

Jacques Henri Lartigue

A New Paradise

11 September – 24 October, 2009

Opening Reception
Thursday, 10 September, 6-8pm



Bouboutte, Rouzat, 1908
Gelatin silver print, printed c. 1908

It is with great pleasure that the Howard Greenberg Gallery presents *A New Paradise*, a comprehensive exhibition of photographs by Jacques Henri Lartigue and the first New York exhibition of his work since 2000. Born in France in 1894, Lartigue made his first photograph when he was six years old. Imbued with unadulterated glee, Lartigue's early photographs record and reflect the joie de vivre of fashionable upper class French society during the Belle Epoque. His most famous images depict pre-World War I Europe, especially moving cars, airplanes, and other machines. Fascinated with movement and the changing, modernized world, he quickly learned to infuse his elegant and idealized imagery with a new sense of vigor. Though it would take more than half a century for Lartigue to receive world-wide recognition, he is arguably one of the most important visionaries of early 20th century photography.

A New Paradise is comprised of vintage and early prints from the Collection of Jacques and Florette Lartigue, many of which have never previously been exhibited. In 1979, Lartigue donated his photographic archive to the French State. Under the supervision of the French Ministry of Culture, the Association des Amis de Jacques Henri Lartigue was established to manage and preserve Lartigue's legacy. Upon Florette Lartigue's death, her holdings of Lartigue's work were bequeathed to the Association, enhancing the overall archive.

Jacques Henri Lartigue was a child of privilege, born to an upper class family in Courbevoie outside Paris. He was given his first camera by his father in 1901 and from that point on he started a life-long visual journal. Naturally talented and influenced by no one, he documented the world around him in order to be a participant. Encouraged and indulged by his family, he tirelessly experimented with the new technology of faster films and cameras to preserve his idyllic childhood. The recreation of the leisure class begged to be photographed and Lartigue had access to it all: racetracks, flying machines, early powered flights, balloonists, women strolling in elegant costumes, and life at the seashore. He seized the world around him and took some of his most iconic images before he was 10 years old. As accompaniment to his photographs, Lartigue created countless photo albums and journals where he obsessively recorded every detail about his photographs. After receiving his first camera, Lartigue wrote, "Now I will be able to make portraits of everything...everything . I know very well that many, many things are going to ask me to have their picture taken and I want to take them all!"

A career in photography was not considered a respectable profession and Lartigue turned towards painting where he made his name professionally. He was a prolific artist and widely exhibited between the two world wars, but his career as a painter was essentially finished by the mid-50s. While on a trip to New York in the early 60s, Lartigue's photographic work was introduced to curator, John Szarkowski who remarked "only a true primitive could have produced work as confidently radical as this." In 1963, the Museum of Modern Art presented an exhibition of more than 40 of Lartigue's photographs which catalyzed his reputation as a photographer of international stature. Through the MoMa exhibition and *Life* magazine's publication of a portfolio, Lartigue secured lasting fame which was further increased by the publication of his first book, *The Family Album*. MoMa's exhibition traveled to 17 other venues and toured for more than 3 years. Once his work became known it had a tremendous impact on photographers such as Richard Avedon and Hiro who mimicked Lartigue's vigorous compositional style. Avedon edited a pivotal book of Lartigue's work, *Diary of a Century*, published in 1970. In 1975, Musée des Arts Decoratifs in Paris gave Lartigue his first French retrospective and he was honored again with an exhibition at the Grand Palais in 1980. Lartigue continued to actively work until his death in 1986.

For further information,
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Starting September 11th, the exhibition can be viewed at www.howardgreenberg.com