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CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK SUPER NANNY

Vivian Maier, who worked as a nanny in New York and Chicago and took photographs in her spare time, died in 2009, leaving behind more than three thousand prints and some hundred thousand negatives, not one of which



was published or exhibited in her lifetime. The book “Vivian Maier: Street Photographer” and two concurrent shows, at the Howard Greenberg and Steven Kasher galleries, are only the first steps in her rediscovery; thousands of negatives remain unscanned and at least a thousand rolls of film are undeveloped. But even this fraction of Maier’s work is substantial enough to establish her as a real artist with a definite point of view. Though apparently untrained, she was a keen observer, and her best work (primarily from the nineteen-fifties and sixties) is confident, arresting, and strong enough to stand up to comparisons to Walker Evans, Lee Friedlander, and Diane Arbus. If her pictures of people on the street are notably un sentimental, she’s just as tough on herself. Both shows include self-portraits of a plain, determined-looking woman with no illusions but plenty of pluck.

—Vince Aletti
