

FIRST EXHIBITION OF MARIANNE BRANDT'S PHOTOMONTAGES TO BE DISPLAYED AT HARVARD'S BUSCH-REISINGER MUSEUM

Exhibition of rarely seen works comes to the Harvard University Art Museums following its debut at the Bauhaus Archive in Berlin, Germany



Marianne Brandt, *Untitled (with Anna May Wong)*, c. 1929. Assemblage of newspaper clippings, glass, celluloid, and metal on cream board, 67 x 50 cm. Courtesy Gallery Kicken, Berlin.

CAMBRIDGE, MA (January 25, 2006)—*Tempo, Tempo! The Bauhaus Photomontages of Marianne Brandt*, a pioneering exhibition of over 30 works, will be on display at Harvard's Busch-Reisinger Museum from March 11 through May 21, 2006. The montages, created by Brandt in the mid-1920s and early 1930s, offer visually dynamic and intriguing pictorial investigations of technology, gender roles, and entertainment culture through a medium not often associated with this artist. Although Brandt is better known for her iconic metal work designs for the Bauhaus, these works reveal an artist entirely at home in the medium of photomontage. Brandt is not known to have shown the photomontages until over 40 years after their creation, and this exhibition brings together all but a handful of them for the first time.

“This exhibition is a perfect compliment to the Busch-Reisinger Museum’s outstanding holdings of Bauhaus art and design.” said Thomas W. Lentz, Elizabeth and John Moors Cabot Director of the Harvard University Art Museums. “The Busch has a commitment to exploring the richness and variety of modern German art, with a special concentration on the Bauhaus era.”

In the early 1920s, Brandt had fully completed her studies as a painter when she attended a Bauhaus exhibition; she promptly burned all of her paintings and joined the school. In 1924, she became the only woman to apprentice and complete studies at the Metal Workshop. She went on to create signature metal works, including teapots, ashtrays, and bowls, that would become icons of Modernist design. After moving to Paris in 1926, she began to work intensely in photomontage, a medium that has increasingly come to be seen as quintessentially modern.

Brandt created the photomontages using fragments of popular and media culture, drawing upon the vast array of visual material made available by the period's burgeoning illustrated press. The works explore and critique a moment of great changes in German culture and society, one in which dramatic shifts were taking place, including the advent of Germany's first parliamentary democracy, the Weimar Republic, and the granting of suffrage to women. The montages may have been intensely personal reflections, but they also use the mass media imagery of the time to comment on key social issues. Many of the works display and investigate the rise of the New Woman, a figure seen to embody the free spirit of the time, and explore themes of freedom, judgment, and limits placed upon women by male figures around them. Other works focus on varied images of men—boxers, business tycoons, imperialists or soldiers—to represent and indicate the problematic links between manhood, aggression, and militarism in the wake of the First World War.

The exhibition was organized by Elizabeth Otto, assistant professor of art history at the State University of New York at Buffalo, for the Bauhaus Archive in Berlin and was coordinated at the Harvard University Art Museums by Peter Nisbet, Daimler-Benz Curator of the Busch-Reisinger Museum. Otto based the exhibition on her PhD research, in which she uncovered a great deal of new information about the photomontages including the existence of works that were thought to be lost.

“During my research, I met with collectors and gallery owners who knew Brandt or who held unidentified works and documents on the artist,” said Otto. “I was able to find photographs of two montages that were previously unknown to scholars and archivists and located several works that had been missing. I also spent time exploring the illustrated press of the time. This

helped me to identify many of the sources of Brandt's imagery, thereby adding depth and resonance to the works' interpretation." Nisbet adds, "As a result of the research and collaboration with the Bauhaus, this exhibition offers an unprecedented opportunity to discover, enjoy, and evaluate an often overlooked body of work by one of Germany's leading women artists of the cultural efflorescence during the Weimar Republic."

The presentation of the exhibition at Harvard's Busch-Reisinger Museum is made possible, in part, by the Friends of the Busch-Reisinger Museum, a group of European patrons of the Busch.

Featured Works

The exhibition contains over 30 works from European and American public and private collections. Brandt's strong sense of design is evident in the abstract forms of her metal works, but it also flows through her photomontages. Reflecting her proficiency for composition, some works are comprised of only a few elements, while others are built up through intricate layers fitted together with a delicate touch.

Notable works in the exhibition include:

- *Untitled (with Anna May Wong)*, c. 1929. Assemblage of newspaper clippings, glass, celluloid and metal on cream board. The Asian-American film star Anna May Wong is presented with other exemplars of female beauty, some curiously, and perhaps disturbingly, compared to exotic wild animals.
- *me (Metal Workshop) in 9 years of the bauhaus. a chronicle*, 1928. Photomontage of original photographs on white board. This montage features the Bauhaus building in Dessau, along with products and members of the Metal Workshop—including Brandt and László Moholy-Nagy, head of the Workshop.
- *Help Out! (The Liberated Woman)*, 1926. Photomontage of newspaper clippings with graphite on gray board. Disjointed images of modern masculinity, violence, and warfare spiral around the head of a pipe-smoking New Woman.

Catalogue

A 176-page, fully illustrated catalogue is a companion to the exhibition. The catalogue features analysis by curator Elizabeth Otto of all 45 surviving or documented photomontages. Otto also contributes an introductory essay, a chronology of the artist's life, and a checklist of documented works, including those currently not located.

Events

Lecture:

Christian Room, Fogg Art Museum
Free and open to the public.

Thursday, March 16, 6:00 p.m.

“Clipping Culture in Art and Science”

Anke te Heesen, Max Planck Institute for the History of Science, Berlin

Dr. te Heesen’s lecture will explore the cultural and scientific significance of collecting and deploying newspaper clippings in the modern age. A research scholar at Berlin’s renowned Max Planck Institute for the History of Science and former fellow of the Institute for Cultural Sciences in Vienna, Dr. te Heesen has researched and published widely on the history of collecting and the production of knowledge.

Gallery talks:

Busch-Reisinger Museum
Free with the price of admission.

Saturday, March 18, 11:30 a.m.

*Elizabeth Otto, curator of the exhibition and Assistant Professor,
State University of New York at Buffalo*

Saturday, March 25, 11:30 a.m.

Peter Nisbet, Daimler-Benz Curator of the Busch-Reisinger Museum

Saturday, April 1, 11:30 a.m.

Lizzy Ramhorst, Curatorial Assistant

Saturday, April 29, 11:30 a.m.

Laura Muir Davies, Charles C. Cunningham Sr. Assistant Curator

Sunday, May 7, 2:00 p.m.

Celka Straughn, 2004-2006 Stefan Engelhorn Curatorial Intern

Sunday, May 14, 2:00 p.m.

Solveig Koebernick, 2005-2007 Michalke Curatorial Intern

The Harvard University Art Museums

The Harvard University Art Museums are one of the world's leading arts institutions, with the Arthur M. Sackler, Busch-Reisinger, and Fogg art museums, the Straus Center for Conservation, the Center for the Technical Study of Modern Art, the HUAM Archives, and the Archaeological Exploration of Sardis, in Turkey.

The Harvard University Art Museums are distinguished by the range and depth of their collections, their groundbreaking exhibitions, and the original research of their staff. As an integral part of the Harvard community, the three art museums and four research centers serve as resources for all students, adding a special dimension to their areas of study. The public is welcome to experience the collections and exhibitions as well as to enjoy lectures, symposia, and other programs.

For more than a century, the Harvard University Art Museums have been the nation's premier training ground for museum professionals and scholars and are renowned for their role in the development of the discipline of art history in this country.

Location and Hours

The Fogg Art Museum and the Busch-Reisinger Museums are located at 32 Quincy Street, Cambridge. The Arthur M. Sackler Museum is located next door at 485 Broadway. Each museum is a short walk from the Harvard Square MBTA station.

Hours are Monday through Saturday, 10:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m., Sunday 1:00–5:00 p.m.; closed on national holidays. Admission is \$7.50; \$6 for seniors; \$6 for students; and free for those under 18 years of age. The Art Museums are free to everyone on Saturday mornings, 10:00 a.m.–noon. The Harvard University Art Museums receive support from the Massachusetts Cultural Council. More detailed information is available at 617-495-9400 or on the Internet at www.artmuseums.harvard.edu.

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For more information on this exhibition or the Harvard University Art Museums, please contact:

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