

WALL LABEL

KERTESZ, RODCHENKO AND MOHOLY-NAGY: PHOTOGRAPHS FROM THE COLLECTION
January 28 - April 7, 1974

These forty photographs were made in the 1920s and 1930s by three of this century's most gifted photographers: André Kertész, Alexander Rodchenko and László Moholy-Nagy. Uniting these works beyond the Central European origins of their makers and the calendrical time in which they were made are several factors. Most obvious, perhaps, is the dizzying vantage point embodied in the vision many of them record: in pointing the camera down at the earth, the horizon line is displaced or completely eliminated, and the result for the viewer is a kind of vertigo at once disturbing and pleasurable. It is as if one suddenly were able to fly.

In leaving the surface of the earth one enters a new world, a world abstracted from the old. Kasimir Malevich, the Russian Suprematist painter and theoretician, in The Non-Objective World (Berlin, 1927) wrote:

The ascent to the summit of non-figurative art is difficult Accustomed things fall away gradually, and at every step objects fade further and further into the distance, until finally the world of pre-conceived notions -- all that we loved and all that we depended on for life -- completely disappears from sight.

Also functioning in many of the photographs is a tension between the actual flatness of the picture plane and the illusion of three-dimensional space. The use of distortion, abstraction, negative images, and the cutting off of objects by the picture frame so they are no longer recognizable, all emphasize the picture as a flat pattern. The deep space provided by the use of a high vantage point contradicts the flatness while at the same time the unusual viewpoint makes orientation to the space difficult.

(more)

André Kertész was born in Hungary in 1894. He moved to Paris in 1925 where he met and photographed many of the artists and writers who lived there. Since 1936 he has lived and worked in New York City. Kertész has created a large and distinguished body of work whose richness can only be suggested by the photographs shown here. In contrast to the photographs of Moholy-Nagy and Rodchenko, Kertész's appear more elegant, supple, and diverse. He uses his camera, too, not as they have (as a machine for better seeing or a knife to dissect society), but as a beloved extension of his own self, holding it, one imagines, as carefully as one holds a child.

Alexander Rodchenko was born in St. Petersburg in 1891. He was trained as a painter but under the influence of Malevich and Tatlin he renounced painting in 1922, turning his energies to "socially useful" activities of photography and design. Closest of these three to what one critic has termed "the Hegelian romantic negation" of this period, Rodchenko's work is brash, graphic, and incisive while at the same time (particularly in the portrait of his wife, Varvara Stepanova) tender, subtle, and deeply moving. He died in Moscow in 1956.

László Moholy-Nagy was born in Hungary in 1895 a year after Kertész. He studied law before succumbing to an interest in art, moved to Berlin and from 1923 to 1928 taught at the Bauhaus. Deeply influenced by the theories of Malevich and Russian Constructivism, Moholy-Nagy embraced photography, urging that everyone learn to photograph to avoid suffering from a modern form of illiteracy. His work is highly inventive, exploring techniques unique to photography including negative prints, photograms, and photomontage. In 1938 he founded the School of Design in Chicago where he taught until his death in 1946. The prints exhibited here were part of Moholy-Nagy's first one-man exhibition in America at the Delphic Gallery in New York in 1931.

The Museum of Modern Art

11 West 53 Street, New York, N.Y. 10019 Tel. 956-6100 Cable: Modernart

CHECKLIST

KERTÉSZ, RODCHENKO, and MOHOLY-NAGY: Photographs from the Collection

January 28 - April 7, 1974

KERTÉSZ, André American, born Hungary 1894

22. Mondrian's Studio. 1926 Gift of the photographer
9 1/2 x 7 5/8
310.65

37. Satiric Dancer. 1926 Purchase
13 1/2 x 10 1/2
1000.69

16. Leger's Studio with Assistant. 1927 Gift of the photographer
18 3/8 x 12 9/16
320.65

1. Montmartre. 1927 Purchase
6 x 8
316.65

26. Marionettes de Pilsener. 1929 Purchase
9 5/8 x 7 7/8
622.41

9. Touraine. 1930 Purchase
16 3/8 x 11 7/8
984.69

17. Chagall Family. 1933 Gift of the photographer
7 x 9 1/4
311.65

34. Distortion #126. 1933 Purchase
4 1/2 x 6
317.65

RODCHENKO, Alexander Russian, 1891-1956

30. V. V. (Vladimir) Mayakowski. 1924 The Parkinson Fund
22 1/2 x 16
54.70

15. Assembling for a Demonstration. 1928 Mr. and Mrs John Spencer Fund
19 1/2 x 13 7/8
55.70

14. At the Telephone. 1928 Mr. and Mrs. John Spencer Fund
15 x 11
56.70

(over)

RODCHENKO, Alexander Russian, 1891-1956

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|---|--|
| 10. <u>Untitled</u> (Railroad Station). 1928 | Gift of Alfred H. Barr, Jr.
9 x 6 1/2
220.70 |
| 3. <u>Untitled</u> (Street). 1928 | Gift of Alfred H. Barr, Jr.
8 7/8 x 6 1/2
221.70 |
| 5. <u>Belomorsk Canal</u> . 1933 | Purchase
17 3/4 x 11 1/2
47.70 |
| 21. <u>Moscow</u> . 1931 | Gift of the photographer
11 1/2 x 9
1.71 |
| 4. <u>Rehearsal, Belomorsk Canal</u> . 1933 | Purchase
11 3/8 x 17 1/4
48.70 |
| 32. <u>Rumba</u> . 1935
Negative print with colored pencil | Purchase
8 7/8 x 6 3/8
46.70 |
| 28. <u>V. (Varvara) Stepanova</u> . 1935 | The Parkinson Fund
14 7/8 x 10
52.70 |
| 31. <u>Parade on Red Square</u> . 1936 | David H. McAlpin Fund
11 1/8 x 18 7/8
50.70 |
| 39. <u>Parade</u> . 1936 | David H. McAlpin Fund
10 3/4 x 18
49.70 |
| 40. <u>Sport Parade, Champions of Moscow</u> . 1937 | David H. McAlpin Fund
18 5/8 x 10 3/8
53.70 |

MOHOLY-NAGY, László American, born Hungary 1895-1946

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| 38. <u>Chute</u> . 1923
Collage of halftone reproductions of
photographs, airbrush, pen and ink. | Gift of Sibyl Moholy-Nagy
25 x 19
19.65 |
| 11. <u>Notre Dame de Paris</u> . 1925 | Anonymous gift
9 1/8 x 6 5/8
502.39 |
| 12. <u>Ascona</u> . 1926 | Anonymous gift
14 3/8 x 10 7/8
476.39 |

(more)

MOHOLY-NAGY, László American, born Hungary 1895-1946

20. Composition. 1926. Anonymous Gift
Negative print from a positive transparency 8 1/4 x 6 1/2
491.39
29. Head. c. 1926 Anonymous gift
14 1/8 x 10 1/4
505.39
18. From Radio Tower, Berlin. 1928 Anonymous gift
Also titled "Topographical Design, No. 1" 13 1/2 x 10 1/2
484.39
19. From Radio Tower, Berlin. 1928 Anonymous gift
Also titled "Topographical Design, No. 2" 10 13/16 x 8 1/8
485.39
24. The Diving Board. 1929 Anonymous gift
11 1/8 x 8 1/8
480.39
36. Nude. 1929 Anonymous gift
Negative print from positive transparency 10 1/2 x 8
505.39
35. Nudes on the Grass. 1929 Anonymous gift
Negative print from positive transparency 8 5/8 x 11 5/8
486.39
6. The Street, Winter, Berlin. n.d. Anonymous gift
11 5/8 x 8 5/8
483.39
33. After the Bath. n.d. Anonymous gift
11 1/4 x 8 1/8
482.39
2. The Boardwalk. n.d. Anonymous gift
10 7/8 x 7 1/2
479.39
7. Geometry and Texture of Landscape. n.d. Anonymous gift
11 1/8 x 8 1/8
500.39
27. Head. n.d. Anonymous gift
Negative print from positive transparency 9 1/4 x 6 7/8
509.39
23. Photogram. n.d. Anonymous gift
With pencilled additions 6 5/8 x 9 1/8
490.39

(over)

MOHOLY-NAGY, László, American, born Hungary 1895-1946

13. Repose. n.d.

Anonymous gift
14 x 10 $\frac{3}{8}$
478.39

25. Siesta. n.d.

Anonymous gift
8 $\frac{7}{8}$ x 6 $\frac{1}{4}$
477.39

8. The Water's Edge. n.d.

Anonymous gift
11 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 8 $\frac{3}{8}$
473.39