

University



Photographer and professor Fred Lonidier with a camera over his shoulder.

Photographer brings the art of class struggle to wide audience Previously censored works of San Diego professor Fred Lonidier in Whitney Biennial

FRED LONIDIER'S artwork depicting the lives and struggles of maquiladora workers was banished from the Autonomous University of Baja California in 2005. This month artwork telling the story of that censorship

assembled those images into major artworks at the University of Baja's Tijuana campus.

When the owners of the maquiladoras protested, the show was taken down. Lonidier was inspired to docu-

scious work in the 1970s. He has been an activist with organizations that develop solidarity among



my work in a way it never has before," he says. "The Whitney show does that — even street sweepers in the city know this museum. Second, I'm speaking to the art world, especially the activists and young people in it. I'm saying that art should not just

deal with social class. It should deal with class struggle."

The Whitney will also exhibit an early Lonidier work, "GAF Snapshirts," depicting the growth of the chemical and photo company in a series of t-shirts. At the same time, the Maxwell Graham Fine Art gallery will show 15 panels from "The Health & Safety Game," about the experiences of American workers injured on the job, and in June, a broad collection of his labor art.

— By David Bacon, CFT Reporter



COURTESY FRED LONIDIER

After Fred Lonidier's photographs were removed from a Tijuana exhibition, he installed the art in a large semi-trailer that was driven to the gates of the maquiladoras plants each morning so workers could see their lives reflected. Top right: Lonidier's *GAF Snapshirts* exhibit from 1976.

will go up on the walls of New York's prestigious Whitney Museum of American Art as part of its renowned Biennial exhibition.

With the coming of the North American Free Trade Agreement in the 1990s, Lonidier documented the burgeoning workers' movement in the maquiladoras, the foreign-owned industrial plants just south of the U.S. border where multinational corporations took advantage of low wages and unenforced environmental laws to make everything from jeans to televisions for the U.S. market.

Lonidier, a photography professor and labor activist at UC San Diego, began photographing the workers organizing independent unions in those plants and defending their homes on the margins of Tijuana's industrial parks. In 2002 he was invited to show large panels that

ment its removal and create new panels. He installed the panels in a large semi-trailer with lights and a generator. Every day the truck was driven out to the gates of the plants. Sanyo

U.S. workers and unions for workers' struggles on the other side of the border, as well as president of the San Diego UC-AFT and a delegate to the central labor council.

"My commitment has long been that art that challenges the social world be connected in some way to organized efforts towards the same ends." — Fred Lonidier, UC San Diego

and Hyundai workers, going to and from their jobs, could visit the trailer and see their lives reflected. The truck crossed the border to the campuses of San Diego City College and Lonidier's own UCSD campus, where students learned how Mexican factory workers struggled to gain control over their lives and workplaces. Two panels from that show will be on exhibit at the Whitney Museum.

Lonidier began his socially con-

Of his work, Lonidier says, "My commitment has long been that art that challenges the social world be connected in some way to organized efforts towards the same ends. Art has its best chance in tandem with social/political organizations and their allies. Organized labor, the union movement, is the primary connection to consider."

Lonidier has two hopes for the New York exhibition. "First, I'm trying to get the labor movement to see

BOB SAMUELS
COUNCIL PRESIDENT

College can be free

The United States is already spending enough money to make all public undergraduate higher education free, but as I argue in my book *Why Public Higher Education Should Be Free*, what we lack is a federal policy to make this happen.

My proposal would link state and federal aid to the requirement that each university and college receiving funding generates at least 75 percent of its student credit hours in classes taught by full-time faculty. It would also tie aid to a mandated level of direct instructional spending. Further, at least 75 percent of the courses would be taught in classes of fewer than 26 students.

This policy would not only force schools to put more resources into undergraduate education, it would also motivate schools to have more effective learning environments.



TOP: OBRA GONG