



Submitted image

This image from "Mementi Mori," a show at the Museum of Wisconsin Art, shows the site of Matthew Shepard's killing in October 1998. Shepard's killers targeted him because he was gay.

Art exhibit photos expose hate crimes against gays

Images on display
at Museum of
Wisconsin Art
until Sept. 25

By **JILL BADZINSKI**
Daily News Staff

Alexio Bell of Miami. Clinton Risetter of Santa Barbara. Guinn "Richie" Phillips of Elizabeth-

town, Ky.

The images at the heart of a new art exhibit at the Museum of Wisconsin Art seem as random as most of the people after which they are named.

With one possible exception: Matthew Shepard of Laramie, Wyo.

In October 1998, Shepard died five days after he was driven to a remote area, robbed, pistol-whipped, tortured and tied to a fence. His assailants said they targeted Shepard because he was gay.

While Shepard may be the most-reknowned man to be killed for being gay, he is not the only one. Artist Paul Baker Prindle said he knows of dozens of similar cases in the past year alone.

His collection, "Mementi Mori," consists of large-format photographs taken at locations where men and boys were murdered because they were gay or transgender. The local installation, which opened Wednesday,

Please see **EXHIBIT/A7**



LEFT: Durval Martins, a 35-year-old gay man, was murdered in December of 2008. Martins was found, dead in this Washington, D.C., intersection, with his wallet in his hand. He had been shot multiple times in the head. He had not been robbed. No arrests have been made in Martins' case.

ABOVE: Henry Northington's severed head was found squarely in the center of this walkway in Richmond, Va., in March of 1999, leading many to speculate that the murderer(s) had intended to make an anti-gay statement.

Both images are from "Mementi Mori," a show at the Museum of Wisconsin Art through Sept. 25.

Submitted images

Exhibit: Photos expose hate crimes against gays

consists of eight photos from the larger series.

While the subject matter may be disturbing, the images are not. Rather, they appear almost random, ranging from a motel in Kentucky and a street corner in Washington, D.C., to a bridge in Virginia and an apartment building in Chicago.

And that is the point, said Baker Prindle in an email to the Daily News from Hong Kong, where he is currently working.

"Each image requires the viewer to help create its

Getting the images

Artist Paul Baker Prindle said he chose sites to photograph based on news reports of murders that had been labeled hate crimes.

Arrival in an area where a crime was committed often means his work is about to begin, not end.

"It is often challenging to learn details about the crimes and sites," Baker Prindle wrote in an email to the Daily News

not. Once, a police officer drove me to a site in Wisconsin, while an officer in southern Indiana cursed at me and told me to drive another 60 miles to the courthouse if I wanted the address of the site. A neighbor of a murdered man in Long Island talked to me for an hour, while a resident of Englewood in Chicago asked which of several murders in her neighborhood I was refer

At a glance

"Mementi Mori" is open through Sept. 25 at the Museum of Wisconsin Art, 300 S. 6th Ave. Public hours are Wednesday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. and Sunday from 1 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. Admission is \$5 for adults, \$3 for students and seniors, and free for children 12 and younger.

The public is invited to a reception for "Mementi Mori" from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. on Wednesday, Sept. 7, at the

viewer to help create its meaning, so I want viewers to see a scene that looks every day," Baker Prindle wrote. "Like a place they could stumble upon every day because this work is about all the places around us marked by history and erased by time."

Images of "unexceptional places" where unimaginable crimes took place power the exhibit, said Graeme Reid, assistant director at the Museum of Wisconsin Art.

Were it not for the succinct text panels that accompany each image, the exhibit would look like a collection of "pretty pictures," Reid said.

"And there's nothing wrong with a pretty picture," he said. "But this is about much more than that."

To Reid, the exhibition is about intolerance.

To Baker Prindle, it's about overcoming hate.

to the Daily News. "Neighbors often plead ignorance or display indifference. It's hard to accept that many people quietly think that gays and trans people are expendable. Sometimes it's easy to get information, other times

"Perhaps this exhibition will encourage people to think about how hate that might otherwise grow can be redirected while there's still a chance," he wrote. "When we let hate grow, we demean ourselves and lessen our own humanity. This exhibition isn't about gayness, it's about being human."

Reid echoed that sentiment, saying the West Bend museum has been planning the "Memento Mori" exhibit for more than a year. It was selected, Reid said, because it meets the museum's crite-

neighborhood I was referring to. I find that either people want to cover-up or forget that something so ugly happened in their community or because of their own personal politics or beliefs they don't much care about these crimes."

ria: It is the work of a Wisconsin artist (Baker Prindle is a teacher at Edgewood College in Madison), it has artistic value and it has a message.

It was not selected, Reid said, to tweak some community members who objected to a request for the West Bend School Board to allow the West Bend High Schools Gay-Straight Alliance to organize as a school-sponsored club after years of operating as a non-sponsored club.

However, the exhibit might challenge people to re-

think their beliefs, Baker Prindle said.

Assistant Museum Director Graeme Reid will give a casual gallery talk and artist Paul Baker Prindle will discuss the photographs. See all images in the "Memento Mori" series at www.paulbakerprindle.com.

think their beliefs, Baker Prindle said.

"No matter our opinion about homosexuality, we can all recognize that murdering people because they are gay or trans is radically anti-social, deeply disturbing in its frequency and in stark contrast with our shared devotion to liberty and community," he said.

Baker Prindle said when he started working on the exhibit in 2009, he "didn't set out to make the work as an activist, rather I set out to make work about how memory is shaped by the image."