

JACQUES HENRI LARTIGUE

A BOY, A CAMERA, AN ERA

Jacques Henri Lartigue (1894—1986) created a remarkable body of photographs during his lifetime — nearly a quarter of a million pictures, which are now considered a French national treasure. Born into a prosperous family, Lartigue received his first camera and took his first picture when he was just seven years old, and he didn't stop taking photographs for the next eighty-five years. However, his best known and most important photographs are those that belong to his childhood and teenage years. Forty of these amazing photographs are the focus of the Harn Museum exhibition. In addition, this exhibition features twelve stereographs, double pictures that appear as single three-dimensional images when seen through a viewer. Seen together, these photographic works illustrate the irrepressible inventiveness of an extraordinary child artist.

As a boy, Lartigue used his camera to document the idyllic moments of family and friends at leisure and play during the Belle Époque, or “Beautiful Time,” in France prior to World War I. He also photographed elegant women promenading in all their stylish finery on Parisian boulevards and the many pioneers who were creating and experimenting with the newest technological innovations of the day — among them, airplanes and automobiles. Lartigue's candid shots capture the thrill of this spirit of invention and the joy of living during the peaceful beginning of what would become a tumultuous twentieth century.

We are most grateful to the many people who helped make this exhibition possible. We wish to offer our sincere thanks to Martine D'Astier, Director of the Association des Amis de Jacques Henri Lartigue, French Ministry of Culture, who provided for the loan of these Lartigue photographs. We are deeply grateful to Victoire Bidegain di Rosa of the Consulate General of France in Miami and to Carol Murphy, Director of the France/Florida Research Institute of the University of Florida, for the encouragement and generous grant. For all their timely help with technical equipment and expertise, we send many thanks to Tony Barr and John Rayl of Barr Systems. At the University of Florida, we are most appreciative for the enthusiastic support of Dr. Neil Sullivan, Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and Dr. Winfred Phillips and the Office of Research and Graduate Programs. Finally, our abiding thanks goes to the Center for Children's Literature and Culture, the creative crucible for this project, and to Eve Cech who helped this exhibition take flight.

Generous support for this project has been provided by the Hilldale Fund; the 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.

Dr. John Cech, Guest Co-Curator
Director of the Center for Children's Literature and Culture at the University of Florida

Kerry Oliver-Smith, Co-Curator
Curator of Contemporary Art, Harn Museum of Art

STEREOGRAPHS

Jacques Henri Lartigue and his father, Henri Lartigue, shared the Victorian craze for stereographs. A stereograph is created from two photographs of the same image taken from slightly different perspectives.

Mounted on a card, and viewed through a stereoscope, they create the extraordinary effect of a three-dimensional image. Father and son used their twin-lens Stereo-Spido camera to create the twelve images on view here through a contemporary device. The work is on loan from the Association des Amis de Jacques Henri Lartigue, French Ministry of Culture.