

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

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THE PHOTOGRAPHS OF JACQUES HENRI LARTIGUE, with an introduction by John Szarkowski. 32 pages. 30 black and white photographs. Published by The Museum of Modern Art, New York. 35 cents

The fashionable life of Paris at the turn of the century was once caught in the camera of a precocious young boy and that life has been recaptured in a monograph on his work, The Photographs of Jacques Henri Lartigue, just published by The Museum of Modern Art. The 30-page Museum Bulletin includes 29 pictures selected from 42 recently acquired by the Museum for its Photography Collection. The introduction is by John Szarkowski, Director of the Department of Photography at the Museum.

Lartigue's career in photography was short but brilliant. He started taking pictures in 1902 at the age of six, when the rapid lens and shutter were new discoveries. He captured with fresh perception and uninhibited grace well-to-do people and scenes in France, before World War I.

Lartigue was born near Paris in 1896, into an inventive, prosperous, fashionable French family. His father Henri was a banker, his grandfather Alfred (called Delacour) was one of the inventors of the monorail system, and also a dramatist; his brother Maurice designed and built gliders and powered airplanes as early as 1908. Jacques' inventiveness was in his eyes.

Too young to participate in all the activity, Jacques could only observe. "With great simplicity, the child loved the physical act of seeing. Lartigue saw, as though for the first time, the transient relationships of life in flux," writes Mr. Szarkowski. "Before he was ten years old, Lartigue was making pictures which today seem an astonishing anticipation of the best small-camera work done a generation laterIt is...likely that work as confidently radical as this could have been achieved only by a true primitive: one working without a sense of obligation either to tradition or to the known characteristics of his medium. Perhaps only a greatly talented child, left to his own devices, could have made these pictures a half-century ago.

"He saw the momentary, never to be repeated images created by the accidents of overlapping shapes, and by shapes interrupted by the picture edge. This is the essence of modern photographic seeing: to see not objects but their projected images."

Lartigue's pictures reflect his intense love for the world around him - beautiful women, elegant costumes, automobiles, flying machines, speed and games. Only three photographs post-date World War I, for by that time, Lartigue's interest had turned to painting, which he still pursues in Paris. "But in the decade that preceded his own twentieth year, Lartigue looked into the eyes of a changing world, and what he saw there he recorded with a prophetic freshness of vision."

Review copies and additional information available from Sharon Keene, Department of Public Information, The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, New York 19, N. Y. CI 5-8900.