

PHOTOGRAPHY

BRASSAI—In an essay about this photographer (who was born in Transylvania as Gyula Halász and has lived in Paris since the twenties), Lawrence Durrell records these comments, made during a sitting: "I only take one or two or three pictures of a subject, unless I get carried away; I find it concentrates one more to shoot less. Of course it's chancy; when you shoot a lot you stand a better chance, but then you are subjecting yourself to the law of accident—if accident has a law. I prefer to try and if necessary fail. When I succeed, however, I am much happier than I would be if I shot a million pictures on the off-chance. I feel that I have really made it myself, that picture, not won it in a lottery." The seventy-eight pictures in this exhibition, taken between 1931 and 1959, have the "made it myself" look that forms the unmistakable difference between art photography and photojournalism. Each of the photographs—whether a portrait of Maillol, a scene in a Montmartre dance hall, a study of a sleeping derelict—has a lucidity and concinnity of form that only a handful of photographers have contrived to wrest from the mess of reality (André Kertész and Henri Cartier-Bresson are Brassai's two living peers) and that, wisely or foolishly, today's young photographers are determinedly repudiating, as a dead end for photography. Through Thursday, March 6. (French Institute/Alliance Française Gallery, 22 E. 60th St. Mondays through Fridays, noon to 7.)

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