

Schneider Hall Galleries
Schneider Hall
University of Louisville
Louisville, KY 40292

For Immediate Release: May 19, 2022
Sites and Sights of Work
May 27-August 26, 2022
Reception: Thursday August 25, 5-7 PM

The Hite Institute of Art and Design presents *Sites and Sights of Work*, an exhibition that explores printmaking from the 19th to 21st century as both sites of artistic labor and depictions (“sights”) of modern work. The prints expose shifting perceptions of labor. The artworks ask us: what is, and what should be, defined as labor? Prompted by the COVID-19 pandemic, which radically disrupted daily work routines, this exhibition provides a lens through which to interpret the fluid state of labor.

Work in the exhibition includes Sylvia Wald’s 1941 silkscreen print “Spring Cleaning” is a frenzied depiction of housework that signals the endless labor hidden from public view; the “unpaid yet highly productive”[1] work, as researcher Lyn Craig describes it, allows society to churn. The array of color and diagonal composition in her print lend a sensation of frantic movement, one that is not a coincidence but layered carefully by Wald during the printmaking process. As a counterpoint to Wald’s frenzy, Henry George Keller’s lithograph, *Mexican Wood Merchant* (1938) wistfully exploits interconnectedness (male-coded) of peasant labor as “satisfying in its completeness”. This idealized perspective of work directly connected to survival provides a foil to the discussion of the intense dissatisfaction of workers in the 21st century, manifested most recently in the covid-era “Great Resignation”. Keller’s artwork posits, can work be meaningful if it is not explicitly intertwined with one’s well-being? Likewise, Antonio Frasconi transforms raw, found

wood into signposts for essential, often immigrant, workers. His highly stylized geometric figures are often day laborers whose work remains unseen.

Much of the labor depicted in—and captured by—these prints highlights the contrast in modern labor revealed by the Covid-19 pandemic, an era of labor defined by the term “essential worker.” For the last two and a half years, society was forced to notice, if not recognize, that labor that keeps the capitalist machine running is performed by the very people who are the most exploited.

Sites and Sights of Work is on view at the Schneider Hall Gallery from May 27th until August 26th. This exhibition is curated by Abby Briney, Nicole Clay, Danielle Deeley, Hollister Doty-Griner, and Lucy Wedding. An opening reception will be held on Thursday August 25th from 5 PM to 7 PM.