

**CHAZEN MUSEUM OF ART
University of Wisconsin-Madison
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**PRESS RELEASE
For immediate release**

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Jacques Henri Lartigue: A Boy, A Camera, An Era

October 22 – December 31, 2005, Mayer Gallery, second floor

Jacques Henri Lartigue (1894–1986) created an impressive body of photographs throughout his lifetime; however, he took many of his most famous pictures during his childhood and youth. Forty of these extraordinary photographs and stereographs are the focus of this exhibition. Since Lartigue's "discovery" in 1964 and his first major exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, this is a rare opportunity to see such a large group of his childhood photographs.

These images offer an exuberant portrait of a remarkable child artist. Lartigue's talents began to develop quickly after he received his first camera for his seventh birthday. After this, he was rarely without a camera, and he immediately began experimenting with this exciting new medium. Lartigue used his camera to document the idyllic moments of family and friends at leisure and at play. He was also fascinated by the activities of inventors, scientists, and daredevils of every kind, who were busily creating the thrilling technologies, such as the airplane and the automobile, which would revolutionize life in the twentieth century. Through his photographs, Lartigue was a youthful witness to these events. In a larger sense, Lartigue provided a vivid, candid portrait of life of the prewar Belle Époque in France—on boulevards and country lanes, joyfully at play, parading the latest fashions, and aviation's pioneers fearlessly launching themselves into the skies.

Jacques Henri Lartigue was born in France in 1894, just 50 years after the advent of photography, and is recognized as one of the most important and influential photographers to pick up a camera. He took his first photographs at the age of six, using his father's camera. In 1902, at age seven, Lartigue began to organize his photographs,

along with captions, stories, and other detailed descriptions, in what would become a lifelong diary. He declared, “I know that many, many things are going to ask me to have their pictures taken, and I will take them all.” In 1904 he began making photographs and drawings of family games and childhood experiences, also capturing the smart society women, sporting events, and beginnings of aviation and cars. An unfailingly curious amateur, he tried out all the available techniques, recording fleeting moments and meticulously arranging his several thousand images in large albums.

During his career, his acquaintances in the art world included Sacha Guitry and Yvonne Printemps, Kees van Dongen, Pablo Picasso and Jean Cocteau, while his passion for movies saw him work as still photographer with Jacques Feyder, Abel Gance, Robert Bresson, François Truffaut and Federico Fellini. Lartigue first gained widespread recognition at the age of 70 with a retrospective exhibition at New York’s Museum of Modern Art in 1963, and the publication of a portfolio in *Life* magazine. Several years later, he published his first book, *The Family Album*, followed in 1970 by *Diary of a Century*, which together brought him international recognition. The prestige that accompanied these events and publications brought Lartigue considerable commission work until his death in 1986 at the age of 94.

Despite Lartigue’s prolific and influential life’s work, many critics deem the work from his childhood to be some of the most important, due to its inventiveness and power to captivate. His experimentation with inventive techniques—including double exposure, stereographic photos, and capturing moving objects— influenced many modern photographers. The Chazen Museum is privileged to have the opportunity to present this exhibition, as it will provide a rare opportunity for audiences to view such a large collection of Lartigue’s works from his childhood. The collection was the inspiration of Dr. John Cech, Director of the Center of Children’s Literature and Culture at the University of Florida and author of a book about Lartigue.

Jacques Henri Lartigue: A Boy, A Camera, An Era was organized by the University of Florida’s Harn Museum of Art with works on loan from The Association of Friends of Jacques Henri Lartigue of the French Ministry of Culture, to which he donated his works upon death, and where they are considered a national treasure. Generous support for this project has been provided by Dane County Cultural Affairs Commission with additional funds from the Endres Mfg. Company Foundation and the Overture Foundation and the Wisconsin Arts Board with funds from the State of Wisconsin.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

Thursday, October 27, 5:30 p.m., Room L140, Conrad A. Elvehjem building:

Lecture by John Cech, professor of English and director, Center for Children’s Literature and Culture, University of Florida. “Jacques Henri Lartigue: A Boy, A Camera, An Era.” This lecture will explore the childhood photographs of one of the prodigies of photography, Jacques Henri Lartigue. Born in 1894 into one

of the wealthiest families in turn-of-the-century France, Lartigue took nearly a quarter of a million photographs during his long life. Yet the pictures from his childhood represent for his audience the dynamic source of his original creative talent and the place of his greatest achievement as an artist. Lartigue brought to his earliest photographs an exuberant, experimental spirit of play, but he was also, from the beginning, a dedicated documentarian -- of his family, his times, and himself.

Funded by the University Lectures Committee. Organized by the Chazen Museum of Art and cosponsored with the University of Wisconsin School of Library and Information Studies.

**Tuesday, November 22, 4 p.m., Mayer Gallery, Chazen Museum of Art,
After-School Family Event: Tour and Interactive Workshop.**

Students in grades 1-5 accompanied by adults are invited to have a brief tour of the exhibition *Jacques Henri Lartigue: A Boy, A Camera, An Era* followed by gallery activities that include storytelling. The workshop will be led by graduate students from the University of Wisconsin School of Library and Information Studies.

There is no charge, but preregistration by phone or email is required: 608-263-4421 or alambert@chazen.wisc.edu.

RECEPTION

A free public preview reception will be held on Friday, October 21 from 5:30 p.m. to 7 p.m. Gypsy Swing by Maggie and Sims of Harmonious Wail will provide music. Refreshments and a cash bar will be available.

The Chazen Museum of Art is open Tuesdays-Fridays 9 am-5 pm; Saturdays and Sundays 11 am-5 pm; closed Mondays and major holidays. Admission to galleries and educational events is free. The museum is located on the campus of the University of Wisconsin-Madison and is accessible to wheelchairs from the Murray Street (north) entrance. Parking is available at the city of Madison's ramp between Lake and N. Frances streets, university lot 46 on Lake Street between Johnson and University Avenue, university lot 47 on Johnson Street between Park and Lake streets. Evening and weekend parking is also available at UW Lot 83 under Fluno Center: enter on N. Frances Street and UW lot 7 under Grainger Hall: enter on Brooks Street. The museum will provide sign language interpreters for associated programs by three-week advance request to Anne Lambert, Curator of Education, weekdays, 608 263-4421 (voice). Information is also available by visiting our Web site at www.chazen.wisc.edu

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