

The Museum of Modern Art

For Immediate Release
April 1989

AMERICA WORKED: THE 1950s PHOTOGRAPHS OF DAN WEINER

April 20 - July 11, 1989

An exhibition of the work of Dan Weiner (1919-59), a photojournalist for the last ten years of his life, opens at The Museum of Modern Art on April 20, 1989. On view through July 11, AMERICA WORKED: PHOTOGRAPHS OF DAN WEINER includes pictures that appeared in a variety of popular American magazines and newspapers, primarily Fortune and Collier's. Weiner's uncanny capacity for making himself invisible to those he photographed, and the openness of people to the camera in the fifties, combined to create an authentic photographic portrait of American life of that period.

Organized by Susan Kismaric, curator, Department of Photography, and William A. Ewing, consulting curator, the exhibition consists of approximately fifty photographs made between 1949 and 1959, when Weiner died in a plane crash while on assignment. The photographs were selected from Ewing's forthcoming book, America Worked: The 1950s Photographs of Dan Weiner (Harry N. Abrams, Inc. 1989). Many of the photographs have not previously been published or exhibited.

Weiner's rich portrayal of the nation during a period of explosive growth and economic expansion was thoughtfully constructed, at once respectful and caring, inquisitive and critical. He depicted a working America, capturing with unaffected accuracy its supermarkets and shopping centers, offices and boardrooms, schools and hospitals, farms and factories. Although many of Weiner's Americans seem enchanted with their new suburbs, automobiles, goods,

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and services, and display with pride the toys and badges of entrepreneurial success, others cling to faltering farms or live in decrepit old-age homes, discarded by a prodigal society.

Weiner was never fully satisfied with the vehicle of photojournalism. His pictures were often ill-treated by editors, and much fine work never made it to the printed page. He hoped that his work would transcend the momentary, and "stand against a long, cool appraisal." Ewing writes, "Ultimately, he hoped that his own pictures...would become, in his words, "remembered images...images that will live and grow, and become more meaningful in a historical perspective."

Born in New York City, the son of Russian-Rumanian parents, Dan Weiner began to paint and photograph as a young man. After studying painting at the Art Students League and Pratt Institute, he turned to photography full time. He became a member of the Photo League, an association of photographers whose concern was the social and economic condition of people. Weiner served as a photography instructor in the Army Air Force from 1942 until the end of the war. His belief in the power of documentary photography led to his career as a photojournalist.

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Publication America Worked: The 1950s Photographs of Dan Weiner by William A. Ewing, with an introduction by Lionel Tiger. Published by Harry N. Abrams, Inc. 192 pages; 170 black-and-white photographs. Hardbound \$35.00. Available in the Museum Store.

No. 41

For further information, contact the Department of Public Information,
212/708-9750.