

= André Kertész =

André Kertész (French : [kɛʁtɛs] ; 2 July 1894 ? 28 September 1985) , born Kertész Andor , was a Hungarian @-@ born photographer known for his groundbreaking contributions to photographic composition and the photo essay . In the early years of his career , his then @-@ unorthodox camera angles and style prevented his work from gaining wider recognition . Kertész never felt that he had gained the worldwide recognition he deserved . Today he is considered one of the seminal figures of photojournalism . The Estate of André Kertész is represented by Bruce Silverstein Gallery New York , NY

Expected by his family to work as a stockbroker , Kertész pursued photography independently as an autodidact , and his early work was published primarily in magazines , a major market in those years . This continued until much later in his life , when Kertész stopped accepting commissions . He served briefly in World War I and moved to Paris in 1925 , then the artistic capital of the world , against the wishes of his family . In Paris he worked for France 's first illustrated magazine called VU . Involved with many young immigrant artists and the Dada movement , he achieved critical and commercial success .

Due to German persecution of the Jews and the threat of World War II , Kertész decided to emigrate to the United States in 1936 , where he had to rebuild his reputation through commissioned work . In the 1940s and 1950s , he stopped working for magazines and began to achieve greater international success . His career is generally divided into four periods , based on where he was working and his work was most prominently known . They are called the Hungarian period , the French period , the American period and , toward the end of his life , the International period .

= = Biography = =

= = = Early life and education = = =

Andor Kertész was born on 2 July 1894 in Budapest to the middle @-@ class Jewish family of Lipót Kertész , a bookseller , and his wife , Ernesztin Hoffmann . Andor , known as " Bandi " to his friends , was the middle child of three sons , including Imre and Jen? . When Lipót died in 1908 from tuberculosis , the widowed Ernesztin was without a source of income to support their three children . Ernesztin 's brother , Lipót Hoffmann , provided for the family and acted much like a father to the boys . The family soon moved to Hoffman 's country property in Szigetbecse . Kertész grew up in a leisurely pace of life and pastoral setting that would shape his later career path .

Hoffman paid for his middle nephew 's business classes at the Academy of Commerce until his 1912 graduation , and arranged his hiring by the stock exchange soon after . Unlike his older brother Imre , who worked at the exchange in Budapest for all his life , Kertész had little interest in the field . He was drawn to illustrated magazines and to activities like fishing and swimming in the Danube River near his uncle 's property .

Kertész 's first encounters with magazine photography inspired him to learn photography . He was also influenced by certain paintings by Lajos Tihanyi and Gyula Zilzer , as well as by poetry .

= = = Hungarian period = = =

After earning enough money , Kertész quickly bought his first camera (an ICA box camera) in 1912 , despite his family 's protests to continue his career in business . In his free time , he photographed the local peasants , gypsies , and landscape of the surrounding Hungarian Plains (the puszta) . His first photograph is believed to be " Sleeping Boy , Budapest , 1912 " . His photographs were first published in 1917 in the magazine Érdekes Újság , during World War I , while Kertész was serving in the Austro @-@ Hungarian army . As early as 1914 (for example , " Eugene , 1914 ") , his distinctive and mature style was already evident .

In 1914 , at the age of 20 , he was sent to the frontline , where he took photographs of life in the trenches with a lightweight camera (a Goerz Tenax) . Most of these photographs were destroyed during the violence of the Hungarian Revolution of 1919 . Wounded in 1915 by a bullet , Kertész suffered temporary paralysis of his left arm .

He was sent for convalescence to a military hospital in Budapest , but was later transferred to Esztergom , where he continued to take photographs . These included a self @-@ portrait for a competition in the magazine *Borsszem Jankó* . His most famous piece of this period was " Underwater Swimmer , Esztergom , 1917 " , the only surviving work of a series of a swimmer whose image is distorted by the water . Kertész explored the subject more thoroughly in his series of " Distortions " photographs during the early 1930s .

Kertész did not heal soon enough to return to combat , and with peace in 1918 , he returned to the stock exchange . There he met his future wife Erzsebet Salomon (later changed to Elizabeth Saly) , who also worked at the exchange . He began to pursue her romantically . During this period of work and throughout his whole career , he used Elizabeth as a model for his photographs . Kertész also took numerous photographs of his brother Jen? . Kertész left his career at the exchange to try agricultural work and beekeeping during the early 1920s . This venture was brief given the political turmoil that accompanied the revolution and coming of communism .

After returning to the stock exchange , Kertész decided to emigrate , to study at one of France 's photographic schools . His mother dissuaded him , and he did not emigrate for several years . Working during the day at the exchange , he pursued photography the rest of the time .

In 1923 , the Hungarian Amateur Photographer 's Association selected one of his photographs for its silver award , on the condition that he print it by the bromoil process . Kertész disliked this , so turned down the medal . Instead , he was given a diploma from the association . On its 26 June 1925 , the Hungarian news magazine *Érdekes Újság* used one of his photographs for its cover , giving him widespread publicity . By that time , Kertész was determined to photograph the sights in Paris and join its artistic culture .

= = = French period = = =

Kertész emigrated to Paris in September 1925 , leaving behind his mother , his unofficial fiancée Elizabeth , both brothers , and his uncle Hoffman , who died shortly afterward . Jen? later emigrated to Argentina . Elizabeth Kertész remained until her future husband was well enough established in Paris that they could marry . Kertész was among numerous Hungarian artists who emigrated during these decades , including François Kollar , Robert Capa , Emeric Fehér , Brassai , and Julia Bathory . Man Ray , Germaine Krull and Lucien Aigner also emigrated to Paris during this period .

Initially Kertész took on commissioned work for several European magazines , gaining publication of his work in Germany , France , Italy and Great Britain . Soon after arriving in Paris , Kertész changed his first name to André , which he kept for the rest of his life . In Paris he found critical and commercial success . In 1927 Kertész was the first photographer to have a one @-@ man exhibition ; Jan Slivinsky presented 30 of his photographs at the " *Sacre du Printemps Gallery* " . Kertész had become connected with members of the growing Dada movement . Paul Dermée dubbed him " Brother Seer " and " Brother Seeing Eye " during his first solo exhibit , alluding to a medieval monastery where all the monks were blind bar one . Over the next years , Kertész was featured in both solo exhibits and group shows . In 1932 at the Julien Levy Gallery in New York , the price of Kertész 's proofs was set at US \$ 20 (\$ 347 in 2016) , a large sum of money during the Great Depression .

Kertész and other Hungarian artists formed a synergistic circle ; he was featured in exhibits with some of them later in his life . Visiting his sculptor friends , he was fascinated by the Cubism movement . He created photo portraits of painters Piet Mondrian and Marc Chagall , the writer Colette , and film @-@ maker Sergei Eisenstein . In 1928 , Kertész switched from using plate @-@ glass cameras to a Leica . This period of work was one of his most productive ; he was photographing daily , with work divided between magazine commissions through the late 1920s and his personal pieces . In 1930 , at the Exposition Coloniale in Paris , Kertész was awarded a silver

medal for services to photography .

Kertész was published in French magazines such as Vu and Art et Médecine , for which his work was used for numerous covers . His greatest journalistic collaboration was with Lucien Vogel , the French editor and publisher of Vu . Vogel published his work as photo essays , letting Kertész report on various subjects through images . The photographer was intrigued with the variety of topics assigned by Vogel .

In 1933 Kertész was commissioned for the series , Distortion , about 200 photographs of Najinskaya Verackhatz and Nadia Kasine , two models portrayed nude and in various poses , with their reflections caught in a combination of distortion mirrors , similar to a carnival 's house of mirrors . In some photographs , only certain limbs or features were visible in the reflection . Some images also appeared in the 2 March issue of the " girly magazine " Le Sourire and in the 15 September 1933 issue of Arts et métiers graphiques . Later that year , Kertész published the book Distortions , a collection of the work .

In 1933 Kertész published his first personal book of photographs , Enfants , dedicated to his fiancée Elizabeth and his mother , who had died that year . He published regularly during the succeeding years . Paris (1934) was dedicated to his brothers Imre and Jen? . Nos Amies les bêtes (" Our Friends the Animals ") was released in 1936 and Les Cathédrales du vin (" The Cathedrals of Wine ") in 1937 .

= = = Marriage and family = = =

In the late 1920s , Kertész secretly married a French portrait photographer by the name of Rosza Klein (she used the name Rogi André) . The marriage was short @-@ lived and he never spoke about it .

In 1930 , he ventured back to Hungary to visit his family . After his return to Paris , Elizabeth followed him in 1931 , despite opposition by her family . Elizabeth and André remained together for the rest of their lives . Despite his mother 's dying in early 1933 , Kertész married Elizabeth on 17 June 1933 . He was said to have spent less time with his artist friends in favor of his new wife .

In 1936 they emigrated to New York , where within a decade , they became naturalized citizens . After creating and running a successful cosmetic business for years , in 1977 Elizabeth died of cancer .

= = = Pending war = = =

Social and political tensions were rising in Europe with the growing strength in Germany of the Nazi Party . Many magazines emphasized stories about political topics and stopped publishing Kertész because of his apolitical subjects . With his commissioned work dropping and persecution of Jews increasing , Kertész and Elizabeth decided to move to New York . He was offered work at the Keystone agency owned by Ernie Prince . In 1936 , Kertész and Elizabeth boarded the SS Washington bound for Manhattan .

The couple arrived in New York on 15 October 1936 , with Kertész intent on finding fame in America . They lived at the Beaux Arts Hotel in Greenwich Village . Kertész found life in America more difficult than he had imagined , beginning a period which he later referred to as the " absolute tragedy " . Deprived of his artist friends , he also found that Americans rejected having their photos taken on the street . Soon after his arrival , Kertész approached Beaumont Newhall , director of the photographic department at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) , who was preparing a show entitled Photography 1839 ? 1937 . Offering Newhall some of his Distortions photographs , Kertész bristled at his criticism , but Newhall did exhibit the photographs . In December 1937 Kertész had his first solo show in New York at the PM Gallery .

The Keystone agency , who had offered him offsite work , required him to stay in the company 's studio . Kertész tried to return to France to visit , but had no money . By the time he had saved enough , World War II had begun and travel to France was nearly impossible . His struggles with English compounded his problems . Years after learning to speak French in Paris , it was difficult for

him to learn another new language . The lack of fluent language added to his feeling like an outsider .

Frustrated , Kertész left Keystone after Prince left the company in 1937 . He was commissioned by Harper 's Bazaar for an article on the Saks Fifth Avenue department store in their April 1937 issue . The magazine continued to use him in further issues , and he also took commissions from Town and Country to supplement his income . Vogue invited the photographer to work for the magazine , but he declined , believing it was not appropriate work for him . He chose to work for Life magazine , starting with a piece called The Tugboat . Despite orders , he photographed more than just tugboats , including works on the entire harbor and its activities . Life refused to publish the unauthorized photographs . Kertész resented the constraints on his curiosity .

On 25 October 1938 , Look printed a series of Kertész photographs , entitled A Fireman Goes to School ; but credited them mistakenly to Ernie Prince , his former boss . Infuriated , Kertész considered never working with photo magazines again . His work was published in the magazine Coronet in 1937 , but in 1939 he was excluded when the magazine published a special issue featuring its " Most memorable photographs " . He later severed all ties to the magazine and its editor Arnold Gingrich . After being excluded from the June 1941 issue of Vogue , dedicated to photography , Kertész broke off relations with them . He had contributed to more than 30 commissioned photo essays and articles in both Vogue and House and Garden , but was omitted from the list of featured photographers .

In 1941 , the Kertész couple were designated as enemy aliens because of World War II (Hungary was fighting on the side of the Axis powers) . Kertész was not permitted to photograph outdoors or to have any project related to national security . Trying to avoid trouble because Elizabeth had started a cosmetics company (Cosmia Laboratories) , Kertész ceased to do commissioned work and essentially disappeared from the photographic world for three years .

On 20 January 1944 , Elizabeth became a US citizen ; and Kertész was naturalized on 3 February . Despite competition from photographers such as Irving Penn , Kertész regained commissioned work . He was omitted from the list of 63 photographers which Vogue 's identified as significant in its " photographic genealogical tree " . But , House and Garden commissioned him to do photographs for a Christmas issue . In addition , in June 1944 László Moholy @-@ Nagy , director of the New Bauhaus - American School of Design offered him a position teaching photography . Despite the honor , he turned the offer down .

In 1945 , Kertész released a new book , Day of Paris , made up of photographs taken just before his emigration from France . It gained critical success . With his wife 's cosmetic business booming , Kertész agreed in 1946 to a long @-@ term , exclusive contract with House and Garden . Although it restricted his editorial freedom and required many hours in the studio , the pay of at least US \$ 10 @,@ 000 per annum (\$ 121 @,@ 000 per year in 2016) was satisfactory . All photographic negatives were returned to him within six months for his own use .

Kertész worked in the settings of many famous homes and notable places , as well as overseas , where he traveled again in England , Budapest and Paris , renewing friendships and making new ones . During the 1945 ? 62 period at House and Garden , the magazine published more than 3 @,@ 000 of his photographs , and he created a high reputation in the industry . With little time for his personal work , Kertész felt starved of being able to exercise more artistic creativity .

= = = Later life = = =

In 1946 , Kertész had a solo exhibition at the Art Institute of Chicago , featuring photographs from his Day of Paris series . Kertész said this was one of his greatest times in the United States . In 1952 , he and his wife moved to a 12th @-@ floor apartment near Washington Square Park , the setting for some of his best photographs since having immigrated to the US . Using a telephoto lens , he took a series of snow @-@ covered Washington Square , showing numerous silhouettes and tracks . In 1955 he was insulted to have his work excluded when Edward Steichen 's The Family of Man show was featured at MoMA . Despite the success of the Chicago show , Kertész did not gain another exhibit until 1962 , when his photographs were shown at Long Island University .

= = = International period = = =

Toward the end of 1961 , Kertész broke his contract to Condé Nast Publishing after a minor dispute , and started doing his own work again . This later period of his life is often referred to as the " International period " , when he gained worldwide recognition and his photos were exhibited in many countries . In 1962 his work was exhibited in Venice ; in 1963 , he was one of the invited artists of the IV Mostra Biennale Internazionale della Fotografia there and he was awarded a gold medal for his dedication to the photographic industry . Later in 1963 , his work was shown in Paris at the Bibliothèque nationale de France . He later visited Argentina to see his younger brother Jen? for the first time in years . Kertész experimented with color photographs , but only produced a few .

In 1964 , soon after John Szarkowski became the photography director at the Museum of Modern Art , he featured Kertész in a solo show . With his work critically acclaimed , Kertész gained recognition in the photographic world as an important artist . The work of Kertész was featured in numerous exhibitions throughout the world in his later life , even into his early nineties . Due to his newfound success , in 1965 Kertész was appointed as a member of the American Society of Media Photographers .

His awards rapidly accumulated :

1974 , Guggenheim Fellowship ;

1974 , Commander of the French Ordre des Arts et des Lettres ;

1977 , Mayor 's Award of Honor for Arts and Culture in New York ,

1980 the Medal of the City of Paris , and the first Annual Award of the Association of International Photography Art Dealers in New York ; and

1981 , honorary Doctorate of Fine Arts from Bard College , and the New York Mayor 's Award of Honor for Arts and Culture that year .

During this period , Kertész produced a number of new books . He was able to recover some of the negatives he had left in France decades before .

Despite his successes , Kertész still felt unrecognised as a photographer . His last years were spent travelling to various locations around the globe for his exhibitions , especially Japan , and rekindling friendships with other artists . To deal with the loss of his wife in 1977 , Kertész fell back on his new network of friends , often visiting them to talk . By this time , he was said to have learned basic English and talked in what his friends called " Kertészian " , a mixture of Hungarian , English and French .

In 1979 , the Polaroid Corporation gave him one of their new SX @-@ 70 cameras , which he experimented with into the 1980s . Still growing in fame , Kertész was granted the National Grand Prize of Photography in Paris in 1982 , as well as the 21st Annual George Washington Award from the American Hungarian Foundation the same year .

= = Legacy and honors = =

1983 , honorary Doctorate from the Royal College of Art ; and title of Chevalier de la Légion d 'honneur in Paris , together with an apartment for future visits to the city ;

1984 , the Maine Photographic Workshop 's first Annual Lifetime Achievement Award ;

1984 , purchase of 100 prints by the Metropolitan Museum of Art , its largest acquisition of work from a living artist ;

1985 , Californian Distinguished Career in Photography Award ;

1985 , first Annual Master of Photography Award , presented by the International Center of Photography ; and

1985 , honorary Doctorate of Fine Arts from Parson 's School of Design of the New School for Social Research .

Kertész died peacefully in his sleep at home on 28 September 1985 ; he was cremated and his ashes were interred with those of his wife .

= = Critical evaluation = =

Throughout most of his career Kertész was depicted as the " unknown soldier " who worked behind the scenes of photography , yet was rarely cited for his work , even into his death in the 1980s . Kertész thought himself unrecognised throughout his life , despite spending his life in the eternal search for acceptance and fame . Though Kertész received numerous awards for photography , he never felt both his style and work was accepted by critics and art audiences alike . Although , in 1927 , he was the first photographer to have a solo exhibition , Kertész said that it was not until his 1946 exhibition at the Art Institute of Chicago , that he first felt he received positive reviews on his work , and often cites this show as one of his finest moments in America . During his stay in America , he was cited as being an intimate artist , bringing the viewer into his work , even when the picture was that of subjects such as the intimidating New York City and even his reproduced work printed after his death received good reviews ; " Kertész was above all a consistently fine photographer " . Kertész 's work itself is often described as predominantly utilising light and even Kertész himself said that " I write with light " . He was never considered to " comment " on his subjects , but rather capture them ? this is often cited as why his work is often overlooked ; he stuck to no political agenda and offered no deeper thought to his photographs other than the simplicity of life . With his art 's intimate feeling and nostalgic tone , Kertész 's images alluded to a sense of timelessness which was inevitably only recognised after his death . Unlike other photographers , Kertész 's work gave an insight into his life , showing a chronological order of where he spent his time ; for example , many of his French photographs were from cafés where he spent the majority of his time waiting for artistic inspiration .

Although Kertész rarely received bad reviews , it was the lack of commentary that lead to the photographer feeling distant from recognition . Now , however , he is often considered to be the father of photojournalism . Even other photographers cite Kertész and his photographs as being inspirational ; Henri Cartier @-@ Bresson once said of him in the early 1930s , " We all owe him a great deal . " When he was 90 years old , a person asked him why he was still taking photographs . He replied , " I 'm still hungry . "

= = Exhibitions = =

This list includes material from Capa et al , Corkin & Lifson , Könemann et al , and Naef et al .

= = Selected works = =

Bibliography

This list is compiled from Capa et al , Corkin & Lifson and Könemann et al .