



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

October 22 to 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. The exhibition is accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue which is available through the [Museum Shop](#).

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. But he was also fascinated by the activities of inventors, scientists, and dare-devils of every kind, who were busily creating the thrilling technologies, such as the airplane and automobile, that 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 its boulevards and country lanes, joyfully at play, parading its latest fashions, and fearlessly launching itself into its 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.

Reception

There will be a free public reception on Friday, October 21 from 5:30 to 7:00 p.m. Maggie and Sims of Harmonious Wail will play gypsy swing. Refreshments and a cash bar.

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.

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The Chazen Museum of Art is open Tuesdays-Fridays 9-5 pm; Saturdays and Sundays 11-5 pm; closed Mondays and major holidays. Admission to galleries and educational events is free. The museum is located at 800 University Avenue 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 Lake Street and Frances Street ramps, 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 under Grainger Hall with entrance on Brooks Street between University Avenue and Johnson streets. The Chazen Museum of Art will provide sign language interpreters for associated programs by three-week advance request to Anne Lambert, Curator of Education, weekdays, 608-263-4421 (voice).