



Miniature reindeer and spotlight

c 1945, gelatin silver photograph, 18.2 x 12.2 cm

National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, gift of American Friends of the National Gallery of Australia, Inc, New York, NY, USA, made possible with the generous support of Anton Bruehl Jr, 2006

Anton Bruehl (1900–1982) was a New York-based, Australian-born commercial photographer renowned for his brilliant work with colour. Bruehl's fascination with photography began at an early age when his elder brother Martin gave him a box camera.

He and Martin both migrated to America in 1919, where Anton secured a job as an electrical engineer with Western Electric in New York. With its dazzling neon skyline, New York proved a fascinating city for the young Australians.

Bruehl's engineering background provided him with a thorough understanding of the mechanics of the camera but it was his creative ambitions that soon led him to study at Clarence H White's School of Photography in 1923. He opened his own studio in 1926 and Martin joined him in the business the following year.

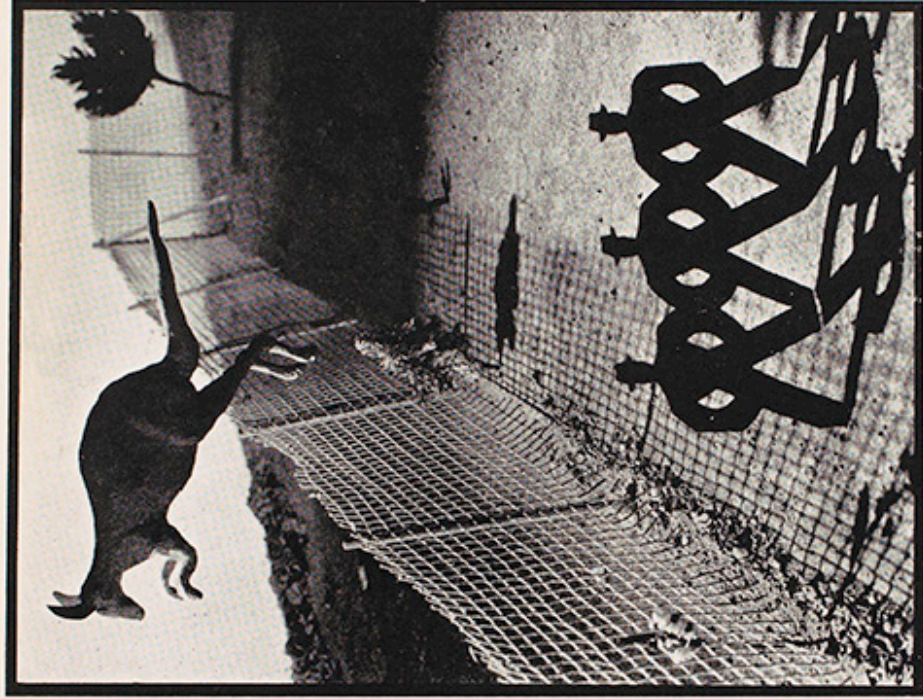
This image of miniature reindeer lit from numerous angles shows Bruehl's passion for spotlights and studio photography. When we consider the wintry subject of the photograph, it is likely that it was used as a promotional Christmas card for the studio.

Anton Bruehl
IN THE SPOTLIGHT
PHOTOGRAPHS 1920s-1950s

Activities

Look closely at this winter scene. Notice Bruehl's use of dramatic lighting. Select simple items from around the home. Arrange a tabletop scene and photograph it.

Create a greeting card with your photograph and mail it to a friend.



ANTON BRUEHL

“I met an Australian chap this morning who saved my life during the war.” “What did he have to say?” “He said I’d even up the balance if I told him where I got my clothes.”

The Fabric Group abroad no 32

1928, for Weber and Heilbroner menswear advertisement,
The New Yorker, 25 February 1928, offset colour lithographic
print, 20.3 x 11.4 cm

Anton Bruehl Papers, National Gallery of Australia Research Library, Canberra

Although photography replaced illustration as the primary advertising tool in the 1920s, one of Bruehl's most successful campaigns borrowed from the graphic aesthetic of illustration. The campaign was for the Fabric Group line of suits available from the Weber and Heilbroner menswear store, and debuted in the *New Yorker* magazine on 1 January 1927.

The advertisements combined whimsical images with witty captions and were reminiscent of comic strips. They featured a trio of paper cut-outs in suits who travelled the globe as men of style. The sentiment was that you could achieve anything that life threw your way as long as you were stylishly armoured in a Fabric Group suit.

Careful manipulation of scale, dramatic lighting and constructed models combined to create the Fabric Group campaign. In this particular photograph from the series, the trio have made their way to Bruehl's Australian homeland. The fence and textured ground create bold visual geometry, while the caption refers to an Australian soldier's bravery during the First World War and his envy over the American Fabric Group suit.

Anton Bruehl
IN THE SPOTLIGHT
PHOTOGRAPHS 1920s-1950s

Activities

Design and make a studio model.
Consider the placement of your
objects.

The reference to Australian soldiers
in the First World War has a
certain power within this caption.
Research Australian and American
relations after the First World War.
Would the Fabric Group trio wish
to identify with the kangaroo as a
symbol of Australia? Why?



Top hats

1929, for Weber and Heilbronner menswear advertisement, *The New Yorker*, 13 April 1929, gelatin silver photograph, printed later, 35.2 x 27.3 cm

National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, gift of American Friends of the National Gallery of Australia, Inc, New York, NY, USA, made possible with the generous support of Anton Bruehl Jr, 2006

Anton Bruehl arrived in New York at a time of great technological change. Commercial radio and Hollywood films were creating a new era of mass media and popular culture, and advertising often showed images of wealth and prosperity.

Top hats had largely fallen out of fashion by the end of the First World War. They were associated with the upper class and were often targeted by satirists as a symbol of the rich and greedy. They were also seen as old-fashioned.

However, in this department store advertisement for a range of stylish top hats made of the finest silk, Bruehl cleverly uses sharp angles combined with the drama of strategically placed spotlights to create a modern and saleable image. The hats appear in abundance, portraying a charming readiness for the everyday gentleman rather than the wealthy elite.

Anton Bruehl IN THE SPOTLIGHT

PHOTOGRAPHS 1920s-1950s

Activities

Set up a scene to be photographed. Select small cans of food, teacups, bottles or other objects. Photograph them with your mobile phone. Send it to a friend or create a wallpaper for your phone.

Research the history of the top hat online. Who was the first gentleman to wear one and how did society react?



Knitted-to-order sport clothes

1932, for Bonwit Teller department store advertisement,
gelatin silver photograph, 44 x 33.5 cm

National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, gift of American Friends of the National Gallery of Australia, Inc, New York, NY, USA, made possible with the generous support of Anton Bruehl Jr, 2006

Artistic excellence was vital to advertising success. The influence of high art filtered into many of Bruehl's campaign photographs. In 1932, Bruehl delivered an enticing image of a seemingly naked woman for a Bonwit Teller knitwear advertisement. The concept seems to have stemmed from the Greek legend of Ariadne of Crete, whose unravelled thread rescued her hero from the labyrinth.

The influence of Surrealism is unmistakable and may have been at the client's request considering that Surrealist artist Salvador Dalí, with Bruehl's assistance, had already created extraordinary window displays for Bonwit Teller's Fifth Avenue store.

Bruehl preferred to work entirely in the studio, employing sophisticated lighting systems. The model's face is obscured entirely by shadow, allowing the viewer to focus on the product and the model's carefully lit torso. The lighting also hides the fact that this rather alluring woman was actually a three-foot-high wooden figure.

Anton Bruehl

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

PHOTOGRAPHS 1920s-1950s

Activities

How does the Bruehl studio make thread appear sophisticated, luxurious and enticing? Create an accompanying slogan for this advertisement.

Choose a variety of wool, cotton, needles or pins. Create a tabletop photograph with a dreamlike or surreal quality.

Research the ancient Greek myth of Ariadne's thread and the labyrinth? Who does she rescue?



Gas tank

c 1926, gelatin silver photograph, 35.8 x 24.9 cm

National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, gift of American Friends of the National Gallery of Australia, Inc, New York, NY, USA, made possible with the generous support of Anton Bruehl Jr, 2006

This strikingly modernist photograph of a gas tank of around 1926 reveals Anton Bruehl's fascination with the new industrial era. Bruehl's experience as an electrical engineer gave rise to his preoccupation with modern technology.

The powerful geometry of the ironwork towers above the viewer in almost monumental glory. The dramatic view of the sunlit tank is awe-inspiring. The scaffolding and beams intersect ladders and the stairs travel to seemingly impossible heights.

Bruehl invents a shallow picture space with elements that border on abstraction. The photograph appears linear and flat due to the intersection of steel beams and shadows. Working with his familiar tools of light and shadow, the image is an interplay of sweeping angles and planes. A hazy skyline softens the starkness of the tank itself, and the dynamic stairwell forms a pattern of contrast in its deep shadows.

Anton Bruehl
IN THE SPOTLIGHT
PHOTOGRAPHS 1920s-1950s

Activities

Find a stairwell. Photograph it from an unusual viewpoint. How do the lines intersect and form an interesting composition?

Research the Australian photographers Harold Cazneaux and Max Dupain. Both made modernist industrial photographs of Australia in the 1920s and 1930s. What do these artists have in common with Anton Bruehl?



Boy (Muchacho)

1932, gelatin silver photograph, printed later, 35.2 x 27.2 cm

National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, gift of American Friends of the National Gallery of Australia, Inc, New York, NY, USA, made possible with the generous support of Anton Bruehl Jr, 2006

In 1932, Bruehl stepped out of the comfort and familiarity of his studio, where he could carefully light and choreograph his images. He travelled to Mexico and plied his art under the harsh and intense light of the sun.

This particular photograph of a young Mexican boy peering between two wooden posts was one of 25 images that Bruehl published in a book titled *Photographs of Mexico*. The photographs are very different to the work that Bruehl did for advertising. They are more personal and focus on precise details to create drama and narrative. A safety pin replaces the button on the boy's shirt and the dirty coat pocket appears both open and empty, indicative of an impoverished nation.

Together, however, the photographs in the book express something about the strength of the Mexican people, who had recently risen up against a tyrannical government and had faced hardships that many Americans and Australians could only imagine.

Anton Bruehl
IN THE SPOTLIGHT
PHOTOGRAPHS 1920s-1950s

Activities

Bruehl photographed his subjects up close to convey deeper meaning. Zoom in and take a portrait photograph of a friend or family member. What is the story you are trying to tell?

Research the Mexican revolution of 1910–20. Focus on Mexican painters. Think about the way these artists portrayed life in the aftermath of the revolution. How is a photograph different than a painting when presenting social issues?



Portrait of Marlene Dietrich, Hollywood

1935, direct positive colour photograph printed 1988 from original Bruehl–Bourges colour transparency, 35.6 x 27.6 cm

National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, gift of American Friends of the National Gallery of Australia, Inc, New York, NY, USA, made possible with the generous support of Anton Bruehl Jr, 2006

In 1932, Anton Bruehl began using colour photography. Bruehl worked with colour technician Fernand Bourges and engravers from Condé Nast's magazines. Together they created colour images for the printed page. In this captivating portrait of Hollywood star Marlene Dietrich, Bruehl manipulates colour with intoxicating results. The photograph was taken on the set of Dietrich's 1936 film *Desire*.

By the late 1930s, both advertising salaries and budgets were on the increase. Filmmaking, now in colour, meant big budgets all round. This led to a period of high glamour and excess. Many photographers became famous in their own right, having built up exclusive Hollywood clientele.

In this photograph, Bruehl's expert positioning of studio spotlights delivers a captivating result. The composition of the image and black sweater draw the viewer's attention to Dietrich's face and to her raised hand. The dramatic pose is punctuated by the lustrous sheen of her red lips and fingernails as well as her perfectly painted lashes and pencilled eyebrows.

Anton Bruehl
IN THE SPOTLIGHT
PHOTOGRAPHS 1920s–1950s

Activities

This photograph of Marlene Dietrich is very stylised. Cut out and collage facial features from magazines to create your own mask.

Research Australian photographer Max Dupain using the National Gallery of Australia's collection search on the NGA's website at nga.gov.au. Look at the image titled *Doll's head and goat's skull*. Compare these two images.



Autumn rain girl

1935, cover of *Pictorial Review*, c 1935, offset colour lithographic print, 23.5 x 26.9 cm

Anton Bruehl Papers, National Gallery of Australia Research Library, Canberra

When advertisers discovered that colour was a selling power, they began making consumer products more appealing through colour photography. Anton Bruehl, with his precise studio technique, was perfectly suited to the complex processes of colour photography.

In collaboration with commercial photographer Fernand Bourges and engravers from Condé Nast, Bruehl developed a process for high-quality colour reproductions in which separate gel transparencies were made and sandwiched together to achieve vibrant colour. The first Bruehl–Bourges photograph appeared in the May 1932 issue of *Vogue* magazine.

In the 1930s, Bruehl also produced a series of child studies for covers of the women's magazine *Pictorial Review*. In this autumn cover for the magazine, a little girl holds an umbrella with other her palm open to the rain. The primary colours of the little girl's yellow raincoat and red hat are offset against a pale background. Readers would cut off magazine covers and frame them for display in their homes.

Although this enchanting autumn scene evokes the outdoors, the magic was achieved under the controlled lighting of Bruehl's studio.

Anton Bruehl
IN THE SPOTLIGHT
PHOTOGRAPHS 1920s–1950s

Activities

Research the history and process of tricolour photography. What colours make up the three main dyes?

Choose a season. Take an indoor photograph to represent that season using a few simple props. Try to capture something unique about the seasons in your area.



Billy 'Bojangles' Robinson and ensemble dancers,
Whitey's Lindy Hoppers, from Michael Todd's *Hot
Mikado*, World's Fair, New York

1939, offset colour lithographic print, 32.8 x 24.4 cm

Anton Bruehl Papers, National Gallery of Australia Research Library, Canberra

Anton Bruehl created many dynamic promotional images for stage and theatre. In this photograph, we see Bruehl's ability to capture the liveliness and theatricality of the stage. Working with his studio spotlights, Bruehl darkens the foreground and lights the star of the photograph, tap dancer Bill 'Bojangles' Robinson.

Bruehl shows Robinson in action with the Whitey's Lindy Hoppers dancers from the *Hot Mikado* stage show that was performed at the 1939–40 World's Fair in New York. The white and blue of the costumes are balanced purposefully against the red studio backdrop—perhaps as a patriotic wink to the American flag.

The dancers' athletic gestures and elated facial expressions would indicate that they are in the middle of a song and dance routine, but the photograph is not as spontaneous as it would first seem. Bruehl felt there was no such thing as a 'lucky shot' and he would have carefully arranged each of his subjects to artificially create the dynamic feel of the stage.

Anton Bruehl
IN THE SPOTLIGHT
PHOTOGRAPHS 1920s–1950s

Activities

Balance yourself with one leg raised in the air. Choose a facial expression that conveys intense emotion. Have a friend or family member photograph you.

Research the nature of race relations in America in the lead up to the Second World War. Is Bruehl's portrayal of these entertainers typical for 1939?

VOGUE

REPRODUCING VANDY ABE



SPRING HATS
BETWEEN-SEASONS FASHIONS
JANUARY 15, 1940 • PRICE 35 CENTS

★ PUBLISHED WEEKLY BY VOGUE PUBLICATIONS, INC.

Between-seasons fashions

1940, for *Vogue*, 15 January 1940, offset colour lithographic print, 33 x 25 cm

Anton Bruehl Papers, National Gallery of Australia Research Library, Canberra

The Anton Bruehl Studio produced many glamorous images for Condé Nast magazines such as *Vogue*, *Vanity Fair* and *House and Garden*. Bruehl's creative use of composition is evident in this photograph for the cover of an issue of *Vogue* magazine in 1940.

The image is carefully arranged and features the seasonal hat designs of fashion designer Lily Dache. Bruehl has positioned the female models in profile and three-quarter poses, fanned out in an attractive display to show the hats and the women from the best angles.

Jewellery would also have been carefully selected and the make-up thoughtfully applied to complement the composition of the image as well as the colours and styles of the hats. Every detail of this photograph has a precise purpose.

Elaborate staging, studio lighting and intense colours are all strong features of Bruehl's photography. His approach was to spare no expense as long as the ultimate result was achieved. The high cost of producing these glamorous magazine images only added to the feeling of luxury to which people aspired.

Anton Bruehl
IN THE SPOTLIGHT
PHOTOGRAPHS 1920s-1950s

Activities

Research *Vogue* magazine covers over the decades. How have they changed since the 1940s? Design your own magazine cover.

Research the fashions of women in Australia and America during the Second World War. Why would the hat have been a popular fashion item at this time?



“You’re not, I fear, a Birds Eye Ear!”

Fresh, summer-sweet corn. Each golden kernel firm with milky flavor. That’s for Birds Eye! The rest goes out on its ear!

Birds Eye checks each ear twice. Makes doubly sure not one kernel of starchy corn goes into a Birds Eye box. Our Birds Eye checking

is fast, too. Preparation and packing must take no more than two hours from harvest time.

Fresher flavor you can’t find, unless you have your own rows of ripe ears. Something else nice about Birds Eye Corn – it comes three ways: Cream Style, Whole Kernel and On-the-Cob.



SPINACH



POTATO PUFFS



RASPBERRIES



You're not, I fear, a Birds Eye ear!

c 1960, offset colour lithographic print, 38.9 x 30.6 cm

Anton Bruehl Papers, National Gallery of Australia Research Library, Canberra

The Anton Bruehl Studio produced a series of advertisements for Birds Eye Foods. Bruehl was a skilled craftsman and he used models in his earliest advertising work. This preoccupation with model making returned later in his career.

In this advertisement, ears of corn with silken hair and large eyes are sizing up a rather undernourished contender hoping to join the Birds Eye team. The contender clearly doesn't make the cut.

This cleverly orchestrated photograph has a certain charm, appealing to the female consumer on an emotive level. The tape measure is targeted at women who watch their waistlines, suggesting that Birds Eye corn will help them keep a trim figure.

Anton Bruehl
IN THE SPOTLIGHT
PHOTOGRAPHS 1920s-1950s

Activities

Using modelling clay or plasticine, create your own fruit or vegetable creature.

Imagine the humorous dialogue that would transpire between these ears of corn. Write a short story inspired by this funny Birds Eye advertisement.



Fashions of the future no2: Gilbert Rhode banishes buttons, pockets, collars, ties

1939, for *Vogue*, Americana issue, 1 February 1939,
offset colour lithographic print, 32.9 x 24.8 cm

Anton Bruehl Papers, National Gallery of Australia Research Library, Canberra

During the First World War, communication technologies rapidly developed. Western Electric, where Anton Bruehl first worked after arriving in the USA, was the manufacturing arm of American Telephone and Telegraph (AT&T). AT&T was responsible for supplying sophisticated forms of communication, such as radiotelegraphy, to the European military.

Films with sound were developed as early as 1923, and commercial radio stations began broadcasting in New York by 1926. In this 1939 photograph, communication technology becomes essential to the man of the future.

Designer Gilbert Rhode ‘banishes buttons, pockets, collars and ties’ and attached to his chain-link vest is a transmitting device. His headdress, some kind of antenna, is ready to receive signals. He stands prepared for technological change, looking beyond the present to an unforeseen future.

Manipulating scale through the use of miniatures and clever lighting, Bruehl transforms tiny pieces of copper wiring into enormous telecommunication coils. The angled planes of the set and colourful backdrop help set the scene for Bruehl’s vision of the future.

Anton Bruehl
IN THE SPOTLIGHT
PHOTOGRAPHS 1920s-1950s

Activities

Bruehl’s image of the man of the future was taken in 1939. Consider the historical importance of this date. Why were advancements in technology so significant at the time?

This photograph has a science-fiction feel about it. The man of the future stands ready for action. Write a comic strip about this character’s quirky adventures.