



Brassaï and Photography

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Art and Society in France

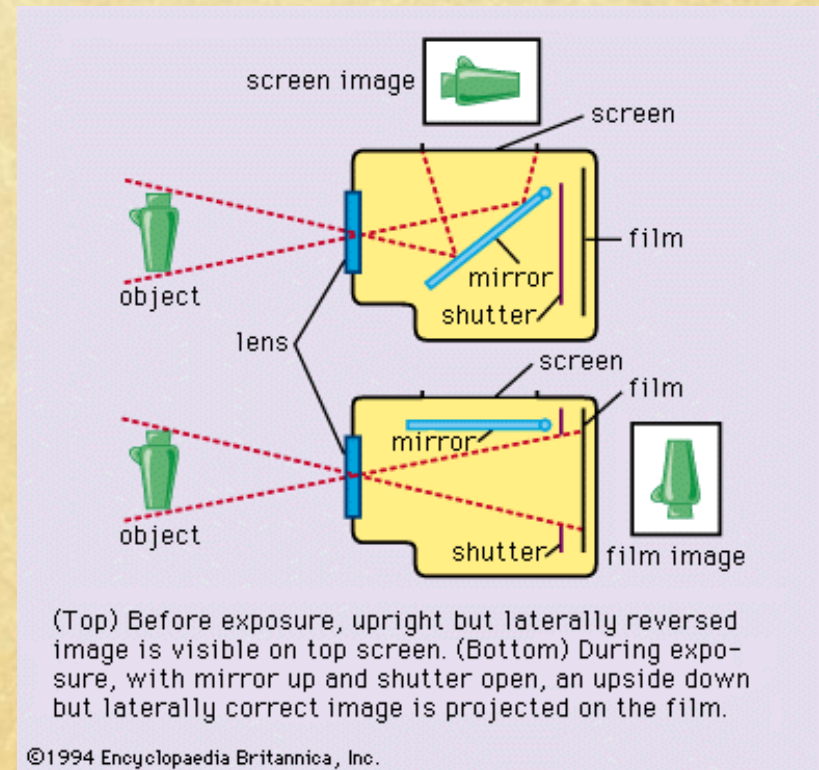
“Brassaï sees Paris as a subject of infinite grandeur, his photographs providing a sensitive and often extremely dramatic exploration of its people, its resplendent avenues, and endlessly intriguing byways.”

(Source)

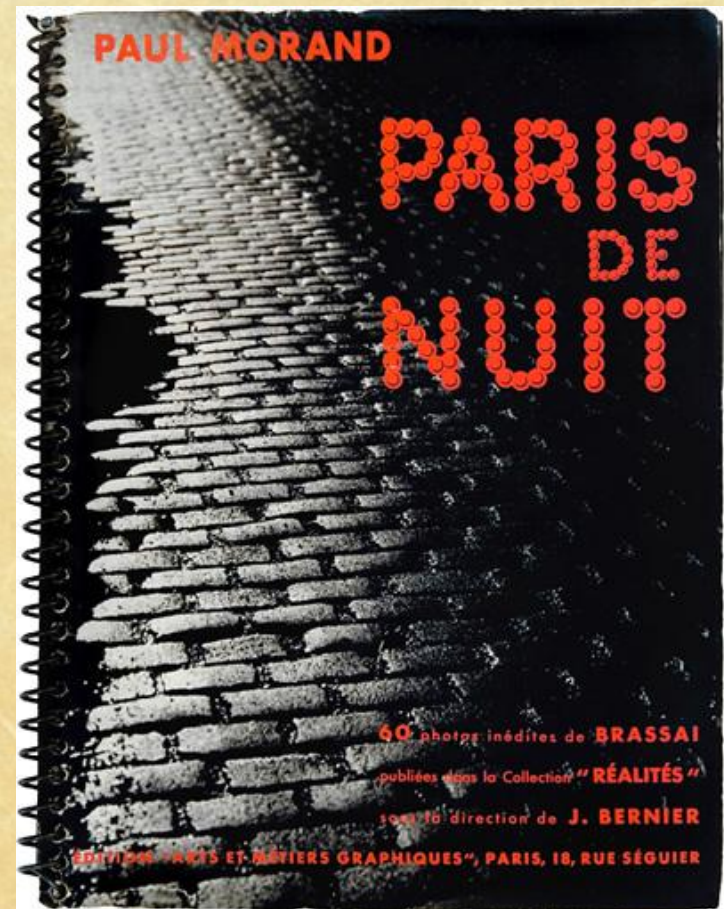
About Brassai

- ♦ Brassai (born Gyula Halász) was born on September 9, 1899 in Brassó, Hungary. The name Brassai literally means “of Brassó.”
- ♦ When he was three years old, his parents moved to Paris, France for a year, where he would later become a famous photographer, sculptor, and filmmaker.
- ♦ Ironically, when he was young, he focused on painting and sculpting and actually avoided using a camera in the Academy of Fine Arts in Budapest.
- ♦ It wasn't until 1918 when he became a journalist in Paris that he fell in love with the camera.
- ♦ He would wander around Paris at night taking photos of hoodlums, prostitutes, transvestites, opium dens, and the cheap music halls of Paris.
- ♦ By incorporating the rain, mist, shadows, and puddles on the streets, he creates a mystical and mysterious feeling.

- ◆ In order to take pictures in such dark conditions, Brassai would create his own solution that was perfect.
- ◆ He set his camera on a tripod, opened the shutter, and fired a flash.
- ◆ Even if the flash made the photographs seem as if they didn't match the lighting of where he took the photo, Brassai was ok with it.
- ◆ He thought that it showed more truth of his photos subject, and was straightforward, which was what he was trying to show.



- ◆ In 1933, Brassai published his first photography book, *Paris de Nuit*, or *Paris by Night*.
- ◆ Some of the photos in the book are clear and lit up, but others are dark and gloomy from rain and mist.
- ◆ Others still focus on the shadier Parisians, while still capturing the beauty of the city.
- ◆ The book became so famous that Henry Miller, who was also his friend, referred it to as “the eye of Paris” in an essay.



- ◆ Some of his more famous photos “Graffiti,” which are just photos of words and scribbles drawn on walls by many Paris dwellers, are the subject of one of his one-man show at New York’s Museum of Modern Art
- ◆ His photos have been shown in many different international shows as well as published in magazines.
- ◆ He was the last person to receive England’s P. H. Emerson Award, from Emerson himself.
- ◆ Brassai also took portraits of his friends, who were also artists including Salvador Dalí, Pablo Picasso, Henri Matisse, Alberto Giacometti, and also many famous writers whom included the likes of Jean Genet, and Henri Michaux.
- ◆ He was also the author of 17 books and articles.

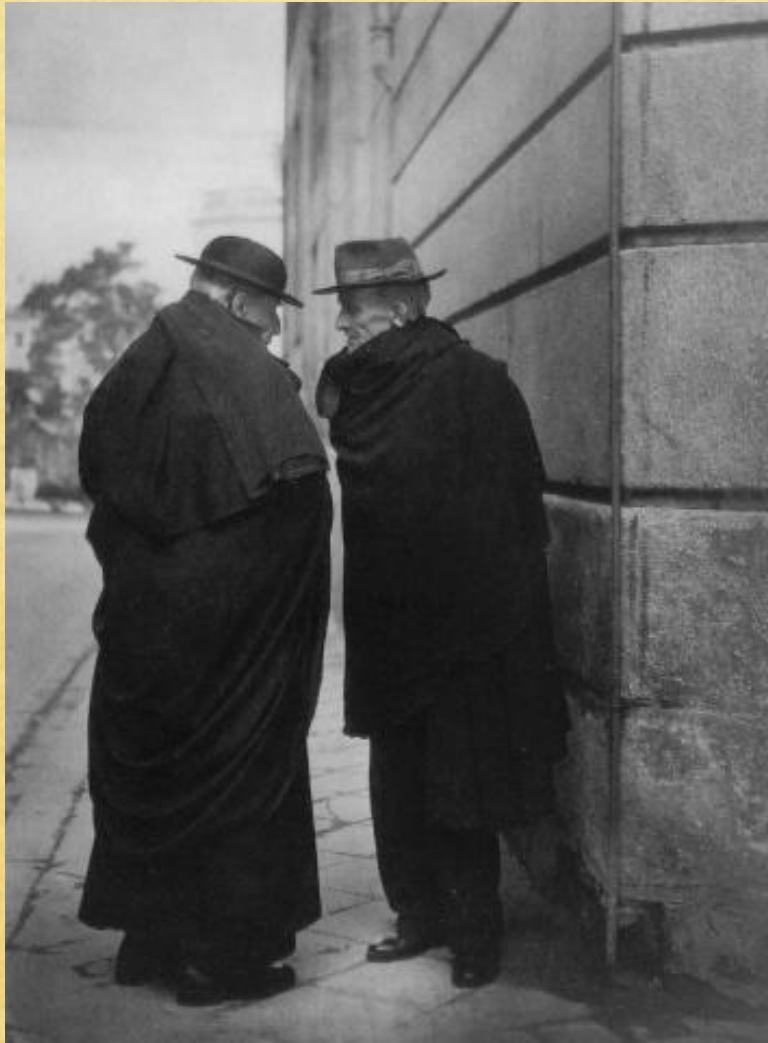
- ♦ He stopped taking photos in 1961 and reverted to sculpture using stone and bronze.
- ♦ There were also tapestries created that were based on his graffiti photos.
- ♦ On July 7, 1984, Brassai died in Beaulieu-sur-Mer, Alpes-Maritimes, in the south of France and was buried in the Cimetière du Montparnasse in Paris.



Photos

“The thing that is magnificent about photography is that it can produce images that incite emotion based on the subject matter alone.”

—Brassaï



Seville—1952-53





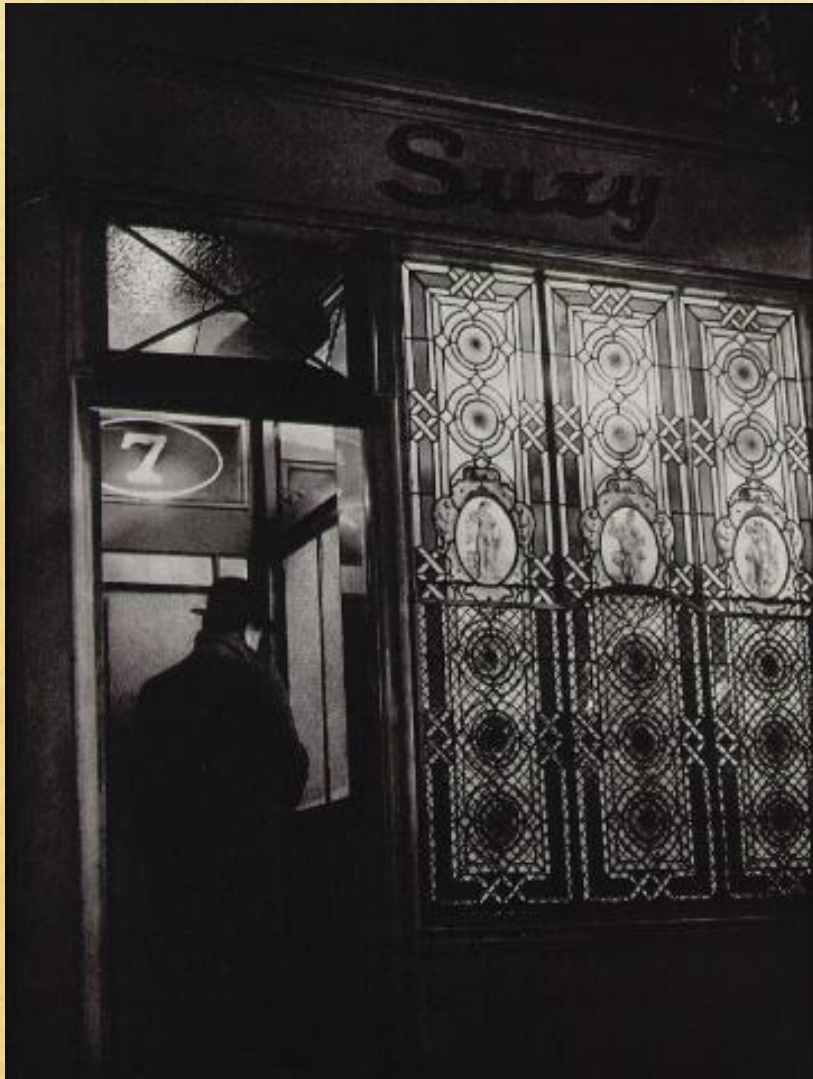
Lovers in a Bistro—1932-33





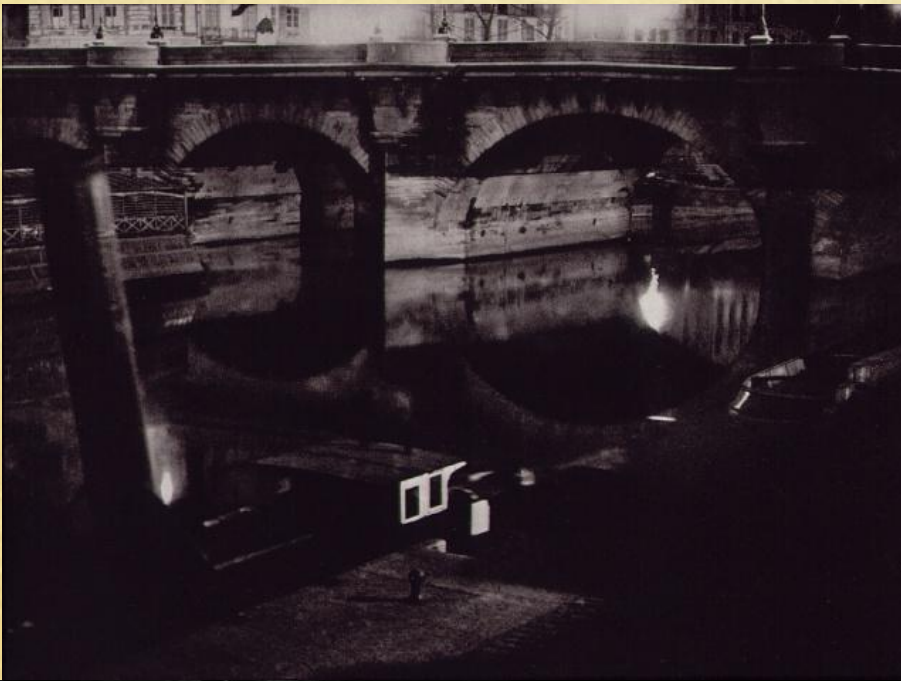
Bijou—1933





House of Illusion—1933





Tugboats and Barges Beside
Pont-Neuf—1933





Arc de Triomphe—1933



Foggy Night in Paris—1934



References

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