

NEW YORK

André KERTÉSZ / LŐRINCZY György

7 March – 30 April 2020

The names André Kertész and György Lőrinczy do not typically occur in the same context in the history of Hungarian photography. While they knew each other – as a photograph of the two of them taken in New York in the 1970s, as well as a postcard bear witness – Kertész and Lőrinczy belonged to different generations. Their oeuvres can neither be linked according to the tendencies they represent: while the former is generally considered one of the most important representatives of subjective documentary photography, the latter is chiefly mentioned in connection with abstract photography. Still, in what sort of relation can their photographs be shown side by side, aside from the fact that they were taken in the same city?

André Kertész was born in Budapest in 1894, then moved to Paris in 1925, where his first large exhibition was held at the Galerie Au Sacre du Printemps in 1927. His photographs were published in such international magazines as *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung*, *Vogue*, and *L'Art vivant*. By 1935, the oppressive atmosphere of growing anti-Semitism in Europe had reached Kertész, so in 1936 he submitted an appeal for an American visa and began working in New York for the Keystone Press Agency. Six months later he quit his job and tried to make his way as a freelancer. At this time, however, photojournalism underwent a significant shift, and the new "aggressive" style did not correspond with Kertész's lyricism. The fact that during the Second World War the authorities considered him a hostile immigrant, and forbid taking photos on the street, added to his loss of inclination. In 1952 he moved to lower Fifth Avenue with his wife, Elizabeth. Greenwich Village reminded Kertész of Paris with its small streets and cafe scene, this brought new joy into his life, so he began taking more personal photos again. In 1964, his solo show opened at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, curated by John Szarkowski. Kertész had purchased a Leica camera back in Paris, which due to its small size allowed quick, hand-held photography. With this working method, he had an influence on, among others, Henri Cartier-Bresson, who is considered the other preeminent author of lyrical documentary photography, and who later professed: "Whatever we have done, Kertész did first."

György Lőrinczy also began to work in the spirit of the "snapshot", and according to his wife, Kati Lőrinczy, "he wanted to make Cartier-Bresson-esque photographs" at first. Lőrinczy was born in Budapest in 1935, and circa 1958 he began to visit Vera Photo, where he gained access to American magazines. His wife recalled their impact on him thus: "What he loved in these American photos was their 'straightforward' realism, their wide-eyed approach that seemed so uncomplicated. He found these photos less aestheticizing than European photography." In 1968, their friends, Edit de Ak and Peter Grass invited the Lőrinczys to America. As a means of acquiring a passport and currency, György Lőrinczy decided on making an album of New York. The atmosphere was defined by, among others, the hippies, the Civil Rights struggles of African Americans, drugs and student movements, this environment completely enraptured the Lőrinczy couple. They roamed the city day and night, attending parties and concerts, and getting to know many artists. Around this time, they returned to Hungary, and then in 1973 they moved to New York permanently.

André Kertész and György Lőrinczy's photo albums presenting New York were both published in the 1970s, but two completely different approaches appeared in them. In André Kertész's album, entitled *Of New York*, published in 1976, he presented a selection of his photographs made over a period of close to forty years. Architecture and the contrasts and rhythms composed by the correlations of light and shadow played the leading roles in these photos. Kertész's attitude comprised a space of aestheticizing distance: he was present as an observer, without interacting with the events occurring around him. Even if a person happened to appear in any of his photos, they always became evident at a distance, integrated into the cityscape surrounding them. Not a single subject photographed by Kertész looked into the camera.

György Lőrinczy's album, entitled *New York, New York* was published in 1972 by Magyar Helikon, featuring the photos he made back in 1968. In the preface to the album he wrote: "This book is not about New York, nor the city nor the New York State. I have photographed the people amongst whom I have lived in 1968 and those places that interested me for some reason. In the book there are no images of famous buildings, machinated American households, bank associates, billionaires, female shop assistants, light, shade and many other things. (...) I lived in the East Village amongst them: hippies, artists, students. The studio of Tom Wesselmann was in the neighbouring street, a few corners away Andy Warhol's Factory, the greengrocery was opened at night as well and there was the smell of incense in the streets. I felt very well between them." Lőrinczy ultimately made compromise – since officially they planned to publish the book as a city album – and integrated a few conventional photos into the final selection, but also included some montages, what counted as unusual at the time. In one image, he copied a Peter Grass painting into the sky, while on page 32 he stuck a helicopter over the buildings. Lőrinczy employed two-page spreads, some without margins or gutters, and translucent, colourful prints on wax paper, also a few of the photos were solarised. All of these solutions were innovations at their time and had great impact on the Hungarian art scene, the album is considered an important publication up to the present day.

André Kertész and György Lőrinczy both set out from Hungary, though with a gap of 41 years. Kertész's work can be linked chiefly to classic photography and European modernism. In the early twentieth century Paris was an essential station for Kertész, where his circle of friends included Picasso, Mondrian, Chagall, and Brassaï, and he himself was an important artist of the Montparnasse. He spent about a decade in the French capital, and even at the end of his life, he yearned again for Europe. György Lőrinczy also showed his work for the first time in an international context in Paris, when he represented Hungary with four works at the Paris Biennial in 1967, but European photography did not make a big impact on him. It was rather the American approach of the era that caught hold of him, and in 1975 his work was already displayed together with Christo and Andy Warhol at the exhibition *Not Photography / Photography* in New York. While Kertész created clear compositions with eliminating every distracting element from the image field, Lőrinczy's photos were raw and grainy, representing a more progressive approach. The meeting point of their life trajectories was the New York of the 1970s, and the oeuvres of the two artists came to a close at nearly the same time: Kertész died at the age of 92 in 1985, while Lőrinczy died at the age of 46 in 1981. Their images presented side by side emphatically demonstrate, taking into account their very different antecedents and circumstances alongside some parallels, how artworks of such diverging character to be created in almost synchronous time and almost the same place.

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André KERTÉSZ

[New York, 34th Street, Looking East toward the Empire State Building]
1940s, silver print, 252x203 mm, AKN0423

[New York, View from Apartment Window], 1970
silver print, 252x204 mm, AK0646

New York [Chimneys and Bridge], 1947
silver print, 269x276 mm, AKN3273

Backyard, 23rd Street between Second and Third Avenues, 1975
silver print, 252x203 mm, AK2350

Glass Sculpture and World Trade Center, 1979
silver print, 252x202, AK563

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Buy, Long Island University, 1962
silver print, 253x202 mm, AK0209-30

[New York, woman sunbathing on roof with cassette player], 1978
silver print, 252x203 mm, AK0421

6th Avenue, New York, 1973
silver print, 187x247 mm, AKN4221

[New York, 1963.08.25], 1963
silver print, 165x73 mm, AKN0671

[New York, wooden water towers in foreground], 1960s
silver print, 252x205 mm, AKN3026

[New York, construction in foreground], 1958
silver print, 206x250 mm, AKN0976

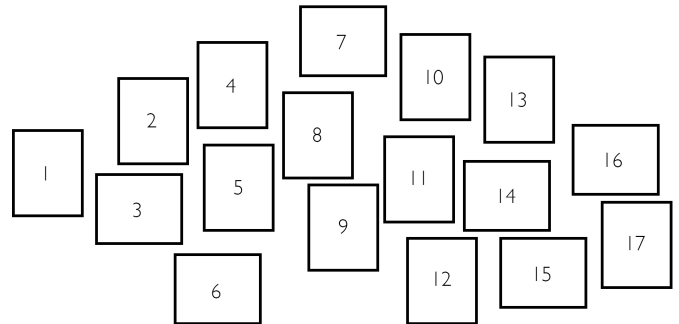
Downtown, Wall Street, 1963
silver print, 253x205 mm, AKN4169

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André KERTÉSZ and György LŐRINCZY in New York, 1970s
photographer unknown

Holiday Greeting Card from André KERTÉSZ to György LŐRINCZY, 1970

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LŐRINCZY György

1 New York, New York (Viva), 1968
silver print, 240x173 mm, L134

2 New York, New York (No7), 1968
silver print, 238x182 mm, L116

3 New York, New York, 1968
silver print, 180x243 mm, L141

4 New York, New York (No8), 1968
silver print, 240x160 mm, L114

5 New York, New York (No76), 1968
silver print, 240x162 mm, L143

6 New York, New York, 1968
silver print, 180x242 mm, L138

7 New York, New York (No17), 1968
silver print, 180x242 mm, L142

8 New York, New York (No15), 1968
silver print, 290x213 mm, L132

9 New York, New York (No3), 1968
silver print, 240x168 mm, L122

10 New York, New York, 1968
silver print, 240x173 mm, L123

11 New York, New York (No29), 1968
silver print, 245x165 mm, L115

12 New York, New York, 1968
silver print, 120x95 mm, L19

13 New York, New York (No30), 1968
silver print, 225x145 mm, L120

14 New York, New York, 1968
silver print, 180x240 mm, L12
László Vágó's Collection

15 New York, New York (No85), 1968
silver print, 175x238 mm, L10
László Vágó's Collection

16 New York, New York, 1968
silver print, 172x242 mm, L129

17 New York, New York, 1968
silver print, 188x183 mm, L3
László Vágó's Collection