy Newhall Curatorial Fellow (2008–11); 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 Creighton, Kristen Gaylord, Laura Guerrin, Andrea Hackman, Sarah Jamison, Emily Kloppenburg, 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 Pritzker, Kristen Ross, and Juanita Solano.

In the Department of Publications, my thanks begin with Christopher Hudson, Publisher, whose stalwart support began early and has continued undiminished. 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 (Charles) Kim, past and present Associate Directors of Publications, expertly managed the project both internally and externally. Marc Sapir, Production Director, and Matthew Pimm, 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 notice it is due. For their instrumental help with the imaging for this book, my

appreciation extends to Erik Landsberg, Director, and Robert Kastler, 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 separations.

That Beverly 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 Best'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 Castellano, and Alexis Dean at Edwynn Houk Gallery; Malcolm Daniel, Jeff Rosenheim, Meredith Friedman, and Anna Wall at The Metropolitan Museum of Art; Sandy Phillips, Corey Keller, and Erin O'Toole at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Terence Pepper, Helen Trompeteler, and Georgia Atienza at the National Portrait Gallery, London; Anne Tucker and Del Zogg at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; Sarah McDonald at

Getty Images/Hulton Picture Archive, London; Michael Wilson and Polly Fleury at the Wilson Centre for Photography; Michael Mattis and Judith Hochberg; Robert Stevens; Vince Aletti; and last but certainly not least, Pryor Dodge, son of Lyena Barjanski, who has shared his extensive research and insights along with his mother's extraordinary albums.

For instrumental help in my research and for sharing his personal perspective on Brandt's work, I would like to express my gratitude to Mark Haworth-Booth, curator at the Victoria and Albert Museum from 1970 through 2004, whose distinguished scholarship has shaped many subsequent appreciations of Brandt's work. Likewise, I would like to thank Martin Barnes and Marta Weiss at the Victoria and Albert Museum; Hilary Roberts at the Imperial War Museum; and Lindsey Stewart at Bernard Quaritch, Ltd. Through our informal conversations about aspects of Brandt's practice and the ways their own work has shaped my understanding of Brandt's legacy, I would also like to thank the artists Chris Killip and Paul Graham.

On a personal note, I feel fortunate to enjoy the advice and friendship of Harper Montgomery and Elise Meslow Ryan, each of whom has helped with this project over the years. I thank my parents, Susie Hermanson and Terry Hermanson, for their support of my passion for photography since the sixth grade, and my sisters (and most candid critics), Leslie Lynch and Merrill Hermanson. To my husband, Adam, and our children, Madeline and Lee, thank you for your unending love, patience, and understanding as I took time away from you all to work on this.

I would like to echo Glenn Lowry's expression of gratitude to Gregory Annenberg Weingarten, Peter Schub, The Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation, Heidi and Richard Rieger, and Ronit and William Berkman for their essential support of this exhibition, to The International Council of The Museum of Modern Art for a very important travel grant, and to the John Szarkowski Publications Fund (and all who contributed to it) for making it possible for the Museum of publish such independent scholarship. Finally, I would be remiss not to underscore my deep gratitude to three individuals whom I've already mentioned but who nevertheless have made essential contributions to the development of this project and to the overall collection of Bill Brandt's work at the Museum: David Dechman, an ardent supporter and informed connoisseur of Brandt's work; Edwynn Houk, whose gallery represents the Estate of Bill Brandt; and John-Paul Kernot, Brandt's step-grandson and director of the Bill Brandt Archive. My sincere appreciation as well goes to Noya 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 one of the most recent acquisitions to the Museum's collection of Brandt's photographs was given in her honor. It has been a pleasure and a privilege to get to know each of these individuals better through this project.

## Acknowledgments

# Shadow and Light

## The Life and Art of Bill Brandt

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.*

*This should be the photographer's aim, for this is the purpose that pictures fulfill in the world as it is to-day. To meet a need that people cannot or will not meet for themselves. We are most of us too busy, too worried, too intent on proving ourselves right, too obsessed with ideas, to stand and stare.*

– Bill Brandt<sup>1</sup>

l. 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 Brassai (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 drifting 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 purposefully apolitical perspective, particularly when considered against the political backdrop of Europe at the time. Although he would become something of an icon in Britain, as the almost exhaustive circulation of his exhibitions by the Arts Council of Great Britain and the British Council suggests, he was not born British, and

though the material comfort of his family enabled a lifestyle one might associate with the upper classes, this was not synonymous with British aristocracy. To Brandt, though, all this was irrelevant: art was what mattered.

Throughout his nearly fifty-year career, Brandt embraced photography's potential to use unadorned fact to create art—a central tenet of photographic modernism. But to a degree unmatched by his peers, he resolved the tension between reality and fantasy by transcending (or ignoring) 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 evasiveness 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 first 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 retrospectives 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,

<sup>1</sup> Bill Brandt, “A Photographer's London,” in *Camera in London* (London: The Focal Press, 1948), 15.

however, fundamentally differs from those prior in that its primary function is to convey the art of Brandt's photographic achievement in all its unruly splendor.

In the past, discussion of the dramatic evolution of Brandt's printing style has been relegated to the sidelines, and while it is necessary to value the nearly impenetrable darkness and muted tones of his early prints from the 1930s, it is not so simple to dismiss the forcefulness of his later interpretations as an aging man's bastard prints. Indeed, a significant part of Brandt's art is that the exposure of the negative was, for him, only the beginning. In many respects each Brandt print is unique because the pervasiveness of his hand in retouching his work—to correct and to enhance, with a variety of tools—means that it is rare to find two prints presented in an identical manner.<sup>2</sup>

Whereas the sections of plates here correspond roughly to Brandt's dominant subjects and to the structure he favored for his own retrospective publications, a significant difference is the expanded consideration of the work Brandt made during World War II, a survey that goes much beyond the pictures he made of the underground shelters in London during 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*, 1929. Gelatin silver print, 9 x 6 7/8" (22.9 x 17.5 cm). Courtesy Edwynn Houk Gallery, New York

<sup>2</sup> In the mid-1970s, Brandt began making prints specifically for sale, in association with Marlborough galleries in New York and London. The "Marlborough prints" were made from copy negatives (and then mounted and signed). They are arguably Brandt's least inspiring prints, with a production-line uniformity to them, and yet a number of these include evidence of Brandt's retouching on the final print, when it would have been much easier for him to have made those adjustments at an interim stage.



II. For many generations, Brandt's family had operated a successful shipping and banking business based in Hamburg, Germany. That Brandt's paternal grandfather was born in Russia and that his father was born in London suggest the expansive reach of the business and explains how Brandt's father (the youngest of seven siblings) was, technically, a British citizen.<sup>3</sup> Bill Brandt actively promoted the impression that he was British, but the fact is he was born Hermann Wilhelm Brandt in Hamburg in 1904, the second of four brothers, and raised in a German-speaking household. There has been much speculation concerning the reasons for Brandt's apparent disavowal of his roots, but politics alone should suffice. In response to one request, he wrote:

*My wife tells me that you would like some information about my life between 1953/69. I am afraid nothing happened during those years. Actually, nothing has ever happened to me. I have never hitch-hiked through Russia, nor has anybody ever telephoned me from Peking in the middle of the night. Even with such highlights, I find biographical chronologies pathetic and boring. I think it would be less conventional and much more interesting to concentrate on photography and leave my life alone. I hope you think so too.*<sup>4</sup>

Brandt was intensely private, so although his soft-spoken nature has been interpreted as an attempt to mask the German accent that persisted even after decades of living in London, one might also consider it a reflection of an artist's reticence to speak for his art. Brandt's declining health as a teenager in the years following World War I

led his parents to pull him from his German boarding school, and he spent more than four years in Swiss sanatoria (first in Agra, then Davos) in an attempt to cure his tuberculosis. Essentially all physical activity was forbidden in these sequestered alpine environments, which left Brandt plenty of time to read, watch movies, and experiment with a camera. His profound interest in the visual and literary arts—the foundation of which can be traced to his bourgeois family life—was nurtured during this period of forced passivity.

Brandt likely dabbled with photography during his treatment in Davos, but his first formal engagement with the medium began in a Viennese photography studio. In the spring of 1927, he had been drawn to Vienna, where his younger brother Rolf was then living, by the prospect of having his tuberculosis cured through psychotherapy.<sup>5</sup> Although it is unclear whether psychoanalysis deserves credit, Brandt succeeded in stabilizing his health, and he needed to decide what to do with his life. It was Dr. Eugenie Schwarzwald, a prominent Viennese intellectual and philanthropist with a particular interest in education, who is credited with suggesting photography. Brandt found a position as an apprentice in the studio of Grete Kolliner, and he worked there for much of 1927–28. His forceful portrait of Ezra Pound (left) was made during this time, employing the traditional studio techniques of directed lighting, shallow depth of field, and a plain backdrop. The portrait is more than a convincing likeness: the tight cropping signaled Brandt's avant-garde intent, and he used the reductive means of Pound's own poetry to convey the sitter's intensity.

Bill Brandt. *Ezra Pound*, 1928. Gelatin silver print, 7 1/2 x 6 3/8" (19.1 x 16.2 cm). The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston

<sup>3</sup> Paul Delany, *Bill Brandt: A Life* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2004). All biographical details about Brandt's life are drawn from this book as well as Mark Haworth-Booth's texts in *Bill Brandt: Behind the Camera, Photographs 1928-1983* (Oxford, U.K.: Phaidon; New York: Aperture, 1985).

<sup>4</sup> Bill Brandt to Katherine Kinear at the Arts Council of Great Britain, March 11, 1970, Victoria and Albert Museum archives, London. I am indebted to Mark Haworth-Booth for directing me to the original letter.

<sup>5</sup> For about six months, Brandt was a patient of the Viennese physician and psychoanalyst Wilhelm Stekel, who championed the potential of this approach to treat tuberculosis.



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).<sup>6</sup>

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 the very casual and personal nature of his early explorations with a camera—a distinct counterpoint to his studio experience (facing).<sup>7</sup> 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 1932, 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

reinfecting 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 as an informal apprentice in the studio of Man Ray, the American expatriate painter and photographer 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.<sup>8</sup> 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.<sup>9</sup> 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).<sup>10</sup>

Paris 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



6 Underscoring the need for more attention to the chronology of Brandt's career, his portrait of Pound is often published alongside the postwar portraits, as if the intervening decades were immaterial.

7 Two of Eva Boros's scrapbooks are in the collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Lyena Barjansky's scrapbooks are in the collection of her son, Pryor Dodge, in New York. Brandt would ultimately include at least a dozen pictures that appear in the scrapbooks in *The English at Home*.

8 Many years later Brandt told Man Ray: "You went out so often that I did not learn much from you directly. But what I did was go through all the drawers and files that I would not have dared touch when you were in the studio. So I learnt a great deal when you were not there." Ian Fraser, "Bill Brandt in Camera," *The World of Interiors*, February 1983: 80, quoted in Delaney, 62–63. Man Ray used the term "Rayograph" to refer to his cameraless photographs, but more relevant to Brandt's darkroom work, he would use solarization (which reversed some tones from positive to negative during the printing process) and various screens to achieve his desired effect from a given negative.

9 Eugène Atget, *Atget: Photographe de Paris* (New York: E. Weyhe, 1930), with an introduction by Pierre Mac Orlan.

10 René Crevel, "La grande mannequin cherche et trouve sa peau," *Minotaure* 5 (May 1934): 18–19.

(facing, top row) Pages 17 and 18 from Lyena Barjansky's first album chronicling her time with Bill Brandt, including Brandt family photographs and images of Eva Boros and Lyena in Vienna, 1928–29. Lyena Barjansky Collection, courtesy of Pryor Dodge

(facing) Individual pages from Lyena Barjansky's second album. Lyena Barjansky Collection, courtesy of Pryor Dodge. (middle row, left) Page 11, Paris, 1930; (middle row, right) Page 23, Paris, 1931; (bottom row, left) Page 26, Barcelona, April 1932; (bottom row, right) Page 34, London, 1931–32

(above) *Minotaure*, May 1934, p. 18. Brandt's photograph (*Marché aux Puces, Paris*, c. 1930) illustrates an article by René Crevel

Night”) in 1933. Brassai was Brandt’s only contemporary with a similarly fluid approach to photographic realism, and Brandt paid close attention to his example. Brandt’s photograph of a prostitute in Hamburg’s red-light district is a direct homage, although Brassai’s subjects were real women he encountered at work on the street, while Brandt used Eva as a model (facing, left).<sup>11</sup> It was only with the publication of *A Night in London* in 1938 that Brandt demonstrated the full extent of Brassai’s influence—and how he made it his own. The similar titles were likely dictated by their shared publisher, Arts et Métiers Graphiques, and both books feature glimpses into a range of nocturnal urban circumstances, although access to the affluent came more easily to Brandt, who had a number of family members and their servants who could pose for him.<sup>12</sup> Brandt embraced the inky black expanses that appeared frequently in Brassai’s work and the hyper-glossy surfaces that amplified this effect, which were favored for their superior reproducibility, but his pictures manifested a distinctly less sensational flair—Brandt was more interested in looking at the mundane world with “a sense of wonder.”<sup>13</sup> Of course, in the early and mid-1930s in Paris, opportunities for Brandt to publish his work were few and far between: André Kértész, Germaine Krull, Henri Cartier-Bresson, Ilse Bing, and many others—in addition to Brassai—were actively seeking jobs for the illustrated press. Brandt’s decision to settle permanently in London allowed him to sidestep this competition, and it was in the British capital that he transformed the avant-garde esprit into his own art.

III.  
Brandt and Eva moved to London in April 1934.<sup>14</sup> Supported in part by his parents, who would join the rest of the family in England shortly before the outbreak of the war, Brandt set about applying the lessons he had learned on the continent to his photographic explorations of the city that he would call home for the rest of his life. By the late 1940s, after Brandt had established himself as a regular contributor to the illustrated press, he wrote, “As a matter of fact I am able to forget photography almost completely when I am not working and never carry a camera except on an assignment.”<sup>15</sup> Yet this was not the case in 1934. It would be more than two years before Brandt received a commission to do a photo-story and two years after that before he could rely upon these assignments as a regular source of income. Fortunately, his pursuit of the English through the lens of his camera needed no external motivation.

The absence of regular assignments allowed Brandt the luxury of photographing whatever caught his eye, and this frequently included friends and family members going about their everyday lives or posing for his camera. His photographs were factual, and they rang true whether 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, huntsmen, racegoers, and more. Brandt’s attentiveness to the distinctions of social class, “that most British of preoccupations,”<sup>16</sup> 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 parlormaid, known to the family as Pratt, and he photographed her repeatedly, once even arranging his camera so that he could appear with her (facing, right).<sup>17</sup> 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 impassiveness 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 Brassai’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-Portheim’s *The Spirit of London*.<sup>18</sup> *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 Brassai, 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 equanimity to his approach that imbues his *Workmen’s Restaurant* (c. 1934; p. 62) with the dignity of the *Clubmen’s*

11 A clear model for this photograph appears in *Paris de Nuit* (Paris: Arts et Métiers Graphiques, 1933), pl. 30. Even before the book was published, it is highly likely that Brandt would have seen Brassai’s photographs based on the photographers’ mutual acquaintances in Paris.

12 See Anne Wilkes Tucker, “Brassai: Man of the World” in *Brassai: The Eye of Paris* (Houston: The Museum of Fine Arts, 1998), 61–63, for a detailed comparison of Brandt and Brassai.

13 Many of Brassai’s prints from this era are 11-by-14 inches, with a glossy, ferrotyped surface. The vast majority of Brandt’s prints—before and after the war—are on 8-by-10-inch semi-gloss paper, but there are a significant number of early prints that echo the surface and size of Brassai’s work.

14 Brandt lived at 43 Belsize Avenue, and Eva had her own apartment, less than a ten-minute walk away. Lyena remained in Paris.

15 Brandt, *Camera in London*, 13.

16 Richard Howells, “Self Portrait: The Sense of Self in British Documentary Photography,” in *National Identities* 4, no. 2 (2002): 104.

17 Another view of Pratt in the dining room of Brandt’s uncle appears as the sixth plate in *The English at Home*, and Pratt is the protagonist in Brandt’s 1939 *Picture Post* article “The Perfect Parlourmaid,” in which this self-portrait appears.

18 Mark Haworth-Booth, “The English at Home,” in *Bill Brandt: Behind the Camera, Photographs 1928-1983*, 12.



Bill Brandt. *Hamburg, St. Pauli District*, c. 1933. Gelatin silver print, 8 x 6¼" (20.3 x 15.9 cm). Courtesy of Edwynn Houk Gallery, New York



Bill Brandt with Pratt, c. 1939. Gelatin silver print, 5½ x 4¼" (13 x 10.5 cm). Lyena Barjansky Collection, courtesy of Pryor Dodge

*Sanctuary* that appeared opposite it. One contemporary reviewer noted: “It is because each scene or figure has interested him purely for itself that his pictures are so good and carry such implications. He does not only set out to illustrate the contrast between rich and poor; he takes his pictures and the contrast is there. The best of them are—what can one call them?—pictorial epigrams, surprisingly, vividly, exactly, seen.”<sup>19</sup>

In all subsequent books and, indeed, in the vast majority of his prints, Brandt’s work is reproduced almost exclusively in a slightly vertical, rectangular format. But at this early stage, Brandt was still considering a variety of presentation methods—the examples of the jumble of pictures on the pages of Eva’s and Lyena’s albums, as well as on the pages of several popular German, French, and British weekly illustrated magazines being fresh in his mind. Almost a quarter of the plates present strong horizontal rectangles and are printed sideways to maximize the image size on the page, requiring the viewer to flip the book in order to look at the picture in its proper orientation.<sup>20</sup>

The pictures are paired, most often to elaborate a narrative sequence, although there are a handful that might be characterized as describing the class contrasts that provide the backdrop for the book (right, top). Despite Brandt’s success in describing his titular subject, there is an air of strangeness that persists throughout, such as in his rendering of the Billingsgate porter with an enormous fish balanced nonchalantly atop his head (p. 65), or the children’s party in Kensington, where the balloons suspended in midair act as surrogates for the privileged innocents



(top) Plates 39 and 40 from *The English at Home*, 1936

(bottom) Plates 4 and 5 from *A Night in London*, 1938

19 G. W. Stonier, “Ourselves in Photograph,” *New Statesman*, February 29, 1936: 318; quoted in Delany, 110.

20 This had been the same solution used to include Atget’s horizontal images in *Atget: Photographe de Paris*, although in that instance the trim size was significantly more generous.

below (p. 45). The apparently hypnotic power of Brandt’s flash in prosaic settings across class boundaries suggests the ways in which he was adapting the surrealist lessons he had learned in Paris to his own purposes.

Despite the book’s positive critical reception, *The English at Home* was far from a commercial success.<sup>21</sup> Brandt continued to receive a modest allowance from his parents, but magazine work held the key to increased financial stability. It was Tom Hopkinson, the editor of *Picture Post* and *Lilliput* magazines throughout the 1940s, who wrote the first profile of Brandt in 1942, which begins with his description of meeting the artist for the first time:

*Some time in the spring of 1936 a young man came into the office where I was working. He was tall and slim, sunburned, with golden hair brushed back. He had a rather narrow mouth with thin lips, long forehead and chin, and very clear blue eyes. He wore a grey flannel suit, had a voice as loud as a moth, and the gentlest manner to be found outside a nunnery.*

*Altogether, he did not seem a very likely person to be given a job on a weekly picture paper. However, he carried under his arm a book, and in the book were photographs taken by himself. They were remarkable photographs, and they showed more sharply than I had ever seen before how a human eye and a piece of mechanism can combine, not so much to record the world as to impose a particular vision of the world upon it.*<sup>22</sup>

The office in which Hopkinson was working in 1936 was of *Weekly Illustrated*, the magazine founded two years prior by the innovative Hungarian-born publisher Stefan Lorant.<sup>23</sup> Brandt’s first picture in *Weekly Illustrated* was published on May 23, 1936; his first story, “Opera in a Country

House” (at the celebrated Glyndebourne), appeared the following week. However auspicious this may have seemed to Brandt, regular assignments (or, more commonly in the 1930s, the use of his existing pictures) were elusive. Hopkinson may have immediately recognized the uniqueness of Brandt’s achievement, but while Lorant was in charge, he had his own favorites.<sup>24</sup> Despite, or perhaps thanks to, the dearth of assignments, Brandt was able to continue his pursuit of the English and to concentrate his attention on his next book.

In 1937, Brandt ventured to the industrial towns of Northern England, an area that had been severely impacted by the Depression. He left no record of what motivated him to travel there, nor does he appear to have been on assignment. At first glance, the images that resulted from his trip can be taken as an investigation of the deep poverty and dire conditions that had attracted the attention of a number of social reformers, and indeed, Brandt made a few great pictures that bear unequivocal witness to the devastating unemployment that plagued the region at the time (see pp. 74–75). But there is a subtle ambiguity to many of his images as well: the social implications inherent in the blackened structures of the industrial landscape or even the photographs of the domestic lives of the miners (both of which find parallels with the pictures he was making in London during the same period) are balanced against or even eclipsed by an obvious aesthetic intent. It would be unfair to suggest that Brandt was indifferent to the circumstances before his camera, and yet in the face of such a major social issue, the recurring visual leitmotifs (soot-covered surfaces of both buildings

and people) and the private existence of these pictures (unpublished for more than a decade) suggest that he found it difficult to resist the artistic potential he sensed in these subjects.

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 as 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 pictures give 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 affair taking place in *Soho Bedroom* (1934; p. 53) or the ambiguous exchange in *Street Scene, London* (1936; p. 56) are all staged for Brandt’s camera.<sup>25</sup> This artifice was irrelevant for Brandt so long as the pictures rang true, which they did without exception.

There are no horizontal photographs in *A Night in London*, only gently vertical rectangles, which hints that Brandt

21 Brandt reminisced with Brian Batsford in 1978 that even at a price of five shillings, it was soon remaindered. His letter is quoted in Mark-Haworth Booth, *Bill Brandt: Behind the Camera, Photographs 1928–1983*, 13.

22 Tom Hopkinson, “Bill Brandt—Photographer,” *Lilliput* 11, no. 2 (August 1942), 130.

23 *Weekly Illustrated* was the first of three magazines founded in London by Lorant, the other two being *Lilliput* (June 1937) and *Picture Post* (October 1, 1938). By June 1940, Lorant had moved to the United States, and Hopkinson succeeded him as editor at *Picture Post* and *Lilliput*.

24 Felix Man (born Hans Baumann) and Kurt Hutton (born Kurt Höbschmann) had both worked for Lorant in Munich and arrived in London not long after him, at which time they anglicized their names to help obtain assignments—like Brandt, understandably wanting to minimize their affiliation with Germany.

25 Mark Haworth-Booth identifies many of these individuals in *Bill Brandt: Behind the Camera*, p. 26. See also Delany, pp. 112–3, 120, 128–9.

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.<sup>1</sup> 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."<sup>2</sup>

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*.<sup>3</sup> 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.<sup>4</sup>

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.

# 3

## World War II

<sup>1</sup> The first appeared in "Blackout in London," *Lilliput* 5, no. 6 (December 1939): 551–8; followed by "London by Moonlight," *Lilliput* 11, no. 2 (August 1942): 131–40.

<sup>2</sup> Bill Brandt, "Pictures by Night," in L. A. Mannheim, ed., *The Rolleiflex Way: The Rolleiflex and Rolleicord Photographer's Companion* (London and New York: The Focal Press, 1952), 185; reprinted in Nigel Warburton, *Bill Brandt: Selected Texts and Bibliography* (Oxford, U.K.: Clío Press, 1993), 41.

<sup>3</sup> "Shelter Pictures," *Lilliput* 11, no. 6 (December 1942): 473–82.

<sup>4</sup> Brandt's work was unattributed, as were all other photographs in the exhibition.



Deserted Street in Bloomsbury. 1942



Crowded, Improvised Air-Raid Shelter in a Liverpool Street Tube Tunnel. 1940



Liverpool Street Underground Station Shelter. 1940



Bath—The Circus. 1942



Packaging Post for the War. c. 1942



Bombed Regency Staircase, Upper Brook Street, Mayfair. c. 1942

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."<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup> 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.<sup>3</sup>

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."<sup>4</sup> This 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.

# 6

## Nudes

<sup>1</sup> Lawrence Durrell, preface to *Perspective of Nudes* by Bill Brandt (London: The Bodley Head; New York: Amphoto, 1961), 5.

<sup>2</sup> Brandt's late nudes, made between 1977 and 1980, which are not included here, might be considered an exception.

<sup>3</sup> 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 distilled into the three groups described here.

<sup>4</sup> John Szarkowski, "Bill Brandt," in *The Museum of Modern Art Members Newsletter*, Fall 1969, n.p. This piece was republished along with sixteen photographs chosen by Brandt in *Album*, no. 1 (February 1970): 12–13.



Hampstead, London. 1945



Micheldever, Hampshire. 1948



Nude. 1953



Campden Hill, London. 1958



London. 1952



Taxo 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.

### WASH

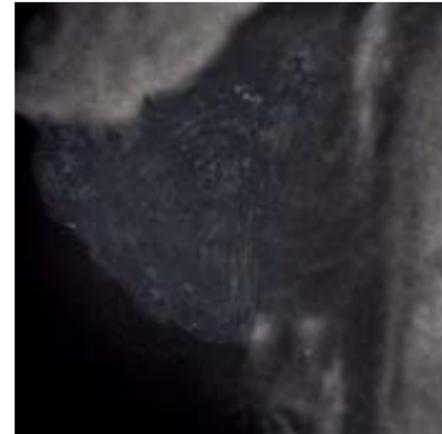


OPAQUE BLACK WASH  
Detail of *Giant's Causeway, Antrim* (1946; p. 138).  
The field of view shown is 2.4 mm x 2.4 mm

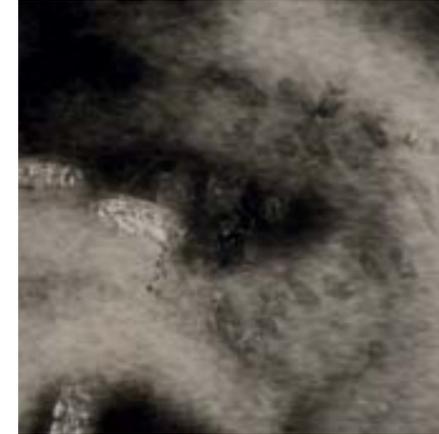


WHITE GOUACHE  
Detail of *Jean Dubuffet* (1960, p. 121, right). The field of view is 6 cm x 6 cm

Opaque 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 *Giant's Causeway, Antrim*, for example, Brandt has applied the black wash to reinforce the checkerboard pattern of the rock formations, in some areas creating dense shadows where there were none. In *Barmaid 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 upon 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.



OPAQUE BLACK WASH  
Detail of *Barmaid at the Crooked Billet, Tower Hill* (1939; p. 54). The field of view is 2.5 mm x 2.5 mm



WASH (WITH ABRASION AND SCRATCH)  
Detail of *Losing at the Horse Races, Auteuil, Paris* (1932, p. 34). The field of view is 8 mm x 8 mm



TRANSPARENT WASH  
Detail of *Vastérial Beach, Normandy* (1954, p. 178).  
The field of view is 1.7 cm x 1.7 cm

The photographer employed more transparent washes as well, either by thinning the black wash or using neutral-toned watercolors, which allowed him to approximate mid-tones or gradations of tone. In *Vastérial Beach, Normandy*, Brandt used the wash to further delineate an area of rocks, while in *Losing at the Horse Races, Auteuil, Paris*, he dabbed on a darker wash to greatly enhance a mustache and beard.

### GRAPHITE



GRAPHITE  
Detail of *Barmaid at the Crooked Billet, Tower Hill*.  
The field of view is 4 cm x 4 cm



GRAPHITE  
Detail of *Vastérial Beach, Normandy*. The field of view is 1 cm x 1 cm

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 *Vastérial 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.

### POROUS POINTED PEN



POROUS POINTED PEN (WITH ABRASION)  
Detail of *Jean Dubuffet*. The field of view is 3 cm x 3 cm

In later years Brandt expanded his tool kit to include porous pointed pen, also known as felt-tip marker. Marketed to artists as early as 1946,<sup>13</sup> 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.

<sup>13</sup> Margaret Holben Ellis, "The Porous Pointed Pen as Artistic Medium," in Shelia Fairbrass, ed., *The Institute of Paper Conservation: Conference Papers, Manchester 1992* (London: Institute of Paper Conservation, 1992), 11–18.

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 *Münchener 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's involvement with both publications allowed him to focus on a broad range of subjects in photographs that would be seen by two distinct audiences. Hopkinson, in particular, regarded Brandt as a photographer of singular talent, and 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.

Gustav Doré's  
London Rediscovered  
by Bill Brandt in 1938

VERVE  
January–March 1939: 107–14

Three of Brandt's photographs are paired with Doré engravings from the 1870s. In May 1939, *Lilliput* would expand this concept to include seven pairings, calling the story "Unchanging London," Brandt's second

for the publication. The opening image in *Lilliput* is a slightly cropped version of *Rainswept Roofs* (p. 39), and the last is *Evening in Kenwood* (p. 67). Brandt's first article for *Lilliput*, "London Night," appeared in June 1938 and featured eight photographs, seven of which were included 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

## Day in the Life of an Artist's Model

## PICTURE POST

January 28, 1939: 34–37

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, Bill's 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. 54–55 for two unpublished pictures from this story); and "The Perfect Parlourmaid" (July 29, 1939), which followed Pratt, the parlourmaid in the home of Brandt's uncle. Variant images from the feature on Pratt appear on pages 46, 47, and 48; Brandt's self-portrait with Pratt, the final image in the article, is on page 17. 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*.



## 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.

## Enough of All This!

## PICTURE POST

April 1, 1939: 54–57

This story contains images by Brandt of children living in squalor and dire conditions in London's East End neighborhood, illustrating an article about rent strikes and poverty. It marks one of Brandt's last social critiques published before Britain declared war on Germany, after which *Picture Post* maintained a stalwart position focused on publishing nationalistic, morale-boosting stories on the home front.

## Twenty-Four Hours in Piccadilly Circus

## LILLIPUT

September 1939: 233–40

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

## Blackout in London

## LILLIPUT

December 1939: 55–58

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

appears 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 63.



p. 86



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## 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

## LILLIPUT

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.

## Nightwalk ... a dream phantasy in photographs

## CORONET

January 1941: 47–54

The female model for this photo essay is Marjorie 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 the course of a night. 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.



## Spring in the Park

## PICTURE POST

May 10, 1941: 18–21

## I Look at Bournemouth by J. B. Priestley

## PICTURE POST

June 21, 1941: 20–23

## This Was the War-Time Derby!

## PICTURE POST

July 5, 1941: 13–17

## A Day on the River

## PICTURE POST

July 12, 1941: 12–15

## What Are All These Children Laughing At?

## PICTURE POST

August 23, 1941: 16–17

## A Simple Story about a Girl

## LILLIPUT

September 1941: 235–42

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. An unusually sentimental story by Brandt, perhaps explained by the fact that the idea originated not with him but with *Lilliput* assistant editor Kaye Webb.

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