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MODERN TIMES

TIFF13 Review: Finding Vivian Maier

Posted by Brandy Dean September 2, 2013 1 Comment 2316 views

In 2007, in an effort to find photos for a book of local history, John Maloof bought a box of photo negatives at a storage auction. There were no photos suitable for his book, but there was a mystery to solve. The box belonged to Vivian Maier, a nanny in Chicago's Northshore for 40 years. After posting some of Maier's work on Flickr, Maloof set out to reconstruct not only Maier's troubled life, but her archive. He eventually amassed a collection of 100,000 to 150,000 negatives, more than 3,000 prints, hundreds of rolls of film, home movies, audio tape interviews. His resulting documentary *Finding Vivian Maier*, co-produced with Charlie Siskel, chronicles the hunt for the truth about one's of America's greatest photographers.

Human interest wise, Vivian Maier's story is fascinating. Much like the tale of Henry Darger, it's mind-boggling to think that an artist could produce such a copious amount of work without anyone ever knowing. However, unlike Darger, there can be no critical quibbling about the *quality* of the work. Maier's personal history might add interesting elements to the story, but the works stands alone, with or without detail. It seems petty to call Maier's work "street photography," though that is technically true. But her portraits of urban life, including shots from both New York and Chicago, surely rank among any of the greatest photographers.

Ultimately, *Finding Vivian Maier* chronicles a rather sad tale. Maier died penniless, descending into what appears to have been ever deepening mental illness. However, there is the work and the work is undeniable. Vivian Maier lived life on her own terms, with a level of independence that was rare for women of her time. She forfeited a lot in her own life to produce the work and the work speaks for itself. *Finding Vivian Maier* is an absolute must see at this year's installment of TIFF.

Screening Times for Finding Vivian Maier

Monday September 9 TIFF Bell Lightbox 3 4:45 PM

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A Gallery of Images from Finding Vivian Maier



Watch the Finding Vivian Maier Trailer



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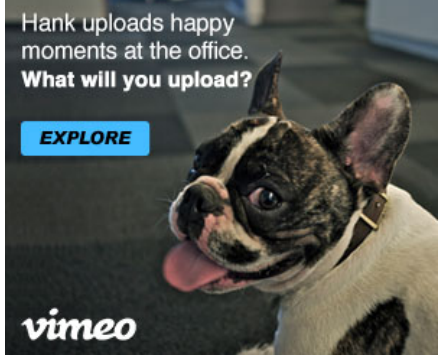
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