



BERMUDA NATIONAL GALLERY

For immediate release

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**Major retrospective of photographer Bill Brandt headlines
Autumn exhibitions at the BNG**

Hamilton, Bermuda, September 22, 2008 — British master photographer Bill Brandt's wide ranging work is explored in a comprehensive exhibition *Bill Brandt: A Retrospective* opening at the Bermuda National Gallery on September 29.

The exhibition, sponsored by the Bank of Bermuda Foundation, continues through December 24. It is complemented by a special local exhibition, *The History of Photography in Bermuda*, using artwork from the BNG's permanent collection and significant loans, which features work by Bermudian photographers such as Richard Saunders, John Weatherill, Nicholas Lusher, John Athill Frith and James Heyl, and visiting artists like Karl Struss. The exhibition also features a display of vintage cameras.

Bill Brandt: A Retrospective spans 50 years of Brandt's far reaching career through 155 vintage gelatin silver prints from the Bill Brandt Archive in London. Brandt's vision extends from photojournalism to moody, atmospheric landscapes to stark, revealing portraiture to high-contrast nudes, distorted with wide-angle lenses.

Brandt (British, b. Germany 1904-1983) once wrote, "Photography is still a very new medium and everything is allowed and everything should be tried." Although driven by historic periods and events, Brandt's endless invention and continual search for ways to expand the medium makes his work fresh and timeless.

"No other British photographer has made so many memorable photographs as Bill Brandt," according to Mark Hayworth-Booth, curator at the Victoria and Albert Museum,

London. “He excelled in all fields – social scenes, Surrealism, night photography, wartime documentary, landscape, portraiture and the nude.”

Brandt worked as Man Ray’s assistant in Paris in 1929 and returned to London in the 1930s to become a freelancer for the *Weekly Illustrated*. Some of this work was later published as his first book, *The English at Home*. In contrast with his contemporaries in Depression-era America, Brandt developed an expressive, high-key style that pushed accepted boundaries of documentary and journalism when photographing the destitute villages and mining towns of northern England.

“He photographed sharp social contrasts, the glittering surfaces of a rich and imperial city, compared with its humble East End; the coal-black buildings of the northern industrial heartland and the cool, moonlit streets of black-out London during the period of eerie calm at the beginning of the Second World War,” describes Hayworth-Booth.

During the “blitz” of World War II, Brandt photographed London by night and followed the crowds into the Underground to escape the bombs. After the war, Brandt’s work underwent a shift in focus. He left his documentary style behind and returned to his interests in the surreal. As Brandt himself explained it, his “main theme of the past few years had disappeared; England was no longer a country of marked social contrast.” Brandt then turned to nudes, portraits and landscapes.

Brandt’s formally plastic and haunting nude studies from this period were published in *Perspective of Nudes* (1961) and are considered today as some of his most innovative work. Using an old wooden plate camera with an ultra-wide-view lens, Brandt defined new territory showing among other things, photography’s kinship with sculpture and modernist abstraction. At the same time, Brandt developed the symbolist potential of photography in a series of landscapes inhabited by the spirit of Romanticism and directly inspired by the writings of poets and novelists such as Emily Brontë.

Himself an important figure of the British artistic and intellectual scene, Brandt produced striking portraits of celebrated contemporaries, such as Francis Bacon, E.M. Forster, René Magritte and Henry Moore.

In 1969, New York’s Museum of Modern Art honored Brandt with the first retrospective of his work. Several solo shows followed at museums and galleries in both Europe and the United States. In 1981, two years before Brandt’s death, the Royal Photographic Society inaugurated its National Centre of Photography in Bath with a retrospective on Brandt.

Bill Brandt: A Retrospective, curated by John-Paul Kernot, is organised by the Bill Brandt Archive and is circulated by Curatorial Assistance Traveling Exhibitions (CATE), Pasadena, California.

The Autumn Exhibitions are supported by an extensive programme of related lectures, workshops and films. Highlights include a PartnerRe Art Lecture on Bill Brandt on September 30 by Ian Jeffrey, lecturer and art critic from Goldsmiths College, University of London on September 30; two photography workshops by local artist Theresa Airey; a PartnerRe Art workshop, Literacy Through Photography, for local educators and parents; and a Surrealism workshop for young artists.

For full details see the attached calendar of events or visit the BNG website at www.bermudanationalgallery.com/calendar.html

Note to editors

About the Bermuda National Gallery:

Opened in 1992 and located in the City Hall & Arts Centre in Hamilton, the Bermuda National Gallery is both the home of Bermuda's national art collection and the centre of the Island's thriving arts scene. It is the Island's leading art museum with a richly diverse exhibition programme of past and present works by local and international artists that reflects Bermuda's varied artistic heritage and multicultural community. The Bermuda National Gallery is open from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. from Monday to Friday and 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Saturday. Admission free. For more details contact Director Laura Gorham on 441-295-9428, director@bng.bm or visit www.bng.bm.