

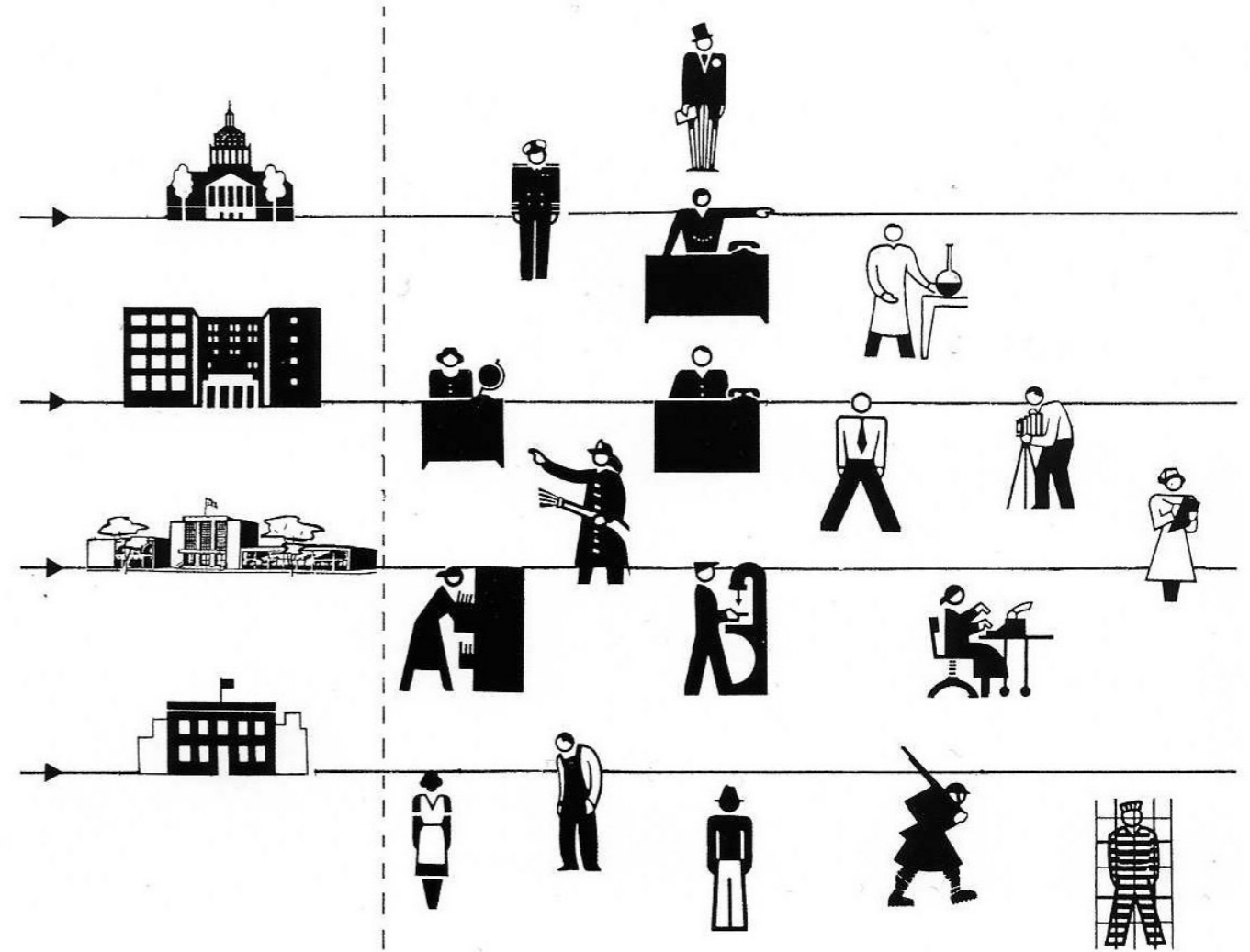
Allan Sekula

School Is a Factory, 1978-80



Our schools are, in a sense, factories in which the raw materials are to be shaped and fashioned into products to meet the various demands of life. The specifications for manufacturing come from the demands of the twentieth-century civilization, and it is the business of the school to build its pupils to the specifications laid down.

Elwood Cubberly, Public School Administration, 1916





This photograph was taken at a community college in Southern California, as were all the following pictures of school situations. Three welding students pose for a portrait. They hope to graduate into Jobs with metal fabrication shops in the area. Their instructors act like bosses, supervising the action from a glassed-in office. This apprenticeship program, like public education generally, is supported by taxes that fall heavily on working people and only lightly on corporations. Spared the cost of on-the-job training, local industry profits from the arrangement. Social planners also like the idea that vocational courses keep unemployed young people off the streets and dampen discontent. A lot of Hispanic and black students are tracked into these courses. Despite such programs, unemployment continues to increase as industry cuts back production and moves its operations to the nonunionized labor markets of the South and to the Third World. These students may never find steady work as welders.



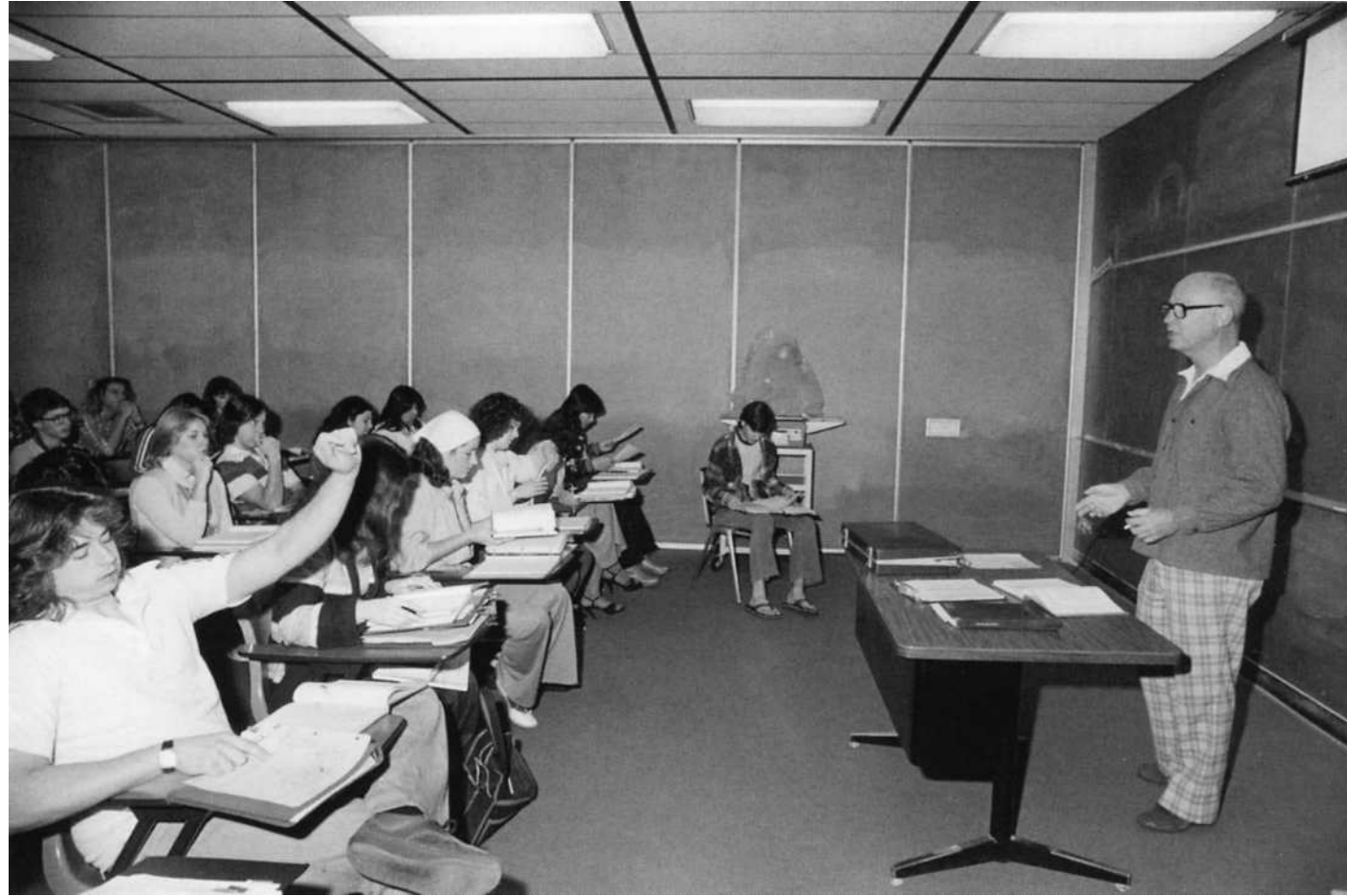
Two students look up from their machines. They are learning key-punch operation in a business information systems course. This junior college delivers a lot of students, mostly women, to surrounding corporations with a need for clerical and low-level computer workers. Key-punch is the lowest level of computer work, rivaling the assembly line in its brain-numbing routine.



In the room next to the women keypunch students, a computer programmer stops for a moment, smiles, then looks solemn. I don't talk to him much, but later a friend, a union activist at the college, tells me a story about programmers. Most move frequently from job to job, since their skills are in high demand. Some are active in the faculty-staff union, which is auditing the financial records of the college in an attempt to prove that the administrators and not the workers are responsible for a serious budget crisis. Some programmers know that the computer records have been deliberately altered to obscure illegal administrative expenses. They know how to help open the books, and they know the risks involved. This may or may not be a true story or a lesson in resistance.



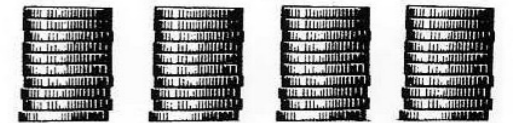
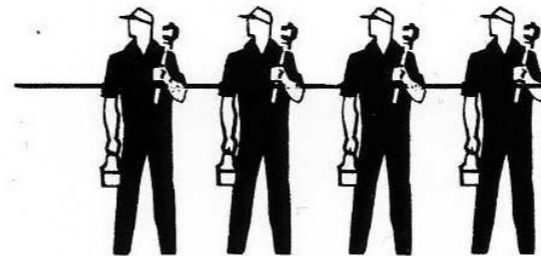
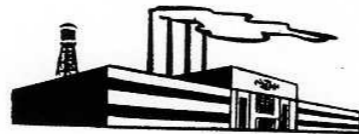
A businessman holds a plastic schoolhouse, a funnel full of figurines, and a good cigar in front of one of the many computer firms in this region. The streets are named for famous scientists, inventors and industrialists. Even maps celebrate the fusion of organized science and big business. One can stand at the intersection of Dupont and Teller and think, or not, about the march from gunpowder to the hydrogen bomb.



A mathematics instructor quizzes his students. Most of them are taking math for practical, vocational reasons. Very few, if any, will get to be scientists, engineers, or mathematicians. This is not a matter of talent or ability, but a matter of social channeling. There are more prestigious schools for the higher professions.

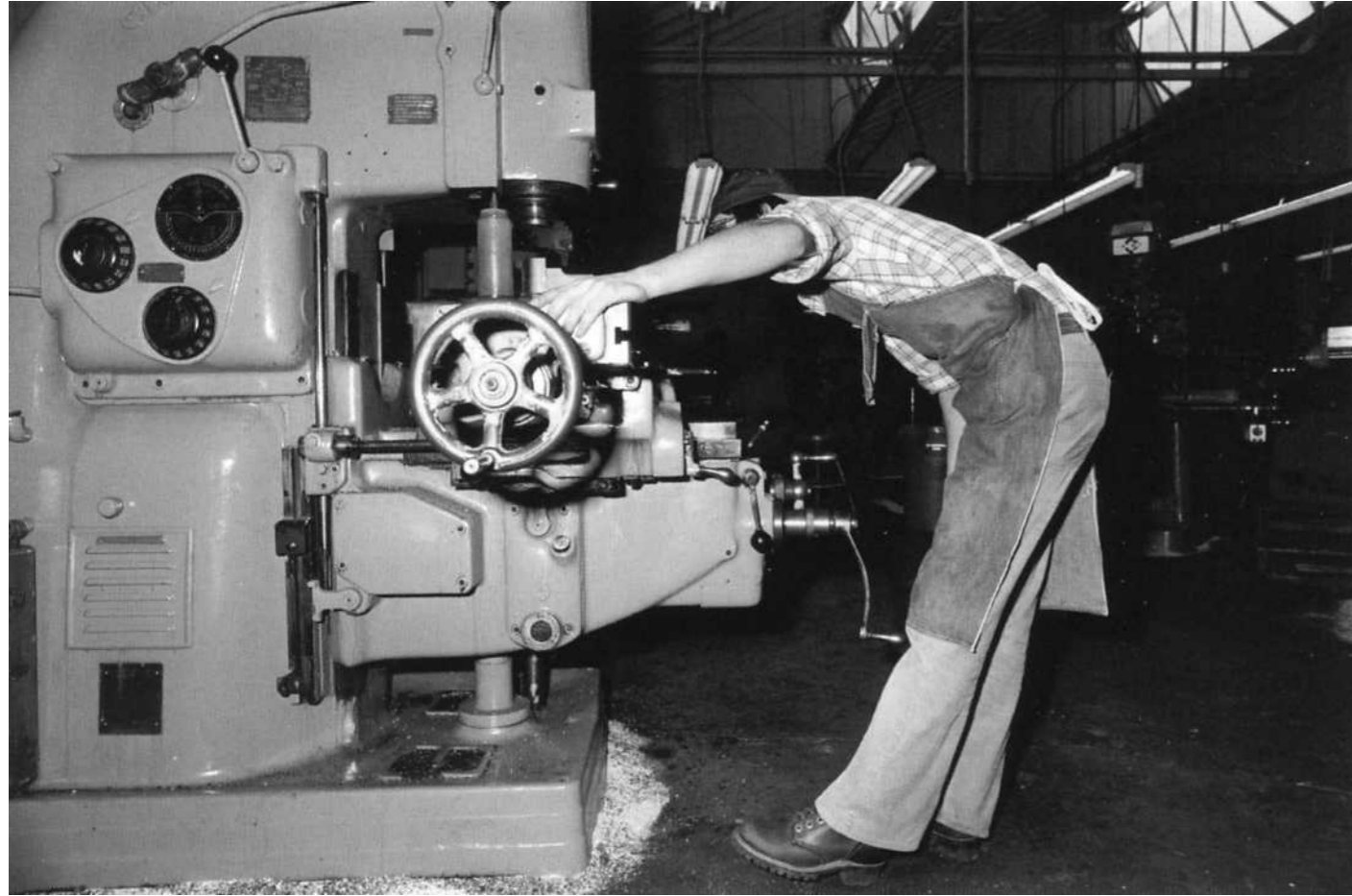


A half-abandoned shopping center, only minutes away by car from the college scenes you've been looking at.





Funny things happen in this landscape of factories disguised as parks. Corporate executives decide to relocate their plants, often moving from the Hispanic or black inner districts to the orange groves near the coast. Now, these managers drive only a short distance from their beach-front homes to their work. But somehow real-estate interests and manufacturing interests come into conflict. Things are not working smoothly here under the palm trees. Escalating property values make it impossible for lower and middle level employees to find housing. So now a new, less privileged group of commuters join the traffic on the freeways of Southern California, cursing and dreaming their long way to work.



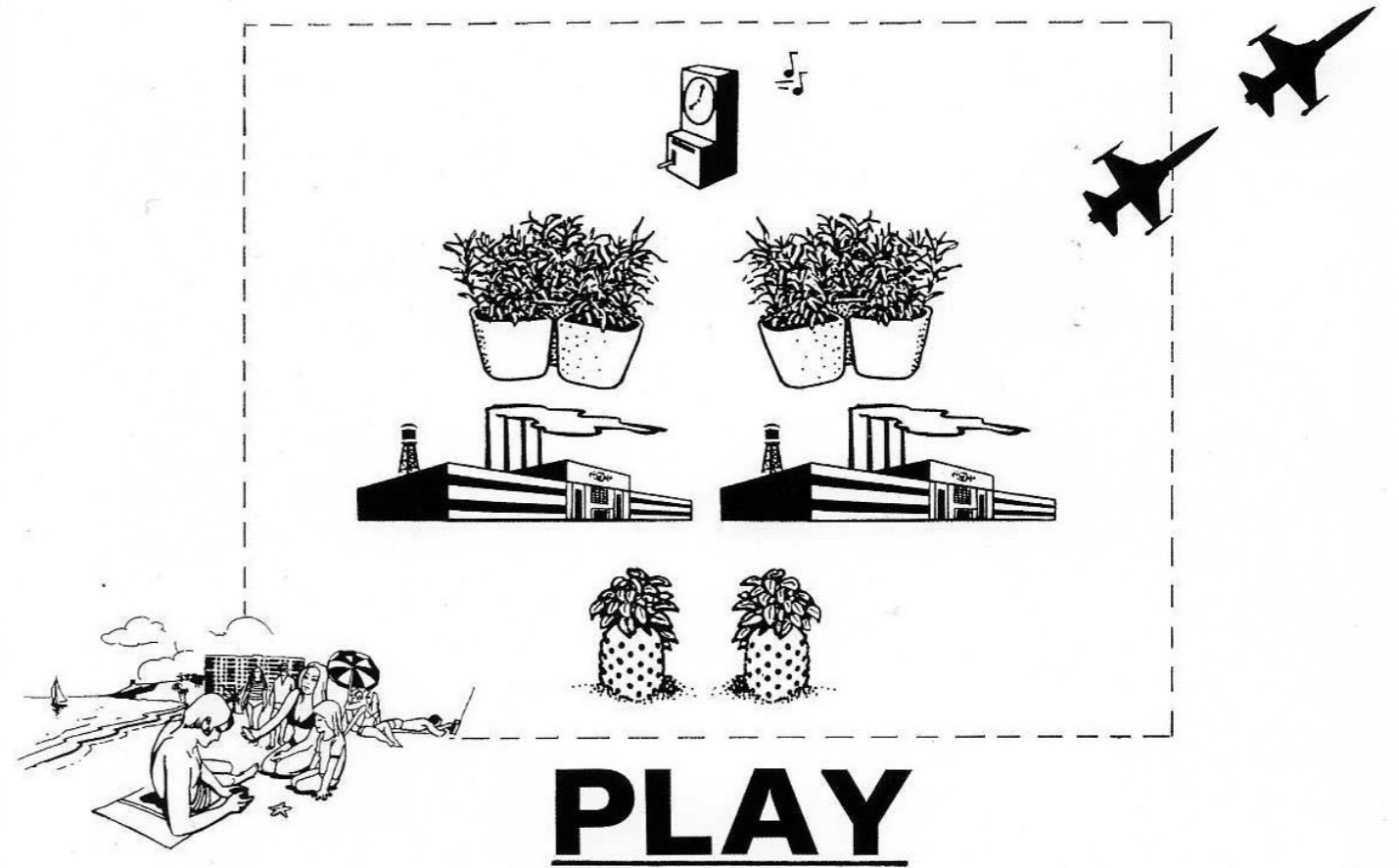
This student runs a milling machine. He studies machine technology and business administration, hoping to own his own machine shop one day. Around him are newer computer-controlled milling machines, machines which require less graceful, careful attention but rather a nervous, jerky movement between the machine and the punched tape which controls the machine. Working near him in this big room are many Vietnamese refugees, some of whom will become machinists in the military production plants in the area.



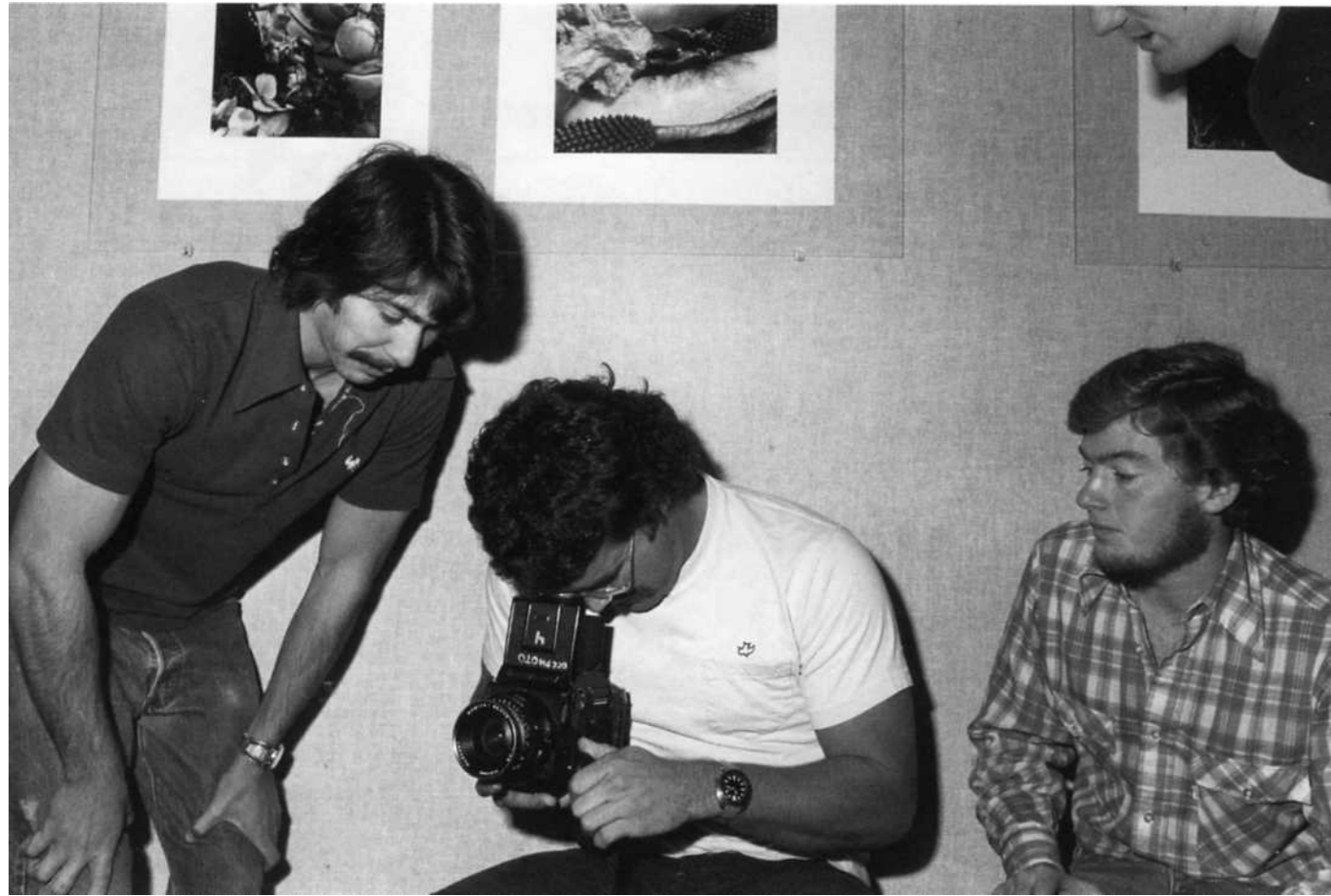
One of my students, a welder, had worked in a large shipyard in Los Angeles harbor, but poor wages, periodic layoffs, and danger drove him to a better-paying job at Disneyland. Now, instead of building bulkheads for Navy frigates and repairing oil tankers, he constructs the hidden skeleton of an amusement park, commuting to the night shift after class. He remarks drolly on the button-down fun-loving ethos of the place, and on the snobbery directed at Disneyland's manual workers by the college students who serve as guides and performers. So he prefers the solitary nighttime work, welding as the fog rolls in from the Pacific, softening the contours of Fantasyland and obliterating the artificial peak of the Matterhorn.



WORK



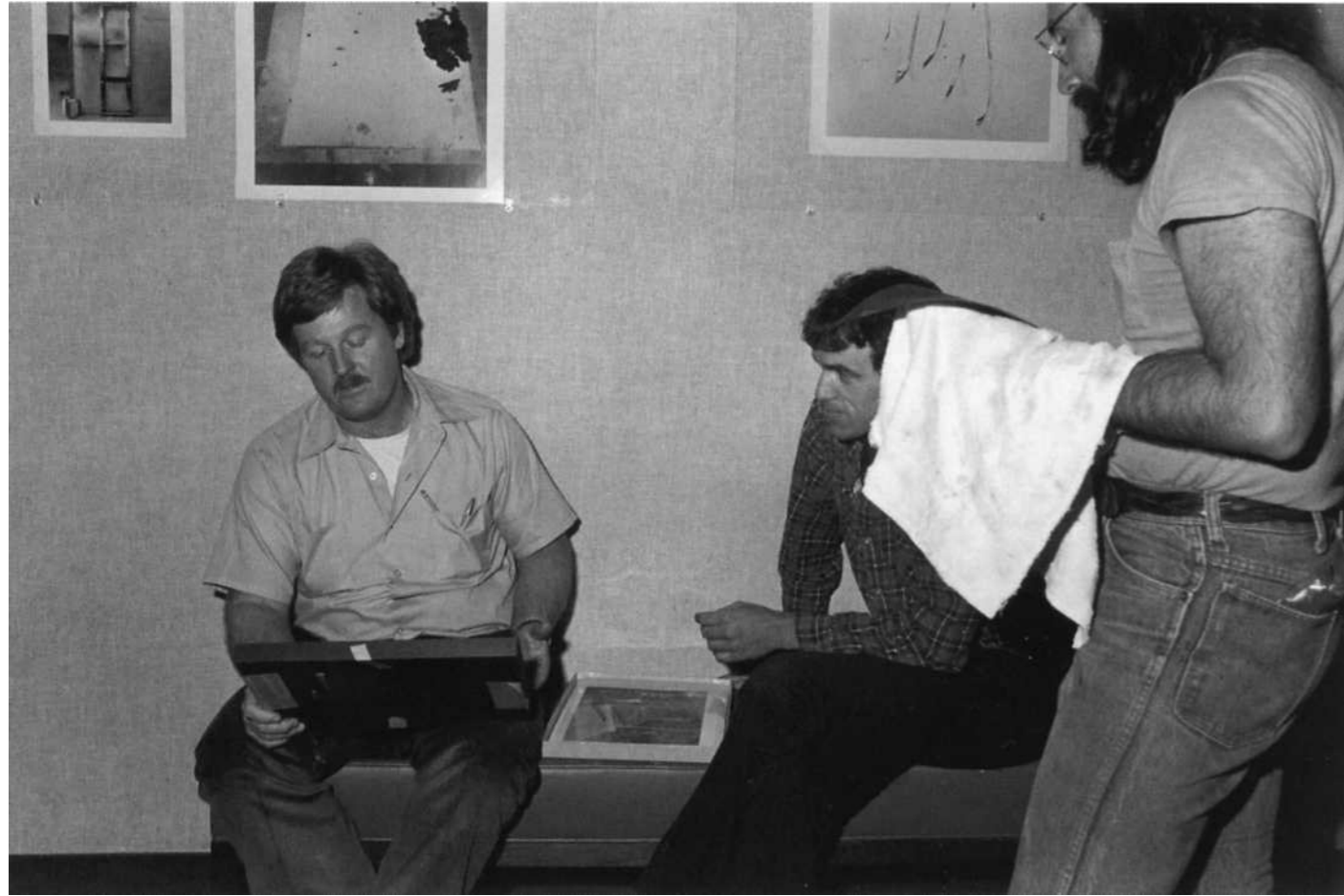
PLAY



Four male commercial photography students inspect a camera in front an exhibit of a well-known woman art photographer's work, prints with vegetable-erotic overtones. Most commercial photography students learn to concentrate on technical matters. Nevertheless, their instructors periodically expose them to privileged examples of the beautiful.



A male biology instructor looks on as a female student pours a chlorophyll solution into a funnel. More than half of the students at this college are women, while the faculty is predominantly male (and white).



This photograph was taken in a space that serves both as a gallery and as a darkroom foyer for a large photography department. A well-known photographer sits in front of an exhibit of his own color prints. He critically inspects a student's work while a second student, holding an unwashed print on a towel, looks on. Although some students from this department land commercial photography jobs, very few, if any become exhibiting fine art photographers.



A film critic drives a cab in New York City. He was a working-class kid who managed to attend the creative writing program of an elite university. Since his writing tends to deal with the politics and ideology of Hollywood movies, he's not well paid for his efforts, and publishes in a collectively edited film journal.



An artist paints her loft, an abandoned yeshiva in a Chinese neighborhood on the Lower East Side of New York City. She works as a clerk, and barely makes ends meet. Although she's in her late thirties, she's considered a "young artist" because she's just begun to be noticed by curators and critics. Six months after her first one person show at a Fifty-seventh Street gallery, she mysteriously disappears from the art world.



Not far from Disneyland, an art museum stands at the edge of a huge "exclusive" shopping center. The trustees of the museum are aerospace executives, bankers, and fast food and car wash kings. As collectors, they seem to favor Pop Art and minimal painting and sculpture. Art instructors from the community colleges bring their students to the museum to see the latest trends.

7—TELEVISION ANNOUNCING I (3-3) CSU

Prerequisite: Speech 3 and Television 9 and 46 with grades of "C" or better, or by examination. Required of all TV Broadcasting majors.

Training in radio and television announcing for newscasts, ad-libbing, commercials, sportscasts, and various program performance assignments with emphasis on the development of the student's individual style and personality. Practice in presenting the "personal you" over the mike and to the TV camera.

Los Angeles City College General Catalog, 1978-79

Beginning Video/Performance

Howard Fried

class defies description
teacher defies description
teacher defies class description

teacher defies convention
students defy conventions
students defy conventions teacher

art defies authority
revolution defies authority
art defies revolutionary authority

San Francisco Art Institute College Catalog, 1979-81

13—WORKSHOP IN THE ANIMATION FILM (4-4) O

Prerequisite: Cinema 1 and 2 with grades of "C" or better, or by permission of instructor. Equipment deposit, \$10.00

Required of Cinema majors.

Laboratory, 10 hours.

An introduction to the theory and practice of animation. An examination of the different types of animation, and the creative use of titles in films. Emphasis on design, timing and the technical possibilities of the camera. Drawing skill is not essential.

Los Angeles City College General Catalog, 1978-79

800 Film Cartoonists Threaten Strike

Walkout Planned Monday Over Work Being Sent Overseas

BY TIM WATERS

Times Staff Writer

Hanna-Barbera declined to comment on the matter, but the producers who are talking admit that much work is being moved overseas. And they also estimate a studio can generally cut total production costs nearly 50% by having the work done in Korea, Spain, Taiwan, Australia and other countries.

The local, which is a member of the International Alliance of Theatrical and Stage Employees, was given the authority to call a strike by its members Aug. 1. It was the first time members have authorized a strike over the loss of work, although the leadership has twice before asked them to do so.

Hester attributed this to a new activist spirit within the union, especially among the younger women, who compose the majority of the local's technical workers.

"Now, without a doubt," he said, "nine-tenths of our women are self-supporting. Before, most of them were married and they accepted the five or six months of employment and then collected their unemployment checks. Now we have a lot more women who need a steady paycheck coming in."

Los Angeles Times, August 11, 1979

In the midst of standardized and administered human units, the individual lives on. He is even placed under protection and gains monopoly value. But he is in truth only the function of his uniqueness, a showpiece like the deformed who were stared at with astonishment and mocked by children. Since he no longer leads an independent economic existence, his character falls into contradiction with his objective social role. Precisely for the sake of this contradiction, he is sheltered in a nature preserve, enjoyed in leisurely contemplation.

Theodor W. Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, 1951



This photograph was taken at a Hilton Hotel in Los Angeles. An avant-garde artist and tenured professor at a university in Southern California interviews a less well-known artist for a teaching position. Since she's female and Hispanic, the mere fact of the interview satisfies affirmative action requirements. She doesn't get the job.

