Jonathan Long

André Kertész (1894-1985)

Born Kertész Andor, André Kertész was one of the major innovators in twentieth century photography. He was self-taught, and largely produced scenes of everyday life in his native Hungary. After moving to Paris in 1925, he embarked on a career as a professional photographer, and began to publish his images in many major illustrated periodicals in Europe. He was invited to the United States by Keystone Studios in 1936 and settled there permanently, taking US citizenship in 1944. Kertész continued to undertake photo-reportage assignments for *Look*, *Harper’s Bazaar*, and *Vogue*, while also exhibiting extensively and publishing his work in book form.

The formal and stylistic approaches developed in his Parisian period remained hallmarks of his photographs throughout his career. A series of nudes photographed with the help of distorting mirrors (1933) brought him briefly within the ambit of Surrealism; but his most typical work is characterised by unconventional camera angles and formal composition, as well as a heightened sense of the geometric properties of common objects, and a striking management of light, shadow, and reflection, particularly in urban environments by day and by night. Kertész is one of a generation of photographers who pioneered the introduction of avant-garde techniques into the photojournalistic mainstream.

References and further reading

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