



International
Center of
Photography

***The International Center of Photography Presents
Sergio Larrain: Wanderings***

The International Center of Photography | 84 Ludlow Street, New York
On View October 16, 2025-January 12, 2026v
Public Opening October 16, 5–8PM



Sergio Larrain, Bavestrello Passage, Valparaíso, Chile, 1952 © Sergio Larrain / Magnum Photos

The International Center of Photography (ICP) is proud to present *Sergio Larrain: Wanderings*, consisting of prints drawn entirely from the Magnum Photos archive, the cooperative that Larrain was a member of for over fifty years. Curated by Agnès Sire, former Director of the Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson, Paris, the exhibition primarily highlights the work Larrain made during the first twenty years of his career, in cities such as Valparaíso, Santiago, Paris and London. With examples from many of his most renowned series, *Wanderings* provides a new perspective on Larrain's inventive and humanist photography that for decades has remained little seen and seldom exhibited.

"The terms Sergio Larrain used to describe the 'state of grace' necessary for 'receiving' a good image are mystical, as if the images were already present in the cosmos and the photographer acted as a medium," said Agnès Sire. "He was at one with stone, just as he was at one with the children of the streets, who meandered like angels appearing out of nowhere. His magnetic eye carved out fragments of reality, with no fear of what was outside the frame, of the time to come, of bold diagonals, of direct sunlight or of darkness. Neither are his pictures closed: the figures often move out of the frame, as elusive and resistant to confinement as their author."

Structured chronologically and using Larrain's own writings as a guide, *Wanderings* looks at both the material and spiritual drama of rural and urban life while also charting the subtle evolution of Larrain's style. The photographs he made in 1957 of the fishing community on Chiloé Island off the coast of Chile would prefigure many of his coming series, with their attention to the plight and circumstances of children and the psychological tension to be found in even commonplace scenes. That same year, the children of Santiago, Chile were the subject of Larrain's first major body of work, resulting in photographs that look unflinchingly at the material hardship of these children while also finding moments of levity and surprise. In these photographs the conditions of poverty are shown vividly though without sentimentality, as Larrain sought to shed light on their situation without valorizing their experiences.

Larrain later relocated to Paris for a while and traveled extensively throughout Europe while reporting for Magnum Photos, of which he became a full member in 1961. His photographs from Paris and London reveal a keen interest in bizarre and unexpected combinations of architecture and humanity, resulting in new and almost surreal compositions within these rapidly changing cities. Upon returning to his native Chile, Larrain completed his seminal body of work titled *Valparaíso*, which depicted the texture and atmosphere of urban space overcome with struggle, with specific attention paid to children who seem to wander the streets as much as they navigate them. In photographs of dramatically compressed space and staggered, tense compositions, Larrain's kaleidoscopic portrait of the city itself, from its nightlife to its architecture, has proven to be an enduring statement on the clash between history and modernity.

As Larrain worked in and reported from countries throughout South America in the 1950s and 1960s, his photographs continued to show figures resistant to being fixed within the frame, constantly in motion and in flux, a reflection of his own style and the social character of the countries themselves. This unsettled and fleeting quality is regularly set against dynamic views of architecture and the built environment, reflecting the friction between inner truth and external

pressures. Writing about his work and the effect that photography can have, Larrain wrote: “I want the photographs I make to be an immediate experience and not one that is chewed over. I understood that photography, like every other form of artistic expression, is something that you have to seek deep inside yourself. The perfect photograph is a kind of miracle that appears in a blaze of light—subject, shapes and perfect mood; you press the button almost by chance and the miracle happens.”

David Company, Creative Director at ICP, said, “Shining a light on great but overlooked photographers is an important part of what we do at ICP, so it is with tremendous excitement that we are bringing Sergio Larrain’s truly exceptional pictures to new audiences.”

About Sergio Larrain

Sergio Larrain, born in 1931 in Santiago into a Chilean family rich in art and culture, studied forestry at University of California, Berkeley and the University of Michigan. He became a freelance photographer, worked for *O Cruzeiro* magazine, and received a British Council scholarship in 1958. He joined Magnum Photos a year later after meeting Henri Cartier-Bresson in Paris. Larrain's notable series include *Vagabond Children* (1957), *London* (1958–59), and *Valparaíso* (1952–62). In 1963, he published his first book, *El rectángulo en lamano*. Later in life, he collaborated with Pablo Neruda on his book *Una casa en la Arena*, with Neruda also contributing texts to Larrain’s books about *Valparaíso*. Larrain passed away in 2012 at his home in Tuluahuén, Chile.

About Agnès Sire

After a master in philosophy and aesthetics, Agnès Sire worked at Alexandre Lolas Gallery in Paris before joining the team of the Magnum Photos Paris office. She worked there as artistic director for 20 years and co-authored several collective Magnum projects such as *Magnum Cinema* and *Behind the Iron Curtain*. She also oversaw the publication of various photographers’ books, such as Henri Cartier-Bresson: *Mexican Notebooks 1934-1964* and *Valparaíso* and *London* by Sergio Larrain.

She taught for two years at Sorbonne University and in 2004 she became director of Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson in Paris. For 15 years, she was the curator of most of the 45 exhibitions presented there and contributed widely to the creation of this Institution together with Martine Franck.

Exhibition Support

Exhibition organized in collaboration with Magnum Photos.

The word "MAGNUM" in white, bold, sans-serif capital letters, centered within a solid black square.

Exhibitions at ICP are supported, in part, by Caryl Englander, Almudena Legorreta, ICP Board of Trustees, and Blanchette Hooker Rockefeller Fund, with public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council and the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of the Office of the Governor and the New York State Legislature.



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About The International Center of Photography

The International Center of Photography (ICP) is the world's leading institution dedicated to photography and visual culture. Cornell Capa founded ICP in 1974 to champion "concerned photography"—socially and politically minded images that can educate and change the world. Through exhibitions, education programs, community outreach, and public programs, ICP offers an open forum for dialogue about the power of the image. Since its inception, ICP has presented more than 700 exhibitions, provided thousands of classes, and hosted a wide variety of public programs. ICP launched its new integrated center at 84 Ludlow Street on Manhattan's Lower East Side in January 2020. ICP pays respect to the original stewards of this land, the Lenape people, and other Indigenous communities. Visit icp.org to learn more about the museum and its programs

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