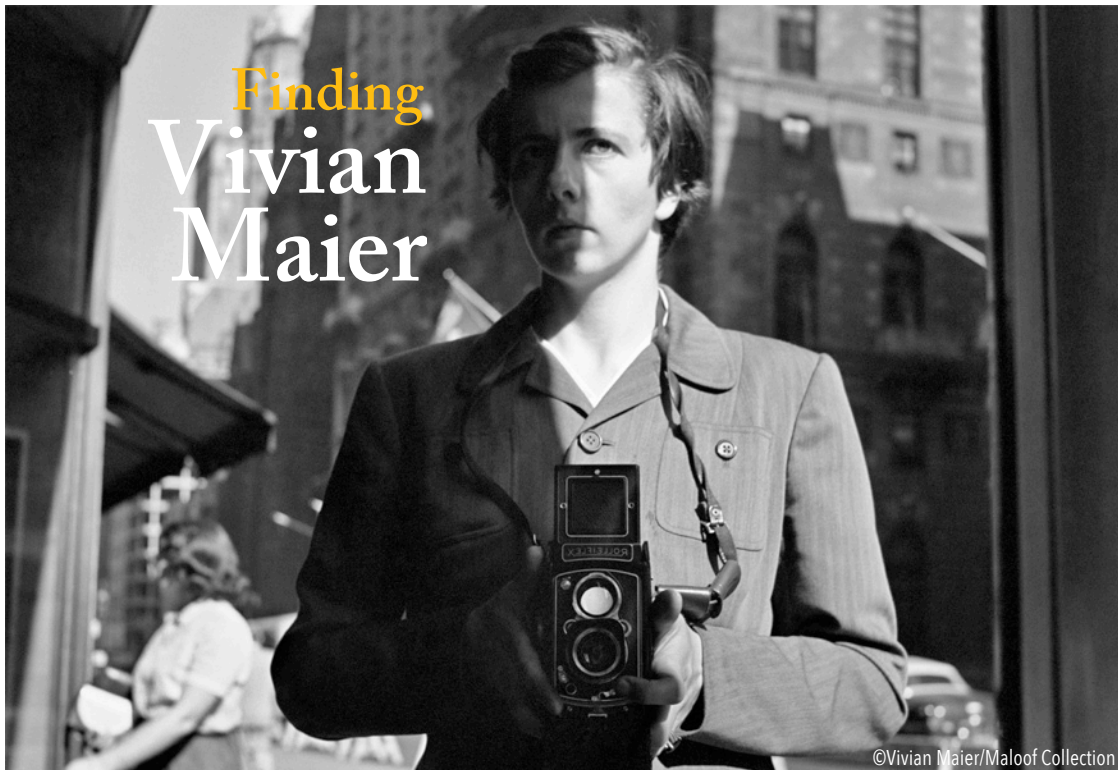


FINDING VIVIAN MAIER

2014 / USA / English / 84 Min

Produced and Directed by John Maloof & Charlie Siskel



Download press kit and images:

<http://www.findingvivanmaier.com>

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FINDING VIVIAN MAIER – SYNOPSIS



©Vivian Maier/Maloof Collection

A mysterious nanny, who secretly took over 100,000 photographs that were hidden in storage lockers and discovered decades later, is now considered among the 20th century's greatest photographers. Maier's strange and riveting life and art are revealed through never before seen photographs, films, and interviews with dozens who thought they knew her.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT – Charlie Siskel

We all choose what we want the world to know about us. And yet in the end we can't help but reveal ourselves. It may be that if Vivian Maier had her choice the world would know nothing of her life or her photographs. She chose to conceal herself and hid her art during her lifetime.

But hiding one's art is, of course, the opposite of destroying it. Maier preserved her work and left its fate to others. Like Kafka's instructions to burn his writings unread, any wish she may have had for her work to remain unseen, either expressed or unspoken, was ignored.



©Vivian Maier/Maloof Collection

Documentary filmmakers also choose the stories we want to tell. After years of sifting through Maier's life's work and the mountain of personal material she left behind, we made a film that tells the story of an artist who masqueraded as a nanny and whose discovery brought her overdue fame and recognition.

Maier was a kind of spy. She captured street life, often with her suburban charges in tow, recording humanity as it appeared, wherever it appeared - in stockyards, slums, and suburbia itself.

As an artist, Maier was an outsider, which made her empathic toward the marginalized people she often photographed. But her single-mindedness in pursuit of her art exacted a high price.

Maier jokingly called herself a mystery woman. She fiercely protected her privacy and asserted her independence from the bourgeois values of the families she lived with. But she may have secretly longed for the family bonds she witnessed intimately for decades, bonds that were broken in her own childhood.

Our film shows a darker side of Maier than she might have wanted others to see and darker than that which has so far been revealed. But this is only one piece of the story. Her work is now part of the history of photography and an undeniable treasure. The discovery of Maier's work not only gave her story an ending, there would be no story without it.



©Vivian Maier/Maloof Collection

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT – John Maloof

Being raised by just my mother who barely made minimum wage her whole life forced me to be extremely resourceful at an early age. Finding thrown out junk and reselling it at flea markets had become a skill of mine. If I wanted something, I figured out a way to make it happen, with a compulsion.

In 2007, as I was writing a history book on my Chicago neighborhood, I was wondering how I would find enough old photos to illustrate the book and tried my luck at a local junk and furniture

auction house. I bought a box loaded with negatives that never ended up being used for the book. However, I knew to keep them. I thought, "I'm resourceful. I'll look at them later when I have more time." Fast forward 2 years later; that purchase had unearthed some of the finest street photography of the 20th Century. I decided to make a film to document my journey in figuring out who took these incredible photographs.

The negatives belonged to a woman named Vivian Maier. I was given access to her belongings and tons of her odd possessions, so I started my detective work to figure out more about her. I wanted this film to follow the process of my uncovering Maier. The evidence that led me to a person who knew her and then another, and so on. But the more that was uncovered, the more questions that were raised. Would she like what I'm doing? Why did she hide her photos and her personal life from others? Who the hell is this woman? She started to seem like some mythical person.

My obsession drove us to compile a library of interviews and strange stories from across the globe. We found roughly 100 people who had contact with Vivian Maier. In the film, we let the people speak for themselves. I hope that this story comes through honest and pure, and does more than just uncover a mysterious artist but tells a story that changed the history of photography.



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MAIN CREW – BIOS

John Maloof (Director/Producer)

John Maloof is a filmmaker, photographer and historian. He is also the chief curator of Vivian Maier's work. Through the Maloof Collection, John continues the work of preserving Maier's photography and making it publicly available. John grew up on the West Side of Chicago buying and selling at the kind of flea markets and storage lockers that led to the discovery of Vivian's photographs. Maloof is the author of a book on Maier's work, *Vivian Maier: Street Photographer*, and an upcoming self-portrait book.



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Charlie Siskel (Director/Producer)

Charlie Siskel is an Emmy-nominated television and film producer, writer and director. His producing credits include the Academy Award-winning film *Bowling for Columbine* with Michael Moore, and *Religulous* with Bill Maher and Larry Charles. In television, Siskel's Executive Producer credits include *Tosh.0* on Comedy Central. He has worked on documentaries and comedies for 15 years, often combining the two. Charlie was born and raised in the North Shore suburbs where Vivian was a nanny. A former lawyer, Siskel lives in Los Angeles.



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Jeff Garlin (Executive Producer)

Jeff Garlin is a producer, writer, director and actor, whose many credits include HBO's *Curb Your Enthusiasm*. Garlin is also a photographer, collector of photography, and an early Vivian Maier enthusiast.

Aaron Wickenden (Editor)

Aaron Wickenden's editing credits include the award-winning films *The Interrupters*, *At the Death House Door*, and the upcoming film *The Trials of Muhammed Ali*, all produced by acclaimed Chicago-based Kartemquin Films (*Hoop Dreams*.)

J. Ralph (Composer)

J. RALPH (American born, New York, 1975) is an Academy Award® nominated composer, singer/songwriter and producer whose professional career began at age 22 with the signing to Atlantic Records as a Recording Artist. He is the founder of the internationally award winning production company The Rumor Mill, and has written and produced the music for numerous Grammy winning Artists, Oscar® winning films, Symphony Orchestras and The President of The United States, Barack Obama.

Highly regarded for his contributions to the documentary medium, J. Ralph has written and produced the music for 4 out of the last 5 Oscar® winning/nominated films including *Man on a Wire* (2009), *The Cove* (2010), *Hell and Back Again* (2012), and *Chasing Ice* (2013) which also features his original song "Before My Time" performed by Scarlett Johansson and world renowned violinist Joshua Bell. In the 85 year history of the Academy Awards, J. Ralph's song "Before My Time" is one of only three songs from a documentary ever to be nominated for an Oscar®.

J. Ralph's music encompasses a wide variety of genres and mediums. He is a fellow of Yale University, a member of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences and the only composer ever to win two consecutive A.I.C.P. awards. Several of J. Ralph's works are included in the Museum of Modern Art's permanent collection in New York City.

MAIN CREW

Executive Producer

Jeff Garlin

Written and Directed by
John Maloof & Charlie Siskel

Produced by
John Maloof & Charlie Siskel

Director of Photography
John Maloof

Music by
J. Ralph

Editor
Aaron Wickenden

Production Sound
Scott Palmer
Steve Lynch

Photo Editing
Martin Fuchs

Associate Producers
Anthony Rydzon
Lars Oxfeldt Mortensen

PRESS QUOTES

"Ms. Maier's streetscapes manage simultaneously to capture a redolent sense of place and the paradoxical moments that give the city its jazz, while elevating and dignifying the people in her frames – vulnerable, noble, defeated, proud, fragile, tender and often quite funny. "

- David W. Dunlap – *NY Times Blog*:

LENS: Photography, Video, and Visual Journalism

<http://lens.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/01/07/new-street-photography-60-years-old/>

"Fractions of seconds, captured by Vivian Maier a half century ago or more - fleeting moments of life on the streets at a time when men wore fedoras and dragged on Lucky Strikes, when women favored babushkas, when families piled in Studebakers and DeSotos for Sunday drives. Maier observed it all without judgment. This was her hobby, not her job. But over the decades, it also was her life. She shot tens of thousands of photos. Most were never printed. Many weren't even developed. And few were seen by anyone but her."

- Sharon Cohen – *The Huffington Post*

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/03/12/celebrating-vivian-maiers_n_834905.html#s252866

"Long before The Sartorialist and Bill Cunningham became icons, when "blog" was a foreign word and Marilyn Monroe ruled Hollywood, Vivian Maier pioneered street photography. If Maier's name is unfamiliar that's her own doing—as a nanny she honed a hidden passion for taking pictures in New York, Chicago, and beyond, but kept her photos stashed in obscurity. Her impressive body of work only reached public eyes in 2007, when realtor and historian John Maloof discovered 100,000 of her negatives at an auction house in Chicago.

The photos are an outstanding catalogue of urban American life (think Humans of New York of the '50s and '60s): highlighting everyday mundanity, strangers glamorous and rugged alike, and—inadvertently—fashion of the time. We can't help but admire her subjects' perfectly coiffed hair, fur shawls, birdcage veils, and pearls. Beyond this, her black-and-white collection is a time capsule of moments that are beautiful for their normalcy: families on street corners, children playing, and lovers whispering.

- Kristina Rodulfo – *Elle Magazine*

<http://www.elle.com/news/culture/vivian-maier-photographs>

INTERVIEWS – Excerpts

Interview with John Maloof: Discoverer of the Vivian Maier

Collection by Devon Caulfield for *Lomography* March 25, 2011

<http://www.lomography.com/magazine/lifestyle/2011/03/25/interview-with-john-maloof-discoverer-of-the-vivian-maier-collection>

The street photography of Chicago nanny, Vivian Maier, was discovered when 29-year-old history enthusiast John Maloof stumbled across an enormous stash of negatives at an auction. When he started a blog to share her incredible photographs with the world; the response was unbelievable. Everyone - including the NY Times - started running stories on the photos. We caught up with John Maloof, the discoverer and champion of Vivian's work.

DC: First of all, could you tell [us] a little bit about how you came across the photographs?

JM: In 2007, as the president of a local historical society here in Chicago, I was co-authoring a book on the neighborhood Portage Park. I needed historic photos for the book so I visited the local resale auction house and saw negatives with scenes of Chicago in some of the frames, so I made a gamble hoping for the best. I won the box, and looked through the images with my co-author, finding none suitable for our book, so I stashed them in the closet. It wasn't until I was finished with the book that the images were looked at again and it took about a half year or more for me to realize that these were really good photographs and not just some old found snapshots.



©Vivian Maier/Maloof Collection

DC: What impact did the photographs have on you?

JM: Since I wasn't a photographer at the time I discovered them, the photographs were only interesting in a historical context, meaning, the architecture, skyline, or images that depicted the way the city looked then. It did, however inspire me to take up photography so, as I progressed as a photographer, I learned more about her work and photography as a whole. I can say the photographs impacted me by taking my life into a new direction.

DC: What do you know about Vivian Maier and how did you go about finding out what she was like as a person?

JM: I didn't know anything about Maier. In fact, there was absolutely nothing concrete available online until her obituary came up in 2009. As I became more fascinated by Maier, I got sucked into the investigative work of who she was. Since I'm co-producing a documentary film on this story... the research has been getting even better. We're finding many people who knew Vivian and we have many stories to share in this film.

Interview with John Maloof

by Michelle Hauser for *The Design Observer Group* March 31, 2010

<http://m.designobserver.com/observatory/feature/finding-vivian-maier/13118/>

MH: From what I've gathered, Vivian did not print, or even bother to develop, the thousands of rolls of the film that she shot. She may have held back for financial reasons or because she lacked a proper darkroom. Or perhaps she shared the same sentiment expressed in the following quotations by Henri Carter-Bresson:

"Your first 10,000 photographs are your worst."

"Actually, I'm not all that interested in the subject of photography. Once the picture is in the box, I'm not all that interested in what happens next. Hunters, after all, aren't cooks."

It seems that Vivian's appetite was for hunting. Have you developed any thoughts or theories on this? Also, have you noticed any reoccurring themes or locations in her work?

JM: The reason she had a couple thousand undeveloped rolls of film is really hard for me to understand. I know that she had lived her life as a nanny/caretaker and, since her income wasn't steady through the years, perhaps she had a point where she was too poor to develop. When she had money again, she may have just decided to develop what she was working on at the moment. It's anyone's guess.

There are recurring themes in her work for sure. She had a soft spot for children. From the earliest work up until the latest work, children found their way into her photos. She also had an interest in street graffiti and newspapers. Newspapers in stands, on curbs, in garbage cans, etc. But, her most recurring style would be her street portraits.



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