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Mementi Mori

Artist Paul Baker Prindle's haunting photos catalogue locations where biological men, sometimes boys, were murdered because they were gay or transgender.

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Mementi Mori is a body of work that seeks to illumine the sublime within stories where sex meets murder. These narratives are all set upon the everyday landscape of the United States. The quotidian look of these representations belies the horrific events that have taken place at sites I visited from California to New York.

These photographs are of locations where biological men, sometimes boys, were murdered because they were gay or transgender. The murder victims were burned, stabbed repeatedly, shot within a classroom of teenagers, and/or

bludgeoned. In most cases, murder was preceded by consensual sex.

Viewers won't find the bloody remains of violence or clues to who was murdered or why within these photographs. Human lives were forever ended upon ignominious, plain places. Over the years, growth and developments have obscured any traces that once scared the land. Even the infamous site of Matthew Shepard's death at the foot of idyllic, snow-capped peaks is encircled by suburban sprawl. Each site I visited was an unsettling disappointment, bearing few if any clues to the value of the life that ended there.

Contrary to our shared faith in photographs to faithfully record, photographs fail miserably in communicating the fullness of experience, the nuance of laughter and sadness, or the horror of loss. Through these photographs I hope to mark out a path toward the inarticulate qualities of the events, lives, and themes I've followed, but it is a path the falls short of its end. These photographs hint at the fleeting nature of life and call attention to the speed with which hate can bring about death and oblivion. At the same time I hope they affirm that the worth of a life cannot be fully memorialized. Any art can only whisper at the awesomeness of life, but it is that whisper that reiterates the volume of the wonder.

Photography by Paul Baker Prindle

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