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Dick Bruna

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Roseld Laguatan

Professor Clair

Design Pioneers CDE 504

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Dick Bruna

Dick Bruna was a talented and successful Illustrator and designer. He is most famous for his creation, Miffy, a curious simple white rabbit that has the innocence of a young child—which made her an endearing character to children all over the world. Because of his successful children's books, he was highly sought after by children's medical hospitals and world health organizations to help promote health and safety for children everywhere. He also designed thousands of spy, mystery and detective novel covers for his family's publishing company. Bruna was a master designer of simplicity, color and form—able to convey a great deal of emotion through the use of simple lines, a limited color palette and striking layouts. Spanning six decades of work, he was a prolific individual with a variety of skill sets that made him a versatile artist.

Dick Bruna's Birth and Early Childhood

Bruna's early life was filled with happiness and joy. He was born August 23, 1927 in Utrecht,



Figure 1. Dick Bruna, one year old. Photo by Bruna family.

Netherlands to parents, Johanna Clara Charlotte Erdbrink and Albert Willem Bruna. They named him, Hendrik Magdalenus Bruna, after his grandfather. Interestingly, he was born the year of the rabbit, according to the Chinese horoscope—maybe a sign of what was to come? Because he was such a chubby baby, he was nicknamed Dik/Dikkie, which

means fatty in Dutch. Throughout his childhood, the nickname stuck and he chose to go by Dick. His family owned a publishing house, A.W. Bruna & Sons, established by his grandfather in 1868. A.W. Bruna & Sons was one of the largest publishers in the Netherlands and had book kiosks in every train station throughout the country.

In 1931, his brother, Fredrick Hendrik (Fritz) Bruna was born and soon after the whole family moved to Zeist—a town east of Utrecht. There, Dick and his brother had a fairytale lifestyle: a large playroom, a summer house, a garden where they could play in their toy cars; and living amongst them were chickens, dogs, a goat and rabbits that were able to run freely—he was especially fond of the rabbits—maybe another sign of his future.

He was exposed to various music and books—it was also during this time Bruna began to show interest in artistic endeavors. He learned to play the piano and later the accordion. Because of his family's successful publishing company, authors and designers were regular visitors to his household. He was exposed to not only great books, but to poetry and children's books. There were even visits by Jean de Brunhoff, creator of Barbar. His childhood was a paradise.

Bruna's Teen Years During WWII

In 1940, the family moved again to nearby town of Bilthoven. Life in their new home was short lived. During this time, Nazi Germany had invaded parts of the Netherlands and Belgium. In 1943, their home in Bilthoven had suddenly been occupied by the Nazi German army. Fearing that Dick, now in his teens, and his father would be sent to work in Germany or worse, the Bruna family quickly escaped to their summer home in Loosdrechtse Plassen, south of Amsterdam.

In their summer home, they were far enough from the Nazi takeover and were able to live cautiously for the time being. Although Dick and his family had averted the immediate threat, he still had his personal issues to deal with. Throughout Bruna's upbringing, because he was the eldest, it was expected that he would take over the family business. But Bruna had other ambitions, artistic ones, which unfortunately didn't follow his father's plan. Because of this, there were many squabbles between the two men, which lasted for years.

Despite their disagreements, Bruna attempted to pursue his ideas of being an artist. He was able to explore his artistic talents in music, writing and the arts—he began to appreciate the great masters like Rembrandt and Vincent Van Gogh. Thankfully, writers and illustrators who collaborated with his family's business still were able to visit in spite of the war. One important visitor was Rein van Looy, a well-known Dutch illustrator who created sensitive, detailed illustrations for Gulliver's travels, which Bruna no doubt saw and admired. Van Looy would mentor Bruna regularly in sketching, drawing and painting. They would often ride a boat into the middle of the lake together, sketching the scenery around them. Because of the war, many materials like paper were scarce. Dick drew on anything he could get his hands on: paper scraps, planks of wood even shelving material.

This continuous involvement in the arts unfortunately put further strain on the relationship between Dick Bruna and his father, who still insisted that he follow in his footsteps by taking over the



Figure 2. Illustration by Rein van Looy, from Gulliver's Travels by Jonathan Swift, J. H. Gottmer, 1940.



Figure 3. Early painting of a sailboat by Dick Bruna, 1943.

publishing business. Dick was very rebellious toward his father and did not want to do anything with the company or even be remotely like his father; Dick later discovered that his father had had affairs with other women. The way he coped with the situation of his father's affairs is that he wrote a novel with illustrations that depicted a boy who had a sick mother—and the boy played the accordion to support them both. Dick Bruna did indeed play the accordion so there was an auto biographical essence to this story. The book was never published, but Bruna did manage to make a single bound edition for himself. Dick loved his mother dearly and was thankful he could find refuge in her—through her support and encouragement of his artistic endeavors.

Apprenticeships in Utrecht, London and Paris

After the end of the war, the Bruna family moved to the town of Hilversum. There, they tried to go back to a normal life postwar, with Dick and his brother returning to school. But school was a difficult time because he had been learning independently for the last few years, and it was hard for him to follow the structured environment of a school. This, coupled with Dick's unwillingness to learn about the publishing business, caused Bruna's father to force Dick, now 18, to begin an intense immersion into the publishing world. Bruna's father secured an apprenticeship for Dick at the Broese bookshop in Utrecht; the following year another apprenticeship with a newsagent in London, W. H. Smith; and for the third year, a work study in Paris at the publisher Pon. At all these apprenticeships, the work entailed selling, accounting and packing of books—all of which Bruna dreaded and found extremely uninteresting.

However, through these uninspired internships, Dick's father inadvertently made Bruna more enthusiastic about pursuing a career in art. During Dick's time in both London and Paris,

he was able to visit many museums, galleries, exhibitions and he read up on the biographies of famous artists—becoming familiar with greats like Picasso and Léger. Léger had a profound affect on Bruna. He would study Léger’s style closely and in later years, he would perfect his own version of this style. During his internships he was also absorbing all the music, food and culture these two great cities had to offer. Bruna was especially fond of Paris, it was a place where he felt free—free in thinking and being.



Figure 4. Fernand Léger, Étude pour les plongeurs (Study for Divers) 1942, Gouache on paper.



Figure 5. Fernand Léger, Les Plongeurs (The Divers) 1943, Oil on canvas.

Early Artistic Pursuits

When Dick returned home, he was more determined than ever to follow a path as an artist. He was finally able to convince his father, without much disagreement, that he should pursue an education in art in Amsterdam. He attended the State Academy of Visual Arts under the tutelage of Jos Rovers. Rovers’s gloomy impressionistic style didn’t appeal to Bruna’s taste or reflect what he had seen in London or Paris. Plus, days of just copying other painters’ techniques and doing plaster busts were not to his liking either. After six months, he returned

home. He felt there was too much structure and outdated techniques that did not excite him. He kept reminiscing about the art that had truly inspired him in his travels—and wanted to explore that more modern approach to art.

Back at home, he eventually started to do book covers for various novels that were being published by his family's company. He was even in contact with the books' authors so he could correctly represent the content of the book on their respective covers. While doing this, he also pursued his love for sketching, drawing and painting. Although Dick didn't enjoy his apprenticeships, through them he did become friendly with Chris Leeftang, a director at the Broese Bookshop in Utrecht. They both enjoyed talking about art and sketching. They frequently took trips to the south of France to do landscape studies and paintings. While on one of their many excursions, they went to the Chapelle du Rosarie (Chapel of Rosary) in Vence. All the artwork in the chapel, stained glass, murals, statues, decor and vestments were designed by Matisse. From that fateful day, Bruna was so profoundly inspired by Matisse's work that he began to focus on flat compositions, disregarding perspective and creating works that were as simple as possible—unknowing to him, he would eventually become a master of this style.



Figure 6. Interior view of the Chapelle du Rosaire by Henri Matisse, 1951. Photo by François Fernandez. Matisse uses shapes reminiscent of leaves to create a pattern in the windows on the left and natural motifs in the windows on the right.



Figure 7. Vestments designed by Henri Matisse, 1951. Photo by The Art Pilgrim. Matisse emulates his paper cut out style to create the various designs of the vestments which complement the look of the chapel.

The Return to Utrecht and New Love

In 1951, his family moved back to Utrecht. Upon arrival, Dick Bruna met his future wife, Irene de Jongh who lived across the street. Although Irene rejected Bruna numerous times, she did agree to a relationship. They courted each other for a couple of years and eventually married in 1953. One of the stipulations that Irene's father had for Bruna was that he had to have steady employment before marrying her. So with that, Dick Bruna asked his father for a permanent job at the publishing company. He was still adamant about not wanting to run the business, so he asked to be a staff illustrator.

Becoming an Illustrator and Designer

Unknowingly, this position would offer just the art education that Dick Bruna had been seeking. This placement as staff illustrator allowed him to learn new techniques and gave him the freedom to explore and experiment in the styles of the many artists who had influenced

him. The publishing industry at the time was having a huge boom in business—particularly in detective books. There was such a demand for these books that Bruna’s father made it a priority to take advantage of this trend. A new subsidiary was created with the help of Jaap Romijin, commercial director at A.W. Bruna & Sons. This small press would feature the works of various writers for a detective and spy series. Bruna’s family publishing company had an advantage over most, because it already had book kiosks in every station in the Netherlands. Dick understood that the way to attract readers was by creating an immediate visual connection. This new series was going to be called the “Zwarte Beertjes” (Black Bears). With that, Bruna had a limited color palette to work with—the book cover color plus the use of black ink. He still managed to create designs that had atmosphere, drama and intrigue. Because of Bruna’s understanding of the market reach of these novels, he was able to create engaging covers that hit their target audience. As the novels sold, hand over fist, more money was able to be put into the design of the covers. Regardless, for consistency, Bruna kept to a fairly simple design—only adding additional ink colors when needed. He often edited his work, trying to make each design as simple and elegant as possible. The number of novels that came through the publishing house was quite staggering. At the end of the detective novel fascination which lasted 17 years, Bruna had designed nearly 2000 book covers. To help promote the books, Dick also created corresponding posters that were displayed throughout the Netherlands. Bruna’s father said of the success of the line, “...all the covers are from the same designer. My clever son.”



Figure 8. Zwarte Beertjes (Black Bears) promotional poster by Dick Bruna, 1956. First promotional poster for the small subsidiary press of Bruna & Sons that focused on the detective and spy novels in 1956

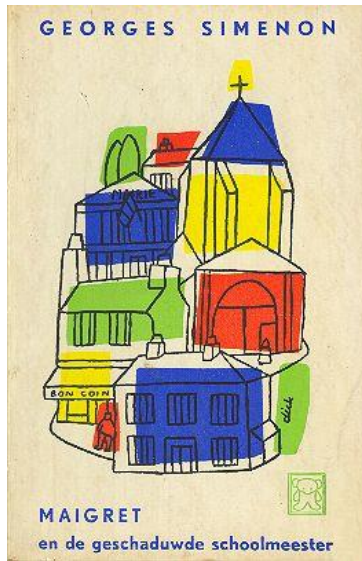


Figure 9. Cover illustration by Dick Bruna for Maigret en de geschaduwde schoolmeester (Maigret and the Shadowed Schoolmaster) by Georges Simenon, A.W. Bruna & Sons, 1956.



Figure 10. Cover illustration by Dick Bruna for Het probleem van de twee hulzen (The Problem of the Two Shells) by Hendrikus Frederikus van der Kallen, A.W. Bruna & Sons, 1958.

During this time period, Dick drew constantly and practiced his art both at work and at home. His wife Irene was a great help in critiquing his work and making it stronger. In fact, he relied primarily on Irene's feedback to fine tune his creations. He took advantage of the artists around him to help in his development. He often looked at Matisse's work and was inspired by his avant-garde approach using cut paper. He loved the simplicity and solid colors used to create a scene—he then would use this technique in his book covers.



Figure 11. Henri Matisse, Blue Nude (1), 1952. Gouache painted paper cut-outs on paper on canvas.

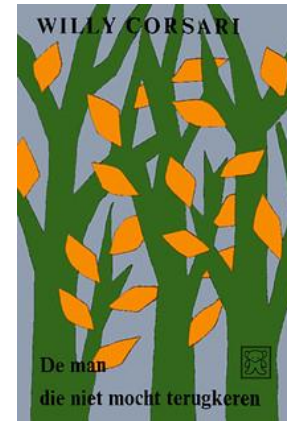


Figure 12. Cover illustration by Dick Bruna for De man die niet mocht terugkeren (The Man Who Was Not Allowed to Return) by Willy Corsari, A.W. Bruna & Sons, 1959. This cover clearly uses the cut paper technique Bruna was enamored with after studying Matisse.

He was also inspired by local designer, Willem Sandberg. Sandberg's use of torn paper to create typography left an impression on Bruna. He too started to incorporate torn paper techniques to create images for the book covers as well.



Figure 13. (Left) Willem Sandberg, museum journal for modern art cover, 1963.



Figure 14. (Right) Cover illustration by Dick Bruna for *Bramen met Arsenicum* (Blackberries with Arsenic) by Shirley Jackson, A.W. Bruna & Sons, 1963. It's clear that Bruna used the torn paper technique for the heads of the cats in this illustration.

Another Dutch artist, Hendrik Nicolas Werkman created work using printing techniques which involved stamping and stenciling. This intrigued Bruna, especially the stenciling, because Werkman consistently used both the positive and negative part of the stencil to create a visual echo—which Bruna found fascinating.



Figure 15. (Left) Cover illustration by Hendrik Nicolas Werkman for *Sabbatsgesänge* (Sabbath Singing) by D. Dekkers, J. van der Spek & A. de Vries, *De Blauwe Schuit*, 1941

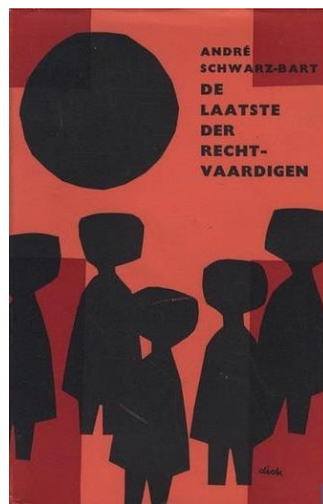


Figure 16. (Right) Cover illustration by Dick Bruna for *De Laatste Der rechvaardigen* (The Last of the Just) by Andre Schwarz-Bart, A.W. Bruna & Sons, 1961

In the Netherlands, during 1917-1931, the De Stijl movement, made famous by artist Mondrian, Van der Leek and Rietveld, Bruna was inspired by their simplicity and limited color palette. Bruna took inspiration from all these De Stijl artists not only for his cover illustration, but also continued to use these principles for his later works as well.

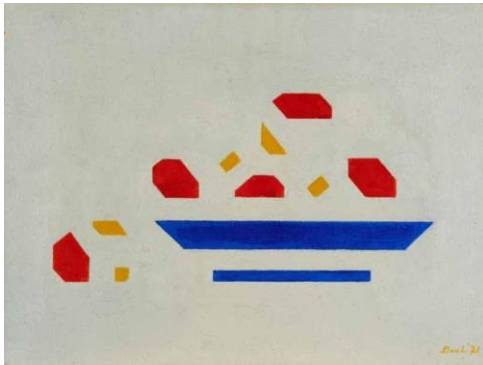


Figure 17. (Top Left) Bart van der Leek, Bak met appelen (Bowl with Apples), 1922. Color lithograph on paper.

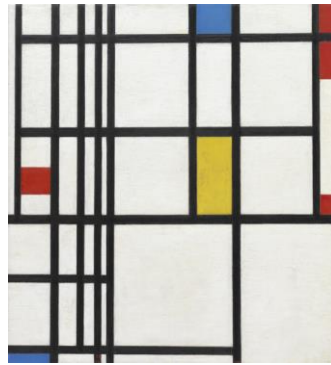


Figure 18. (Top Middle) Piet Mondrian, Composition in Red, Blue, and Yellow, 1937-1942. Oil on canvas



Figure 19. (Top Right) Gerrit Thomas Rietveld, A 'Red Blue' Armchair, 1918-1921. Painted beech, painted beech-veneered plywood.



Figure 20. Cover illustration by Dick Bruna for Kermis in de regen (Christmas in the Rain) by Joop van den Broek, A.W. Bruna & Sons, 1958.

The influence of the De Stijl movement is apparent in this illustration: the use of primary colors, the simplicity of the shapes and the grid-like layout.

Regardless of how busy he was at work, Bruna always made time for his own projects. He wanted to publish a book that paid homage to one of his main influences, Henri Matisse. He was so enamored with Matisse's cut out paper work that he wanted to explore and emulate that style. In doing so, Bruna created his first book, *De Appel*, which became a children's book—but he had no intention for it to be a children's book. It was due to the simple nature of the illustrations that people and reviewers assumed it was for children. *De Appel* was his first attempt at self publishing in 1953.

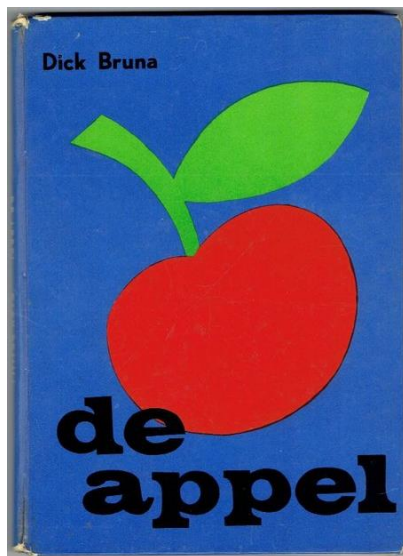


Figure 21. *de appel* (The Apple) written and illustrated by Dick Bruna, A.W. Bruna & Sons, 1953.

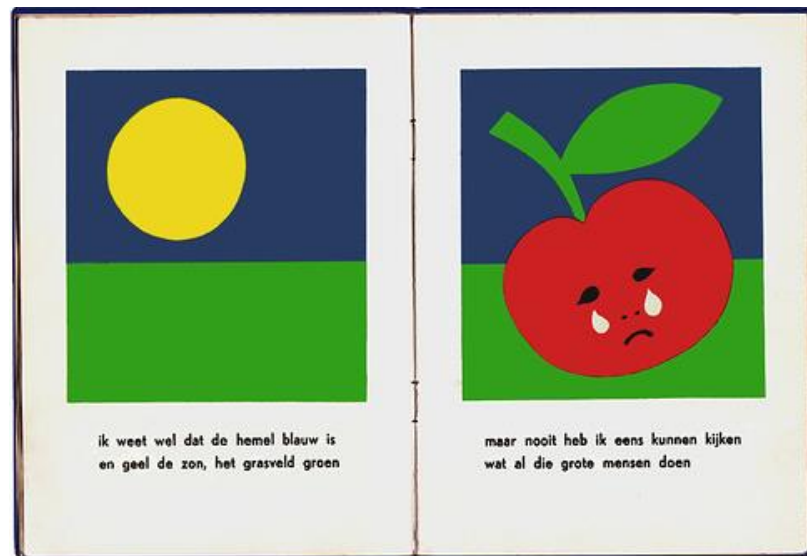


Figure 22. An interior spread of *de appel* (The Apple), 1953. One can see how the simple color format with simple shapes would be appealing to children.

The Genesis of Miffy

Shortly thereafter, in 1955, Dick, his wife and newborn son, Sierk went on vacation to the seaside resort Edmond Ana Zee. There, Sierk, who had a plush bunny at the time, was immediately intrigued with the real bunnies at the resort. This reminded Bruna of his youth, growing up at his family gardens that had many cute rabbits. Bruna decided to draw a rabbit

for his son. His son named it Nijntje. The actual word for little rabbit is konijntje. But since Bruna's son couldn't say the full word, it ended up just being Nijntje. June 21, 1955 is Nijntje's (Miffy's) official birthday. Dick decided to make Nijntje a female bunny, possibly a nod to his mother.

That same year Bruna published the first two books on this curious rabbit: called *Nijntje (Miffy)* and *Nijntje in de dierentuin (Miffy at the Zoo)*. Nijntje's (Miffy's) original design



Figure 23. Early version of Nijntje (Miffy) by Dick Bruna, 1955

was influenced by the works of Matisse and Léger: flat shapes (Matisse) and shaky outline (Léger). Nijntje (Miffy) was always looking slightly left or right, giving a three-dimensional feel on a flat background. Dick's technique for illustrating *Nijntje (Miffy)* was laying out the page and sketching out where the elements of the illustration would go. Then he would paint in the areas with a single color—no shading—he wanted to have that purity of color similar to a Matisse cut out. After, he would take black paint and create the contour lines. This method of illustrating is the same process Dick used when making promotion book posters.

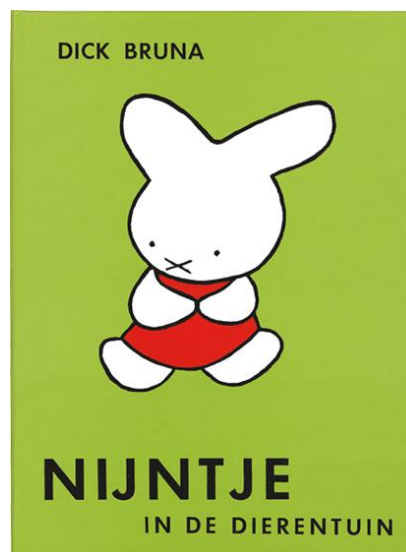
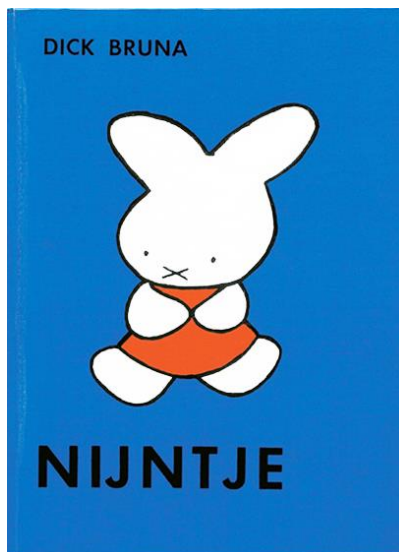


Figure 24. (Left) Nijntje (Miffy) written and illustrated by Dick Bruna, A.W. Bruna & Sons, 1955.

Figure 25. (Right) Nijntje in de Dierentuin (Miffy at the Zoo) written and illustrated by Dick Bruna, A.W. Bruna & Sons, 1955.

For the A.W. Bruna & Sons' promotional posters, they were printed at Steendrukkerij De Jong & Co. The owner's son, Pieter Brattinga, who worked as the in-house graphic designer, also happened to be one of Dick's old classmates and good friend. Trying to be economical and practical, Brattinga came up with a method of printing so that when a sheet is folded a particular way, it could be folded down into a 15.5 x 15.5cm 12 page book. The format made it possible to print 4 books at one time. Dick thought this was brilliant. It reminded him of the De Stijl style—simple and symmetrical. Since this discovery, every Bruna book would follow this format. Plus, he felt the size was perfect for little hands.

During this time, Bruna was reluctantly promoted to co-deputy director at A.W. Bruna & Sons. Bruna was still determined to deal with the creative aspects of the job, he left the financial details to others. He continuously buried himself in the creative duties and left the money aspects to Jaap Romijn. But this focus on the creative aspect of work allowed Bruna to further explore his artistic interests.

Since Nijntje's (Miffy's) introduction, Bruna had two more children: Marc (1958) and daughter Madelon (1961). During that span of time, Dick had changed his style and method of making his illustrations. He would take sheets of vellum and sketch out the design he wanted. At times, it would take nearly 100 drawings before he was satisfied. After, he would take the drawing he approved of and place it over a sheet of watercolor paper. He would then take a



Figure 26. Bruna's working method: (1) original drawing on vellum, (2) inked image on watercolor paper, (3) combining colored paper cut outs and line art film layered on top for finished illustration.

pencil and push down hard over the vellum sheet creating grooves into the watercolor paper below. Then, he would take black acrylic paint and paint into the grooves/channels. Because he did this on watercolor paper, it gave a shaky feel to the line (a nod to Léger) which gave life to the character/object he was illustrating. After he finished painting the outline, he would take the line art through a photographic process that output the line work onto clear film. Using the drawing on vellum sheet from the start, he would trace that onto large sheets of colored paper, then cut them out with scissors creating large color flat shapes—again, a nod to his hero, Matisse. He would lay all the cut paper pieces out. Finally, he would take the film with the outline art, and lay it over the cut pieces of paper—the illustration was now complete.

The World of Miffy

Along with this new method of creating his illustrations, Nijntje's appearance had a

metamorphosis as well. Bruna made the conscious decision to eventually have Nijntje (Miffy) looking at the viewer—creating a connection between her and the

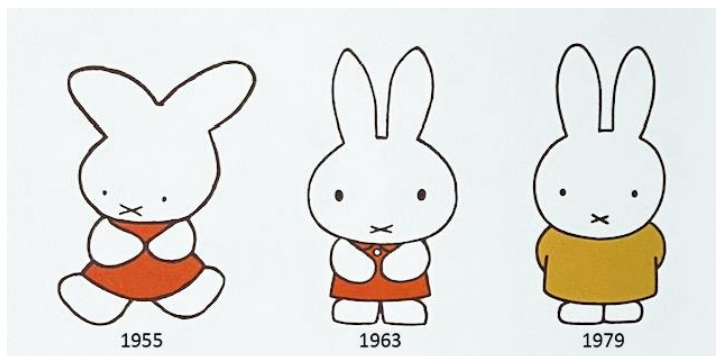


Figure 27. Evolution of Miffy.

reader. The other evolution of Nijntje (Miffy) was in her overall appearance. In 1963, Bruna

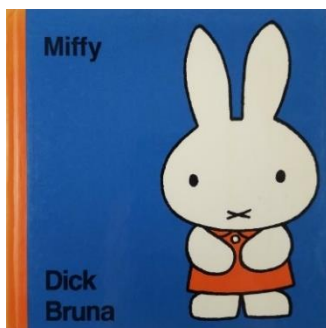


Figure 28. Miffy (US Edition), written and illustrated by Dick Bruna, Price Stern Sloan, 1992.

designed her with an oval head and slightly parallel pointy ears. In 1979, she would evolve once more where she had a more circular head and her ears were rounded off. In his further emphasis on simplicity, he refused to create any perspective aspects of his illustrations, everything was flat. Finally in 1963, with Nijntje's new

look, Bruna was ready to reintroduce his rabbit to the world. Still using Brattinga's 12 page

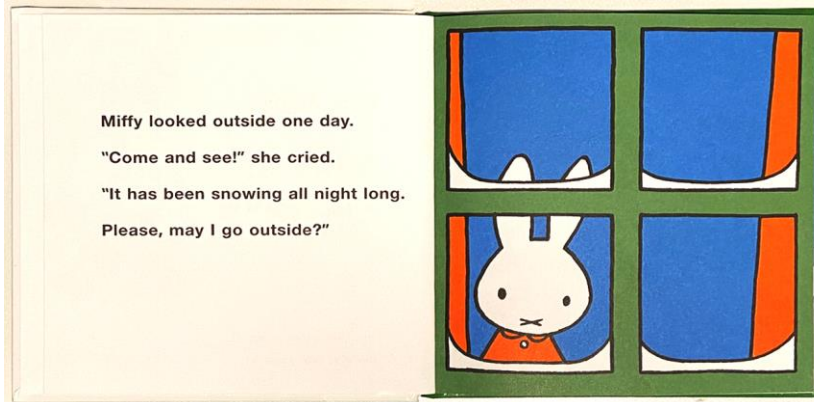


Figure 29. *Miffy in the Snow (US Edition)*, written and illustrated by Dick Bruna, Kodansha America, Inc., 1999. An interior spread with a limit of just four lines of written copy on the left page and a full-page illustration on the right.

child, the typography should not interfere with the image—so the child could absorb the image without distraction. He also wanted all the typography to be sans serif (for simplicity) and no capital letters used (Dutch versions only)—he felt it was too distracting otherwise. Because he had new books to publish, he wanted them translated into English. With the help of the translator, Olive Jones, she helped Dick come up with a name that sounded like rabbit, and the name Miffy was chosen. From this point on, Nijntje and Miffy were one and the same. In 1963, Miffy was reintroduced into the world with four titles: *Miffy*, *Miffy at the Zoo*, *Miffy in the Snow*, and *Miffy at the Seaside*. With the success of Miffy, Bruna wanted to expand her world. So he introduced new characters: Snuffy the dog (1969), Poppy Pig (1977), Boris Bear (1989) and many more characters. He had no idea he had created a property that was larger than anything he could have ever imagined.

layout, Bruna designed the spreads so that the left side of the book had 4 sentence lines and the right side of the book would be a full illustration. He felt because the parents were reading to a

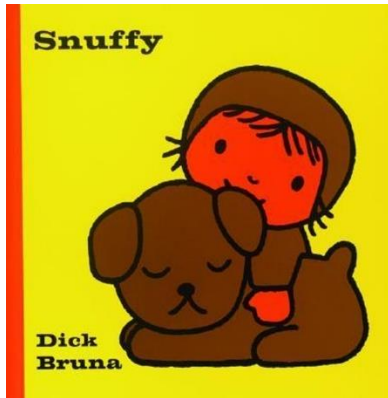


Figure 30. *Snuffy (US Edition)*, written and illustrated by Dick Bruna, Big Tent Entertainment, 2010.

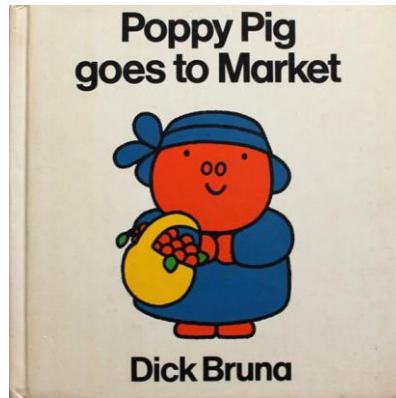


Figure 31. *Poppy Pig Goes to Market (US Edition)*, written and illustrated by Dick Bruna, Price Stern Sloan, 1981.

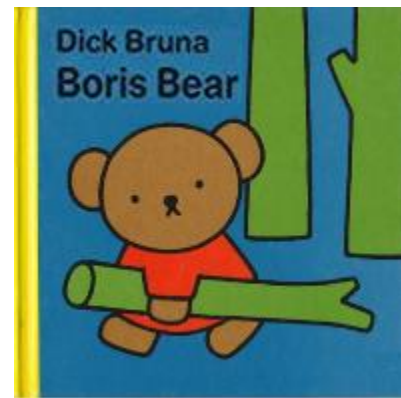


Figure 32. *Boris Bear (US Edition)*, written and illustrated by Dick Bruna, Big Tent Entertainment, 2010.

Back at A.W. Bruna, Dick became more distant from his work. Detective and spy novels had slowed down, and the new incoming trend was science fiction. Although he tried to get involved in science fiction, it was difficult for him to read and understand them. By 1975, A.W. Bruna & Sons experienced such a downturn in profits that Dick decided to leave the family business and concentrate on his own works. (A.W. Bruna & Sons joined the WPG Publishing Group in 2010. They changed their name to A.W. Bruna Publishers and are still producing new Zwarte Beertjes (Black Bears) novels.)

Bruna's Work Around the World

From his detective novel book covers for A.W. Bruna & Sons to his own work with Miffy, Bruna was getting international attention. In 1969, Bruna designed five postage stamps for the Netherlands Royal Post; he illustrated a mural for a children's hospital in Leidschendam, Netherlands and designed and illustrated posters for the city of Utrecht, UNICEF, Amnesty International and other organizations focusing on the well-being of children.

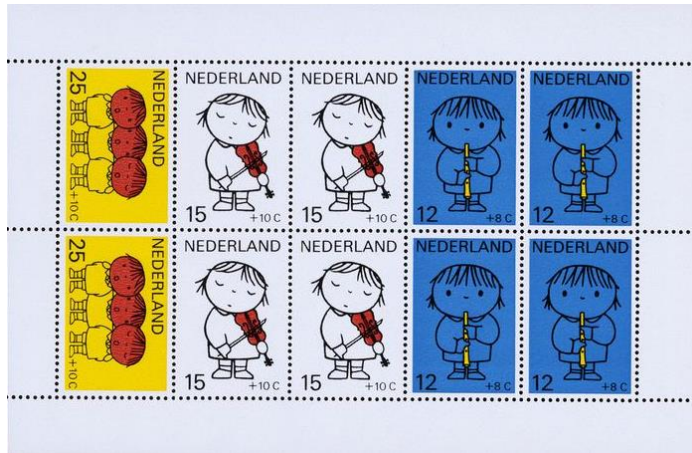


Figure 33. Stamp designs for the Netherlands Royal Post, 1969.

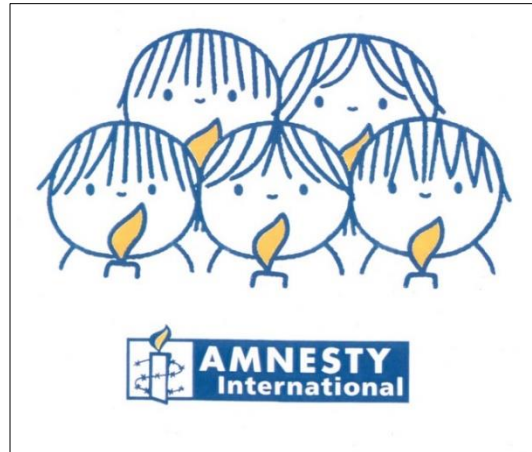


Figure 34. Poster for Amnesty International, 2002.



Figure 35. Anti-child labor poster for Mondiaal FNV, 1999.

Now that Bruna had more time, he enjoyed meeting with other working designers and illustrators and was part of a designer's social club at Steendrukkerij De Jong, the local printing house where he had his Miffy books printed. There he and his old friend, Pieter Brattinga, discussed the fact that Bruna's work was starting to have some licensing requests. Brattinga convinced Bruna to start a company that would have control over his intellectual assets. So, they created the company Mercis bv in 1971. This

company had full control of all Bruna's works plus had a say in all future developments and productions. Brattinga handled the business side of all the transactions, which freed Bruna to follow his creative endeavors—creating more picture books.

Children and designers from all around the world loved Miffy. Soon Dick Bruna was on school visits, interviews and world tours. Miffy made her tv debut in 1984 featured in a number of five minute animated shorts shown in most of Europe, called *Dick Bruna's Miffy Story Book Classics* —these shorts ran from 1984-1992. Eleven years

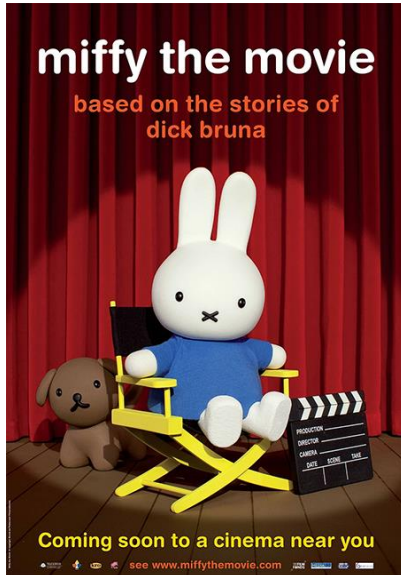


Figure 36. Promotional poster for *miffy the movie*, 2013.

later, *Miffy and Friends* debuted on the silver screen for a total of nine seasons (2003-2014). In 2013, *Miffy the Movie* was released and was shown in the Netherlands, Japan, Canada and the UK. Another tv series titled, *Miffy's Adventures Big and Small*, aired for three seasons from 2015-2017. In addition to the golden and silver screens, Miffy also shared her talents in theater as well. The premier of *Miffy, the Musical* was performed for the public on April 16, 2001, in the city of Utrecht. It was so popular, a follow-up musical, *Miffy is Back*, was performed on April 18, 2004.



Figure 37. Stamp designs for Japan, 1991-2000.

Dick Bruna's work is popular worldwide but is overwhelmingly appreciated in Japan. Because the Miffy books have been in Japan since the 1960's many Japanese at the time assumed Dick Bruna was Japanese. His simple line work and bright bold colors appeal to the Japanese sensibilities and is considered "kawaii" meaning cute. Bruna designed a series of stamps for Japan from 1991 to 2000. After the Great East Japan Earthquake of 2011, Bruna created an image of a tearful Miffy for the Children of Japan and made donations for rescue efforts. In 2009 he had a major exhibition of his work in Tokyo (which later travelled to Paris and at the Rijksmuseum in the Netherlands). From 2020 to 2022, Bruna's work was shown once again as a traveling exhibition throughout Japan, commemorating Miffy's 65th Birthday, even though Dick Bruna was no longer alive to see the show.

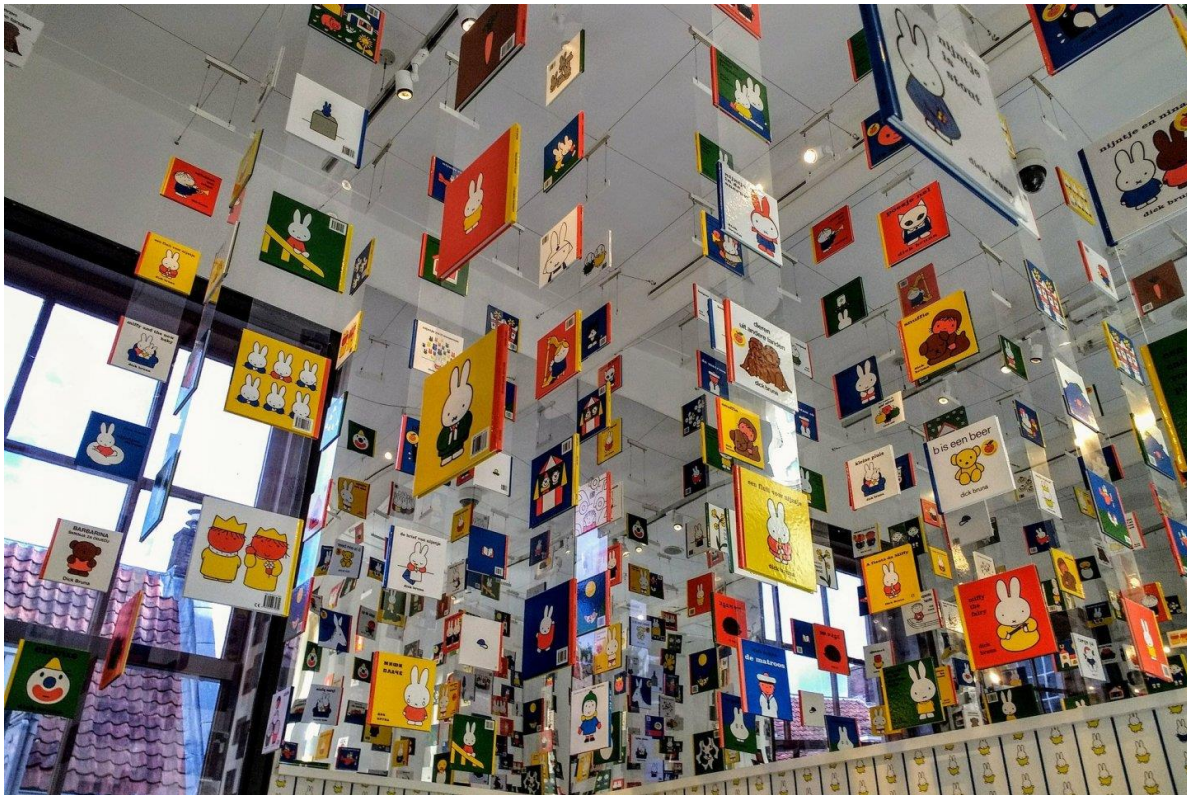


Figure 38. Part of the exhibit for the 65th Anniversary of Miffy in Japan, 2020-2022. Photo by Alex Hoekerd



Figure 39. UNICEF HK (Hong Kong) Child Ally X miffy Fun Day, 2023. An event held by UNICEF and Mercis bv to help children learn to empathize with others around the world. Photo by UNICEF Hong Kong.



Figure 40. Miffy airplane kit, Miffy fan and Miffy ears were provided at the unicef HK event, 2023. Photo by UNICEF HK (Hong Kong).



Figure 41. Monthly UNICEF donation envelopes featuring Miffy, 2023. Photo by UNICEF HK (Hong Kong).

In 2006 in Utrecht, Netherlands, a museum called the nijntje museum (Miffy museum)



Figure 42. Current logo for the nijntje museum (Miffy museum), 2023.

(formerly the Bruna Huis (Bruna House)) opened—there it featured more than 1,200 works of Bruna. This would be the largest tribute to Dick Bruna’s life work ever

assembled into a single retrospective. Bruna passed away



Figure 43. Gift shop for nijntje museum (Miffy museum) in Utrecht, Netherlands, 2020. Photo by Joop

in his sleep on the 16th of February, 2017. At that point, he had created 124 picture books (thirty-two of them featuring Miffy), eighty-five million books in print in more than fifty languages around the world.

Dick Bruna's Parting Gifts

Dick Bruna from a young age wanted to pursue a career in art. Not only did he achieve his dream of being an artist, designer and illustrator—he became a visionary. Through a simple drawing of a rabbit he drew for his son, he was able to create a world full of wonder and imagination that children everywhere enjoy. Throughout his early childhood and into his teens, he was always devoted to his craft—absorbing and learning all he could. Through his apprenticeships in London and travels to France, he was able to discover great artists like Léger and Matisse. Working as the main illustrator and designer at A.W. Bruna & Sons, he was able to experiment with many techniques and styles, which made him a versatile designer. In reflecting on Bruna's development, it was his constant persistence to become a minimalist: to limit the use of color; to eliminate perspective; and to create the simplest of forms—which made his work stand out. He truly understood the concept: less is more. He succeeded in creating Miffy. Dick leaves us with his greatest creation, which took years to achieve. He created a character that children all over the world adore. With Mercis bv, the company he started with his friend, Pieter Brattinga, Bruna's vision will go on for many years to come—developing new exhibits, entertaining shows and programs along with toys, stationery, room décor and other lifestyle products for the young and the young-at-heart. Dick Bruna has given



us gifts that will live on—through Miffy, his picture books, illustrations and designs that will continue to inspire.

Figure 44. Dick Bruna with various sized Miffy plushies, 2023. Design by nijntje museum (Miffy Museum)

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