



Bruce Mozert (American, 1916-2015)
“Untitled (Jumping Hurdles),” c. 1950
Silver Gelatin Photograph, 20 x 24 in.

INTRODUCTION

Provided by the Appleton Museum of Art, College of Central Florida, this teaching poster features one of Bruce Mozert’s beautiful and iconic underwater photographs of Silver Springs, “Jumping Hurdles.” This teaching poster is also a perfect way to introduce students to the Appleton before a class field trip and as a tool to enhance student’s visual literacy. Before you start a discussion, give the students a few minutes to really look at the poster. Ask students to tell you what they see. After you’ve spent a few minutes discussing all the recognizable elements, have the students dig for deeper meaning and understanding. Having students verbalize their thoughts when examining a piece of art encourages better critical thinking.

We hope you will hang it in your classroom as a source of inspiration for thoughtful discussion, creative thinking and art-making.

ABOUT THE ARTWORK

“Jumping Hurdles” is a black and white photograph of a woman appearing to jump high over a hurdle as a man cheers her on. The woman in the top center of the photograph wears a white bathing suit with her right arm and leg reaching over the hurdle, while her left arm and leg follow straight behind. The man crouches left of center with his hands cupped around his mouth as though he is yelling. Tall, wavy grass frames the tableau in the left foreground and right background.

Upon closer examination, it is evident that the photograph has been taken underwater. The bottom halves of three people can be seen in the background, ruining the illusion that this activity is occurring on ground. The woman isn’t jumping over the hurdle, but rather suspended in the water above it. The dark striations at the top of the photograph aren’t clouds, but ripples and shadows in the water. The three figures in the background also reveal that Mozert took this photo in relatively shallow water near the swimming area of Silver Springs, allowing the models to easily surface for air without the help of extra assistants with air hoses.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Bruce Mozert (1916-2015) holds a rich and unique place in Florida’s history. He spent 30 years as the official photographer for Silver Springs, Florida’s first tourist attraction. Using the crystal-clear waters of the springs, Mozert’s iconic underwater photography and exclusive access created some of the most widely recognizable tourism photography of the mid-20th century. Mozert’s underwater photographs of everyday activities like cooking, cleaning and sports transformed Florida’s springs as magical vacation destinations and Hollywood filming sites.

Mozert was both an innovator and inventor. Mozert is considered a pioneer of underwater photography. To aid his underwater photographs, Mozert began experimenting and inventing his own waterproof containers to house his cameras. He also created underwater lighting gear to create lighting patterns to better capture his photographs.

SILVER SPRINGS

Silver Springs, a nature park surrounding the headwaters of the Silver River, is located east of Ocala in North Central Florida and less than two miles away from the Appleton Museum of Art. Now known as Silver Springs State Park, and operated by the state of Florida, Silver Springs has been a tourist destination since the 1870s with its peak popularity in the 1950s. Silver Springs, the largest artesian spring in the world, is known for its crystal-clear water and glass-bottomed boats that allow visitors to look at life underwater. Silver Springs and other Florida attractions lost their popularity with the opening of Walt Disney World in 1971.

PARADISE PARK

Paradise Park, the once segregated counterpart to Silver Springs, was located just one mile downriver and operated from 1949 to 1969. Paradise Park was enjoyed by vacationing African-Americans and featured its own beach, buildings, concessions and glass-bottomed boat rides. Bruce Mozert took many of the official photos of Paradise Park, providing an important visual history for generations to come.

DID YOU KNOW?

Mozert would train the models to hold their breath for up to two minutes underwater and sink quickly to the bottom to better enable him to photograph them.

Mozert preferred taking his underwater photographs in the afternoon and on overcast days to prevent “zebra stripes” in the water.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

What is the setting of this photograph? How can you tell?

What makes this photograph unusual?

What would you add to this photograph to make the illusion more believable?

Bruce Mozert took these photos to help promote Silver Springs. Do these photos make you want to visit? Why, or why not?

What role does texture play in the photograph?

Would the photograph be better if it was in color? Why or why not?

What sort of challenges might Bruce Mozert have had to overcome to take this photograph?

Have you ever tried to take a photograph underwater? What challenges did you face?

SUGGESTED CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

Underwater Diorama
Create an underwater diorama of Silver Springs using a shoebox. Leave room at the top of the shoebox to include the horizon and activities happening above the water. Don’t forget the famous glass-bottomed boats! You can even add the figure of Bruce Mozert taking photos of people underwater.

Grey-toned Underwater Painting
Use only black and white paint to create different shades of grey for an underwater painting. With a limited palette, students can focus on the light and dark in their composition. Make sure students add plants and animals to their underwater landscape.

Positive and Negative Space
Learn about positive and negative space using black and white paper. Have students use half a piece of black paper and a pencil to create a simple outline drawing. Cut the drawing out to create a silhouette of the drawing. Glue the black paper leftover from the cut-out drawing onto a larger white piece of paper. Next glue the silhouette of the drawing upside down under the leftover black paper, making sure to align the edges.

Invent a Waterproof Container
Bruce Mozert made his own underwater devices to facilitate his taking photographs underwater. In that spirit, challenge students to create their own waterproof container using materials found around the classroom or home. Be sure to test the containers.

Advertising Silver Springs
Many of Bruce Mozert’s photographs were advertisements for Silver Springs. Look at vintage Silver Springs ads and create your own in a similar style. What image would you choose? What text would you include to entice people to visit?

History Projects
Learn more about the histories of Silver Springs and Paradise Park. Research newspaper archives for articles and conduct oral interviews. Present what you’ve learned to classmates. It’s important to research and know local histories.

Haiku Poetry Writing
Use Bruce Mozert’s photographs to inspire haiku-writing. For example: Leaping over the hurdle/she floats gracefully up above/frozen forever in time.

SUGGESTED READING

<https://www.holdenluntz.com/artists/bruce-mozert/>

<https://silversprings.com/>

Mozert, B., & Monroe, G. (2008). Silver Springs: The underwater photography of Bruce Mozert. Gainesville: University Press of Florida.

Vickers, L., & Wilson-Graham, C. (2015). Remembering Paradise Park: Tourism and segregation at Silver Springs. Gainesville: University Press of Florida.

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