



FINE ARTS CENTER

UNIVERSITY GALLERY

UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS AT AMHERST
AMHERST, MASSACHUSETTS 01003 (413) 545-3670

The University Gallery of the University of Massachusetts Amherst is pleased to present The Changing Landscape of Labor: American Workers and Workplaces, an exhibition of 36 black and white photographs by Michael Jacobson-Hardy. The photographs will be on view from February 3 through March 15, and a public reception will be held in the University Gallery on Friday, February 9 from 5 to 7 p.m. "Voices of New England Workers," a roundtable discussion organized by the University's Labor Relations and Research Center, will take place on Thursday, February 8 from 7 to 9 p.m. in the University Gallery. The event is free and open to the public.

In 1989 Northampton photographer Michael Jacobson-Hardy began to photograph and interview industrial workers in some of the Pioneer Valley's oldest mills, with an eye toward recording a way of work and life that is rapidly disappearing from our region. Using a large format camera and existing light, Jacobson-Hardy is able to capture in precise detail and with dramatic tonal range the pride and dignity of manual laborers in their everyday work environments. Shot in nearby Holyoke and Leeds, Massachusetts and as far north as Bath, Maine, the photographs in the exhibition contrast the work environments of traditional industries such as paper and textile mills, foundries, and shipyards with newer "high-tech" industries as computer manufacturing and aircraft production. Pursued by the artist as a series until 1995, the images and accompanying texts provide a poignant document of the changing world of manual labor in late twentieth century New England.

Jacobson-Hardy's photographs belong to the tradition of social documentary photography of Jacob Riis and the American reformer Lewis Hine whose photographs documenting the abuses of child labor and the plight of American industrial workers were popularized by the 1932 publication Men at Work. Though Men at Work was misinterpreted by some as moving away from social criticism because of its artistry, Hine's intention was to illuminate the human spirit behind the making of our material assets. Likewise, Jacobson-Hardy's photographs provide personal witness to the men and women who make the things that help make modern life what it is.

In conjunction with the exhibition, The Changing Landscape of Labor: American Workers and Workplaces, a book published by the University of Massachusetts Press, features over 50 photographs from the series by Jacobson-Hardy. A foreword by Bruce Laurie and essays by John T. Cumbler and Robert E. Weir place the works in the contexts of the development of social documentary photography and the pattern of industrial change in New England, birthplace of the industrial revolution in the early nineteenth century and of the recent "high-tech" revolution. The book is available for viewing

at the University Gallery and copies may be ordered from the University Press.

The University Gallery, located in the lower level of the Fine Arts Center, is open to the public Tuesday through Friday from 11 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., and Saturday and Sunday from 2 to 5 p.m. The Gallery is also open during evening performances held in the Concert Hall of the Fine Arts Center. For more information, please call the Gallery at (413) 545-3670.