

# Street Photography – Part 1

- a selective history



Everything has beauty, but not everyone sees it.

Confucius

# Outline:

- Definition



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- From the beginning

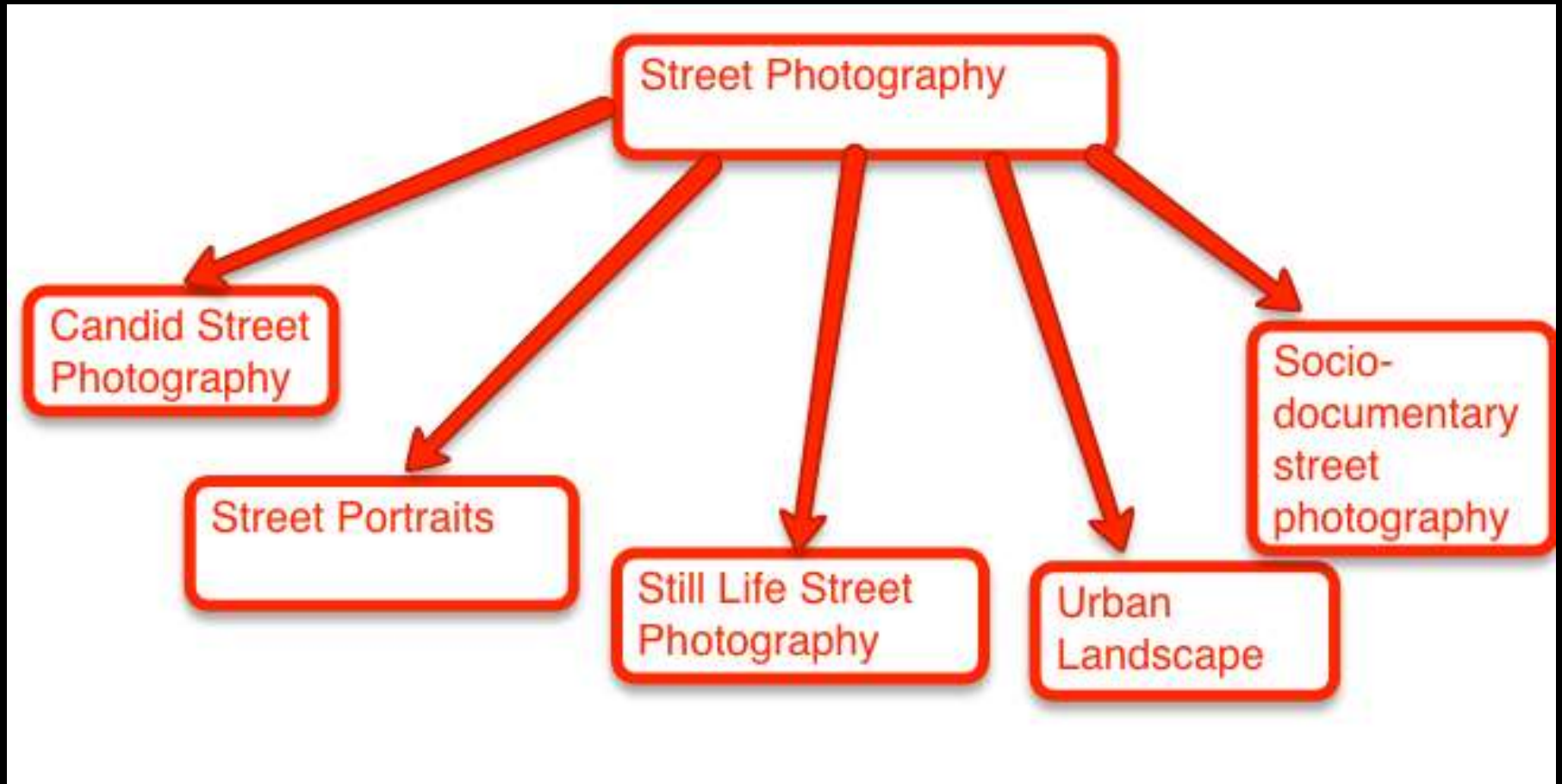
# Outline:

- Definition
- From the beginning
- Early practitioners

# Definitions

- Do we need a definition?

# Sub – genres?



# Definitions

- Do we need a definition?
- To understand what we are talking about



# Definitions

- Do we need a definition?
- To understand what we are talking about
- To guide you for our street photography competition!

## Definition

*Street photography is a genre of photography that records everyday life in a public place. It is about capturing the essence of humanity*

# From the start



Early photographers worked alongside artists (impressionists and surrealists)

Large cameras needed good light – best on the street

1830s - Daguerrotype plates – required 15 to 30 mins exposure

Calotype plate (Henry Fox-Talbot) patented 1841 – only required 1 min exposure

When people ask me what equipment I use  
– I tell them my eyes.

Anonymous



# The first book on street photography 'Street Life in London' – John Thomson 1877

Used the 'collodian' process to emphasize sharpness. Needed a very slow film speed. Note the difference between the 'posers' and the bystanders



# Photography as History

Preserving today's  
everyday images for our  
descendants



Samuel Coulthurst c.1894

Photographers of the street  
(still to be avoided today!)



# Eugene Atget 1857 - 1927

Widely regarded as the father of street photography

Worked the streets of Paris 1890s to 1920s

Mainly shot non-human subjects

Fits with our definition..... *records everyday life in a public place....capturing the essence of humanity*







Car and two motorcycles in front of a garage, Paris 1922



Street paver c.1899 - 1900

A good photograph is like a good hound dog,  
dumb, but eloquent.

Eugene Atget

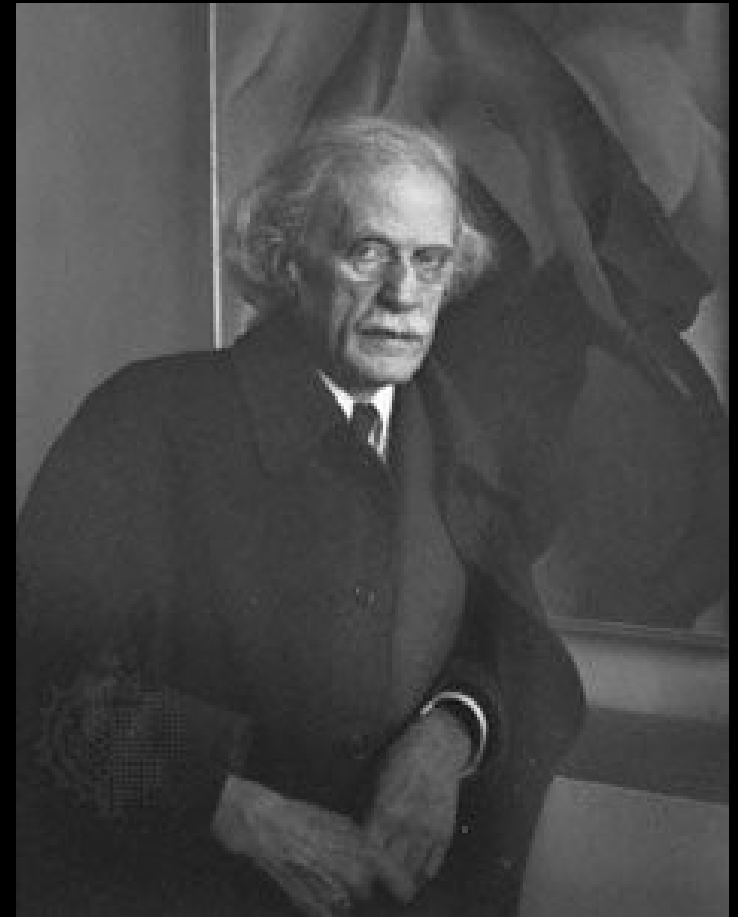


# Alfred Stieglitz 1864 - 1946

Founder member of the Photo-Secession Group (1902) – emphasizing the craftsmanship involved in photography (photography as art).

Stieglitz relied on compositional effects and mastery of tone, often concentrating on natural effects such as snow and steam to create qualities similar to those of the Impressionists.

His later work reflects the decline of Pictorial photography and the rise of photography as a revealer of truths about the modern world.





Winter – Fifth Avenue 1892



Venetian Canal 1894



The Terminal 1892



The Steerage 1907



Equivalent 1930



## Andre Kertesz 1894 - 1985

Widely regarded as one of Europe's leading photographic artists, particularly for his contribution to photographic composition and the photo-essay.

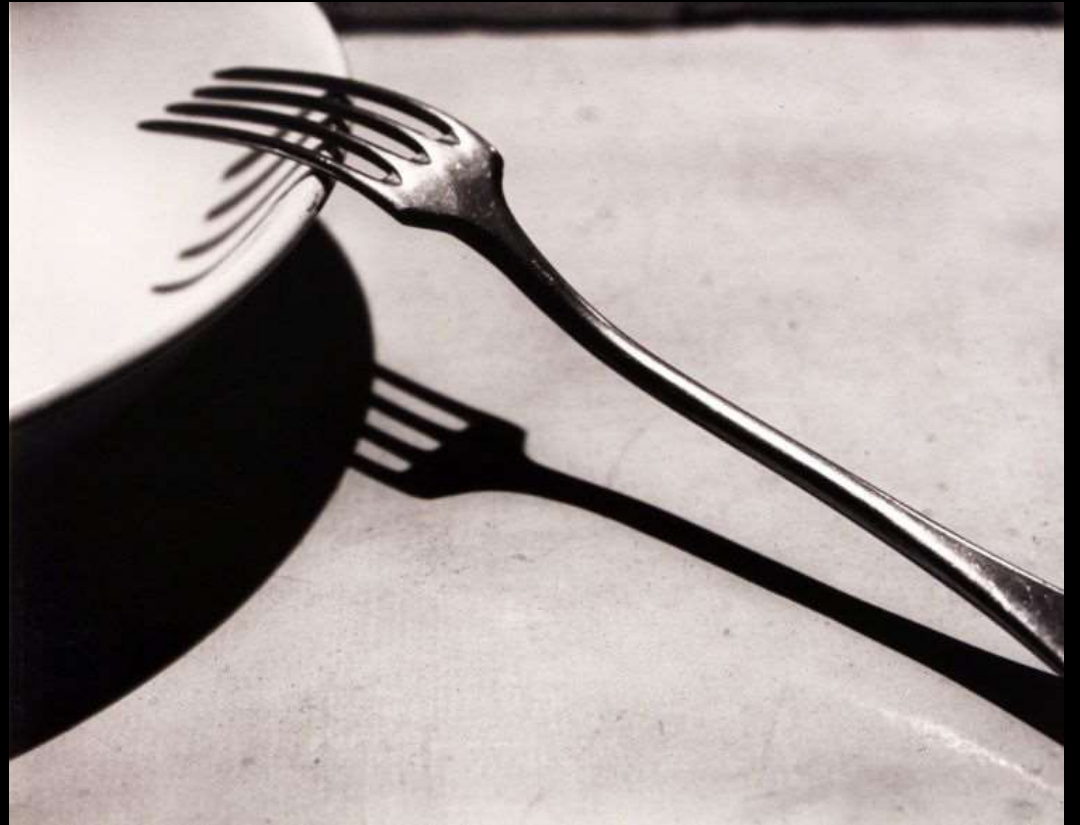
His later photographs, such as *The Fork* (1928), *Melancholic Tulip* (1939) and *Washington Square, New York* (1954) shown here are now amongst the most famous photographs of the twentieth century.

He is widely regarded as an idiosyncratic and influential photographer.





Melancholic Tulip 1939



The Fork (1928)



Chez Mondrian, Paris 1926



Chairs of Paris 1927





Meudon 1928



Pont des Arts 1929



McDougal Allee 1977

# Brassai (Gyula Halasz) 1899 - 1984

Renowned photographer and sometime surrealist of the interwar period. A *flaneur*

Captured theatrical performances rather than decisive moments

Used his camera to chronicle the unseen side of human behaviour: from illicit liaisons and private gatherings, to criminal activity and policing, to vagrants, and workers emerging from their long night shifts

He did not hesitate to pose or stage his photographs. Used a large, fixed lens 6.5x9 cm Voigtlander camera





Nuits de Longchamp 1937



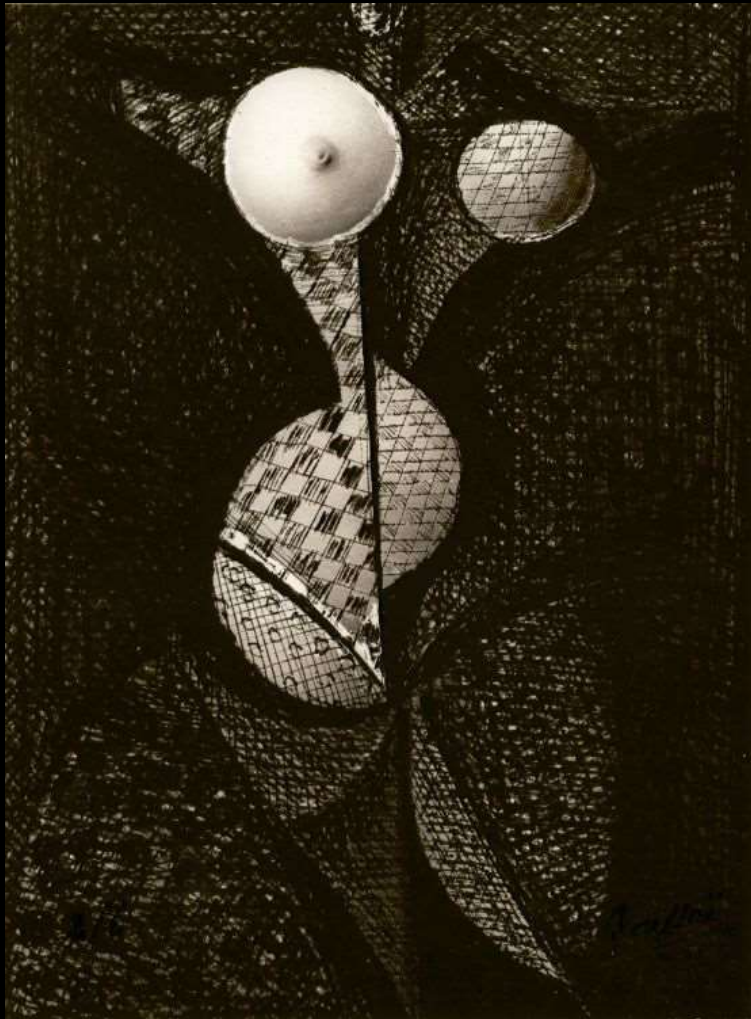
Lovers in a Paris Café 1932



Le Couple Fache, Rue de Lappe c.1933



Gala Soiree at Maxim's 1949



Femme-Fruit (Transmutation) 1935



Avenue de L'Observatoire dans le Brouillard 1931



My ambition has always been to show the everyday city as if we were discovering it for the first time

Chance is always there. We all use it. The difference is a poor photographer meets chance one out of a hundred times and a good photographer meets chance all the time.

Brassai

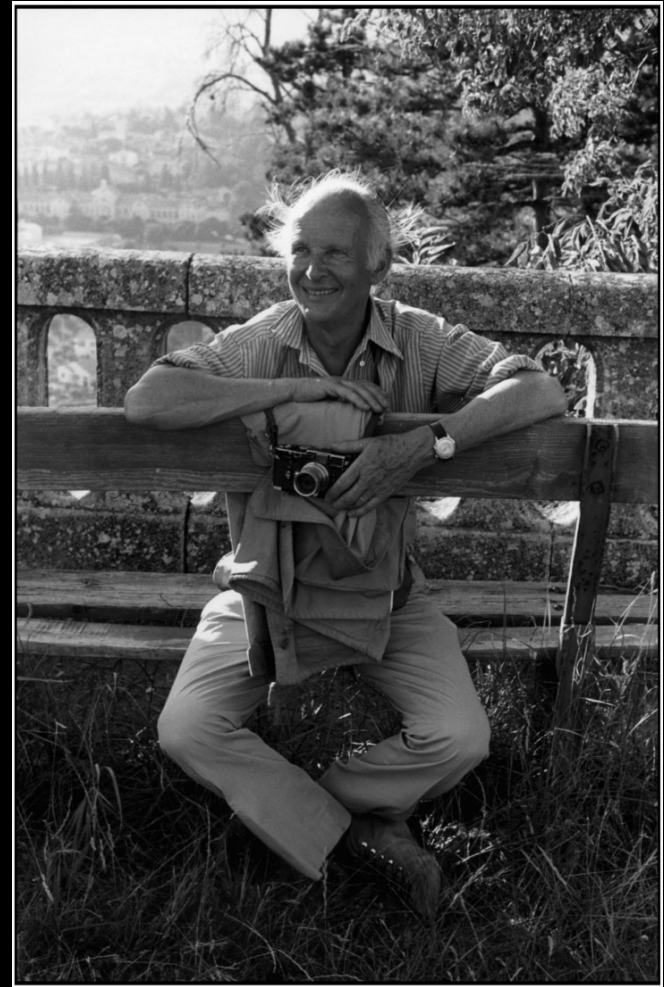
# Henri Cartier-Bresson 1908 - 2004

*For me the camera is a sketch book, an instrument of intuition and spontaneity, the master of the instant which, in visual terms, questions and decides simultaneously.*

*To take a photograph is to hold one's breath when all faculties converge in a face of fleeing reality.*

*To take a photograph is to align the head, the eye and the heart. It's a way of life"*

Almost always used a Leica 35 mm rangefinder camera fitted with a normal 50mm lens, or occasionally a wide-angle lens for landscapes.



Your first 10,000 photographs are your worst.

Henri Cartier-Bresson



Dieppe, France 1926

In 1952, Cartier-Bresson published his book *Images à la sauvette*, whose English-language edition was titled *The Decisive Moment*. The French language title actually translates as "*images on the sly*" or "hastily taken images"

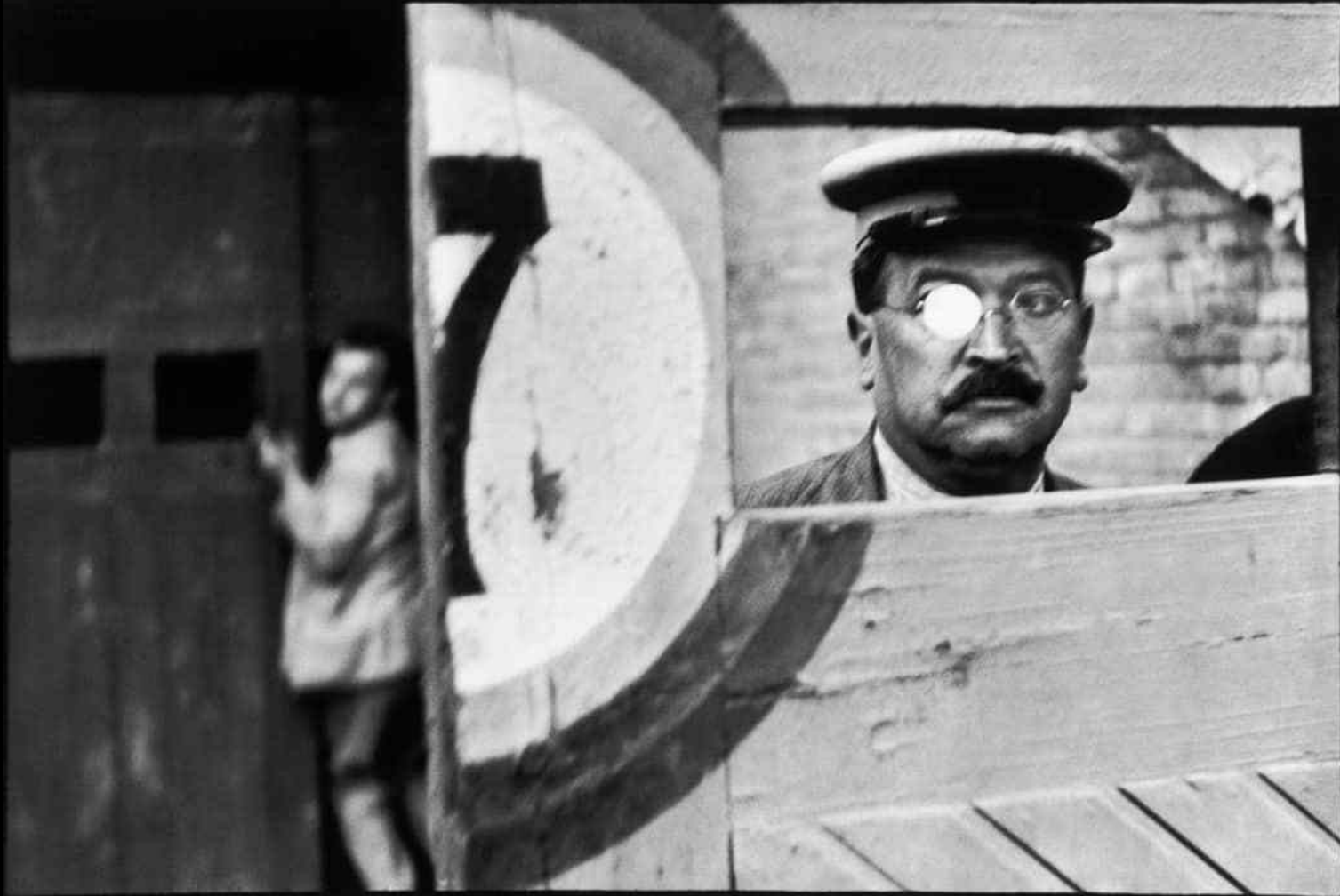
HC-B stated: "To me, photography is the simultaneous recognition, in a fraction of a second, of the significance of an event as well as of a precise organization of forms which give that event its proper expression"



Behind the Gare St Lazare 1932



Madrid, Spain 1933



Valencia 1933

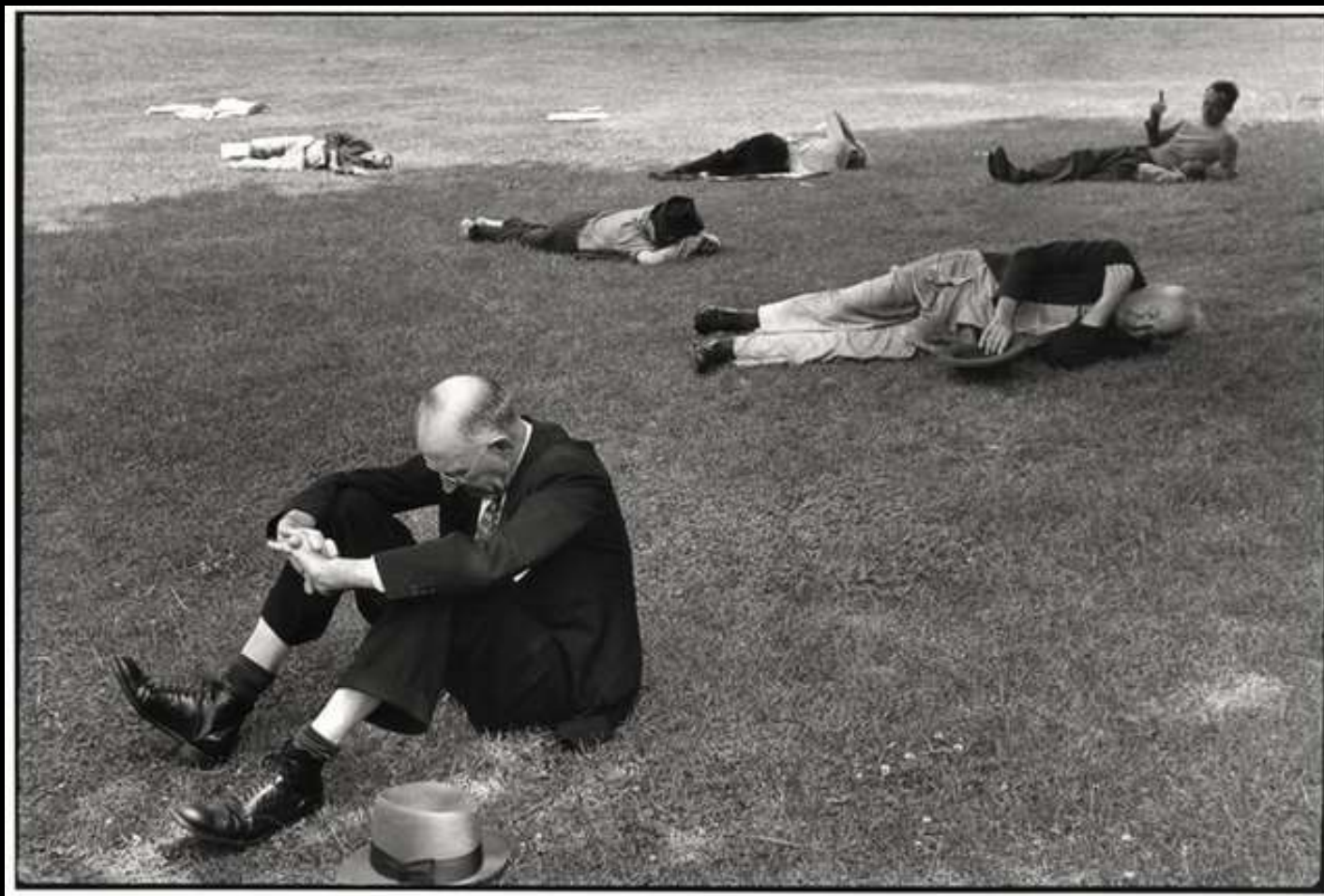




Sunday on the banks of the River Marne 1938



A young Belgian woman is denounced as a Gestapo informer, Dessau 1945



Boston Commons 1947





Srinagar, Kashmir 1948



Rue Mouffetard, Paris 1954



San Francisco 1946



Italy, Abruzzo, Village of Aquila 1951



Les Europeens Photographies 1955





County Kerry, Ireland 1952



What counts are the little differences “general ideas” mean nothing. Long live... the details! A millimetre makes all the difference.

Henri Cartier-Bresson



Island of Siphnos, Greece 1961



Ireland, Province of Munster, Kerry County, Near Bantree 1962



Brie, France 1968





Town of Simiane-la-Rotonde 1969

Thinking should be done beforehand and afterwards—never while actually taking a photograph. Success depends on the extent of ones general culture, on ones set of values, ones clarity of mind and vivacity.

Henri Cartier-Bresson



Hyeres, France 1932





Washington DC USA 1957

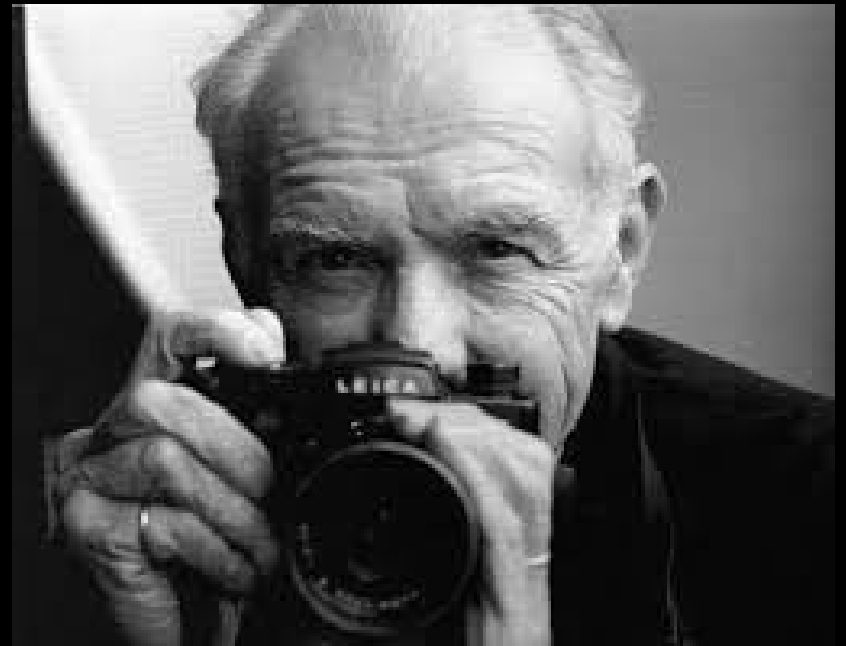
# Robert Doisneau 1912 - 1944

Former soldier and Resistance worker, he photographed Paris through occupation and liberation.

Declined HC-B invitation to join Magnum Photo Agency in 1947.

1949 – 1956 Published 6 books: modest, playful and ironic images of amusing juxtapositions on Parisian streets.

Left behind 450,000 negatives when he died.





Le Baiser, Hotel de Ville 1950



Baiser Blotto 1950



Hellepoort 1952





Les Chiens de la Chapelle 1953

If you take photographs, don't speak, don't write, don't analyse yourself and don't answer any questions

For a photographer, the first 70 years are a bit difficult, but after that things get better

Robert Doisneau



Le Remorqueur du Champ de Mars, Paris 1943



Dog on Wheels, Paris 1977





Concours de Tatouages dans un bar  
de la rue Mouffetard a Paris 1950



Les Deux Freres 1934



Paris en Liberte 1945

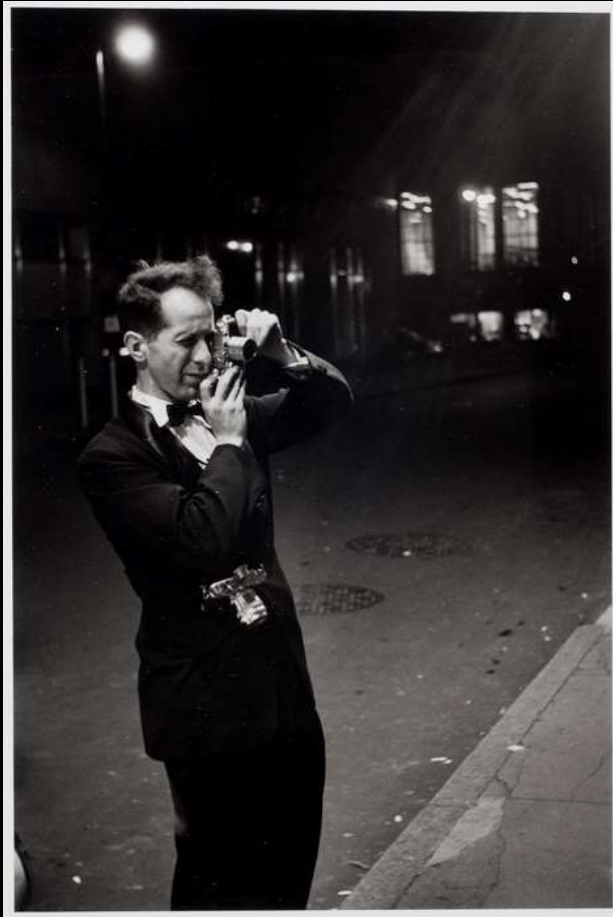


Les Pieds au Mur 1934

If I knew how to take a good photograph, I'd  
do it every time

Robert Doisneau

# Robert Frank 1924 - 2019



Member of the New York School of Photography – mid 20<sup>th</sup> century group that helped to popularize street photography in the USA.

His 1958 book 'The Americans' remains one of the most popular and best-selling street photography books of all time.

Possibly the start of modern street photography - raw, gritty, candid moments of people doing everyday mundane things.

Black and white are the colours of photography.  
To me they symbolize the alternatives of hope and  
despair to which mankind is forever subjected.

Above all, life for a photographer cannot be a  
matter of indifference

Robert Frank



Writing about 'The Americans' in 2008, Charlie LeDuff (Vanity Fair) said of that period in US history

“Patriotism, optimism, and scrubbed suburban living were the rule of the day. Myth was important then. And along comes Robert Frank, the hairy homunculus, the European Jew with his 35-mm. Leica, taking snaps of old angry white men, young angry black men, severe disapproving southern ladies, Indians in saloons, he/shes in New York alleyways, alienation on the assembly line, segregation south of the Mason-Dixon line, bitterness, dissipation, discontent.”





'Trolley – New Orleans 1955

## Robert Frank's book divided opinion:

The pictures were initially considered warped, smudgy, bitter. Popular Photography magazine complained about their “meaningless blur, grain, muddy exposures, drunken horizons, and general sloppiness.”

They said that Frank was “a joyless man who hates the country of his adoption.”

Many agreed with Sarah Greenough (US National Gallery of Art):

Frank's photographs exposed "a culture deeply riddled by racism, alienation, and isolation" and "a people emasculated by politicians fatuous and distant at best."



Charleston, South Carolina 1955

When he died in September 2019, Arthur Lubow (New York Times) wrote:

“In place of the poetic lyricism of Henri Cartier-Bresson and Andre Kertesz, he brought a moody, cool intensity that stamped his pictures with a readily identifiable hallmark. Using a 35-millimeter Leica, he could compose images as elegantly framed as if he’d set up a tripod, or as blurry and off-center as an amateur snapshot. He took whatever means he needed to express a vision that was alternately empathetic and obstreperous, as contradictory as the man himself.”





I've finally figured out what's wrong with photography.  
It's a one-eyed man looking through a little 'ole. Now,  
how much reality can there be in that?

David Hockney

## Definition

*Street photography is a genre of photography that records everyday life in a public place. It is about capturing the essence of humanity*

Are there any questions?

