

NEW PHOTOGRAPHY EXHIBITION REVEALS MIT LAB LIFE
— *Scientific Settings: Photos of MIT Labs* —
MIT Museum's Compton Gallery — September 26 - January 6, 2006

Cambridge, MA (September 2005)— In 1983 and 1984, MIT undergraduate physics major Scott Globus wandered in and out of approximately 75 labs around campus taking 3,000 black and white photographs. *Scientific Settings: Photos of MIT Labs*, on view at MIT Museum's Compton Gallery from September 26 to January 6, 2006, presents a selection of those photographs, which deftly document the look and feel of MIT labs in the early 1980s.

In his junior year, Globus embarked on an Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program (UROP) project with the support of Sharon Traweek, a professor in MIT's Science, Technology, and Society program (STS). Having learned some basic ethnographic techniques from Traweek, Globus set out to make a "Visual Ethnography of the Scientific Environment." Now, 20 years later, his portrayal of the labs and the life in and around them is considered the most comprehensive visual documentation of MIT laboratories in the second half of the 20th century.

"Globus' photographs," states exhibition curator Deborah Douglas, MIT Museum curator of science and technology, "reveal both profound changes and surprising constants in the look and feel of academic laboratories. Although these images are just two decades old, looking at them today we are reminded that the personal computer was not always ubiquitous, that researchers have always loved to personalize their workspaces, and that "cutting edge" more often than not looks like clutter and chaos."

Scientific Settings actually extends Globus' original inspiration to conduct an ethnographic study of the Institute. The show features special comment books allowing visitors to help identify the images—who is in them; what room are we in; what is being worked on—as well as to share their general thoughts and impressions about the laboratory work environment and MIT.

"Scott's initial impulse was to undertake a visual documentation," notes Douglas, "and now the MIT Museum and the Program in Science, Technology, and Society seek to add to the record written comments and context." Under the direction of STS Professor Rosalind Williams, Kaya Williams, an MIT senior, scanned and helped catalog nearly 400 images from Globus' collection. Tabitha Bonilla, an MIT junior, printed the 48 images in the exhibition. The MIT Museum and STS hope that additional students will be inspired to make use of these photographs.

"I am quite pleased that a selection of the images I made as an undergraduate can now be shared with the community that spawned them," says Globus, who currently lives in California with his family. "Perhaps the photos will yield some insights into life at MIT and how science gets done. I hope a dialogue will unfold that is rich and colorful, stimulating and informative. At least, I hope, they present an accurate portrayal of how the world looked back then, and point to some of the ideas and ideals that motivated us."

Scientific Settings: Photos of MIT Labs

September 26 – January 6, 2006

MIT Museum's Compton Gallery

- 77 Massachusetts Avenue, Building 10, Room 150
- Gallery hours: Monday – Friday 9:30 am – 5:00pm
- Gallery admission: Free
- Information: 617-253-4444

<http://web.mit.edu/museum/exhibitions/compton.html>

Suggested Listing:**Scientific Settings: Photos of MIT Labs**

For two years in the early 1980s, MIT undergraduate Scott Globus roamed the corridors of MIT taking 3,000 black and white photographs. Conceived as a visual ethnography of the scientific environment, this work is now considered the most comprehensive visual documentation of MIT laboratories in the second half of the 20th century. Globus' photographs, on view at MIT Museum's Compton Gallery, reveal both profound changes and surprising constants in the look and feel of academic laboratories. Although just two decades old, the images remind visitors that the personal computer was not always ubiquitous, that researchers have always loved to personalize their workspaces, and that "cutting edge" often looks cluttered and chaotic.

September 26, 2005 - January 6, 2006

Related Program:**Gallery Tour with Scott Globus**

- Friday, September 23, 3:30pm
 - Compton Gallery
 - Free admission
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The mission of the MIT Museum, founded in 1971, is to document, interpret, and communicate the activities and achievements of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and the worldwide impact of its innovations in science and technology, to the MIT community and to society at large.

- Museum hours: Tues - Fri 10am - 5 pm; Sat & Sun Noon - 5pm.; closed holidays.
- Museum admission: Adults- \$5; youth under 18, students, seniors - \$2; children under 5 and MIT ID holders – free; free admission the third Sunday of each month
- Wheelchair accessible

MIT Museum

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Cambridge, MA 02139

(617) 253-4444; <http://web.mit.edu/museum>