

MEDIA RELEASE

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For immediate release

Powerhouse acquires archive of fashion photographer Bruno Benini - funded by the National Cultural Heritage Account

The Powerhouse Museum has acquired the archive of fashion photographer Bruno Benini with assistance from the Australian Government through the National Cultural Heritage Account. The Account was established under the *Protection of Movable Cultural Heritage Act 1986* and gives grants to cultural organisations to purchase nationally significant objects for the preservation of Australian history and culture.

Bruno Benini was one of Australia's most elegant and refined mid-20th century fashion photographers and, along with Henry Talbot, Helmut Newton, David Mist and Wolfgang Sievers, belonged to a group of influential émigré commercial photographers working in post-WWII Australia.

His archive consists of over 250 vintage and recent photographic prints, several thousand colour transparencies and black and white negatives, and biographical material including magazine tear sheets and newspaper clippings dating from the 1950s through to the photographer's death in 2001.

Collected by Benini and his wife Hazel, the archive captures a vibrant Australian fashion heritage over five decades, from the elegant couture of the fifties, through the less tailored, mod and hippy modes of the sixties, to the confronting raunchy, grunge and funk styles of the 1970s.

"The Powerhouse Museum is privileged to have received support from the National Cultural Heritage Account to purchase the Benini archive. His collection provides an irreplaceable, cohesive and comprehensive record of the Australian fashion industry and offers a rich visual historical reference for contemporary practitioners," said Dr Dawn Casey, Director, Powerhouse Museum.

Many Australian and New Zealand haute couture gowns, niche labels and ready-to-wear brands are represented, including Norma Tullo (the only Australian dress designer to have a boutique outlet in the prestigious Isetan Department store in Tokyo in the 1970s), Hall Ludlow, Theo Haskin, Prue Acton, Sharene Creations, Solo, Simona, Mike Treloar, Sportscraft and Sportsgirl. International fashion labels also appear, including Cole of California, Fiorucci from Italy, Laura Ashley and Mary Quant from England and Yves St Laurent, Balenciaga, Chanel and Courrèges from France.

The archive joins three other important Australian historical objects acquired by the Museum with funding from the National Cultural Heritage Account: an 1856 double bass made by one of Australia's earliest string instrument makers, John Devereux; one of the 20th century's finest racing trophies, the 1950 Sydney Gold Cup; and one of the first all-Australian designed and built aircraft, a 1930 Genairco Biplane, also one of three surviving examples in the world.

A selection of images from the Bruno Benini photography archive and the Devereux Double Bass are currently on display in the Museum's *Inspired: design across time* gallery. The Genairco is located at the *Powerhouse Discovery Centre: Collection Stores at Castle Hill*.

Further information:

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