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MAJOR RETROSPECTIVE OF ANDRÉ KERTÉSZ OPENS FEBRUARY 6, 2005 AT THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

Renowned Photographer Made Famous Photographs of Prewar Paris



André Kertész

Under the Eiffel Tower, 1929

gelatin silver print mounted on paperboard, 19.6 x 22.4 cm (7 11/16 x 8 13/16)

National Gallery of Art, Washington, Gift of The André and Elizabeth Kertész Foundation

André Kertész photographs reproduced courtesy of the Estate of André Kertész

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Washington, DC--In a 70-year career, which spanned much of the 20th century, André Kertész (1894-1985) made some of the most deceptively simple yet compelling and

poetic photographs ever created. **André Kertész**, on view February 6 through May 15, 2005, at the National Gallery of Art, will be the first major Kertész retrospective of vintage photographs held in the United States; also, the show will present works never before exhibited or reproduced. Following its premiere in Washington, D.C., the exhibition will travel to the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, where it will be on view June 12 through September 5, 2005.

Including some of the most celebrated works in 20th-century photography--such as *Chez Mondrian* and *Satiric Dancer*, both from 1926--120 objects will feature photographs from all periods of Kertész's exceptionally rich and diverse body of work: from his early photographs of his native Budapest made in the 1910s and early 1920s, to his studies of Paris in the 1920s and 1930s, and the final series of photographs he took of New York in the 1970s and 1980s, shortly before his death.

"André Kertész was a man of immense talent. Throughout his life he made photographs that are infused with a haunting poetry and quiet authority few other photographers of his time--or any other--could rival," said Earl A. Powell III, director, National Gallery of Art. "We are grateful to the lenders and the funders that have made this important retrospective possible."

Exhibition Support

The exhibition at the National Gallery of Art is made possible through the generous support of the Trellis Fund and The Ryna and Melvin Cohen Family Foundation. Additional support for the catalogue has been received from The André and Elizabeth Kertész Foundation.

The Exhibition

Arranged chronologically, the exhibition surveys the development of Kertész's oeuvre. It demonstrates his deep involvement with other artists of his time and shows how he used the camera to examine his relationship to the people and things around him. Kertész is revealed as emblematic of a generation of 20th-century artists whose migrations allowed them to rethink the nature and aims of their art as they sought to reconcile their native sensibilities with new cultures.

Born Kertész Andor, he began photographing in 1912. When he served in the Austro-Hungarian army in World War I, he packed a camera. He took photographs not of the battles or destruction of the war, but of soldiers during their rare moments of leisure. After the war, he became fascinated with recording scenes of active, physically fit young people exuberantly enjoying life, such as his portrait of his brother, *Jenő Kertész* (1919-1924). His circle of friends at this time grew to include many painters and graphic artists who sought to find the roots of a new Hungarian identity through a celebration of Hungary's rural past and its peasant life. The influence of their art and ideas can be seen in such Kertész photographs as *Blind Musician, Abony* (1921).

Kertész in Paris

In 1925, after several desultory years working in a variety of jobs in Budapest, Kertész Andor decided to pursue a career in photography. Like so many artists and intellectuals of the period, he moved to Paris, where he changed his name to André Kertész. Never fluent in French, he was closest to his fellow Hungarians, including the painters Lajos Tihanyi, Gyula Zilzer, and István Beőthy. He also met and photographed such luminaries as Marc Chagall, Colette, Sergei Eisenstein, Tristan Tzara, and many others. One of his best-known works, *Chez Mondrian* (1926), depicts Mondrian's vestibule.

Kertész's poetic celebrations of traditional Parisian life and culture--its cafés, fairs, and parks; its streets, clochards, and the Seine--captured the essential mystery of the French capital. During his years in Paris he created some of his most well-known works, including *Meudon* (1928), *Under the Eiffel Tower* (1929), and *Clock of the Académie Française* (1929). Kertész was fortunate to arrive in Paris at the moment when European illustrated magazines were hungry for photographs to fill their pages. He sold his work to--and gained wide recognition in--such French periodicals as *Vu*, *L'Art Vivant*, and *Variétés* and the German publications *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung* and *UHU*.

Kertész in New York

In 1936, lured by a lucrative contract to establish a fashion studio for a picture agency in New York, Kertész moved to the United States. He soon realized, though, that he was

not adept at studio work and that his European sensibility did not merge easily with an American way of doing business. However, the growing hostilities in Europe prevented him from returning there, and he remained in America for the rest of his life. Kertész worked for *Harper's Bazaar*, *House and Garden*, and other magazines. He also made photographs for himself that express his fascination with the spectacle of New York City, and his growing sense of isolation and loneliness.

In 1962, after fifteen years, Kertész quit his job at *House and Garden*. At the same time, his work began to find broad favor with an American audience increasingly fascinated with European photography of the period preceding World War II. By the mid-1970s, a succession of high quality books, exhibitions, and portfolios made Kertész a rising star in the photography world. The final years of Kertész's life were filled with honors and awards, perhaps the greatest of which was receiving the decoration of the Legion of Honor from the French government.

As a sign of his deeply felt connection to the country where he had first achieved significant artistic success, Kertész made plans to donate his archive to the French government, including a lifetime of notes and correspondence as well as his negatives and contact sheets. He also founded The André and Elizabeth Kertész Foundation in New York and dedicated it to supporting the arts and preserving his legacy. He continued to explore the world through his camera with his characteristic playful curiosity almost up to his death; he died at home in New York on September 28, 1985.

Curators, Catalogue, Related Activities

Sarah Greenough, curator and head of the department of photographs, National Gallery of Art, is the exhibition curator.

The exhibition catalogue, **André Kertész**, is by Greenough, Robert Gurbo, curator, The André Kertész Foundation, and Sarah Kennel, assistant curator, National Gallery of Art. The essays-- on the artist's years in Hungary (1894-1925); Paris (1925-1936); and New York (1936-1961 and 1962-1985)-- reevaluate Kertész's art through a close study of his photographs and the archival material he himself saved, as well as through an examination of his relationship to the social, cultural, and artistic communities within

which he worked. Published by the National Gallery of Art, Washington, in association with Princeton University Press, the book is available in the Gallery Shops, from the Gallery's Web site at www.nga.gov/shop (<http://www.nga.gov/shop>) , or by phone at (800) 697-9350 or (202) 842-6002 for \$60 in hardcover and \$40 in softcover (316 pp., 4 color, 112 tritone and 135 black-and-white).

Greenough will present the opening day lecture, "Mystery, Melancholy, and Nostalgia: André Kertész's Changing Vision of Paris," on February 6. Sarah Kennel will present an illustrated lecture, "Picturing Paris: Emigré Photographers in the City of Light, 1920-1940," on March 6. Both lectures will be given at 2:00 p.m. in the East Building Auditorium.

The **André Kertész** exhibition is part of *Paris on the Potomac*, a citywide celebration honoring the longstanding cultural ties between the two world capitals of Washington, D.C., and Paris. To learn more, visit www.parisonthepotomac.org.

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General Information

The National Gallery of Art and its Sculpture Garden are at all times free to the public. They are located on the National Mall between 3rd and 9th Streets along Constitution Avenue NW and are open Monday through Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and Sunday from 11:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. The Gallery is closed on December 25 and January 1. With the exception of the atrium and library, the galleries in the East Building will be closing gradually beginning in July 2013 and will remain closed for approximately three years for Master Facilities Plan and renovations. For specific updates on gallery closings, visit www.nga.gov/renovation (<http://www.nga.gov/renovation>) .

For information call (202) 737-4215 or the Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD) at (202) 842-6176, or visit the Gallery's website at www.nga.gov. Follow the Gallery on [Facebook](http://www.facebook.com/NationalGalleryofArt) at www.facebook.com/NationalGalleryofArt and on [Twitter](http://twitter.com/ngadc) at twitter.com/ngadc.

Visitors will be asked to present all carried items for inspection upon entering. Checkrooms are free of charge and located at each entrance. Luggage and other oversized bags must be presented at the 4th Street entrances to the East or West Building to permit x-ray screening and must be deposited in the checkrooms at those entrances. For the safety of visitors and the works of art, nothing may be carried into the Gallery on a visitor's back. Any bag or other items that cannot be carried reasonably and safely in some other manner must be left in the checkrooms. Items larger than 17 by 26 inches cannot be accepted by the Gallery or its checkrooms.

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