

NATHAN BAKER
ARTIST STATEMENT

OCCUPATION

A job or a career is more than just making a living, even though many people would not be doing the work that they do if they did not need to support themselves and their dependents. Work occupies so much of most people's lives that it eventually draws out a personal investment and calls forth powers and skills.

The subject of "People at Work" is the double nature of labor at all levels of the social hierarchy – a round of tasks, often with no satisfying meaning, and a field for the exercise of aptitudes. By composing digital photographs that compact the varied tasks of individual workers into a single frame, I seek to communicate simultaneously the frenzied tedium of a wide variety of occupations and the intensity of effort that people put into them.

The color images come about through a practice of taking photographs with a 4x5 camera of individuals whom I direct to perform the tasks associated with their jobs, at their workplaces. I scan the photographs into the computer then digitally composite them into images that show at once all of the significant tasks associated with each job. The result in each case is a concentrated look at a person at work that conveys both a sense of frantic alienation and an amazement at the feats performed by workers in what are often considered the most ordinary, routine and undemanding occupations.

Most people try to make the best out of their situations, even if they did not desire to be in them and do not affirm what becomes of their labors. For most people, work has elements of both depravity and dignity. I seek to make that tension come alive, so that we can appreciate one another's endeavors at the same time that we question their intrinsic worth.