



Jacques Henri Lartigue: A Sporting Life

Thierry Terret

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Jacques Henri Lartigue was fascinated by the ascent of sport in the early twentieth century as a fashionable pastime for the middle classes, and was himself a keen sportsman. Lartigue's entirely unposed photographs, presented album-style in this gorgeous, luxurious and delightful volume, capture both the joyous exuberance of amateur sports--racing, skiing, tennis, gymnastics, hang gliding--and the particular character of its popularity in the first half of the twentieth century. Lartigue is an absolute master at conveying the dynamism of the human body at play--the peculiar shapes it can contort into, and the gestures that can express anything from easy nonchalance to fierce focus. These photographs also serve as a historical catalogue of the paraphernalia and smart casual clothing associated with each sport. *A Sporting Life* is divided into five themed chapters: "The Sportsman," "Taking the Air," "Training," "Women and Children" and "Sport as Spectacle." Here, we witness how sports were transforming social relations, introducing new opportunities for expression, especially across gender lines. In an essay, historian Thierry Terret reveals the complexity of Lartigue's technical approach to photography, and looks at the issues surrounding the rise of sport in its modern incarnation as a leisure pursuit and as commerce. In a preface, novelist Anne-Marie Garat (whose own narratives often feature the themes of photography and family) provides a personal perspective on Lartigue's sports photography, also exploring the role played by sport in the development of photography itself. The book is copublished with Hermès, in celebration of its 2013 sports theme.

Jacques Henri Lartigue (1894–1986) was a French photographer and painter, most famous for his photographs of the leisure activities of France's middle and upper classes. An avid photographer from the age of seven, Lartigue gained fame for his photo albums, which provide a comprehensive chronicle of the twentieth century in France and abroad, and for his official portraits.

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