

Performance and Experience at the House of Terror

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Abstract

This paper aims to draw on interview accounts/voices of visitor experiences and a visual narrative analysis at a memorial museum. My case is a site of commemoration in Budapest, Hungary, the House of Terror. The paper treats it as a site of national mythology that is structured by a socialist and fascist past, embodied in a visual and technological culture, which in a performative and sensory form creates an ambiguous and emotional experience that captivates the visitors, which later can frame their understanding of the past, present and future. The empirical findings, the interviews put forward that the narrative exhibition performs a whole, or a total narrative, coming from inside the visitors, through the perception, spaces and emotions they embody throughout the exhibition's narrative path. The paper's focus is on the House of Terror's sensory and physical narrative based on what it evokes in the visitor: an analysis of the practice and agency of display leading into a phenomenological discussion of narrative/re-narration and the visitors' experiences.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Post-socialist places are going through a period of transition and revitalization. For Hungary this entails a transition and integration into the European Union and the global free trade market. New Post-socialist nationalist ideologies are giving new life to the residue of experiences, memories and historical events from fascist and communist time in Hungary. This entails a national revision of the past that has the future in mind. Narratives are created, as myths of the nation that are embodied in the urban landscape in the form of buildings, monuments, tombstones, statues, rhetoric, movies, art, theater, photographs, souvenirs, objects and school curriculum. This movement which in Hungary commemorates the 1956 revolution appears to have its root in legally installing a national martyr of the nation, Imre Nagy. Much has been written about his reburial in the centre of Budapest's most spectacular square filled with roman columns and statues. National Memorial days of the 56 revolution and its victims have been established along with sites for mourning rites, commemorative practices, parades, protests and political rally points. The House of Terror is a central site for these activities.

It is a memorial museum which artistically performs, advertises, markets and sells the national myth to visitors, as a new form of dark tourism regarding fascist and socialist memory in post socialist Europe. It is a place of civil religion, which was established and created by the second conservative government led by Fidesz-MPP (1998-2002) in 2002. In addition to commemorating victims the memorial museum has a function of hammering into stone the failed political value systems/ideologies of the past which besides the performative aspects of the museum aim to make clear in the visitor the equation that comes out of the connection of giving examples of past inhumanity or violations towards a nation's

sovereignty connected with a “victimizer” and what it represents. This equation serves as a warning for the future of the potential results of supporting these value systems/ideologies.

In terms of external representation I was relying on press-articles, conversations with former visitors as well as comments on several web sites where visitors shared their experience. Press articles revealed that the Museum is heavily contested.¹ The Museum drew cues several hours long in its opening year in 2002. Despite the initial popularity, some people were still asking questions. There was a concern from the Hungarian Jewish population whether the place drew people for the wrong reasons in the context of the right wing atmosphere that spread in Hungary during Victor Orban’s rise to power (Williams, 2007:116).² In official self-representations the site was categorized simultaneously as a museum and a memorial, with the corresponding social functions of preserving and educating as well as commemorating the victims of what the memorial museum conceptually signifies as *terror-regimes* in Hungary. These functions were according to their web site aimed to be fulfilled through representing history in a *tangible*, experientially meaningful way. I noted a particular terminology used in the House of Terror which tries to avoid using denominators of site and its historical actors, and historical time, instead replacing them with metaphors like “the House of Terror,” “Terror Regimes,” “Murderous Regimes,” “Statue of Terror,” “two

¹ For an overview of the press-debate around the opening of the Museum see Frazon-Horváth 2002.

² Critics have said that the Arrow Cross was being evoked only in order to implicate the communists by association, and that the House of Terror only was a project of ideological and political construct (Williams, 2007: 72). Corresponding concerns were that the Museum provided young fascists the chance to admire, under a dramatic light and fascist aesthetic art installation atmosphere, the uniforms, architecture, accouterments and ideologies of the pro-Nazi Arrow Cross party (Ibid). These concerns are echoed in Istvan Rev’s writing on the Fascist characteristics of the House of Terror. Many critics were directed at the grave asymmetry between representation of fascism and communism, and the invisibility of victims/victimizers of fascism. Istvan Rev does not interpret fascism to be absent in the House of Terror narrative, rather he held that the House of Terror “is a proper memorial to fascism,” that it is an embodiment of the Cold War consensus of the term generic fascism. Please see: Rev, Istvan. 2008. 47-89 (Re) *Visualizing National History: Museums and National Identities in Europe in the new Millennium*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

An example is the Advocates of Negative or *Gegendenkmaeler*/anti or counter monuments deemed nontraditional commemorative strategies necessary because national socialists abused the monumental forms in their architecture and commemorative projects, making the very idea of monument suspect when it comes to remembering National Socialist victims (McIsaac, 2007:252). They want to counter what they call the ‘ritual forgetting’, meaning that the memory and reverence of victims should engage visitors with the past, not the sense that the past has already been dealt with. In Victor Orban’s speech for the opening ceremony of House of Terror, he stated that “Hungary had slammed the door on the sick twentieth century” (Williams, 2007:116).

bloody periods in Hungarian history” “Powers of Freedom and Independence,” “Sacrifice for Freedom,” etc.³ I also noted that these metaphors are common in the framing cultural narratives (Lakoff, 1999).

This thesis, based on grounded theory is therefore several-folded/multilayered in its different findings: The channels through which the narrative, display, performance, memory, “statue of terror” and “monument to victims” is facilitating in forming an experience and a credible, compelling total narrative performance for visitors by the institution’s hidden curators and artists in context of Post-Socialism. I am interested in grasping agency in a way which includes not only persons but also objects and spaces. I understand agency as relational between the artist, prototype/readymade, art object/space and visitor/recipient. Museums are not some sort of transparent mediums through which the interested visitor can contemplate the past. They create an image of that past, knowledge about it, and they perform this knowledge through exhibitions, which in this sense are to be understood as theatrical (Kirschenblatt-Gimblett 1998:20).

My argument follows and explores a central paradox in the re-narration voices of the interviews throughout the physical narrative path of the House of Terror, especially a general pattern of interviews that in a broad sense render a total narrative and a ‘*Gesamtkunstwerk*’, or a total performance at a site which is a *total reconstruction* filled with spectacular installations and architecture, technological and sensual stimuli, in addition are parts of the narrative exhibition confusing, puzzling and not understood, whereas the total narrative, site and performance as a whole is re-narrated understood after their experience. The interviewees re-narrates the memorial museum narrative as a a-historical total narrative, conflating fascist and socialist past and reducing it to alien fascism and socialism equaling evil or terror (“victimizers”), and on the one hand and the suffering of the Hungarian people (victims) fight

³ Please view visitor pamphlet in index and website for examples:
http://www.terrorhaza.hu/en/museum/about_us.html

for freedom. Although the interviewees are confused and puzzled by the parts of the narrative path like installations and the historical content, I question how the interviewees for the most part reproduce and arrive at the museum's suggested total narrative, notions and objects as authentic, agreeable and credible? Although the museum is a total reconstruction, with a very limited number authentic relevant objects, installations/showrooms of the narrative have very little commentary? How did the processual experience of the narrative path evoke this understanding among my interviewees, and how can it be achieved in re-narration of their experience, despite of the limited transmission of the Hungarian historical narrative the exhibition had on my interviewees?

I argue based on my visual narrative analysis and interviewee response is that this understanding achieved through the performance with an overload of sensory power, affect, the in situ display and enchantment through a nexus of agency of the memorial exhibition performance and narrative (index in relation to, prototype/readymade and recipient) by the agency of the House of Terror narrative's hidden tellers and artist curators, its prototypes/ready-mades and the recipient. The interviewees also strongly indicate the visual, emotional, kinesthetic and bodily impact of their experience, and I conclude that the affect of the exhibition gives little time for reflection (due to the sensory/emotional impact, affect, metaphor, in situ, embodied knowledge and technology of enchantment).

Furthermore these findings can speak to how the human mind and cognition, not in terms of cognition as an autonomous disembodied and disimpassioned process of reason preceding consciousness, and not theoretically separate from conscious experience (Torren, 1999). In light my study of experience, the emotional, spatial and visceral can be considered as a form of cognition, and indispensable for making "rational" sense and decision-making (Damasio, 1994). The sensory experience; perception appears to be paramount to the visitor experience, which is immanent to the conscious embodied mind, which must be understood as

historically constituted (Merleau-Ponty, 1962). In theoretical terms I aim to explain the House of Terror narrative in a visual analysis that can compliment a phenomenological approach to understanding the experiences and re-narration of my interviewees in dialogue with the exhibition frame and narrative. Based on the analysis and interviews I will treat the narrative as a performing exhibition. My focus is on the practice of display and performance of the narrative, as apposed to its politics, in relation to the visitors experience and re-narration. The study will however also implicitly speak to how the domains of art (emotion/metaphor) and politics benefit from one another at the House of Terror.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Key Notions and Terms: Narrative and Myth –Ready Made

In this section I would like to explain some of the key notions and terms of that I will operate with in this study. I have chosen the term narrative and its re-narration. In context of the Civil Religious narrative, national myth is habitually deemed as appropriate. Total narrative corresponds to overarching fixed narrative like grand narrative and ‘meta-narrative’. By total I refer to history, space, time and experience to be eclipsed and conceived as a whole, or the participation in the experience of wholeness. Total narrative can also be understood as referring to prototypes or readymades of cultural narratives in the sense that it is fused with emotion, allowing the visitor to participate following the frame of the emotional cultural narrative of the hero and the villain (Lakoff, 1999), the Dionysian tragedy of human suffering (Nietzsche, 1956), religious narrative models of suffering and the rest.

Narrative is however useful in connection to experience in that when one come to terms with experience, the narrative structure is often utilized. In saying that the participant experiences a narrative; I find the narrative to be both embedded in a political *metanarrative* containing a collage of tropes, short TV audio-visual life memories rhetoric, historical sources and symbols, to also integrate a highly sensual processual narrative of physical spaces and path, music, sounds, touch, lights, art installations, ready made and authentic objects. Therefore adjectives like physical, visual, sensual etc. can be used in specifying which ingredient of the narrative we are dealing with.

It is important to note here that I make out the narrative structure or experience and finding meaning in experience to be processual. The narrative, the experience and re-narration of experience often takes the structure a story with a beginning, middle part and an end. In getting a handle on this processual structure in narrative and experience, Victor Turner’s demonstration of how we have become cognizant of a tripartite movement in space-time is

helpful (Turner, 1974: 13). Turner holds that we cannot look at living action (agency) as a consequence from a program of grand design, and models of society or for example the House of Terror's narrative structure, because of the processual structure of human action. In Turner's terms the House of Terror, a physical narrative path can be considered to be representative of a prestigious, monolithic power supported program which could however influence performance and experience in the participant.

This tripartite movement in space-time can in short say something about what I mean by the processual structure in experience and narrative: in Turner's view there is *antistructure* within structure, and this *antistructure* denotes *communitas* and *liminal* experiences and action within structure which takes place in the middle part of the socially structured event or narrative-experience. Without *liminality/antistructure*, a narrative program might in deed determine performance. But given *liminality*, prestigious programs can be undermined and multiple alternative programs may be generated. The process that the visitor walks through at the House of Terror can be described as a separation (into an total artificial place where the distinction between fiction and reality disappears), transition/process (liminality and climax) and a reincorporation, (visitor finds personal meaning in own existence as an "experience of another experience" and narrative/the past is buried-Farwell Room) and output when visitor leaves the site.

In my literature review of other works which include the House of Terror, I found that the other authors do not give such primacy to the experience of people influenced by the narrative before embarking on their academic essays. Paul Ricoeur's work effectively argued against the structuralist work by for example Levi-Strauss which claimed that narratives and myths can be interpreted independently of the actual experience of the people that are influence by the narrative or myths (Rasmussen, 1971). An interpretation thus demands accessing the experiences of living people who are being influenced by the narrative or myth.

I aim in a sense to follow a narrative style in writing my thesis, including a visual narrative which can help structure my narrative dialogue between the narrative at the House of Terror and the experiences it evoked in the people who were influenced by the narrative. My focus in this dialogue will be on foreign visitors, and treating the teller of the narrative as an institution of civil religion (with infinite possibilities of representations and associations)/museum/place or monument of memory.

2.2 Civil Religion

2.2.1 Origins of Civil Religion

The term Civil Religion was first used by Rousseau and later by sociologists Emile Durkheim and Robert Bellah. The American anthropologist W. Lloyd Warner in his ethnography on an American small town *The Living and the Dead* (1959) wrote a chapter on Memorial Day rites, which "are a modern cult of the dead and conform to Durkheim's definition of sacred collective representations" (Warner, 1959: 278). These rites transcended the division of the community in terms of class, ethnicity, and religion, uniting it around sacred symbols, including the cemetery, and national heroes. This type of transcendence during a sacred rite is similar to Victor Turner's concept of the processual movement in ritual into antistructure and *communitas* and liminal experience. Warner wrote that "The graves of the dead are the most powerful of the visible emblems which unify all the activities of the separate groups of the community," whereas the celebration of the deaths of men who sacrificed their lives for their country "become powerful sacred symbols which organized, direct, and constantly revive the collective ideals of the community and the nation" (ibid: 279). The current form of Hungarian civil religion and ancestor worship in postsocialist Hungary began with the reburial of Imre Nagy. According to the Hungarian historian Istvan

Rev “The reburial of Imre Nagy, the executed prime minister of the 1956 revolution, was the single most important symbolic event of the transition to post socialist understanding of history and politics (Rev, 2008:57)”.⁴

Sociologist Robert Bellah made the concept Civil Religion popular based on Warner's analysis of Memorial Day rites to elaborate a concept of "American civil religion"—"a collection of beliefs, symbols, and rituals with respect to sacred things and institutionalized in a collectivity" (Bellah, 2006:10). Bellah demonstrates that Durkheim's notion of the sacred cannot be understood in direct opposition with the secular. Nietzsche's broad definition of the sacred was “what you cannot laugh at” (Dreyfus, 2011). Williams proposes an analogy to visiting the memorial museum space with an established sacred place of churchgoing in that people attend not so much to learn new information, but because they wish to be in a total environment that rehearses and affirms a sense of *being* in a place (Williams, 2007:98).

According to Rousseau the dogmas of the civil religion ought to be simple, few in number, stated with precision and without explanation or commentaries. The existence of the Deity, powerful, wise, beneficent, prescient and bountiful, the life to come, the happiness of the just, the punishment of the wicked, the sanctity of the social contract and of the laws: these are the positive dogmas. As for the negative ones, I limit them to only one, which is intolerance (quoted from Bellah, 2006:198).⁵

⁴The reburial of Imre Nagy video clip: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4HBD5XScqZw>

⁵ Continuation of quote “Without having power to compel any one to believe (these dogmas) the sovereign may banish from the state whoever does not believe them: it may banish him not as impious, but unsociable of sincerely loving law and justice and of sacrificing, at need, his life to his duty. But if any one, after publicly acknowledging these beliefs, was essential if the new republic was to survive. That is why I have borrowed the term civil religion from Rousseu. Dogmas, behave like an unbeliever in them, he should be punished with death: he has committed the greatest crimes: he has lied before the law.” Rousseau would enforce tolerance by being intolerant of tolerance.

2.2.2 The Memorial Museum and Civil Religion

The House of Terror is one of many sites of communist commemoration and memory in post socialist European states. States have been taking initiative to fund sites of post communist heritage and memory across post socialist Europe during the first decade of the of this millennium,⁶ -why are these sites of memory and commemoration so important for contemporary politics of coming to terms with present, past and the future?

The human geographers Young and Light hold that *post communist heritage tourism* has been one key mechanism for post socialist states promoting a new identity which constitute past links to Western Europe (a common European heritage in context of transition into the European Union) and a clear “rejection of associations with the East” in the case of socialism (Young and Duncan 2007: 251).⁷ Furthermore is promoting this new narrative and construction of myths in post socialist states’ tourism an important source of *symbolic capital* given the lack of economic capital (2007:250-251). The creation of this *symbolic capital* does however directly transfer into economic capital from the economical exploitation of the public and private sector.⁸ This reemergence of the socialist era can however disrupt the post communist states effort in “Europeanization” of their states (2007:254). The importance of tourism goes however beyond the tourist site, “it is about what tourist or Hungarian visitors bring to those sites, take away with them and what they subsequently make of their encounters (2007:258).” This is an encounter between the political objectives coupled with

⁶ For comparisons and examples see: Eurocommunism Commemorating Communism in Contemporary Eastern Europe Péter Apor, *Center for Historical Studies, Central European University (CEU), Budapest*

⁷ For Franklyn “Tourism has ordered some of the ways in which globalization has proceeded and been experienced: an interesting ordering that has reproduced itself over and over again, turning more and more surfaces of the everyday into objects of tourist consumption.”

See: Franklin, Adrian. 2003. *Tourism: an introduction*. London: Sage.

⁸ In some cases the tourism sites are set up by companies from outside of postsocialist Europe. This is the case at the museum of communism in Prague. One might then question whose heritage is being preserved and commoditized? See: <http://www.muzeumkomunismu.cz/articles/newsweek.htm>

artistic agency in the curation of sites of memory and commemoration with the visitor participant and their back ground stock of concepts, knowledge and experience.

In Lowenthal's reading, the House of Terror could possibly be understood in terms of *Heimat* (*home place*), with a stress on empathy, in how The House of Terror sets out to be "a fitting memorial to the victims, and at the same time present a picture of what life was like for Hungarians in those [totalitarian] times."⁹ James and Lowenthal write on the division of Hungarian memory and heritage: Lowenthal considers Hungary to swerve between two contrary legacies: "the primitive nomadic origins and civilized but subservient imperial traditions." James distinguishes the two ideological directions in terms of populist nationalism and urban cosmopolitanism (James 2005:7).¹⁰

In understanding the approach and function of the museum I find that heritage must be compared to how the historical record is able to support heritage in a museum narrative and in museum exhibition. For Kirshenblatt-Gimblett it's characteristic for heritage production to "conflate their effects with the instruments producing them" and in turn creates a Brechtian foreignness and estrangement,¹¹ rather than the *mimetic* in the visitor that produce and encode other messages and meanings than heritage (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998:157). This effect of heritage production that Kirshenblatt-Gimblett describes can evidently disappoint visitors who want to learn the history of the objects on display, in addition to information and commentary on why totalitarian regimes have gotten strong public support that has lead to human

⁹ Lowenthal describes *heimat* as "antipathetic to rational history. Part and parcel of everyday life, *heimat* is enjoyed as an ancestral legacy stressing empathy and identity, not rigorous historical knowledge (1998:121)."

¹⁰ This reading of Hungarian heritage is in other words a juggle between traditional national identity and western modernity, celebration and commemoration. Lowenthal notes that although Hungarians might have a western modern lifestyle and cultural pull, heritage is still important: "surveys show how most Hungarians know little about their history, but its legends and heroes influence daily life and are rallying points for Hungary's future (Lowenthal 1998:73)."

¹¹ Berthold Brecht was a German theater dramatician of the early 20th century. Estrangement refers to his concept of *Verfremdung* of the theater audience. Brecht thought the audience required an emotional distance to reflect on what is being presented in critical and "objective" ways, rather than being *taken out of themselves* as conventional entertainment attempts to do.

atrocities. For Lowenthal heritage is a *declaration of faith*, and therefore heritage cannot be considered to be history even though it mimics history.

James holds that the nation is constructed at places like the House of Terror and thinks of nation in terms of Benedict Anderson's theory on the nation as an imagined community, and considers that the House of Terror narrative has given the 1956 revolution a status as a foundational myth of the nation (James 2005:5).¹² The House of Terror narrative or myth that James is talking about has its basis on collective suffering for the nation. In terms of nostalgia and selective forgetting and remembering is Svetlana Boym in *the future of nostalgia* writing about the Nostos of a nation: "it is not merely a lost Eden; but a place of sacrifice and glory, of past suffering." She describes it as an inversion of the initial "Swiss disease"¹³: in the national ideology, where individual longing is transformed into collective belonging that relies on past sufferings that transcend individual memories (Boym 2001:15). Boym writes that due to the creation of new states the past became heritage, and there was a great interest in restoring historical sites. Boym labels these sites as *total reconstructions*. These intentional memorials from the wake of the creation of a new [postsocialist] state, like in the case of Hungary and the House of Terror loses the values it carries in terms of "age value," and deducts the atmosphere of temporal historical reflection from the original historical location (2001:15).

There has been a taboo and silence regarding socialism in both the Western and Eastern sides of the iron curtain. The archives from the socialist past are still closed and Hungary has not had truth/reconciliation commissions regarding their fascist and communist pasts. Socialism has been brought back into political discourse through heritage and tourism.

¹² Svetlana Boym writes that the idea of revolution derives from Napoleon, and became an idea of progress and industrial development (Boym 2001: 9).

¹³ By the "Swiss disease" she is referring to Swiss nationalist revival from the 19th century which was a process of remembering, constructing and forgetting patriotism at the time of the creation of the federal nation state. Boym defines the nation-state at best is based on the social contract that is also an emotional contract (Boym 2001:15). This reminds me personally of the creation of a Norwegian national narrative and patriotism by public intellectuals after the breakup with the Danish Norwegian union as a result of that Denmark sided with Napoleon and ended up on the losing side against the British alliance.

James observes how “visual media are well suited for this process of historical recovery... as evidence by the metaphoric association of showing with rhetorical proof: the past is illuminated; the suppressed is brought to light; the public eyes are opened; the meaning of events is clarified or elucidated; the truth is revealed at last (James 2005:14).” James also points out the limitations to this form of representation and recovery; in my interviewees the *mimetic* or reflective visitor assumes that the truth was there, and has now been revealed from the shadows in familiar elementary forms, equated into a total narrative of good and evil, freedom and terror: present and past. An important point that James makes in evaluating the visual object in terms of historical relevance and readymade objects echoes Frazon and Horvat’s observations on *in situ* display, that although the “freedom fighter” Georgely Pongratz’s leather jacket was transferred from the army museum exhibit of the 56 revolution to the House of Terror, “otherwise there is little to see in its visual pastiche that is specifically related to the uprising (James 2005:168).”

Jay Winter suggests that the ritual significance of memorials has often been obscured by their political symbolism which now that the significance of the monument of mourning has passed, is all that we can see. This temporal dimension in relevance to mourning serves its purpose in the early memory of work that is socially necessary, a site will lose this function and serve a purely ideological function (Williams, 2007:128).¹⁴ The debate on how to deal with, display, remember, forget the past seems to be concerned with the future, which is echoed in Svetlana Boym text on the future of nostalgia. Huysen also recognizes how atrocities now occur within a “memory culture” in which “national patrimony and heritage industries thrive, nostalgias of all kinds abound, and myth pasts are being resurrected or recreated (Williams, 2007:129).” Memorial museums are politically useful in the way they concretize and distill an event, by providing a tangible sense of a topic that would otherwise

¹⁴ It is however difficult to say with precision at what moment these sites become solely ideological, Williams contrasts the examples of the World Trade Center memorial as already very ideological and the Armenian Genocide memorial and museum as an old atrocity that can be made subject of fresh mourning.

be reserved to disparate books, films, theater plays, websites etc. The museum gives a location, a surrogate place for political rally points and political activism which is interpreted through the shape of the memorial museum.

Both the socialist political groups and the conservatives use the House of Terror such a fashion, most notably by arranging marches to the site at the memory days of when the Arrow Cross Party came into power (political left commemorates) and the public memorial day to victims of communism (political right commemorates). Another rallying point for the political right is the memorial monument on the Freedom Square to the liberation by the Soviet Union from fascist rule in 1945. This is a monument that survived the removal of communist symbols and monuments from the Budapest historical urban landscape, to where communist monuments are sent to die, an artificial environment in the statue park outside of the city.

2.3. Museumology: *Display/Visual Narrative, Spectacle and “In Situ” method*

The question of museum display and its limitations and accuracy in relation to the visitor has long been a controversial topic in anthropology. While nowadays we are accustomed with a focus on the politics of representation, early debates were centered more on its practice. In the late 19th century ethnographic museums came to be understood as forms of exotizing entertainment, great intellectual work was invested in understanding them as mediums through which a culture, an ideology, and some kind of meaning can be made visible. Many of these expositions were playing upon the popular colonial, exotic imagination and evolutionary theories by anthropologists like Morgan, Spencer and Frazer. Pitt Rivers would in museum display arrange objects according to formal elementary evolutionary criteria, from simple to complex. These objects that had origins from different places, times and cultures were framed in order to support a grand and total narrative of

evolution of human culture (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998:20). One of their contemporaries and pioneers of modern US anthropology was the inspirational anthropologist Franz Boas. He resigned after ten years with the American Museum of Natural History because of a disagreement regarding display, he was convinced that it was impossible to adequately represent cultural and historical meaning on such a slim a basis as physical objects, conveying a total/grand narrative. Archeologists and other material anthropologists, like a student of his, Alfred Kroeber on the other hand argued that there is superior objectivity in the material culture of objects. Boas argued that it is crucial that objects are displayed in contexts of its particular history and cultural context (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998:39).

My interviewees are familiar with the elementary forms of the total narrative of for example “Cold War Mythology” in relation to Communism from the west, but most of them had little or no pre-knowledge regarding communisms particular historical developments and context in Hungary. The visitors expressed that they learned little to nothing beyond the total narrative of “Cold War Mythology” they already shared among their histories. Frazon and Horváth (2002:324) argue that from the point of view of museal representation, the House of Terror can be characterized as a “clear form” of what they call an *in situ* display. The idea behind this type of presentation is to achieve a sense of wholeness through creating an artificial environment around a museal object. Frazon and Horváth (2002:324) understand museums as artificial settings, and point at the different ways in which objects taken out from their “natural” environment became interpreted through building a new context around them. In contrast to *in context* presentations which remain distant by making explicit these contexts through *commentaries*¹⁵, *in situ* displays in a way that privilege visitor experience and create a certain spectacle which suggests that “reality” and “representation” are the same (see Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998:20).

¹⁵ In context means that objects are set in context of elaborate labels, charts, diagrams, commentary delivered via earphones, explanatory audiovisual programs, lectures and performances. Furthermore In context approaches to installation establishes a theoretical frame of reference (see Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998:21)

My findings mostly concur with Frazon and Horvath, but I add that the hidden artist and curator's presentation achieving a sense of wholeness and creating an artificial environment (along its museal objects) around the visitor. Williams distinguishes between three museum models: Legislative museum (paragons of aesthetic and intellectual excellence), interpreting museum (commentary/context) and the performing museum. The performing museum model appears as corresponding to the House of Terrors model, what Williams describes as a surge in memorialization, with a focus on expressive lives and memories of ordinary people and acceptance of more theatrical display techniques. There are high stakes associated with the topic of terror and fascist/socialist memory, and memorial museums are thus more efficient in producing drama than other types of museums (Williams, 2007: 96). The theatrical tropes are built on "reality effects", like architectural that show the authenticity of the place, most markedly by stage-set-display scenes and rooms like reconstructed officer quarters and the torture cells, personal testaments on TV screens in which the survivors virtually accompanies the visitors as they move through the physical and visual narrative environment, of installations and open spaces (Williams, 2007: 96-97).

Spectacle as a place of gravity is often referred to the discussion on memorial museums in the literature. The object perpetuates a selective semi-fictional narrative of the past that reflects cultural memory (Bal, 2007). The object can thus often be understood as a prop for dramatizing a narrative in which the visitor participates rather than simply the representation of truth from an earlier time. In the cases of the House of Terror, dead victims are also used as such props. The objects focus is thus decreasing and it is the visitor who becomes the museum's focus.

2.4 Art and Performance

At the House of Terror the domains of art and politics work together in a merger that strengthens both. Bal writes on the relationship between art and politics of nationhood: “how it is brought in according to a particular aesthetic vision that binds the contemplation of art with a repositioning of the subject in relation to the world.” This repositioning by aesthetics in art is called affect by Bal. Bal writes that between a perception that troubles us and the action that we hesitate about what to do, affect emerges (Bal, 2008:35). Affect images present a temporarily set relationship between perception and the action that coincides with subjectivity. The visitor perceives and hesitates what to do, for example in claustrophobic spaces in the museum and in relation to dramatic performances by the museum (in particular please view section on the elevator on p.), and thus “trapped in affect”.¹⁶

Dufrenne’s (1973: 59-60) analysis of the work of art holds that the art work has the initiative and forbids subjectivism. “Far from the work exiting in us, we exist in the work...the ideas it suggests, the feelings it awakens, the concrete images *Ansichten*, as Ingarden calls them – which nourish its meanings vary with each person. But they vary like perspectives which converge at the same point, like intentions which aim at the same object. All these views only expel or exfoliate its possibilities...” Art is employed in many mediums at the House of Terror, installations, motion pictures, music, architecture etc. and Dufrenne’s observations indicate that the visitor participants in a work, in terms of memory of other peoples experiences of socialism this can refer to what Kapferer (1986) calls an “experience of an experience.” In addition Dufrenne underscores the affect art has in conveying a whole, with “perspectives converging at the same point.” This is perhaps a way to see the tricky

¹⁶ Charles Altieri (2003:49) in a negative definition compromises the range of mental states in which an agent’s activity cannot be handled in terms of sensations or beliefs but requires attending to how he or she offers expersession of those states.

process when an artwork constructed outside the subject becomes recognized as subjective, especially in the case it brings you to accept it as a *whole*, also in the interviews when coming to terms with the experience. There are also several other ways to denote this conviction of wholeness or totality, Williams for example referred to churchgoing, cosmological wholeness in response to finding meaning in chaos and suffering (Lazar and Luze, 2007), Kirchenblatt-Gimblett and Horvath and Frazon referred to the method of *in situ* (applied to museum presentation opposite to in context in which metonymy and mimesis play a key part) aims to achieve wholeness in the narrative as well as in experience. Tropes (and their sequential movement in quality space, through *the argumentation of images*) by definition have this mission according to Fernandez. Schutz's concept of "mutually tuning in" in to music reminds us that we must go beyond for example linguistic (or non verbal) structures in understanding experience (for instance a whole or we). In terms of a myth or narrative, it is understood by structuralists like Levi-Strauss to solve culture's cognitive, social and technological contradictions. Fernandez finds that the myth maker or the religious movement has two intentions: to give definition to inchoate (unformed) subjects and the intention to return to the whole. The teller or creator of the narrative has agency, much in the same way as Gell describes agency of art, in which objects (indexes) on display have agency, and can have agency through its recipients as well. The ready-made aspects of narrative are of cause also relevant in evaluating consensus among the interviews. The interviewees come with backgrounds, and have a stock of social, cultural and political concepts and experiences from their individual and shared histories.

Duffrene points out how we all have different perspectives, but still we converge on the same point. The captivation of art forms might as Duffrene holds arrest our subjectivity, but, an experience that embodies meanings and feelings, is often punctuated at some point, when we have the ability to take a step back and ask ourselves and compare with others

regarding the experience. Experiencing given structures, means also that one can later reject or ignore them, the tension between “what is given and what we make of the given” in emerging contexts.

2.4.1 Technology of Enchantment

In the vein of describing aspects of the House of Terror as a performative museum, where art and politics benefit from one another; I would like to include Gell’s notions of art in anthropology, in particular his idea of the technology of enchantment. Gell holds that art is made so that it can be seen in addition to being indexes of social agency: it is enchanting, captivating, difficult to make, difficult to think and difficult to transact indexes that are made with technical expertise and imagination of a high order, which exploit the intrinsic mechanisms of visual cognition with subtle psychological delight (Gell 1998: 23-24). . „Artworks”/indexes in Gell’s view emerge in the overlapping set of intentionalities that are orchestrated in a particular cultural context. These indexes have affects that are mediated by its agency which motivates responses or interpretations. Gell held that „artworks” or indexes embody institutional complexity that is capable of transcending cultural boundaries. This complexity, the art nexus, lies among the relations of „agents,” „patients (recipients),” „indexes” and their prototype (readymade). This relation frame is a way to treat art in terms of agency, and not in terms of aesthetic appreciation. The index may represent a prototype or ready-mades, but things/indexes may also be represented non-mimetically and non-visually. The recipients are taken to affect by indexes, but can also in turn be effective via the indexes themselves. This is looking at the relational basis of persons where artifacts can embody the same intentional complexity as persons: its puzzling qualities are perhaps the choice of artifact, the physical way it is displayed as well as its context, manipulations etc. (Hirsh, 1999).

2.5 Phenomenology: Experience and Narrative

Phenomenology is less concerned with what actually happened in terms of the House of Terror's mirroring of capital H history; rather this study is more interested in exploring the past as a mode of present experience. At the same time it is acknowledge that history is continuously shaped by many hands, often into different narratives. Written history's evidence has important impact on how we understand the past, but this study aims at not divorcing the past from the present as uninfluenced, consequently little or nothing is defiantly knowable (Oakeshott, 1933:107). This study aims at looking at history as living, and helping to make known the social realities that the written history and oral tradition authorize through participants/visitors lived experience at the House of Terror.

It can be argued that the becoming in terms of making the outside narrative structure subjective takes place sometime in the quality space of their experience, following Merleau Ponty, perception is immanent to the mind, historical "facts" are in other words not out there to be discovered by an autonomous cognitive process, that is separate from experience. Intentionality as a function of the embodied mind has to be historically constituted (Merleau-Ponty, 1962). Torren argues that the mind is a function of the whole person constituted over time in intersubjective relations with others in the environing world (Torren, 1999). We can intersubjectively find consensus meaning of our experiences. This argument has its basis that we try to find meaning regarding ourselves and our own experience through comparison with others and our stock of past experiences and agreed upon concepts and meanings. This is also related to Torren's interest in "becoming who we are". We are in a constant state of becoming, and negotiation of how to come to terms with experience in the context of our *lifeworlds*. If an overarching consensus of experience and its meanings can be detected in interview patterns on a specific time and place of an experience, this does not mean that any objectivity is found, rather the interviewees are in a continues state of ontological negotiation

and comparison over meaning and interpretation of for example their experience at the House of Terror and relating it to their own *lifeworlds*. Following Torren this process of making meaning is the psychological aspect of human autopoiesis. The constituting process does not have to be willed by you, you do not have to be explicitly conscious of it and nor can you escape it: it is functioning of being human. Like the process of psychological development, the meaning or knowledge-making process should be understood as giving rise to psychological structures that are at once dynamic and stable over time.

Sociality and embodiment can perhaps be understood as equally primordial aspects of human subjectivity. Jackson indicates how reference to pain (terror, suffering, torture, isolation, angst, victims, martyrs, guilt etc.) reminds us that social meaning can be generated in the interior space of libidinal and visceral being. Studies have for example been done on how the human body and the body of the earth have been fused (Lazar and Luze, 2007 and Jackson, 1996). Such notions could account for why the House of Terror experience is bodily draining for my interviewees, and much less provoking a thoughtful and reflexive experience.

One can refer to embodied mind with the theoretical emphasis is on the body as the “existential ground of culture” and as thus manifesting and constituting the mind (Csordas, 1990). How the visitors came to embody their consciousness of the lived world as a function of experience that is always mediated by meaning. Through performance as embodied experience we can address how any given participant renders the commemoration rite personally meaningful and comes to understand what it might mean for the other participants.

3. Methods, Analysis, Findings and Discussion

My method is based on grounded theory; I had a participant observation approach where I spent time at the House of Terror: conducting interviews with participants and

administration, observing and experiencing both the physicality and emotional aspects of the narrative and exhibition. I have also tried to understand my topic and interviews by making a visual narrative. In my literature review of other works which include the House of Terror, I found that the other authors do not give primacy to the experience of people influenced by the narrative before embarking on their academic essays. Beyond methodology, my main concern in this paper is however not to defend or attack reigning views – my main interest in terms of content is in exploring how something works based on the fieldwork.

Implications deriving from this necessitate addressing what it is that makes a narrative credible in addition to narrative experience techniques. The sensory and phenomenological approaches in anthropology argues that the investigator must him/herself experience sensory perceptions of the subjects of inquiry –in my study will the visual aspect be of particular importance. Criticisms of this approach to anthropology reject this methodology for being too subjective, favoring distance and objectivity from the western scientific enlightenment tradition (Van Ede, 2009: 61). In terms of subjectivity it must not be confused with methodological individualism (Weber). At this point my findings further suggests that I will distance myself from the Cartesian understanding (body and emotion/mind distinction) of experience and transmission, but also reassess the post-modern assumptions that experience can be understood as following a social construction, as well as logo centric models which locates the source of meaning in symbols and signs on the human body.

3.1 My method and Interviews

The analysis that I will present in the following pages is partial in many respects. It relies on participant observation and semi-structured interviews inside and outside the building of the Museum. Based on my observations, I tried to reconstruct the narrative of the

House of Terror through both the perspective of the teller, a visual narrative and from the experience the narrative evoked in the visitors. Making a visual narrative was of great help here in order to make a better grasp of the visitor experience, comparing what they say with what they see. In more precise terms I was looking at those elements in the design of the exhibition space as a whole as well as parts in the arrangement of objects which establish a connection with the visitor, made possible and orient the work of interpretation. My interviews were conducted with a slightly broader scope in mind.¹⁷ More than an interest in the meanings our visitors were attributing to different elements of the display and of the Museum as a whole and in parts, I tried to make sense out of the broader experiential dimensions of the visit.¹⁸

Visitor comments from the guest book and on blogs, although mostly positive, also were characterized by certain excessiveness in their evaluations, in the sense that people were either highly praising or highly condemning the exhibition. I found statements like “beautiful and horrible,” “never again (referring to the main content of the exhibition: the terror regimes)” and “the House of Terror exhibition did not do the victims justice.” The emotional impact was quite evident. In the same time I found a certain confusion and puzzlement articulated in these reviews, limits of comprehension were often rationally being attributed to the lack of sufficient informative materials in English (the Hungarians visitors I spoke to

¹⁷ Interview Sample: I interviewed around a fifteen individuals from England, Finland, Italy, Sweden, Germany, Norway, Belgium and the US. The people we interviewed were in the age group 13 to 70. Both genders were equally represented in our sample size. Most of them have in common that they lived during the time of communism and therefore have a background from living on the western side of the iron curtain. They heard about the museum from guidebooks, hotels, the city tour bus and a couple of individuals heard from a Hungarian friend that the museum was a good place if she wanted to learn about the Hungarian revolution.

¹⁸ I prepared an interview guide which would help me both to structure the discussions and to reconstruct it later. The interviews lasted between 30 minutes and one hour and had three major sections. In the first section I asked questions about the background of visitors, their previous knowledge on socialism and the history of Hungary, their motivation to visit the exhibition as well as their initial expectations related to it. The second section contained questions more concretely related to the actual visiting and sensual experience, the perception and interpretation of different rooms, embodiment, coping, objects, atmospheres, bodily affect etc. In the final section the interview guide was focusing more on their overall view and opinion about the place and on the broader frame of reference which helped them positioning it and come to terms with the narrative.

depending on generation understood more, but also expressed similar confusion, and rationally attributing to lack of commentary).

3.1.1 Interview Sample and Movements in Experience and Re-narration

At this point I have demonstrated the embeddedness of the interviewees' experience, and in the last chapter I will discuss the narrative/re-narration of experience in relation to the performative technologies in the objective of the curator or entrepreneur to facilitate an experience. Ideally I would attempt at doing more than simply reporting experience as representative and conditioning, but also treating it dialectically in context of its every day entrenchedness in both the institution of civil religion and the *lifeworlds* of the visitors.

Experience appears to be a new sacred word that allows us to celebrate the human spirit in the west.¹⁹ In discussing the anthropology of experience we are moving out of the discourse of the social institutions in which the experience is embedded and into the realm of performance and display of the narrative, meaning that I seek the techniques by which individuals in a sort of visitor collectivity develop ways of acting that will authenticate both the actors and the group simultaneously (Abrahams, 1986: 45). The actors of this research are western visitors at the House of Terror, an extension of their experience or coming to terms with experience is the re-narration of experience in my interviews. I argue that the visitors lived experience at House of Terror fuses immediate sensory experience with pre-given cultural knowledge. The phenomenological approach following Jackson tries to put the primary experience at the same footing as the secondary experience (Jackson, 1996:42). During my interviews that took place when the visitor was still inside the building indicated explicitly and implicitly when I asked many of the questions regarding the their experience at

¹⁹ Previous such sacred words have been "civilization", "progress" and "culture" in the western humanist tradition.

the exhibition, and also connecting it with their background, that they either cannot remember, or that they need distance and time, also physical distance to reflect. Drawing from this it appears as many of these interviews extended the primary experiences. This can perhaps be referred to form of attunement of a primary experience that is according to interviewees emotionally strong and bodily captivating, or re-attunement to secondary experience of coming to terms with experience.

A given regarding the scale of this study is that emersion in the *lifeworlds* of each visitor is limited beyond basic inquiry of the background of each participants occupation, generation, nationality and residence, similar experiences/and of similar places, own relation to historical/political material and concepts at the site etc. The interview sample in terms experience potentially consists of what Williams referred to as motives for churchgoing (please revisit the theoretical chapter), memorialize victims, negative/positive thrill-seekers, but also the ones that visit out of boredom, laziness and dispiritedness. On the other hand am I taking those into account who have an explicit aim at the non - experience part in visiting the House of Terror, in terms of learning on the subject of its historical/political content and meaning. I have also talked to people who have a strong interest in the content of the House of Terror narrative, but are reluctant to visit and take part in the experience. These accounts also speak to the interview sample, as well as how one make motives, associations, reactions and assumptions regarding the House of Terror without having visited.

A life story interview for a parallel project with an American who moved from the US to Hungary, who is both a fiction author and historical researcher on the 1956 revolution in Hungary demonstrate an example of an interviewee who has strong personal motives in learning about the historical content, but is reluctant to visit the House of Terror, he tries to resonate himself to an answer. His late father who past away when the interviewee was seven years old fled to the US during the 1956 revolution, and he recalls how his mother's narrative

of the revolution and socialist Hungary was more influenced by “cold war mythology” than his father’s individual experience and narrative; “Her entire life, you know she was dealing with cold war rhetoric. I think even now, even, it’s rather idiotic, some of my family members in the US who were raised in this period, you mention Russia or Eastern Europe; they get this look on their face. Like it’s still that evil empire, and they have no idea that things have changed...they can’t comprehend that it’s changed.”

My interviewee became interested in narratives of socialism in Hungary, like the 56 revolution in the US. He recalls his experience from the first time he went to Budapest in 1998 to reunite with his father’s side of the family. He was at their residence located on the bank of the Danube...“I remember the balcony, I remember that you could turn to the left and see the freedom bridge and the river, so I really felt like I was, it was similar to the same sensation I got when I was researching 56 and I would see those films (about the revolution) I felt like I was part of it.” My interviewee experienced that he was apart of what he had previously been researching from a distance and now embodying this feeling of being apart of by being at the place, and reminded by statues of memory, manifested by the freedom bridge.

“And also I read about these headquarters (House of Terror) in my research on 56, so yeah I don’t know how I would feel about going out there. I am not exactly sure why, I just put it out of my mind. I am not sure what kind of museum it is and why they call it a museum. I went to a joint in Amsterdam called the terror museum...”²⁰ The interviewee compares the House of Terror with a Museum that signals a similar concept of pain and torture based on its name, he contrasts this museum as not being time and space specific with “this [the House of Terror] is time space specific to where a lot of people were tortured.” He clearly indicates

²⁰ The interviewee explained that the Torture Museum in Amsterdam “was like a theme park, basically.” <http://www.torturemuseum.com/>

that he is hesitant and does not know how to cope with the House of Terror, after he had become aware of what actually happened there, and is confused in terms of what to expect from the House of Terror, referring to the name and marketing of the museum. This interviewee was in other words aware of much of the history of the place, and its relevance in context of post socialist and western “cold war mythology” regarding socialism, but bewildered in regards to its function in relation to reverence and the historical narrative.

This is in contrast to the western interviewees that had visited and shared their experience of the site: they understood the name of the museum, the marketing and the total narrative in relation the concept of memorial and museum directed towards tourists as a whole, but on the other hand in most cases explained how they remembered or understood little of the exhibition installations and historical part of the narrative. Some other interviewees agreed however in that they did not know what to expect from the name and marketing of a site of memorial to victims at a place of torture. Especially the English and American interviewees found that the name of the museum gave associations and expectations to popular forms of horror entertainment, a “Halloween Spoke house” or a “Jack the Ripper” type place as apposed to a site of civil religion. Their expectations where however disconfirmed by the participants, they described their visit as emotionally strong and impressive exhibition. Most of my interviewees also belong to the generations who grew up with “cold war mythologies” in different parts of the west. The visitors, with a couple of exceptions readily accepted the terror as synonymous with both fascism and socialism, even the visitors with backgrounds from social democratic welfare states did not attempt to give a more fragmented rendering. The exceptions I found where among those who had a greater physical movement in re-narration in terms of interviewing them outside, returning to a more familiar *lifeworld* and non-artificial space of sensual stimuli. An interviewee from the former Western Germany for example noted that it is not clear to the visitor which time period the

exhibition covers, that it is somehow out of time and in terms of explicitly conflating fascism with communism, in addition to conflating different time periods, -is what I call conveying a sense of wholeness in the visitor of a total narrative. The interviewee gave the example of socialism in the DDR, that fascist past is not conflated with the DDR time, and that “there is a great difference between Honecker socialism and Stalin socialism.”

3.2 Display, Narrative and Experience

The House of Terror exhibition draws its narrative from an era of pre-socialism: a televised map of what can be understood as the “Hungarian Heimat”, before WWI, and continues with the annexed parts being disembodied from Hungary after the First World War’s Trianon treaty, and thereafter, the German occupation before the narrative of socialism begins. This presentation is offering a pre-socialist context in Hungary, but can also obscure the socialist narrative, especially when the fascist and socialist eras are converted into one era of *terror-regimes*. For Young and Light *post communist heritage tourism* does not encompass the full experience of socialism in that it fails to account for various forms of communism in Central and Eastern Europe.

The key-scenes, rooms and installations, run through the ambiguously arranged material of amidst the ongoing puzzlement, affect, captivation and struggle to make sense out of so many confusions among the interviewees. It is hard to resist the “finally, I get it!” impression they make. One is more ready to accept the suggested idea, because he/she can recognize it as not offered from the outside but rising from the inside through the embodiment of special and sensory knowledge or stimuli, out from an understanding, a subjective work of sense-making in an equation that leads to a whole. There are several ways to denote this process. One can refer to the notions of the *ready-made* (Boym, 1998,) metaphor (Fernandez,

1986), *affect* (Bal, 2001) or *enchantment* (Gell 2006:163). One thing is sure: its compelling force hides the cognitive dissonance created by the transmitted idea.

In the space of the museum visitors observe and interact with objects arranged as parts of installations. They emerge against their confusing background due to their less ambiguous nature. For the wandering (and wondering) visitor they show up abruptly, unexpectedly, sometimes offering a strong and clear understanding, a well articulated idea, in other times without context and commentary. A British interview subject eloquently described these as *examples of history*, he added that a prior background or knowledge of the particular subject matter was often necessary for understanding the showrooms, objects and installations. “Example” is an ambiguous term which can denote both a metonymic relation between a whole and its parts, and an illustration of something. Frazon and Horváth (2002:324) argue that from the point of view of museal representation the House of Terror can be characterized as a “clear form” of what they call an *in situ* display. The idea behind this type of presentation is to achieve a sense of wholeness through creating an artificial environment around a museal object.²¹ Dioramas and habitat groups were in fashion during the time of Franz Boas, who, as a strong advocate of the scientific and pedagogical functions of ethnographic museums, criticized displays in which objects and groups were arranged for the effect and not in order to elucidate certain leading ideas or grand narratives (Jacknis 1985:102). The House of Terror overqualifies for this Boasian critique. In fact the elucidation of “leading ideas” becomes at times too excessive. The simplest way however to formulate the tricky question posed by the House of Terror is this: how can meaning or understanding be achieved through confusion? While visitors rationally attribute the mentioned difficulties of interpretation to the lack of

²¹ Frazon and Horváth (2002:324) understand museums as artificial settings, and point at the different ways in which objects taken out from their “natural” environment became interpreted through building a new context around them. In contrast to *in context* presentations (which remain distant by making explicit these context through commentaries) *in situ* displays privilege experience and create a certain spectacle which suggests that “reality” and “representation” are the same (see Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998:20). While in the first case the objects and commentaries ground the authenticity of the display, in the case of re-constructed objects and environments achieving authenticity becomes more problematic.

English explanatory materials, I would argue that they could in fact be produced by the logic of presentation or performance. The *in situ* method of presentations works fine for everyone but only in a limited number of rooms, those which articulate key ideas in the abovementioned grand narrative of terror.²² In other rooms however it functions merely as a device for creating an atmosphere, and works explicitly against interpretation. In most of these cases even the boundaries between exhibited authentic objects and fictional and artistic objects are blurred. The interviewees were in most cases skeptical to the efficiency of the prose from the handouts that is provided in many of the rooms. They are not relevant in explaining the showroom display or objects, and appeared as overwhelmingly long for the interviewees, in addition to already being overwhelmed and captivated by the sensory stimuli of the narrative exhibition path.

Another interviewee when asked about interpretation of installations, distinguished between *lived history* and *sterile history* in the visitor. This distinction is in regard to the different generations of socialist experience. He emphasized that it is more challenging to interpret and understand these installations without having the capital of the *lived history*. When we asked about the target group of the museum, all of our western interviewees found that the museum was well advertised to them as visitors and that the exhibition tended to cater to the younger crowd. This target group goes along with Victor Orban's statement that the museum coined young Hungarians, as a nationalist project, aside from fact that Dark Heritage Tourism has become commercialized and the previous suffering in Hungary has now become an important source of revenue. It is thus a paradox that the *examples of history* are coined on those who have the capital of *sterile history*, and not visa versa.

²² These key-scenes which articulate the main motives of the Grand Narrative in a particularly strong way: external and internal enemy, occupation, a majority oppressed by a minority, suffering (in a personalized way, which invites to empathy), the continuity of fascist and communist rule, etc.

3.2.1 Western Visitor Perspective on Narrative

The House of Terror narrative is covering the period from the Arrow Cross Party (in two rooms) was in power and the Stalinist socialist postwar period until the 56 revolution and its retribution. These are also the years that the House of Terror served as police headquarters to the Arrow Cross Party and the Communist Party. In the last room, the Farwell (please revisit the visual narrative) the narrative makes a leap of three decades to 1989: intended to resolve and reintegrates the visitor with nostalgic music and Victor Orban demanding the Soviet forces to leave, in effect on the next TV monitor show the departure of the Soviet tanks in 1991 and 2002 illustrating the Victor Orban speaking at the opening ceremony of the House of Terror. Following James, the transformation that was negotiated in 1989 did not offer the same opportunities for the dramatic stories of courage, sacrifice and heroism that is associated with 1956, which can be one of the reasons for why the narrative of socialism in Hungary is centered on the time period of 1956. James however points out the irony of commemorating defeat in relation to personal narratives of Hungarians commemorating lost battles against the Ottoman Empire and the Habsburg Empire. She holds that the new visual narratives exemplified by the House of Terror can contribute to the formal Hungarian stories of defiance, endurance and survival despite “the endless history of defeat (James 2005:170).”

This can be an explanation for why it is difficult to understand for visitors with a western background why the national myth is focused on 1956, a failed revolution, and not 1989, where history is most commonly remembered in terms of praising the nation in terms of military victory, beauty of nature, constitutions or in the victory of people’s revolution over the hegemonic monarchs. Furthermore it might also speak to my surprising reaction to that the House of Terror is most frequently associated with Holocaust museums when I asked western

visitors about what other place the House of Terror reminded them of.²³ In a cognitive framework the visitors indicate that they do not compare the memorial museums in terms of the same historical content, rather I argue that they associate the places based on their bodily and emotional memory, in addition to the technology and performance of display where they themselves become actors in the narrative from inside, as apposed to being a passive spectator distanced from the stage. As another example of the combination of emotional, bodily and cognitive effects I would mention the Gulag Room (please revisit visual narrative). One visitor recalled how the narratives of imprisonment told by ordinary people in the interview-excerpts on TV screens there raised her empathy of the mother who lost her child. At the same time this large room (with a map of Russia marked with labor camps and its satellite states ingrained the carpet) made her realize how vast the former Communist territory was, as she was being directed back and forth across the map by TV's that turned themselves on and off in sequences, and how far from home Hungarians deported there, must have felt.

Although my observations concurs with James' theory that the House of Terror can be understood as giving a new national narrative about socialist past and collective identity: in light of my own research I think that it was difficult for my Western interviewees cognitively understand much about the Hungarian national narrative, besides the total grand narrative that Hungary has been possessed by evil regimes coming from the outside in form of two occupations from the last century.²⁴ In other words did my interviewees not learn or recognize much of the "language" that James proposes that the House of Terror is operating with. James appears however to be right in pointing out one of the reasons what Westerners lack in understanding the House of Terror as a meaning producing structure of a new national identity and a new historical narrative is precisely that the change from socialism to

²³ At a later point in my research I discovered that Attila F. Kovács the architect of the House of Terror also designed the Holocaust museum in Budapest. See: <http://www.attilafk.com/site.html>

²⁴ Please revisit the Appendix for visual illustrations of the grand narrative and concept of victimizers vs. victims. The narrative is also new in the sense that it considers both socialism and fascism as two sides of the same coin and does not consider the liberation from the Nazis, rather than another occupation.

postsocialism is not limited to the creation of new markets and writing new constitutions. James writes that this change is conceived by western observers in these narrow terms and do not see the cultural transformations, like the formation of new national identities, through national myth (2005:6). The other two explanations I can propose depend of the generation, background knowledge, and that many of the meanings produced in the visitor at the House of Terror derive from an embodied and intersubjective experience during the performance of the narrative.

The representation that I think is clear to the western eye on the other hand is what James calls the presentation of heroes and martyrs, or “victims who fought for freedom” - according to the House of Terror terminology. Implied in the House of Terror’s total narrative which starts with the carving up of Hungary’s *heimat* and has its focus on Stalinist communism delineates clearly the sides of good and evil, - which I find is a similar structure to a religious narrative of the fight between good and evil, suffering, victims/martyrs and victimizers which makes it compelling to the visitor. I can refer to this as an example of what Lakoff means by framing a cultural narrative structure of the hero and the villain that is fused with emotion. Svetlana Boym makes an interesting point in contrasting the western understanding of evil with the Eastern European understanding. She states that evil has not successfully found its place in western literature and journalism to the same degree as in Eastern Europe and Russia. When the Russian writer Nabakov wrote about the Soviet Union and the Soviet people in relation to the cruelty of its regime, as apposed to patriotism which has a long tradition in the west since the time of the creation of the nation state (Boym 2001:340).

3.3 Narrative and Performance

The Greek term *Theoria* in its pre-theoretical meaning was to go and look at a religious spectacle and then come back and tell what you saw (Dreyfus, 2011). According to ancient Greeks this was a form of transcendence, “to see what is really Good (logos)”. To go into the cave and come out of the cave and see a vision of the truth, you see the world in a different way, past its falsehoods. Herbert Dreyfus recognizes this as the beginning of the chance to use theory in a different form, critical form of undercutting accepted beliefs (Dreyfus, 2011).²⁵ Jackson points out that Misia Landau’s study on narrative on human evolution and paleoanthropological research shows how theoretical discourse often derives from mythical narrative forms and classic folktale scenarios (Jackson, 1991). The pre-historical experience of *theoria* coincides with interview voices of what can be experienced at the House of Terror. In a similar way, my visual narrative illustrates the House of Terror as a place to experience a spectacle with the monumentality of civil religion and come out again with a total narrative that potentially have the agency and affect to frame the way we see the past and the future. The human lived experience is complex and not simply tangible to our reflective thinking and writing. In expressing the emerging living experience our vocabularies do not have the capacity to describe what happened or communicate what is currently happening or express what we imagine to happen. John Berger wrote that if every event in experience could be given a name, there would be no need for narratives (Berger, 1983). Humans therefore rely on narratives, metaphors, art and symbols in communicating parts of

²⁵ Plato established *Theoria* meaning contemplation to be the highest form of human activity, *Bios Theoretikos* - contrasted by Aristotle with *Bios Politikos* and the life of pleasure (Bellah, 2006:86-92). And it was Plotinus who later distinguished between *logos* in the sense of conceptual thought and *theoria* in the sense of a unitive vision, Bellah equates this in current day usage to mean that theory means abstract conceptualization and contemplation contemporary means religious insight. The world was divided up in a transcendent unworldly domain of the mind and a worldly domain of the body. Aristotle’s understanding of *theoria* was an ideal mode of human apprehension, which enables human beings to transcend changeable and particular features of human understanding.

that *whole* experience to others and to ourselves. These metaphors and symbols also refer back to the experience as a whole. Metaphors are based on culturally agreed understandings (Barnard, 2000: 172). At the same time is Schutz's concept from music "a mutual tuning in" an example of that we must also go beyond verbal communication in order to understand experience. Following the technology of enchantment and the in situ method, there is perhaps a bridge between the mutual tuning in relationship with the orchestra in music and the mutual tuning in with orchestration of exhibition indexes and sensual experience along a narrative path at the House of Terror?

The House of Terror as an institution of civil religion sets out to tell *a* narrative which derives from a variety of narrative memory ("lived/experienced first hand by history about the Communist period, which comes back to life in TV narratives) which is selected and on display on TVs throughout the rooms of the building, historical accounts and artifacts, various technologies of art, ready-mades and sensory enchantment of indexes, and current motivations for political meta-narratives. As I showed Berger pointed out; experiences are expressed/organized in narratives; in the case the institutions and its curators drawing upon past experiences facilitating an experience and in (literarily) the coming to terms with experience of the visitors/participants. In narratives, myths and stories people and institutions attempt to create coherent scenarios with shared meanings, which following Jackson presupposes a collectivity and finds meanings not only in the narratives, but also in reciting them (Jackson, 1982). Hence is sociality and the lifeworld both mediated and subjectified by narrative redescription, metaphors and symbols, scenarios are needed, whether they are true or not, which we identify and can have in common. Jackson argues that the narrative is also the link between discourse and practice, since the very structure of narrative is pre-given in every day life. In interviews I found how the House of Terror narrative find meanings relating to visitors lifeworld in both past and present as they have recited and described their experience

there among one another and with me. This is the narrative dialogue between the narrative at the House of Terror and the experiences it evoked in the people who were influenced by the narrative.

Jackson points out that the credibility of a narrative is not decided by facts for themselves or data per se in a postmodern age, credibility is decided by the way facts and data is organized into a narrative (Jackson, 1996). At the House of Terror, I have been trying to make clear the power of the narrative, how it organizes data, “facts,” readymade, artifacts within the frame of civil religion and plays on the strings of sensual perception, the in situ method, technology, art, and enchantment (please revisit visual narrative). The interviewees also show that credibility is also decided in the experience of the participants by the spectacular physicality and technological interaction and standards of their experience

One interviewee noted that she had previously visited the Museum of Communism in Prague, which had a similar message, but she did not find as impressive or have the same affect in terms of the sensory and spatial planning, she contrasted as “shabby” compared to spectacular design and museum orchestration at the House of Terror.²⁶ It has been reported that a considerable amount of tax payer money was invested into the museum, 11 million dollars (James, 2007). Following Gell the agency of the *technology of enchantment*²⁷ can speak to the agency of the museum’s art and technology in the exhibition, indexes referring to the agency of the artist/curator and the art or technologies prototypes that visitors are familiar

²⁶ the Museum of Communism in Prague: <http://www.muzeumkomunismu.cz/>

²⁷ In "Art & Agency," Gell (1998) explicates his theory of art & aesthetics, in which all objects rely on previous works, and on other signs in the cultural system, to derive their meaning. "In speaking of 'enchantment' I am making use of a cover-term to express the general premises that human societies depend on the acquiescence of duly socialized individuals in a network of intentionalities whereby, although each individual pursues (what each individual takes to be) his or her own self interest, they all contrive in the final analysis to serve necessities which cannot be comprehended at the level of the individual human being, but only at the level of collectivities and their dynamics. As a first approximation, we can suppose that the art-system contributes to securing the acquiescence of individuals in the network of intentionalities in which they are enmeshed." Gell draws the connection to Malinowski's Trobriand Kula ring wherein individual actors are not capable of seeing how they are participating in a much wider cultural system. What they are acquiescing to is a system of signs, the meaning of which all point indexically to each other.

with. Gell refers to art and technology's potentiality for captivation or enchantment as not simply a case of aesthetic impact, but a matter of blockage of cognition, which manifests itself at the point when a spectator cannot reconstruct or follow the sequence or steps in an artist's performance. At the House of Terror the agency lies in the indexes: objects, spaces, sounds etc. as a total performance of a narrative embodying indecipherability, whereas the artist remains hidden. Captivation is produced by the spectacle of unimaginable virtuosity in which the index embodies agency which is essentially indecipherable (Gell, 1998: 71). Besides the total performance of the narrative, interviewees were captivated by for instance the gravitation point spectacle tank, which dazzles and upsets the visitor. One interviewee asked "how did they get that huge thing in here, and what is the pool of liquid it is floating in, dripping off the edges into the basement, , that reflects the towering wall of victims?" Beside what Gell referred to as "the halo effect of technical difficulty," visitor's remembered the visual and technical aspects of different show rooms, but struggled to recollect if they found any meaning relating to the total narrative in these *In Situ* displays. Especially in the cases of the rooms of the "Arrow Cross," "Gulag," "the deportation and Deportation," "the Treasury" etc. (please revisit visual narrative).

The consensus at hand from the experience of my interviewees also implies a social evaluation of work (Jackson, 1996); reflecting class interests, shared aesthetic values, a political sense of community and generation rather than solely individual neutrality. In light of the social evaluation of work is perhaps the political sense of community especially important in regards to that my interview sample is exclusively western, represented by the EU and the US. Jackson also assigns acceptance or consensus to hidden metanarratives (scientific, paradigmatic, political etc.), the narrative who bestows this acceptance wants to hear about itself. The "the Cold War Mythology" appears to be instrumental in my interviewees understanding of the narrative in terms of good and evil, most of my

interviewees for example readily accepted slotting communism into the same category as fascism, or rendering the communist past as terror. Bruner holds that it is the perceived discrepancy between the previously accepted narrative and the new situation that leads us to discard or question the old narrative: and it is the perceived relevance of the new narrative to our own life situation that leads to its acceptance (Bruner, 1986: 153).

3.4. Theater and Performance

Narratives operate not only in the realm of the mind, as ideas, to be convincing they also must have a base in experience or social practice (Bruner, 1986: 153). Some of my interviewees reflected upon their own experience and the experience of others, arguing that the participant places oneself on the narratives stage, and physically follows a set spatial narrative path or journey. In this internal theater these participants become actors, the narrative takes the form of *Being* (suspended between being and becoming) as much as a way of saying (Jackson, 1996:39). The metaphor of travel, walking along a path or a journey through the House of Terror for the narrative can impose a precognitive disposition, which following Michel de Certeau will find its expression in stories where moral or conceptual transformations take place from one mode of being to another, a connection between non-discursive and discursive fields of activity (1988:78). This precognitive disposition or pre-conceptual is in relation with what Heidegger means by *being in the world*, it can be deduced that it is prescientific in contrast with the understanding of ontological theory and logic in the Cartesian tradition, in terms of mind relating to body. The only access to being, or *Dasein*, is via the beings themselves according to Heidegger (1962). The performing museum is a surge in memorialization: focus on experiences and expressions of lives of ordinary people making the connection with the visitor more personal and intimate, and acceptance of more theatrical display techniques. There are high stakes associated with the topic and memorial museums are thus more efficient in producing drama than other types of museums (Williams,2007: 96).

The theatrical tropes are built on reality effects, like architecture that show the authenticity of the place, most markedly by stage-set-display scenes and rooms like reconstructed officer quarters and torture cells, personal testaments on TV screens in which the survivors virtually accompanies the visitors as they move through the physical narrative.

Williams proposes an analogy to the memorial museum space with churchgoing in that people attend not so much to learn new information, but because they wish to be in a total environment that rehearses and affirms a sense of being in space/place (Williams, 2007:98). The notion of sacred ground is made concrete in both churches and the House of Terror, and brings people under a single topic of communion. In addition there are several other analogies between the House of Terror and churches; in that it is a place for continues self examination, the focus on the potential of grave sins, martyrs resolving problems through sacrifice and the broad social affect achieved through mass communion.

Theater implies the mise-en-scene that all exhibitions imply. In museums devoted to civil religion, is it the nation itself that gets staged or is narrated in nationalisms favorite genre, the epic of heroes and villains. The conceptual theater metaphor as a frame of reference is easy to grasp, my interviewees frequently also employed a similar metaphor of film when describing their experience of walking through the exhibition path, or described the elevator ride to the basement. Art works are exhibited in the best possible conditions, and the curators have developed a scenography. Objects are arranged in a space that by virtue of those objects' status as art becomes more or less fictional (Bal, 2008:20). The exhibition has the potential to suspend everyday concerns and isolates the viewer with art. At the House of Terror everyday life is also suspended by painting all the windows grey, mimicking the closed space of the theater. At the same time the art can separate the spectator from the art, in most cases the syntax and structure of the House of Terror narrative limits subject freedom of movement and the art-installations limit interaction with the art, which can turn the exhibition space into a

stage separated from the spectator who is left passive in the dark. The result of the exhibition arrangement creates a fictional time and space, with objects and visitors playing fictional roles in the exhibition narrative. Bal points out the difference between the metaphor of theater and film metaphors is that the in the exhibition narrative space the visitor walks around and curator in fulfilling the script in his/her own way within the predetermined parameter in which the story can be told, in stead of being a spectator in front of an imaginary stage. In a narrative exhibition I asks the visitor to establish connections when walking through the exhibition, building up a story which has its outcome, its effect and agency according to Gell. This affect or agency is an impression that binds together the different experiences as a whole evolving from the confrontation with art installations (Bal, 2008:20).

According to the interviews, the total physical environment has itself become the attraction, more so than learning through historical objects and commentary, “facts” and a historical temporal narrative. In a process analogous with planning a theater production – where texts are selected, casts auditioned, sets designed, and lengthy rehearsals take place, the museum objects are spatially arranged and decorated in an installation or showcase, lights adjusted (sometimes in a sequence flickering on and off) and given explanatory material before the show begins in form of a small pamphlet.²⁸

Spectacle is often referred to as a place of gravity in the discussion of memorial museums in the literature. The object perpetuates a selective semi-fictional narrative of the past that reflects cultural memory (Bal, 2007). The objects can thus often be understood as a prop for dramatizing a narrative rather than the representation of truth from an earlier time. One can also question whether the dead victims have been used as props. Besides the facade is the towering soviet tank the gravity point of the exhibition, located in a pool of oil in the

²⁸ Please revisit index for copy of the visitor pamphlet.

courtyard that the exhibition revolves around. The focus on the object is thus decreasing and it is the visitor who becomes the museum's focus.

Beyond viewing the curated and designed memorial museum as a place of learning and contemplating history, theatrical environments museums are concerned with the visceral, kinesthetic, hepatic and intimate qualities (Kirschenblatt-Gimlett, 1998: 194). Awareness of this physical dimension can lead us to question that the memory space is fundamentally about representation, meaning production and symbolization of events. The visitor embodies for example the loneliness, creepiness and isolation in the prison cells. The empty voids in for example the basement cells, gulag room, courtyard²⁹ in the museum are in a way also *Examples of History* in that they refer to absence of someone and something rather than a presence. This museums affective power lies not just in ideas but also in the experience of its awkward, foreign, claustrophobic spaces. These are sensual spaces that all of our bodies feel.

From the perspective of spatial and temporal organization the House of Terror exhibition has a religious structure. One can for example refer to medieval spiraling church structures or libarints with particular focus on movement, emotional and sensory intelligence (Panofsky, 1957).³⁰ One finds a massive soviet tank spectacle at the center of gravity of the exhibition space, around which a one-directional route is organized as a circular movement of descent. This is an emotional journey towards redemption through suffering on which visitors are companioned by memories of ordinary people on TV screens, pictures, installations, sounds and smells.³¹ The visitors' movement along the narrative path is however halted on the 1st floor just after the installation of the enormous underground glowing cross, and the exile

²⁹ Please revisit the Visual Narrative for illustration and commentary.

³⁰ While I did not have the chance to talk with the artist who designed the exhibition and therefore I can only speculate on its intentionality the homology between what I may call the religious narrative of history and the religious space-time structure of the exhibition is remarkable. Please revisit the appendix for visual illustrations with comments of the rooms and objects that we are discussing.

³¹ There are audio tracks on the televisions blurring with songs and narratives in addition to the solemn background soundtracks of the rooms. There are TV screens showing interview excerpts with victims narrating their experiences. There are visual objects that move and change as one are directed by them (like revolving uniforms and the Khrushchev car that have sequences of changing lights and soundtracks). There is a maze of fat that alters the aroma and that visitors touch and dig into with their fingernails.

and suffering of the Hungarian bishop and church. A stairway or an exit to the courtyard is not offered on the end of the 1st floor exhibition maze, only the dark elevator.

The elevator is perhaps the clearest example of intentionally giving a frame for an awkward bodily experience of a foreign and claustrophobic space. The lights are turned off, a soundtrack of disturbing clicking sounds is turned on and as many visitors as possible are packed into the syrup slow elevator ride downstairs. One interviewee from Sweden called the wait for the elevator a nerve wrecking experience before the cells in the basement, and she was about to turn around and leave the tour. Many interviewees expressed in retrospect an experience where they and others around themselves did not know how to cope or direct themselves in relation to a TV monitor inside the elevator. Visitors did not know if they should watch or look away or turn their body away from the TV showing a close up of the face of a former janitor who explained the procedure of executions in detail down to the physical mechanisms of the executioner's actions in yanking the rope of the gallows tied to the victims throat until the victim appeared clinically deceased by a medical doctor. The affect image of the visual close up often "take arrest of linear time" according to Bal, and the specific receptivity that such images entail connects them to aesthetic affect. In other words, this can be taken as a technique to make the three and half minute (in linear time) elevator ride, be experienced as extended, or perhaps more appropriately explained as movement between or outside time and space (Turner, 1970). Some interviewees compared parts of the experience at the House of Terror as a film, for instance, one interviewee referred directly to the medium itself, to the elevator ride with the execution memory on the TV. He said that it was like one of those films that you do not want to watch; you turn away at times and hesitate, but continue watching. The interviewee also explained the directionality of their bodies and the body language of others in the elevator as "not knowing how to cope." The remarks on the experience of how one copes in the these spaces and circumstances are interesting in relation

to Bal's findings on affect: between a perception that troubles us and the action that we hesitate about what to do, affect emerges (Bal, 2008:35). Affect images present a temporarily set relationship between perception and the action that coincides with subjectivity. The visitor sees and hesitates what to do, thus "trapped in affect".³²

The elevator descending to the basement is what I call the climax of the House of Terror narrative. The fears are confirmed when visitors exit the elevator. They have descended into the dark basement, from narrative of fascist and communist past more based on historical material into subjective terror: the sound of solemn music interrupted by occasional clang of a prison door or a rant of a demagogue. The basement, this profane hell of torture and suffering plays on different foul smelling cells in which you can steep into in order to recreate the sense of isolation and despair. A Finish woman I interviewed said that she would never forget the feeling she got of being inside a cell with the door closed that is so small that one is forced to stand upright. This is another example of a creation of a claustrophobic space, and how it becomes embodied in our memories through experience. After walking through the prison cells and interrogation rooms, the memory description of the execution during the elevator ride is connected with the visitor being escorted to an Execution Room with gallows. Paradoxically, the House of Terror website reveals that the executions actually never took place at the House of Terror.³³

³² Charles Altieri (2003:49) in a negative definition compromises the range of mental states in which an agent's activity cannot be handled in terms of sensations or beliefs but requires attending to how he or she offers expression of those states.

³³ House of Terror web-site explaining the Gallows: We placed a gibbet here, which belonged to the prison in Vác and later to the prison on Kozma Street, which was used until 1985 (No executions were carried out at Andrásy Boulevard 60. People died from beatings and from suicide). Based on their (victims who where blindfolded) recollection, many suspected that the building's cellar system had several floors. When the house was rebuilt, no signs of additional floors were found under the cellars. Nevertheless, it cannot be excluded that additional cellars of the labyrinth were dug into the earth.
Please view: http://terrorhaza.hu/en/exhibition/basement/reconstructed_prison_cell.html

All of our respondents characterized their experience as emotional and some of them added that it was exhausting.³⁴ Exhaustion is somewhat understandable and not strictly physical. Direct impulses triggering instant emotions abound and reach their climax around the reconstructed torture-chambers in the basement.³⁵ Following Friedrich Nietzsche, Williams makes it clear that if something is to stay in memory it has to be burned in: “only that which never ceases to hurt stays in the memory.”³⁶ This is perhaps one of the ways to understand the approach of the teller of the House of Terror narrative. The emphasis on the physical in my interview answers is in line with the study of trauma that we do not remember so much in a cognitive declarative fashion, but in one that is bodily and sensory, in other words, the body also remembers. Topics are discomfort, pain, terror and alienation from country (Bennet: 2002). Sociality and embodiment can perhaps be understood as equally primordial aspects of human subjectivity. Jackson indicates how reference to pain (terror, suffering, torture, isolation, angst, victims, martyrs, guilt etc.) reminds us that social meaning can be generated in the interior space of libidinal and visceral being. Studies have for example been done on how the human body and the body of the earth have been fused (Jackson, 1996, Lázár, Imre and Lüse, Agita. 2007). Such notions could account for why the House of Terror experience appears to be bodily draining, and much less provoking a thoughtful and reflexive experience.

³⁴ There was one partial exception from this rule, a woman from New York expected that the museum experience would be sad, but she was touched only by some parts of it (the narratives on the television screens), not being able to make sense of much of the rest.

³⁵ One needs certain distancing when faced with such powerful emotional triggers as six (“authentic”) gallows in a dark room or rusty objects of physical torture in a concrete cellar. The basement in this respect were “reconstructed” as a veritable underworld of physical pain and suffering.

³⁶ One can also refer to repetition compulsion by Freud. Effective display would release in survivors a subconscious desire to return to the time in which the trauma occurred in order to mentally enact it.

Conclusion

In this study I have been going over the following: 1. The processual form of the interviewee experience: embeddedness of experience, relive/reenact, follow, experience of another experience, narrative, re-narration to oneself and others 2. Embodiment from sensory and spatial experience, narrative of different phases (beginning/separation, liminal/climax, end/reintegration) 3. Performance and agency of the artist and architect of the narrative.

Victor Orban stated that “we have locked the past behind bars” when he held his speech at the opening ceremony of the House of Terror (Rev, 2007). There appears however not to be a consensus on the fascist and socialist memory and national myth in Hungary, rather a variability of historical narratives. There appeared however to be a consensus on a total narrative for the foreign interviewees who had visited the House of Terror. This total narrative of the past and present is framed by what Lakoff calls a hero and villain cultural narrative which has a structure with emotion built in. It is a narrative that is performed by the museum and experienced by the visitor.

Turner differentiates between “mere experience” and “an experience.” “Mere experience” is simply the passive endurance of and acceptance of events. An experience like a rock in a Zen sand garden stands out from the evenness of passing hours and years and forms what Dilthey called a “structure of experience.” Abrahams elaborated to this “typical experience”: between an event its interpretive replay as we recollect it to ourselves and others, and its assimilation into the prototype/readymade narratives and categories that, however we struggle, outline our lives (Geertz, 1986: 380). For the visitor, experiences like narrative, theater or performance are made: and it is such made things that makes them. In adding to this, I have looked at the interviewee experience in a processual manner, analogous to the

processual path of the narrative which is offered to them, which in part the plan of this paper seeks to follow. The experience of the interviewees at the House of Terror must be understood as processual movement in its form, being directed on the narrative path and performance in space with a beginning, climax and end. Walking this path is in a way a form of procedural and performative knowledge which has proved difficult to articulate by the interviewees, as apposed to “know how” or declarational knowledge. This is a sense of kinesthetic and embodied action where the visitors are stepping into the light and make themselves familiar with a path that is directing them; the acquisition of procedural steps that leads to a pre-intended established goal and metaphorical object set by the curators (please revisit Farewell room in visual narrative), and following Gell is the index’s and the narrative path the curator’s roundabout technology in achieving this goal in the visitor. This process I denote as, *In Situ*, readymade, affect and enchantment which derives from the agency of the hidden artists and curators indexes. One thing is for sure: its compelling force hides in the cognitive dissonance created by the elementary evoked idea from the House of Terror narrative.

The interviewed visitors’ experience is during this process to a large degree what Kapferer points out as an “experience of another’s experience.”³⁷ The visitors follow, take the role; experience the Hungarian (people’s) victims’ experience of isolation, suppression and suffering, accompanied by snippets of sensory affective memory on TV monitors by everyday people, or *Examples of History* embodied in objects representing memory, and sensory affect, agency of art and spectacle. The visitor experience at the House of Terror corresponds with one exception “mere experience,” the rest with “an experience,” in which they embodied a “Structure of Experience,” in form of a “statue of terror” framed by its blade walls from the

³⁷ Bruce Kapferer in discussing Sinhala exorcism shows how it is through performance as embodied experience any given participant (not just the possessed “victim” renders the rite personally meaningful and comes to understand what it might mean for any other participant. In addition he argues that the affect of the rite is that every participant is freed from solitude (the existential state of the possessed, but is essential in all humans being) of subjective experience, as they simultaneously take standpoints on the experienced world and coming to different meanings.

Please see: Kapferer, Bruce. 1986. *Performance and the Structuring of Meaning and Experience*.

rest of the urban landscape. In terms of “Typical Experience” in the interviewees depending on sharing a common history: *Sterile and Lived History* in experiencing the exhibition is in relation to “the Cold War Experience.”

An extension of “the experience of another experience” during the narrative is the “typical experience” which relates back to the common experiences and experiences in re-narration. The interviews also indicate movements and mediations in re-narration: following Torren we engage others in the processes of our own being and becoming, and intersubjectively and by comparison come to meaning, that is emergent, out of our experience. Interviewees indicate this intersubjectively in the “experience of another experience” from for example being accompanied by the other TV memories of suffering. In the re-narration groups where more dynamic in intersubjectively finding meaning for their own experience of the narrative, collectively finding consensus on their experiences and the narrative as a whole, in some cases subjects of the group gave more abstract descriptions and reflections, whereas many individuals indicated that they would need more time to reflect upon their experience, in absence of intersubjectively finding meaning, when cognitively coming to terms with the narrative in parts, visual display, tropes and historical data. My interviews indicating interpretive answers showing movements in re-narration that starts to deviate from what appears to be a consensus on narrative with its experience and understanding of tropes as a whole: if a temporal and special moment has passed by during our departure of the total atmosphere and the interview is conducted on the street as a walking interview or on a bench. This has implications not only for the context of interview techniques, but also in terms of understanding both the influence of sensory information, spaces, objects and leading ideas framed in a cultural narrative fused with emotion of the museum and memorial site has on the visitors consciousness in terms of embodiment in experience and art’s affect in our understanding and meaning making of experience to

ourselves and others. I have aimed to argue here that the experience of my interviewees at the House of Terror can serve as a keyhole in this endeavor.

Appendix: A Visual Ethnography of the House of Terror



The Facade

Two Captures of the Façade of *The House of Terror*: The curator's framing of an object clearly impacts how the object at hand is felt and how meaning is made. In reference to my pictures *The House of Terror* is presented and framed like an inverted form of humor. It is not a joke because it does not amuse. The structure of its symbolism uses comparison and double meaning like the structure of a joke. This is the first of an array of examples of clashes of themes and their symbols throughout the museum. The façade is dominated by a clash is between the metal frame and the historical architecture of the building.

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Entrance to the House of Terror



How to kill two Stones with one Bird: Illustration of the entrance hallway of the House of Terror with two stone tablets with the symbols of the arrow cross and the communist star in focus. My observation of this entrance with this visual impression coupled by dark according to their webpage “timeless scoring for string orchestra in multiple movements” goes in the direction of the undertakers’ art. Their self-definition of timelessness in their audio tracks and our impression of funeral-like experience were interesting signs to take note of in relation to later findings of a-historical and religious aspects of the museums narrative.

Socialist Spaces



Illustration of the Cafeteria (from Website): where we conducted the majority of our interviews. One guest said that the room reminded her of the interior of waiting and visiting rooms in army caserns. After interviewing several guests here, I started questioning whether or not this was the best environment to interview visitors. I conducted the last interviews outside the building in order to facilitate for a more comfortable atmosphere for both the interviewees and ourselves.



**Trademark interior
Spectacle Installation and
Commemoration Portrait**

Theme I: Illustration of the vocal and gravitation point of the museum seen from the 2nd and 3rd floor perspectives through the red railing bars. Portraits showing a multitude of victims are displayed on the 4 story high wall in the background, and are mirrored in a dark slimy pool in which the tank is residing. There is a clear center of gravity where the symbol of the theme of the exhibition rests. The tank was popular among the young visitors we talked to, and was surprising spectacle to the adult visitors.

The new and total narrative of the House of Terror



This main narrative is a theme where no individual Hungarians are singled out. The focus is on a high numbers of victims, which can translate into collective suffering of Hungarians.

Portrait Theme II: Illustration of the victimizers is also commemorated, on bright red walls in the basement. Nobody is singled out in this presentation, the multitude of pictures as a whole has however an overwhelming effect on the visitor. There are blank portraits frames of victimizers. This room also approximates the function of truth commissions or transitional justice.



Portrait Theme III: In this display it is indicated a category of victims or victimizers over the portraits that are displayed. There are however no mention of why they are displayed and what relationship they had to Andrassy 60, violence and the Nazi or Socialist Hungarian past. This narrative and display is a concept of totality of victimizers vs. victims. There is no focus on individual examples here as a witness of history besides the portraits that are placed under the black and white categories of good and evil. This overwhelming visual concept and narrative's affect and agency dismisses the possibility for fragmentation and reflexive time in understanding history, change and politics.



Portrait Theme IV: The outside is covered in portraits of presumably victims of the Communist and Nazi regimes in Hungary. The curator and the museum have decided also to display “pictures” with an anonym blank face in cases that they presumably had no picture. This odd choice for commemorating using a blank dark uniform face is perhaps an attempt to increase the number of picture displays.



Portrait Theme V and Space and everyday life &VI: The top picture is taken from one of the cells in the basement. The walls in a few of the cell walls are covered with portraits. There was confusion among us researchers and visitors about who is portrayed and what their relationship to the room and Hungary's past is. On the bottom you see another

room that is very scarce of educational information. There is a narrative clip on suppression on the TV screens. These narrative clips showing close up faces of the emotional Hungarians speaking about Socialist terror, and resistance. The desks on podiums are installations offering many associations, however again with no following explanation without explanation. Interpretations could be of different rooms in the house or social class differences.

Socialist Spaces and Installations



Red Space: Communist voting cells in the front and an assembly made out of poor quality sheet wood material with distorted portraits of state leaders and a miniature child size podium and seats.

“Labor in the USSR is a matter of honor, matter of glory, matter of valor and heroism.” The quote was written on the wall of the room below and uses irony, conveying meaning of a whole without being amusing. We think the room simulates a train car on a map, in which the visitor travels to the Gulag. One interviewee found that he could feel that vastness of the former USSR in the space of the room.





Installations on Labor and

Production: To the left is a maze of pig fat. This maze is next after the first torture room, and as a repulsive effect on the senses. Interviewees told us about the smell, visual appearance and texture from scratching their nails on the surface.

The second picture is an installation of what we think is Hungarian silver mining. There is however not any explanation in the room. I think that both pictures deal with labor and production for the state. The visitors maze through pig fat might be an experience that is supposed to resemble the memory of the experience of the peasant. In both pictures, as well is the case with many of the other installations: visitors are caught in moment of bewilderment of spectacles from installations and concepts that is not familiar to them and that they cannot rationalize in a museal context.



Technological

interaction: The narrative path allows for little individual interaction. To the left is an exception, an illustration of a visitor information computer. Visitors reported that they did utilize this resource. These computers hold similar info as the web page.

The rooms below have a concept of black telephones on the left wall. The visitor can pick up the receiver and dial a number that will give them historical audio material in Hungarian like speeches, music, codes etc. The central object is a veiled car, in the center. Our interviewees were thoroughly confused by this room, and could not find information that explained the flicking lights and the veiled car. Later I found out that the Car is an original object, and was used by Nikita Khrushchev when he visited Budapest.



Concept of visitor interaction: This is ready made socialist phone, with a nostalgic dimension. This is one of the concepts that are found throughout the museum. The visitor can pick up the receiver, but is not able to dial a number from this basement phone next to the prison cells and reach someone as was the case upstairs. This increases the affect of isolation. There are also new clean tiles inside the carved out shelf for the phone.

The Arrow Cross and Conceptual Installations



Left above: is the only room designated for the Nazi occupation of Hungary. The installation was a mystery to us and our interviewees. The dining room table, plates with an unidentified “V” symbol. The only attendant of the dinner party is accompanied by an audio soundtrack in the background with a demagogue rant, suggesting absence of Hungarian listeners or dinner participants. The dummy standing at the end of the table without a face, but with projected facial features. There is also a projection in the background of bird view film going across a landscape. Franz Boas objected to the use of dummies in museum display. I agree with his interpretation that they present something deathlike, and can be understood as an extension of the “undertakers’ art” which wax museums benefited from.

Left Bottom: the rotating uniforms are a continuation of the uniform display from the Nazi dinner party room. The arrow cross and communist uniforms are however displayed as if an invisible person was wearing them, and are given life artificially as they are rotating around like ghosts. Another concept here is the interpretation and new narrative of history as terror and suppression that the fascist period and the socialist period where two sides of the same coin.

The House of Terror Narrative and Alternative Narratives



An interviewee explained how the VI district Synagogue (illustrated above) she visited had a narrative where the Communists were portrayed as liberators. This picture below is also not from the House of Terror; however I find the liberty square with its memorial in the foreground and American embassy in the background as an interesting option for a backdrop to the narrative created by the House of Terror. The narrative of victims and victimizers and of Fascism and Nazism as two sides of the same coin is consistent throughout the museum, and is symbolically expressed most noteworthy by means of visual installations like the revolving Nazi and communist uniforms illustrated on the previous page. This new narrative view is different from the narrative manifested at the Szabadság Tér that commemorates the Bolshevik victim whom were fighting for freedom and liberated Hungary from Nazism. The emphasis in the House of Terror narrative is on coming to terms with the past, the victims who suffered from communism, and that they fought for freedom and prosperity. In the entrance hall, next to the cloakroom entrance of the House of Terror is the visitor faced by a TV with a close up of a victim in an emotional state, crying, as he is contemplating whether he can forgive what the socialists did in Hungary. This narrative does not hold the communists as liberators of Nazism, but clearly as another occupation by a totalitarian regime. The story has however a happy ending in the Farwell Room.



Yet another alternative narrative is George Sadovy's photo narrative for Life magazine on the 1956 revolution, illustrated below, of public lynching and massacre of AVH workers "victimizers," and pictures of the defeated AVH men who came out of the communist party committee headquarters after they surrendered, and where massacred by the revolution fighters.³⁸



³⁸ Please see John Sadovy "[...] the fighting really began to flare up, Hungary's fight for freedom: a special life magazine report in pictures, 1956, 26-45.



Church Room: There are two installations, the first one our interviewees could not explain, and the second one appeared to be obvious. One set of Megaphones in the background of the display of an original bishop robe, and an illuminated cross which has been unveiled underneath the wooden floor covering. The hallway to the elevator ride to the basement is on the right hand side at the end of the room.

For more information on Sadovy's narrative and its historical context please see:

Rev, Istvan. 2008. 47-89 (Re) *Visualizing National History: Museums and National Identities in Europe in the new Millenium*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.



The Hungarian history and national identity creation? The readymade object is part of an installation and is perhaps the strongest symbol of a nation as a whole, but perhaps also as a symbol of the narrative that the House of Terror has created. There is a hole or a void in the flag that facilitates for interpretation from the visitor, but the visual direction is a red execution room.





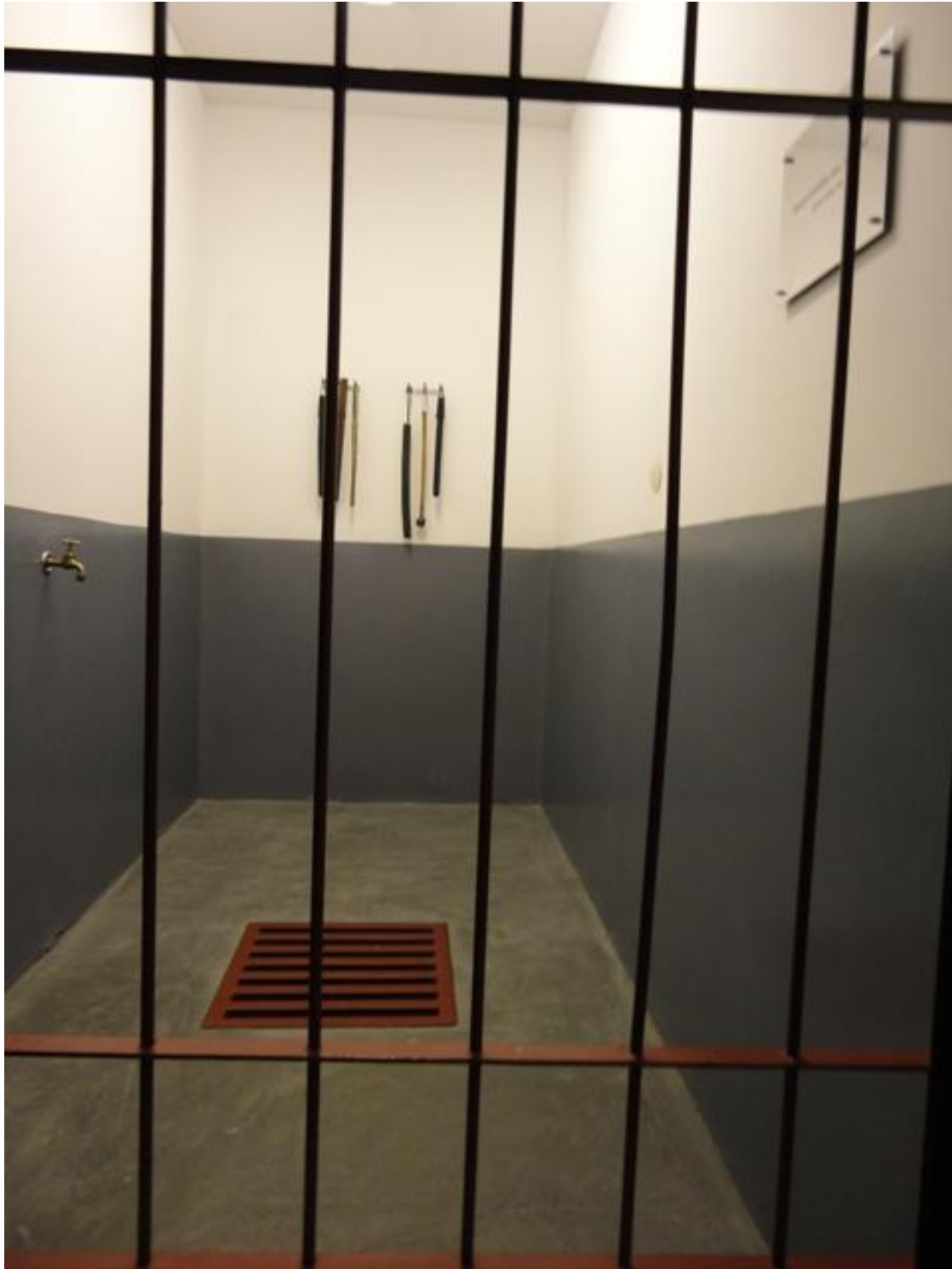
Totalitarian Kitsch





Kitsch and Commemoration of Victims Fighting for Freedom-Kitsch Skull and Sign:
“Koennyek Terme” or “The hall of tears” is another example we give that has a banality of kitsch as a ready made posture. This sign for the red room filled with lights on the end of black metal sticks is presumably intended to commemorate the victims of socialism and fascism.

Unmasked Terror: Recreation and Immortalization of Terror



Recreated Prison Cell on the 1st floor: This is another room that appears to be out of place, next to the restrooms and before the pig fat maze. This can cause confusion in the visitor, but also a cold emotional effect. The audio soundtrack in this room is of drops of water falling from the faucet on the concrete floor. The void is symbolizing an absence of something rather than a presence.



Cell with Gallows: there is a certain gallows humor in the irony in the fact that the gallows is roped off from the visitor. Below: an example of an object that had a small label briefly explaining where it came from, for whom it was designated and its history. The sign is very small and only visible from outside the cells entrance and is only in Hungarian. It reads: “this is a gift from the Budapest prison. It was used to execute political prisoners until 1985. It is not a reconstruction, but was not used at Andrassy 60. It is in other words not clear whether there were gallows in the basement or not, what the cells and basement actually looked like, smelled, sounds etc. There is however a narrative about executions by hanging on a TV in the elevator, what can be described as a liminal phase the elevator taking visitors down to the basement. The House of Terror website however makes it clear that no executions took place at Andrassy 60.



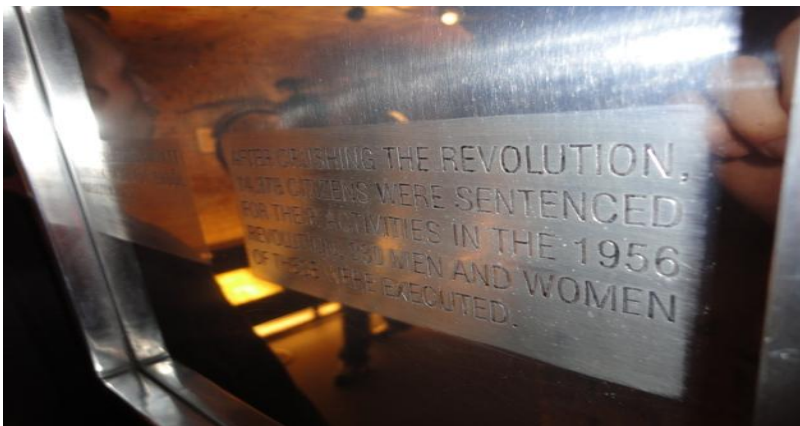
Prison Cell in the Basement: A cell where the prisoner would have had to stand in an upright position. A Finnish interviewee I spoke to recalled that she would never forget the feeling of fare she got when she visited inside the cell.

Objects: Instruments of Violence

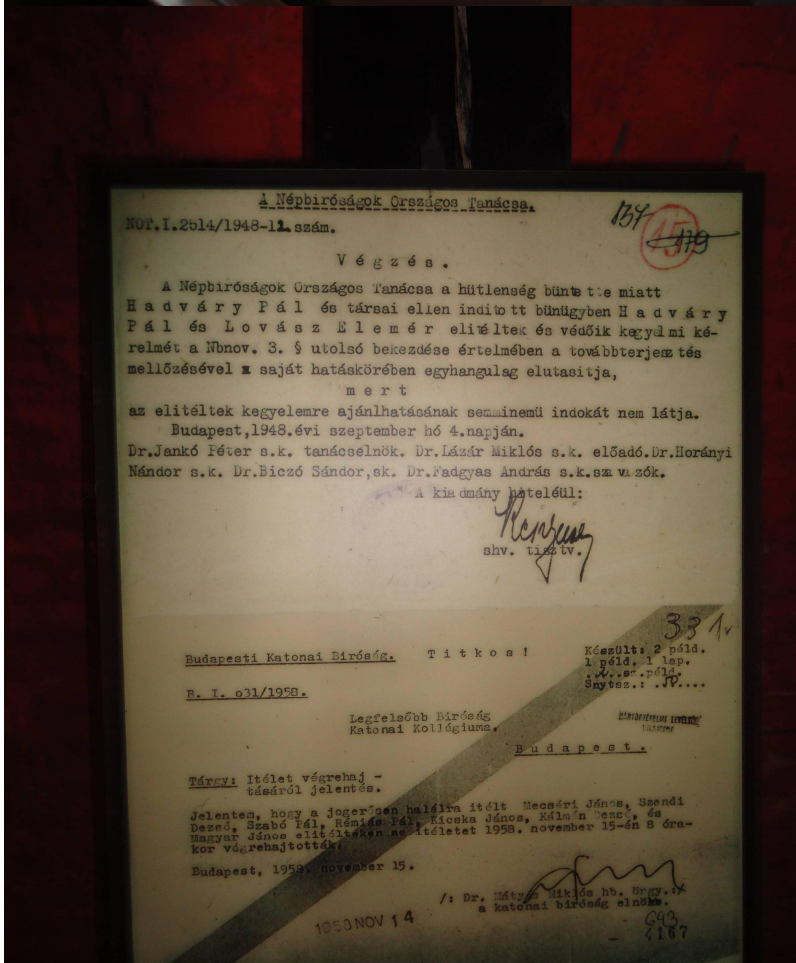


On the pictures shown above are the examples of objects without a label that are gathered in the same display without any coherent relation or indication of why they are important to the exhibition and the narrative of socialism in Hungary. Are they originals to Andrassy 60 or are they assembled objects under building a concept by the curator? Our observations and interviews suggest that these kinds of displays contribute to an overall confusion about the museum experience and the narrative of Hungary's socialist time.

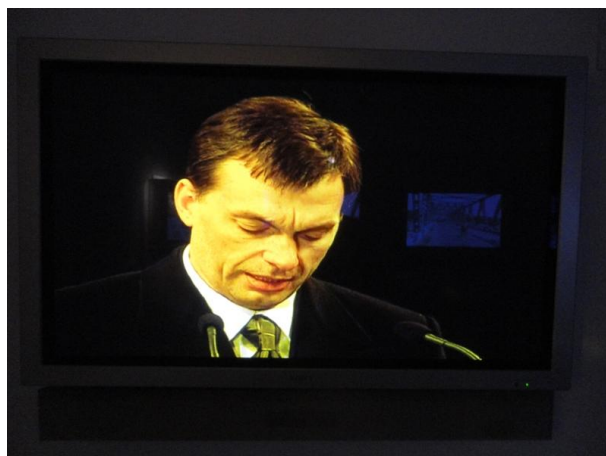
Signifier and the Signified



A sign that does not correspond with the object. This sign indicates that the objects and documents in the room will deal with the communist retribution after the 1956 revolution. The document on the gallows is however dated back to 1948.



Post Socialist Politics of Memory, Commemoration and Past: The Farwell Room



Visitors can watch videos of the reburial ceremony of Imre Nagy, where Victor Orban demanded the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Hungary.³⁹ The opposite wall show the withdrawal of soviet troops where the tanks (used as the gravitation point spectacle) are loaded up on train cars. The last TV shows Victor Orban speaking at the opening ceremony of the House of Terror on the new Memorial Day to the victims of communism, just before the Hungarian general elections in 2002. At the marble stone in the entrance the visitor can read that it was Orban who had the museum built and the last TV image shows an enormous crowd and Hungarian flags announcing the opening of the House of Terror. On the visitors' way out of the museum, they walk again past the marble stone and the two tombstones of the Arrow Cross and Communism. The narrative path comes full circle, and a new era of national revitalization has emerged from the suffering of the past.



³⁹ Clip from Imre Nagy's reburial and Orban's speech on Youtube:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4HBD5XScqZw>

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