

**CONCEPTUALIZING HERITAGE THROUGH THE  
EXHIBITION OF DOCUMENTARY  
PHOTOGRAPHY IN BUDAPEST, HUNGARY**

By

Kristina Ford

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*Academic Research, Policy and Management*

Supervisor: Katalin Szende

Co-supervisor: Ulrich Meurer

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# Abstract

The value assigned to photographs by society make them plausible candidates as heritage objects, the most obvious being family photographs with their inclusion of genealogical, cultural, and historic information in one image, and their recognized value in the present by a living person. But photography and heritage have much more in common than is articulated in heritage discourse: perception and feeling as an identity-shaping experience, and the significance of viewer engagement. In heritage discourse, perception, feeling and engagement are tailored to a heritage perspective with documentary photographs that typically accomplish one of two things: history education or cultural voyeurism. Historic photographs are useful educational tools for the heritage experts handling the collections, and for the public viewing them. In other cases, the photographs recognized as having significance to heritage engagement are examples of collective expression or encouragement of feeling. However, without a more intimate understanding of approaching and analyzing photographs, viewers still find themselves detached from both heritage studies and photography as a medium. This thesis conceptualizes heritage from the perspective of the interpretation and exhibition of documentary photographs in ways that appeal to varied levels of engagement, in hopes of encouraging heritage experts to explore how the perception and feeling in conceptual photography analysis can meaningfully connect with their audiences.

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# Introduction

## To Collect

“To collect photographs is to collect the world.<sup>1</sup>” Albeit a broad idea, Sontag was right: a collection of photographs is a collection of experiences. When photography was born, it was considered the first medium to objectively capture reality. Photography was a tool for the preservation of memory, and the realism and objectivity that photographs provided was considered utilitarian.

A photograph is a scientific token of memory. Andre Bazin, a renowned film critic, accurately portrays a photograph’s spatial contradictions by referring to it as “embalmed time.”<sup>2</sup> Similarly, art writer William Mitchell points to the preservation of an image in a photograph by referring to it as “fossilized light.”<sup>3</sup> Both analogies point to a photograph’s close associations with death and preservation through its relationship with time and its ability to capture reality as evidence. Photographs can be duplicated once an image is made, but the same photograph cannot be captured twice by the photographer. The earth will be in a slightly different position, and the time and date of the photograph will always be different. A printed photograph is a moment captured on paper, but the moment itself is gone at the release of the shutter.

Its ability to preserve memory made it an enticing identity exercise for anyone with or near a camera. Suddenly, people could see themselves as never before: self as other, or in the

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<sup>1</sup> Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (S.I.: RosettaBooks, 1973), 1, <https://api.overdrive.com/v1/collections/v1L1BqQAAAA2G/products/e7e5d450-2b0b-490f-970b-d3870ec0e83b>.

<sup>2</sup> Andre Bazin and Hugh Gray, “The Ontology of the Photographic Image,” *Film Quarterly*, July 1, 1960, 8.

<sup>3</sup> “Mitchell: Intention and Artifice,” accessed April 25, 2022, <https://web.stanford.edu/class/history34q/readings/Mitchell/Mitchell.html>.

words of Barthes, “a cunning dissociation of consciousness from identity.”<sup>4</sup> People adored the sentiment of collecting portraits of their family members, and enjoyed collecting portable images to remind them of their beautiful travels around the world. The sentimental value of photographs made the new medium one of belonging and connection between people.

Taking and collecting pictures happens simultaneously inside the camera. Rolls of film containing their tiny light imprints are chronological collections created by the photographer. Beyond the camera, the act of collecting pictures in the form of prints has been popular since the early nineteenth century, and before photography was considered visual art. The skillset required to take a “good” photograph and to use what was then heavy, unfamiliar photography equipment contributed to the economic value of photographs, making them precious collectible items for the wealthy.

The value assigned to photographs by society make them plausible candidates as heritage objects, one of the most obvious being family photographs with their inclusion of genealogical, cultural, and historic information in one image, and their recognized value in the present by a living person. This example is one that illustrates a definition of heritage as a cultural process, in which heritage is subjectively experienced and understood as a result of the recognition of simultaneous aspects in the present by an individual or any grouping of people.<sup>5</sup> But the fields of photography and heritage as a whole have much more in common than is articulated through family portraits or heritage discourse: both utilize perception and feeling in processual identity-shaping experiences, and these processes are instigated through the intimacy and the power of viewer engagement.

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<sup>4</sup> Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, 2nd ed., Flamingo Edition (London: Fontana Paperbacks, 1988), 12.

<sup>5</sup> Laurajane Smith, *Uses of Heritage* (London ; New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2006), 45.

In heritage discourse, perception, feeling and engagement are tailored to a heritage perspective with documentary photographs that typically accomplish one of two things: history education or cultural voyeurism. Historic photographs are useful educational tools for the heritage experts handling the collections, and for the public viewing them. Voyeurism is referring to a broad use of the term, which can be described as the act of looking onto unfamiliarity. Cultural voyeurism in heritage photography can be described as series of images taken and exhibited to showcase a niche culture unknown to those outside of it, for the intention of cultural education. Without a more intimate understanding of approaching and analyzing photographs, viewers still find themselves detached from both heritage studies and photography as a medium, and subsequently detached from the meaning-making and empowerment that can be found in history and cultural education.

This thesis conceptualizes heritage from the perspective of the interpretation and exhibition of documentary photographs in ways that appeal to varied levels of engagement. Each chapter addresses a different level of engagement as illustrated in the interpretation and exhibition of collections by the selected case studies. The conceptualization of heritage in this thesis is provided through a critical heritage studies perspective, which challenges past definitions of heritage and works to redefine them with consideration to how these concepts change with the present and impact the future. Critical heritage studies also acknowledges and argues that not all artifacts, stories, or spaces are examples of heritage, which allows heritage experts and gallery, museum, archives, and library (GLAM) sector experts to be more intentional and grounded in their interpretations of cultural heritage.

Budapest, Hungary is the location of the case study selections as a prolific source of the archival preservation of documentary photography collections both physically and online, and as a result of the ongoing creative interpretations of these collections exhibited by heritage

experts and visual artists who are based in Budapest. This wide scope of content allowed for the specificity of case study selections based on the interpretation and exhibition of collections by their curators.

The first chapter appeals to LauraJane Smith's definition of heritage as a cultural process,<sup>6</sup> and Harrison's acknowledgement of contemporary heritage as an attempt to conserve a community or landscape whose existence is under threat.<sup>7</sup> The case study for this chapter is the *Srebrenica: Exhumation* exhibition, which took place at the Vera and Donald Blinken Open Society Archives in July 2010. This exhibition brought together multiple legal and forensic collections to both commemorate the Srebrenica Genocide as part of the Bosnian War in 1995, and as an act of truth-telling amidst genocide denial by the Bosnian-Serb perpetrators in hindsight of the genocide. The Archivum's interpretation of the exhibited collections made this exhibition a profound example of memory and truth from a balanced perspective of heritage and visual arts. This integration of ideas into the exhibition by curator Csaba Szilágyi made it an ideal case study selection for continued discussion of how these concepts work together in the minds of viewers, and to articulate the significance of the archive and recordkeeping to both heritage studies and visual arts.

## **To Exhibit**

The word 'exhibit' is derived from the latin *ex-* 'out' and *hebere*, 'hold', meaning "to hold out." Contemporary definitions for 'exhibit' uphold this interpretation, and consistently include synonyms such as 'display,' 'show,' and 'reveal.' Etymologically, to exhibit means to ensure that others are seeing content, and to exhibit photography is no exception. The noun 'exhibition' is a presentation of information, or a story. Therefore, exhibitions can be all of the

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<sup>6</sup> Smith, *Uses of Heritage*, 44.

<sup>7</sup> Rodney Harrison, *Heritage: Critical Approaches* (Milton Park, Abingdon ; New York: Routledge, 2013), 26.

things that stories can be—fictional or non-fictional, inspiring, frightening, mundane, and the list goes on. The versatility and the visual stimulation of exhibitions are what make them unique and fascinating to viewers.

Before the birth of photography, collections of heritage and art in the form of sculptures, letters, and maps were safely stored in cultural heritage institutions such as archives, museums, and libraries. As more people have used photography to illustrate their identities and to tell stories over time, the preservation and exhibition of photography collections has become more abundant in these institutions. The exhibitions the public are the most familiar with are institutional, with images and descriptions on a wall for viewers to interpret. But in law, an exhibit is also referred to as “a document or other object produced in a court as evidence.”<sup>8</sup> In this way, exhibitions can be private, censored, personal, and curated with the intent persuade viewers of a specific narrative.

This places heritage experts, photographers, and people working in the heritage institution in a position of power, as a result of their control of these important tokens of collective memory. If collecting photographs means collecting the world, then understanding their context and describing it implies the position of authority of an educator to their pupils. The case study featured in the second chapter, The Budapest Police Museum, is a clear example of the power of narrative in exhibitions. The Budapest Police Museum has both permanent and temporary exhibitions showcasing the history of police work and forensic science in Hungary. Their exhibitions are interpreted with the interest of educating visitors about historic crimes and accomplishments in forensic science, and to perpetuate the perspective of police work as a service for public safety. This case study analyzes interviews with the museum curators and

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<sup>8</sup> “Exhibit – Free Online Dictionary of Law Terms and Legal Definitions,” June 6, 2018, <https://legaldictionary.lawin.org/exhibit/>.

their exhibitions from an institutional level of engagement, which in turn, is reflected in the conceptualization of heritage as it pertains to these collections.

## **To Dream**

The third chapter ushers in an analysis of an individual level of engagement with the interpretation and exhibition of conceptual documentary photography collections. The case study analysis in this chapter is a culmination of exhibition analysis, book analysis, website analysis, and multiple interviews with artist and photojournalist Szabolcs Barakonyi. His artwork and curatorial work both encourage the subjective interpretation of collective memory, as it is presented by documentary photography in various styles. The subjective interpretation of photography without context makes it an act of the imagination, similar to the way dreams use content resembling reality to communicate fictional ideas. Barakonyi encourages this process to stimulate a feeling in his viewers from the authenticity of perception, which lays the foundation for meaning-making in visual storytelling and the dissemination of information.

Beginning with a traditional walk-through exhibition of this concept by Barakonyi, the chapter goes on to elaborate the different physical forms an exhibition can take to instigate wonder, imagination and feeling in viewers. The chapter then takes this concept a step further by connecting the imaginative qualities of visual art to the instigation of heritage as a subjective identity-shaping process. Rodney Harrison touches on these ideas in *Heritage: Critical Approaches*: “Heritage is not a passive process, but an active assembling of a series of objects, places and practices that we choose to hold up as a mirror to the present, associated with a particular set of values that we wish to take with us into the future.” In this quote, Harrison is metaphorically referring to a mirror as the different ways we describe and understand ourselves and each other in the present. With photography collections, the camera provides a collective mirror for perceiving the world around us, and gazing at photographs provides time and space

for reflection and understanding within. Harrison also references the significance of a heritage as a wish in this quote, as something both imagined and shared with consideration for the future. The exhibition of conceptual documentary photography functions as a mirror, and its interpretation as a wish, that shows how perception and feeling begin in the individual, collectively resonate with the imagination, which is disseminated through creativity in storytelling. The third chapter brings these ideas together with the interpretation and exhibition of conceptual documentary photography as examples of meaningful identity-shaping processes in heritage.

By referencing different levels of engagement throughout the thesis, their impact on meaning-making processes in heritage studies, and the significance of visual art in heritage interpretation, this thesis aims to open up the world of photography and conceptual art to critical heritage studies, so that heritage experts can educate and enrich their audiences in creative ways as the world continues to change, and as we change with it.

# Chapter 1: Evidentiary Photography as Memory

## 1.1 Introduction

This chapter begins with a brief overview of the Bosnian War leading up to the Srebrenica genocide, also referred to as the Srebrenica massacre. The Srebrenica genocide is the largest genocide in post-WWII Europe, but unlike the Holocaust, word of this tragedy didn't reach far beyond the borders of the European Union in hindsight of the atrocity. Despite the Ohio-based Dayton peace agreement bringing an end to the four year-long Bosnian war in 1995, the story of the Srebrenica genocide remains widely untold in Western history education, on the grounds that the war did not make an impact on the global economy, and took place in a country unfamiliar to the public outside of the EU.

It also remains untold in parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina where the Srebrenica genocide took place, such as Konjević Polje, a village about 20 kilometers Northeast of Srebrenica. An all-Bosniak elementary school appointed by Bosnian-Serbs, and named after Bosnian-Serb writer and politician Petar Kočić, distributes textbooks containing information on the Bosnian War and the Srebrenica genocide, but teachers deliberately skip over the information, and refuse to answer student questions about it. During the genocide, the building currently used for Petar Kočić Elementary school was used as a temporary holding place for Bosnian-Muslim (Bosniak) victims, before their transport to mass execution sites. As of 2019, a six-year boycott of the school, led by survivor Muhizin Omerović, persisted in protest of its revisionism.<sup>9</sup>

Without the trail of records left behind from the atrocity, and without its survivors, there would be no story to tell. This chapter contains an overview of the Srebrenica Genocide and the

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<sup>9</sup> Ron Synovitz and Ajla Obradovic, "On Srebrenica Massacre Road, School Won't Teach Of Tragedy," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, 10:50:51Z, sec. Bosnia-Herzegovina, <https://www.rferl.org/a/on-srebrenica-massacre-road-school-won-t-teach-of-tragedy/30139243.html>.



subsequent records that remain to tell the story, with focus on the roles of evidentiary photography and its relationship to heritage.

## **1.2 The Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, February 1992**

Despite pushback from Bosnian Serbs, Bosnia and Herzegovina declared independence in March 1992. The new Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina was now separated from the former Yugoslavia, but with a disjointed population comprised of a close majority of 44% Bosnian Muslims, 31% Bosnian Serbs, and 17% Catholic Croats.<sup>10</sup> The independence of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina was recognized by both the European and the United Nations by Spring 1992 in hopes of ongoing fighting between the different ethnic populations of the new Republic to cease, but unfortunately, it had only just begun. Each of these ethnic groups had different political visions for the new Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, ultimately contributing to rising tension and civil war.

The Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina was of strategic importance by location, situated between Croatia, Serbia and Montenegro. The declaration of independence of the new Republic was opposed by Bosnian Serbs, who boycotted elections regarding the referendum for independence. In April 1992, the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, located on the left side of the country protruding into its center, was recognized as independent by the European Community and the United States. In response, the Republic Srpska, located on the north and southeastern borders of the country, was formed by the Bosnian Serbs with support from Serbia, who insisted their territory remain part of Yugoslavia. The division of these two territories laid the foundation of the Bosnian War, which lasted until 1995.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> “Ethnic Conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina | Britannica,” accessed March 6, 2023, <https://www.britannica.com/summary/Bosnian-War>.

<sup>11</sup> Institute for War NIOD Holocaust and Genocide Studies, “Srebrenica: Reconstruction, Background, Consequences and Analyses of the Fall of a ‘Safe’ Area,” 2002.

### 1.2.1 Srebrenica, 1993 - 1995

One of the several Bosnian cities targeted during the Bosnian War was the city of Srebrenica, located on the Eastern border of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Geographically, Srebrenica was surrounded on all sides by the new Republic Srpska with Serbia at its southern border. By 1993, the area of Srebrenica was surrounded by Serbian forces who were closing in on it, and reduced it to around 150 square kilometers, holding at least 50,000 Bosnian Muslims.<sup>12</sup> The Bosnian Serbs cut off resources for survival to the area such as running water, electricity, food, and medical care.



Figure 1: Map of Bosnia and Herzegovina during the Bosnian war<sup>13</sup>

After extensive negotiations, on April 16<sup>th</sup>, 1993, the UN Security Council declared multiple areas in the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, including Srebrenica, as “safe areas, free from any armed attack or hostile act.”<sup>14</sup> The UN immediately sent the UN Protection Force (UNPROFOR) to de-militarize Srebrenica. By May 1993, generals on both sides agreed for their soldiers to give their weapons to UNPROFOR to move forward with the de-militarization

<sup>12</sup> “Krstic - Judgement - Parts I and II,” accessed March 6, 2023, <https://www.icty.org/x/cases/krstic/tjug/en/krs-tj010802e-1.htm>.

<sup>13</sup> “The Rohde to Srebrenica,” accessed March 6, 2023, <http://www.columbia.edu/itc/journalism/nelson/rohde/intro.html>.

<sup>14</sup> 48th Security Council UN, “UN Security Council Decision 1993.Pdf,” April 16, 1993.

strategy. However, the UNPROFOR's attempts to de-militarize Srebrenica failed, due to both sides refusing to cooperate, and in some cases, hiding their heavy weapons.<sup>15</sup>

In early 1995, the President of the Republika Srpska, Radovan Karadžić, issued a directive, known as Directive 7, ordering soldiers on the ground in Srebrenica to cut the area off completely from aid or outside communication, and to “create an unbearable situation of total insecurity with no hope of further survival or life for the inhabitants of Srebrenica.”<sup>16</sup> By mid-1995, this directive became reality for all citizens trapped in Srebrenica, who consequently starved, which set the disturbing foundation for a catastrophic genocide that followed, also referred to as the Srebrenica Genocide.

The Srebrenica Genocide took place as part of a Serbian offensive that began on 6 July 1995 from the South side of Srebrenica, whose southern border is shared with the Serbian border. It has been confirmed since the genocide, that this offensive was a carefully planned military strategy to ethnically cleanse Srebrenica of its non-Serbian citizens. The Srebrenica Genocide specifically refers to the planned separation and execution of Bosniak men and boys after the city was captured. They were targeted, collected, transported, tortured, and killed at mass execution sites. The scope of the crime itself, and the methodical, systematic approach to the ethnic cleansing, as opposed to it being a “crime of passion,” is ultimately why the ICTY determines the event a genocide.<sup>17</sup> It is of note that even though the abuse of Bosniak women and girls is not legally considered part of the Srebrenica genocide, they were tortured, sexually abused and murdered as part of the ethnic cleansing by the Bosnian Serb army.

The genocide subsided when there were no living people left to torture or kill. Some buses of women and children were driven to safety by the army of the Federation of Bosnia and

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<sup>15</sup> NIOD, “Srebrenica: Reconstruction, Background, Consequences and Analyses of the Fall of a ‘Safe’ Area.”

<sup>16</sup> Judge Theodor Meron et al., “IN THE APPEALS CHAMBER,” 2004.

<sup>17</sup> NIOD, “Srebrenica: Reconstruction, Background, Consequences and Analyses of the Fall of a ‘Safe’ Area.”

Herzegovina, but others were driven by Bosnian Serbs further into Srebrenica, whose passengers were never seen again. The small number of Bosniak men who survived the genocide did so by pretending to be dead during mass executions, or by wandering the Bosnian and Serbian countryside for an extended time before being found. Survivor testimonies can be found in court proceedings and archives, like this one:

“The column was two by two. We went downhill, I saw four dead men. Then we went on. The path was marked with pieces of papers, because they told us it was mined so we wouldn’t move away from these markings.

The Serbs were shooting. I think they used mortars and infantry weapons and rifle grenades. A lot of people lost their lives there.

I saw people falling. A lot of people were hit. And we managed to pull out somehow. We went along the stream and uphill. There weren’t many people who had pulled out. We could hear screams and moans and shooting. And my father and I went on. We found my brother and we stopped there.

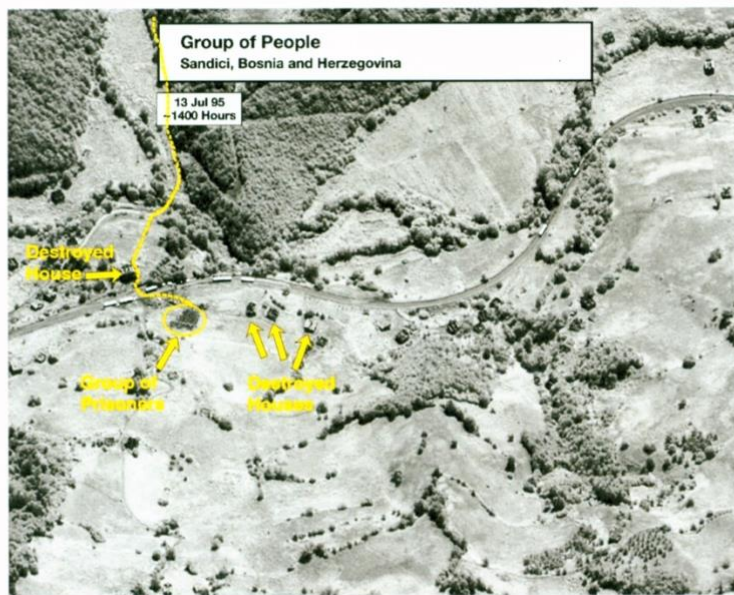
Night fell. We stayed there throughout the night. I fell asleep again. The next day, when it dawned, I saw a lot of dead people around me, they had been killed. Some had been mutilated.”

Witness Husić

ICTY Court Records Database, Transcript pp. 2605-2606.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> *HU OSA 206-2-65 Records of the Blinken OSA: Exhibitions: Srebrenica-Exhumation*, 2010.



1995. július 13-án készült légifelvétel a Sandići mezőn összefogott bosnyák foglyokról.

Aerial view taken on July 13, 1995, showing a large group of Bosnian Muslim prisoners in the Sandići Meadow.

ICTY Press Office



Tömegsír feltárás a Sandići mező közelében 2004 június 14-21. között.

Mass grave exhumation near the Sandići Meadow in June 14-21, 2004.

Missing Persons Institute, Sarajevo

Figure 2: A DNA-based map showcasing the scattered remains from a single victim. Here, the evidentiary record of the remains (left) paired with a photographic aerial map (right) illustrate a third, imagined image: that of the perpetrator exhuming and re-burying remains over dozens of kilometers in the countryside.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>19</sup> [Mass grave exhumation near the Sandići Meadow in June 14-21, 2004], Srebrenica-Exhumation Booklet 2010, Courtesy of Blinken OSA Archivum. Reproduced with permission.

### ***1.3 The Aftermath, Record Collection and Evaluation by the ICTY***

The International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia was established to prosecute the war crimes which took place during the Yugoslavian wars, of which Bosnian war crimes belonged. The four types of crimes it was created to persecute were: significant breaches of the Geneva Conventions (a collection of international treaties and protocols describing humanitarian warfare), violations of other laws and customs of war, genocide, and crimes against humanity. Although the ICTY was largely criticized for some of its verdicts as they pertain to the Yugoslavian wars, it was the ruling body that declared the Srebrenica massacre a genocide, which in turn, contributed to the persecution of those who carefully planned and executed it.

In addition to the tribunal itself, and the use of accurate terminology to describe the scope of the crimes which took place as genocide, evidence was also necessary for the indictments and persecutions of the war criminals. The evidence of their crimes came in the form of survivor testimonies, intercepted military communication between Republika Srpska officials, maps, satellite images, forensic reports, and forensic photography. Survivor testimonies and satellite images were particularly instrumental in criminal convictions, for guiding forensic specialists to dozens of mass graves, and for revealing additional information which was essential to the investigation as a whole: secondary graves.

The United States CIA and Department of Defense actively scanned and monitored images of Srebrenica during the genocide, but it went unnoticed to untrained eyes. However, the ongoing investigation motivated an ICTY prosecutor to review the images, but for confidentiality reasons during the investigations in the 1990's, he could only view the images in private. The investigator used his notes indicating displaced soil in specific locations to draw a map of the disturbances himself. By returning to the sites in person with his map, it was determined that

in the weeks following the genocide, Bosnian Serbs scattered the victims' remains from their original graves across a span of 70 kilometers in an attempt to conceal their crimes, and to slow down the investigation and identification. From there, forensic teams were able to locate the graves and begin the exhumation and identification process, which for some exhumed victims whose remains were scattered, rendered impossible.

Forensic science and human rights investigation organizations and initiatives worked together to exhume, identify, and rebury the victims of the Srebrenica Genocide, and to bring the evidence of the atrocities committed to light in court. These organizations included: the Physicians for Human Rights, the International Commission on Missing Persons, the Missing Persons Institute, and the Mothers of the Enclaves of Srebrenica and Žepa. Investigative journalists, such as David Rohde, were instrumental in spreading awareness, and creating and sharing records pertaining to the genocide which contributed to persecutions in court, and supported activism regarding court decisions.

#### **1.4 Record Collection and Interpretation by the Vera and Donald Blinken Open Society Archives**

The Blinken Open Society Archivum houses collections from some of these organizations and initiatives, as a part of its institutional goal to preserve and share information surrounding the fall of communism in Eastern Europe.<sup>20</sup> Located in Budapest, Hungary, its archivists collect on principles such as abuse victims' "right to truth" in the hindsight of atrocity. In that vein, the Archivum identifies as "the archive of the copy," with an information-based approach to collecting records that may otherwise be inaccessible, destroyed, or whose information is refuted by politicians. The Blinken Open Society Archivum is committed to making records

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<sup>20</sup> *Room Without a View: Inside the Processing of Yugoslav Television Broadcasts*, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bk7f4mGl6e8&list=PLW16VxGg82nWDBBluXZu3B1229qpYp6r&index=7&t=2256s>.

like these accessible to all visitors, and to describing records in ways that appeal to a wide audience.

The legal, forensic, and communications records surrounding the Srebrenica Genocide were collected to discover and to tell the story of Srebrenica, to exhume, evaluate and identify the victims of the genocide, and to respectfully and mournfully bury the dead. Unfortunately, these records have adopted an additional, unexpected purpose since the genocide: remembrance in the face of genocide denial. Genocide denial coming from perpetrators and echoing through the media in Serbia gives these records stronger evidentiary purpose. Chief Archivist Csaba Szilágyi refers to the records as “documents of human pain, ” and believes genocide denial impedes the records’ ability to contribute to the healing process for victims’ families of the genocide.<sup>21</sup>

To “fight oblivion,” on the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the genocide, the team at the Blinken Open Society Archivum with Szilágyi opened the *Srebrenica: Exhumation* exhibition.<sup>22</sup> The exhibition featured a wide range of materials related to the events leading up to the Srebrenica Genocide, the genocide itself, and its aftermath. It also featured information from the human rights collections the Archivum holds, in addition to donations from other organizations committed to telling the story of the genocide.

#### **1.4.1 Srebrenica: Exhumation Exhibition at the Blinken Open Society Archivum**

Similar to the brief overview of events at the beginning of this chapter with corresponding visual components, *telling the story* was at the core of this exhibition, using documentary evidence in the form of legal documents, transcribed survivor testimonies, maps, and forensic

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<sup>21</sup> Blinken OSA, “A Warning Sign: The Srebrenica Genocide Memorial,” accessed January 20, 2023, <https://www.osaarchivum.org/blog/a-warning-sign-the-srebrenica-genocide-memorial>.

<sup>22</sup> Blinken OSA, “Srebrenica Memorial Day,” n.d., <https://www.osaarchivum.org/press-room/announcements/Srebrenica-Memorial-Day>.



photography. The selection, arrangement, and description of these records were interpreted to educate and to remind visitors of the genocide, to fight erasure of the genocide by deniers, and to commemorate the suffering of the victims' and the survivors, through an information-based democratic perspective of evidentiary records. "We looked at records not only from a legal, and a scientific angle, but also from a human story angle," said Szilágyi, who was the curator of the exhibition, "We found that the materials, which at first sight seem to serve very well defined purposes, hold a secondary layer, which can tell the story of the victims involved in the atrocities and who are inscribed in the documents. So we wanted to tell this multilayered story of the surveilled genocide with the help of archival primary sources from our holdings in the first days."<sup>23</sup>

These primary source documents occupied the central space of the exhibition. It was printed onto long, flat, waist-high counters which formed an 'X' from the 1<sup>st</sup> floor overlook of the archive. The 'X' brought together two types of records unique to these collections: textual legal documents, such as those from the ICTY proceedings, transcribed survivor testimonies, and shared military communication revealing the careful planning of the genocide; and the visual components that made up the "surveillance" of the genocide itself and its aftermath, such as satellite imagery of mass executions as they were happening, live footage by investigative journalists in the field, and documentary forensic photography of the mass graves, execution sites, samples, and remains found by the forensic teams on site. The shape of the X also references the importance of mapping in the investigations surrounding the genocide, "X marks the spot." The counters were flat, thin and long, like the autopsy tables used to analyze and identify samples and remains of the victims by forensic teams.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Interview with Curator of Srebrenica: Exhumation, Csaba Szilágyi, interview by Kristina Ford, Recording, November 15, 2022.

<sup>24</sup> Interview with Curator of Srebrenica: Exhumation, Csaba Szilágyi.



*Figure 3: Both images are from the Srebrenica: Exhumation Exhibition Opening at the Galeria Centralis, on the ground floor of the Blinken Open Society Archivum.*

The richness of the materials themselves and their interpretation by the archive was complemented with a land-art installation of grass surrounding the X and a floor-to-ceiling photography of the Bosnian landscape, with Bosnian “Do not cross” tape in between. This installation puts the visitor on-site, where they slowly “exhume” the exhibited information surrounding the genocide on the flat counters in front of them. The exhibition title, *Exhumation*, is indicating the significance of the exhumation of the victims’ remains as it pertains to remembering, recognizing, and healing from atrocity, and an implied exhumation, or discovery, of the records that made the persecutions of perpetrators and the burial of the victims possible.

Besides preserving the victim remains which helped to piece together the happenings of the genocide, the landscape played a vital role in connecting the primary and secondary graves together. Forensic teams identified fragments of glass from a glass factory about twenty kilometers away at a secondary grave site, linking the two areas together. They ran similar tests on soil samples taken from leaves that came from the same species of tree between multiple areas to map the location of additional graves. Found pieces of information slowly came together to form and to recall their story, to be retold with a series of evidentiary images, maps, and reports.

These visual records are examples of evidence presented in court as legal material, and as evidence in the gallery at the Blinken Open Society Archivum as a visual narrative. The shift in location of the photographs from the court to the gallery indicates a shift in their context, which can slightly or completely transform a record or collection’s purpose or definition according to the institution’s interpretation of the material. Within this ambiguous framework, there are understood constants; a historic photograph being the broadest term, referring to any photograph created in the distant past, of at least two generations. Of historic photographs, a large percentage is considered documentary; meaning they were both created in the past and

are providing credible information about it with their content. Documentary photography is also a style of photography that means to depict an unaltered representation of what lies on the other side of the camera. The collections that migrated from the courtroom into the gallery at the Archivum are a type of documentary photography referred to as evidentiary photography, which refers to the legal recognition of the credibility of the images' content. More loosely, photographs are considered evidence of the past, or of memory, but in a professional sense, the identification of evidence is a decision to be made by a legal institution. This legal definition of evidentiary photography is the working definition of the term for this thesis.

Evidentiary reports and images alone are not heritage, but when they are exhibited as a story to build community in hopes of mourning and reconciling, the records become instigators of a heritage process of truth-telling and remembrance. This is aligned with a definition of heritage as a social construct and a cultural process, its creator and muse all being people. Without people, there would be no truth to tell midst deceit, no memory to shape experience or identity, and there would be no interpretation of information to illicit value or meaning.



ICTY Court Records Database, Kristić (IT-98-33)

*Figure 4: Forensic teams recovered pieces of glass and paper scattered 20 kilometers away from a primary grave at an execution site, indicating the movement of remains by Bosnian Serbs to hide their crimes. The visual cues of the glass, the paper fragments, and the soil illustrate the landscape as the first collector of records from these crimes.<sup>25</sup>*

These layers of symbolism were echoed in two rooms situated on either side of the central gallery. For remembrance and feeling, a dark screening room featured several documentaries

<sup>25</sup> Srebrenica-Exhumation Booklet 2010, Courtesy of Blinken OSA Archivum. Reproduced with permission.



about the genocide. These documentaries featuring survivor stories and footage of the genocide played continuously throughout the event, and for the duration of time the exhibition was installed. Szilágyi described the darkness of this room as an comfortable place for mentally processing the emotional intensity of the event, in addition to its practicality as a film screening area. For research and interpretation, a traditional archival reading room was situated on the left side of the space. This room featured document boxes containing collections relevant to the Srebrenica Genocide and the dissolution of Yugoslavia, with an archivist present to assist visitors with pulling and discovering information similar to a journalist, archivist, or a lawyer. This room was to showcase the legal discovery of the genocide, and the importance of the archive and evidentiary record keeping during a process usually kept confidential from public eyes. Lastly, for truth-telling, the central space brought the themes of the two rooms together with the imitated landscape and carefully selected records that retold the story of the genocide.

The *Srebrenica: Exhumation* exhibition transformed primary sources and evidentiary imagery into a multi-layered narrative that allowed visitors to discover, and to map, their way through the information in order to see the larger story. This was reflected in multiple entries in the visitor guestbook, which both articulated generosity for the moving exhibition, and featured statements like, “Time to open the eyes,” and “It should never go away.”<sup>26</sup> These comments point to the visual components of this exhibition that were extensions of the textual material, and made a visceral impact on those with the pleasure of experiencing it.

#### **1.4.2 Recordkeeping, the Archive and Heritage at the Blinken Open Society Archivum**

The *Srebrenica: Exhumation* exhibition was comprised of records. Documents, or records of any form, are at the core of a transitional society’s chance to persecute those at fault for

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<sup>26</sup> From the Guestbook of the Srebrenica: Exhumation exhibition, the Blinken Open Society Archivum. Reproduced with permission.

atrocities and to receive reparations, in an effort to grieve and begin healing. In a transitional society, this has been referred to as their “right to truth.”

In the end, the approach adopted to transition is largely colored by factors such as the existence of archives and records to show the full horror of the human rights violations perpetrated and the policies adopted to manage these records. By contrast, when politicians make the deliberate decision to draw a veil over the past, the fate of records and archives is sealed with dramatic consequences. If there are no supporting documents, transitional justice will be hobbled, leaving it with few alternatives, which is why documents recording human rights violations must be kept, transparently managed and made accessible to citizens.<sup>27</sup>

Records can also be understood in a broad sense as an item that holds information, such as an exhumed bone for forensic analysis, a sample of ice from the Arctic North to study the effects of climate change, or the tick marks inside a clock indicating previous repair techniques. Records hold information which has value for the future.<sup>28</sup> The context of that value can change for a variety of reasons, such as the passing of time or changes in communicative technology. Whether the value in question is heritage value depends on the record itself and the context of its collection. The archive and the archivist step in to collect, describe, organize, and preserve records so they fulfill their value in years to come. Thus, in addition to being curators and caretakers, archivists and those in heritage leadership are in a position of power by managing a site of memory that is constantly re-contextualized by society. For non-government repositories, this position is not to be confused for those with political power, who have governmental or legal control over communities of people. Instead, it is the power of disseminating information, and how this power is used by archivists and heritage experts makes a significant impact on how a community’s collective memory is remembered, or forgotten.

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<sup>27</sup> Jens Boel, Perrine Canavaggio, and Antonio González Quintana, *Archives and Human Rights*, ed. Jens Boel, Perrine Canavaggio, and Antonio González Quintana, 1st ed. (Routledge, 2021), 42, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429054624>.

<sup>28</sup> Harrison, *Heritage*, 4.

The archivist balances the responsibility of describing the authenticity of information and the shifting narratives of collective memory.

For archives like the Blinken Open Society Archivum, researchers who visit the archive inform the archivists of their research needs, which either validate the archivist's descriptions and selections, or reveal a gap that can be filled for more a comprehensive catalogue. As a result of the archivist being the original collector, representing an institution that provides a descriptive framework of records to the public, who in turn create and share their ideas, the archivist's position in the archive is inherently subjective and political. The archivist is an interpreter and a caretaker of the collections which inform an innately subjective society about itself. Howard Zinn elaborates on the political implications of normalcy and the archivist:

“..the archivist, in subtle ways, tends to perpetuate the political and economic status quo simply by going about his ordinary business. His supposed neutrality is, in other words, a fake. If so, the rebellion of the archivist against his normal role is not, as so many scholars fear, the politicizing of a neutral craft, but the humanizing of an inevitably political craft. Scholarship in society is inescapably political.”<sup>29</sup>

Thus, the archive is a vehicle and a vessel, which points to the named and the unnamed, and reflects possibility of solidarity for a self-destructive or victimized society which longs for normalcy in a world that is indifferent to it. In turn, it is people who both mine the archive for knowledge in order to retain it, and who channel their position of power into that of a curator so that evidence can be collected and victims can heal.

Other institutions adhere to what LauraJane Smith refers to as Authorized Heritage Discourse (AHD). Authorized Heritage Discourse is heritage work and information which is expert-lead, and encourages passive, or uncritical, visitor participation with heritage sites or institutions.<sup>30</sup> This approach to disseminating information to the public is less democratic, and severs a

<sup>29</sup> Howard Zinn, “Secrecy, Archives, and the Public Interest,” *The Midwestern Archivist* 2, no. 2 (1977): 20.

<sup>30</sup> Smith, *Uses of Heritage*, 29.



constructively critical connection between heritage experts and the experiences of their audience. Whether this channel of communication should be open is widely debated today, depending on the context of the heritage site or institution, and the needs of their audience. The Blinken Open Society Archivum's inclusion of the needs of the public and their researchers, in addition to being a gallery and a community forum, places the institution in an impactful position to instigate meaningful experiences that shape identity and collective memory, and thus, cultivating heritage.

### **1.4.3 Comparing Visual Evidentiary Records Exhibited in *Srebrenica: Exhumation***

The forensic photographs and the archive worked in tandem with one another in this exhibition. With the introduction and popularization of photoshop in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, photography is considered a medium of distortion and manipulation. As social media surveils all aspects of everyday life, the public is hyper-aware that photographer selects what is included and what is excluded from the photograph. Yet, staying true to its beginnings in science, forensic photography remains documentary and evidentiary. In the Archivum's gallery, and in ICTY court proceedings, the photograph and the map fulfilled the same purpose, woven in-between one another to illustrate the story, and to present the evidence of atrocity. In regards to the Srebrenica Genocide court proceedings, both the aerial photograph and aerial map have accurate measurements of distance, but the photograph provides evidentiary details a traditional map cannot offer.

Providing the global public with atrocity imagery is like providing onlookers with a visual memory map of the atrocity itself. Upon first glance, the atrocity image renders the spectator defenseless in regards to genocide and human rights violations which are either ongoing or have happened in the recent past. The sensitive timeline of atrocity imagery illustrates the suspension of the past in a photograph similar to what Andre Bazin refers to as the action of

“embalming time.”<sup>31</sup> This confrontational act places the viewer post-atrocity where they must make a choice on how to move forward. This can, in turn, motivate solidarity between countries and continents which may or may not be involved in the conflict to bring aid to those in need. It also provokes a series of reactions from the public, containing emotions and opinions based on the context of the atrocity itself.

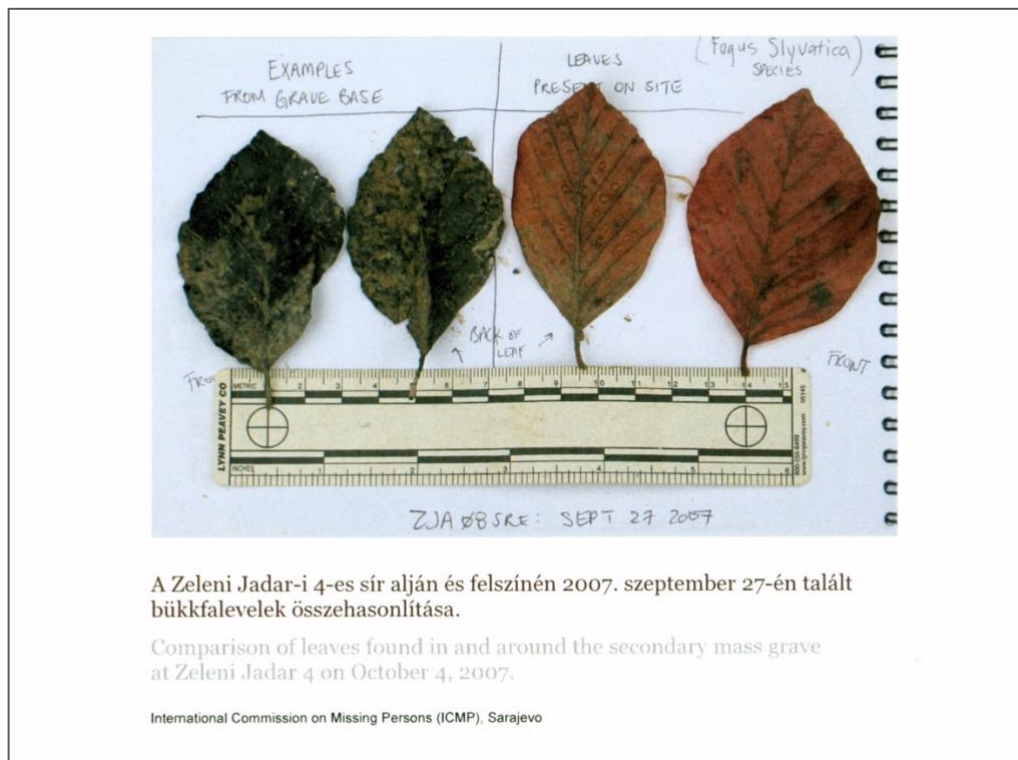


Figure 5: Forensic teams analyzed and compared leaves from secondary graves with those of primary graves for matches. Here, the landscape both preserves and becomes the record for analysis.<sup>32</sup>

On a local scale, atrocity imagery provokes emotion with even more intensity, in addition to providing clues about the identity of the victims and the location of the event. This is where forensic and atrocity imagery come together: both types of images are taken and used as documentation and evidence, and are utilized for the purposes of investigation. Forensic and

<sup>31</sup> Bazin and Gray, “The Ontology of the Photographic Image,” 8.

<sup>32</sup> [Comparison of leaves found in and around the secondary mass grave at Zeleni Jadar 4 on 4 October, 2007]. Srebrenica-Exhumation Booklet 2010, Courtesy of Blinken OSA Archivum. Reproduced with permission.

atrocities are used like maps to understand a timeline of events leading up to and during the atrocity event.

The on-site photographs from ICTY court proceedings bore the markings of maps with arrows, measurements, and circles, so that together, a carefully curated experience of the burial site was presented to the court by a forensic investigator. The forensic reports and their photographs of the burial site, from the Physicians for Human Rights Collection, provided location and identity data which were mapped to understand which victims were moved, how long the victims had been in their current location, and the involvement of the organizations whose workers carefully exhumed the victims. Whereas atrocity photography instills reactionary emotions and a conviction for action from the viewer in an accelerated timeline, forensic photography carefully measures the aftermath of an atrocity of human rights for the purposes of an investigation. The implications of human rights violations in these photographs aren't mounds of eyeglasses and recently worn shoes; they are evident in visual cues such as the arrangement and displacement of victims' remains in the landscape, the shoes which haven't deteriorated over the course of several years and might be identified by a loved one, and a forensic team member holding their nose at the stench of recently uncovered decay. The forensic photographer's documentation is more methodical, including images of the forensic team searching for remains in the Bosnian countryside, hand drawn maps of the location of victim's remains, and a truck carrying wooden coffins for transport for an overdue proper burial.

For survivors, forensic photography is confirmation of the atrocity itself, and serves as a grim reminder; for onlookers, the stories told by these images are new information which begins to fill the gap of the missing person after the atrocity has taken place. This process returns dignity to the victims' families and communities, and allows them to attempt to reclaim their history.

Fransec Torres points out the importance of memory in the power dynamics of war from *Dark is the Room Where We Sleep*:

“If we are not the owners of our history, what really belongs to us anyway? The killer kills so that the one who dies has no history and thus his memory becomes impossible.. [Winning a war] is nothing less than definitively preventing the confusion between those who dominate the moral high ground of history from those who do not. It means recovering the memory of the victims of a sinister regime so that the whole world knows that they were the victims. And once the fire is put out, then lay down the arms.”<sup>33</sup>

In times of devastating loss, the memories attached to certain kinds of material culture, such as forensic photographs of victims’ belongings, take on the form of a relic of grief their families need in order to heal. The photographs of the belongings of the Srebrenica Genocide victims revealed mostly garments, wallets, shoes, and small items such as keys or jewelry. The belongings also included a familiar material for onlookers: polaroid prints. The prints held images of the victims with their loved ones, or portraits of their loved ones who unfortunately outlived them. In these instances, forensic and candid photography pave a clear path to identity and to healing through time and preservation. Interestingly, what starts as a tool for preserving the past becomes a tool for moving beyond that past and its associated traumas.

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<sup>33</sup> Francesc Torres, Francisco Ferrándiz, and Joanna Bourke, *Dark is the room where we sleep: = Oscura es la habitación donde dormimos* (Barcelona: ACTAR, 2007), 15.



A Zeleni Jadar-i 4-es számú másodlagos tömegsírban 2008 szeptemberében talált polaroid kép.

Polaroid picture exhumed from the Zeleni Jadar 4 secondary mass grave in September 2008.

International Commission on Missing Persons (ICMP), Sarajevo

*Figure 6: An exhumed polaroid picture from the Zeleni Jadar secondary mass grave in September 2008.<sup>34</sup>*

This trait is true of other records as well, placing the archive as an institution in a similar position: between the past, present, and future. Aleida Assmann refers to the archive as a “space of latency between passive forgetting and active remembering,” and documents exist in this “state of latency or transitory forgetfulness,” to be compared to the fugitive reality and phantom-like state of the photograph. Like photography, the archive is an evidence-based institution which finds itself shaped by the binary identities of society without subscribing to them: it is influenced evenly by the past and the future in the present, it simultaneously represents the preservation of history and welcomes innovation in information science, and it showcases accessibility to the public while gatekeeping documents which are confidential. This

<sup>34</sup> [Polaroid picture exhumed from the Zeleni Jadar 4 secondary mass grave in September 2008]. Srebrenica-Exhumation Booklet 2010, Courtesy of Blinken OSA Archivum. Reproduced with permission.

places archives with human rights collections, such as the Archivum, in an opportune position to fight the erasure of victims of genocide and their stories by re-telling it to the public.

To commemorate the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Srebrenica genocide, Bosnian artist Šejla Kamerić created a short film installation *Forensic Archive: From One Learn All* on the side of the Potočari battery factory, which served as the headquarters for Dutch UNPROFOR battalions I, II and III during the Bosnian War between 1994-1995, and now is an exhibition space on the Srebrenica Memorial site. The film features a sequence of images and clips of relevant ICTY documents, forensic science identification reports, documentary photography of survivors, and time lapses of red flowers blooming in a field. Similar to *Srebrenica: Exhumation*, this installation retells the story of the genocide from a truth-telling perspective, featuring scientific and legal records as source materials in the face of genocide denial, and to create what Kamerić describes as a “living memorial,”<sup>35</sup> so the suffering of the victims of the genocide and their families is not forgotten. The red flowers in the film installation are symbolic of the suffering of victims and survivors of the Bosnian War, and are similar to the “Sarajevo Rose” memorials scattered throughout the city. In hindsight of the four year siege of Sarajevo, there are scars in the pavement from shelling that resemble an abstract floral pattern. Roughly two hundred of these imprints are scattered around the city, and have been filled slightly with red resin, to create “Sarajevo Roses” in memorial of the siege.<sup>36</sup> This meaningful symbolism is integrated with evidentiary records in *Forensic Archive: From One Learn All* to merge the fields of visual art and human rights to tell the story to an international audience. The installation is from a larger project from which Kamerić has exhibited multiple installations internationally, including London and Istanbul. For Kamerić, she believes that by sharing this

<sup>35</sup> Šejla Kamerić Interview - Exploring the Search for Bosnia's Missing (International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia Youtube Channel), accessed March 24, 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GEYVTXrcERM>.

<sup>36</sup> “Sarajevo Roses,” Atlas Obscura, accessed March 24, 2023, <http://www.atlasobscura.com/places/sarajevo-roses>.

information and preserving it digitally, it contributes to a global collective memory of the genocide, from which all can learn from it, hence: *From One Learn All*.

## 1.5 Conclusion

The *Srebrenica: Exhumation* exhibition illustrates a parallel between memory work and recordkeeping by showcasing the instigation of meaningful heritage processes through truth-telling and remembrance. In turn, the exhibition showcases the strong connection between documentary visual records and heritage as a meaning-making cultural process. A photograph's attachment to and depiction of both memory and history places documentary photography at the eyes of the field of cultural heritage.

This exhibition also shaped an understanding of how archives as heritage institutions can reach audiences at multiple levels of engagement. Both memory and records begin with experience in the mind of the individual before they take up space to serve a collective purpose in the community. This carefully curated narrative exhibited in a public forum is an example of storytelling for audiences on the following levels: at the public level of those witnessing the atrocity in hindsight, the institutional level of the archive and its gallery, and the familial and individual level of all who were impacted by the genocide.

Thanks to the heritage value of memory and of evidentiary documentation, the unifying power of preservation and research, and solidarity between local, institutional, and international levels of engagement, transitional societies can experience reconciliation after genocide.

# Chapter 2: Forensic Photography as Narrative

## 2.1 Introduction

The following chapter is an analysis of the Budapest Police Museum permanent and temporary exhibitions, from between October 2022 and March 2023. Altogether, the exhibitions contain information about the history of police work, crime, and forensic science in Hungary. The visual records on display throughout the museum are documentary photographs showcasing photography's beginnings as a scientific medium, and the connections between early photography history with the documentation of crime scenes.

In this chapter, I will analyze the types of photographic records exhibited, their interpretation by the museum, and the significance of these exhibited narratives in the context of the museum's audiences. I will use this analysis to draw conclusions on the connection between the exhibition of photographs as evidentiary records and heritage. The specificity of institutional heritage in this chapter allows the subsequent conceptualization of heritage to be selective, and thus, lends itself to a critical heritage studies perspective.

## 2.2 Brief History of the Budapest Police Museum

The Budapest Police Museum (BPM) is over 100 years old, with collections which date back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It was originally established as the Budapest Crime Museum in response to a ministerial decree that requires all confiscated objects be sent to the a municipal crime museum, or to the Budapest police headquarters, after full completion of an investigation.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> "Rendeletek Tára, 1908 | Könyvtár | Hungaricana," 1119, accessed December 29, 2022, [https://library.hungaricana.hu/hu/view/OGYK\\_RT\\_1908/?pg=1229&layout=s](https://library.hungaricana.hu/hu/view/OGYK_RT_1908/?pg=1229&layout=s). "Rendeletek Tára, 1908 | Könyvtár | Hungaricana."



The decree does not call for a crime museum to be constructed, but the implication of an operational crime museum resulted in its founding on the historic street Ferenc József tér, opposite the Royal Hungarian Police headquarters in 1908. Once a swampy port for trading in Pest, the area around Ferenc József tér (present-day Széchenyi tér) gradually became more developed. In 1887, the State Treasury bought both the Ullman Palace and the Vieser Palace, from which the Royal Hungarian Police could operate after minor renovations were completed in 1903.<sup>38</sup> The Royal Hungarian Police shared this space with the Budapest city government at the time, until it moved to a larger space for exhibitions in 1926. This new space was located off of Zrínyi utca, a small street facing present-day Szent István Tér and St. Stephen's Basilica. In this space, the museum was able to collect up to 10,000 items.

Unfortunately, most of the Budapest Crime Museum collections were destroyed during the Soviet siege of Budapest in World War II, in addition to the annihilation of the Hungarian Parliament and all seven bridges on the Danube River. In 1958, the leaders of the police force began to rebuild the museum in Buda, on Németvölgyi ut to maintain its importance in the training and the education of the Budapest Police force. However the museum was only open to visitors who worked in a relevant field, such as police officers, law students, and medical students. In 1963, the museum moved to the building of today's Criminal Expertise and Research Institute, where it received its operating license as a national specialist museum in 1967, but it still could not be opened to the public. The museum's doors were finally open to the public in 1999 in a location on Mosonyi utca, where it stands today.

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<sup>38</sup> "A Klasszicista Pest Éke Volt – A Ferenc József Tér Története," pestbuda.hu, accessed December 29, 2022, [http://pestbuda.hu/cikk/20190808\\_filepko\\_dominik\\_a\\_klasszicista\\_pest\\_eke\\_volt\\_a\\_ferenc\\_jozsef\\_ter\\_tortenete](http://pestbuda.hu/cikk/20190808_filepko_dominik_a_klasszicista_pest_eke_volt_a_ferenc_jozsef_ter_tortenete).

Despite numerous changes in location, and the destruction of its collections in 1944, the mission of the Budapest Crime Museum has remained consistent since its founding, with additions to its collections with its re-opening 1999. The decree from 1908 reads:

“The persecutor’s office is obliged to send the objects, which are to be preserved for the purposes of the investigative authorities or for the purposes of further scientific training in criminal law, ... are particularly instructive from a scientific point of view due to its rarity or other reasons, or are shown to be part of the commission of the criminal act illuminates a new method for committing crimes, it should be sent to the Crime Museum organized at the Office of the Chief of the Royal Hungarian State Police in Budapest.”<sup>39</sup>

From this decree, it can be gathered that the Budapest Crime Museum collected items for two main reasons: the preservation of evidentiary items for collective memory and furthering education of law enforcement, and for further forensic scientific research as it pertains to criminal justice. This two-fold mission is still apparent today in the museum’s mission statement from 2016, which emphasizes the importance behind collecting and exhibiting police history and the history of forensic investigation in Hungary. The 2016 mission statement emphasizes the importance of the museum collections in training police officers, providing assistance to scientific research, and has added the museum’s pedagogical significance to Hungarian citizens and students.<sup>40</sup> This is reflected in the scope of its collections, and free admission of the museum to the public.

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<sup>39</sup> “Rendeletek Tára, 1908 | Könyvtár | Hungaricana,” 1119.

<sup>40</sup> “Official Website of the Police Museum,” accessed December 30, 2022, <https://rendormuzeum.com/kuldetesnyilatkozat>.



*Figure 7: Exterior view of the Budapest Police Museum from Mosonyi utca<sup>41</sup>*

When the museum reopened in 1999, the title was changed from Budapest Crime Museum to the Budapest Police Museum. This shift was accompanied by an exhibition showcasing the history of the Hungarian Police Force in addition to the exhibitions illustrating the history of criminal investigations and forensic research in Hungary. The Police History collection has over 1,000 items which date back to 1848, including uniforms, weapons, and relevant police manuscripts. In visitor reviews to the Budapest Police Museum, the police uniforms from this collection, which are featured on mannequins in the center of the exhibition space, are popular with tourists from all around the world. The items in this collection were acquired from American collectors, and some pieces are on loan from the Budapest Military History Museum.<sup>42</sup>

The police force exhibitions complement the forensic investigation exhibitions by relevance, and they send the message that the police are protecting and serving justice to Hungarian citizens in the present. Whereas the police exhibitions are intended as a tool to encourage locals about their safety, the crime exhibitions are intended as both an educational experience and a

<sup>41</sup> Alexander Stemp, "Life in the Shadows Brought to Light at Police Museum in Budapest," May 16, 2019, <https://expat-press.com/police-museum-budapest/>.

<sup>42</sup> "Exhibition - History of the Police - Museum.Hu," accessed January 6, 2023, [http://www.museum.hu/exhibition/12071/History\\_of\\_the\\_police](http://www.museum.hu/exhibition/12071/History_of_the_police).

warning for locals to be mindful of potential criminals in the city. The museum's exhibitions also include detailed information about cases that remain unsolved, in an effort to be open about the truth behind how some investigations unfold.

## **2.3 Photography Exhibition and Interpretation at the Budapest Police Museum**

### **2.3.1 *Past and Present* Exhibition: Re-photography, Photographs as Documentary Records**

To celebrate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Budapest Police Museum in 2008, the “Past and Present” photography exhibition was added to their current exhibitions, which compares images of the Hungarian police force and forensic teams from the 20<sup>th</sup> century to the early 21<sup>st</sup> century.<sup>43</sup> In these paired photographs, visitors see a row of framed pictures from between 1905 - 1965 featuring police attire, weaponry, and forensic experts and equipment, complemented by a second row of framed pictures from 2008, representing forensic innovation and changes in police attire over the last century. This technique of repeat photography after a lapse in time is referred to as re-photography, and is used in many different contexts and disciplines to examine diachronic visual indications of change. Like with the “Past and Present” exhibition at the Budapest Police Museum, commonplace timelines that arise in examples of public re-photography begin in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, when photography became accessible and affordable to the public with the Kodak Brownie in 1901.<sup>44</sup> Despite early manipulative techniques and artistic photography work, this was when photography was a new medium of documentation, and widely used as an objective documentary medium.

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<sup>43</sup> Gábor Adrovicz, “Budapest Police Museum Questions and Correspondence,” December 30, 2022.

<sup>44</sup> Eric Schewe, “How the Brownie Camera Made Everyone a Photographer,” JSTOR Daily, December 26, 2018, <https://daily.jstor.org/how-the-brownie-camera-made-everyone-a-photographer/>.



Figure 8: *Past and Present* exhibition in the Budapest Police Museum<sup>45</sup>

This collective perspective of photography as an objective medium is informed by its beginnings as a purely scientific medium, invented and refined by scientists and engineers. A photograph is literally a light imprint, and the materials used to capture and fix the imprint determine which type of photographic technique has been used. Thus, a fixed photograph is perceived as a fragment of reality. However, like a storyteller, the intention of the photographer dictates how that reality is perceived. This tension between the documentation of perceived reality and the photographer's dictation of visual narratives is apparent in all styles of the medium today.

In this sense, all photographs are records from the past, but not all photographs contain the concise information from the perspective of a documentary photographer that would deem them a *documentary* record. Likewise, not all documentary records are evidence, but all evidence is considered a documentary record. For example, photographs in the Budapest Police Museum's *Past and Present* exhibition are not examples of *evidentiary* records, because they

<sup>45</sup> Image taken by the author.

were not used in court as supporting evidence for a crime or a testimony. They do, however, provide the documentary information, including the intention from the photographer to document, which deems them documentary records.

### **2.3.2 The Water Rescue Police: Documentary Records, Police at Work**

Most of the exhibitions at the BPM contain forensic photographs, with the exception of “Past and Present” and the Water Rescue special exhibition. The Water Rescue exhibition features documentation of Water Police boats, the police performing their duties, and group portraits of Water Police teams over time (similar to the *Past and Present* exhibition concept). These selections complement the museum’s mission to showcase police work in a way that boosts public morale as it pertains to the police, and as encouragement to recruit police officers.

The Water Police and *Past and Present* exhibitions feature the only images of police performing their duties in the museum, making them prominent visual examples of police identity. These displays of documentary portraiture are examples of controlled identity, functioning as a potential visual extension of the investigative police work featured in the crime history exhibition descriptions. The police portraits and the description of investigative police work imply the unity of the police force in enforcing public safety, regardless of the distinction between officers holding positions in investigative units and patrol officers.

Despite these documentary photographs of police at work being examples of familiar figures in Hungarian collective memory, these photographs are not examples of Hungarian heritage from a public perspective. Instead, these images are examples of institutional legal heritage from the perspective of relevant institutions such as Hungarian police force, the Budapest Police Museum, the court system, and the governing body of Hungary.

As a result of these legal institutions interacting with the public by design, engagement at the local or individual levels introduces the possibility of subjective interpretations of whether these photographs are heritage. An individual's affiliation from within the police force as an officer, or a layman, both have the autonomy to decide whether these images qualify as heritage.

### **2.3.3 The Budapest Fine Arts Museum Theft: Photographs as both Documentary and Forensic Records**

The remaining exhibitions in the Budapest Police museum are informative in two ways: an overview of forensic science history in Hungary accompanied by relevant cases, and selected case descriptions of particularly shocking cases to engage visitors with storytelling. For example, the title of the case description involving theft from the Budapest Museum of Fine Arts translates to “Multi-billion Forint Artifact Heist.” The title of this panel reads like a newspaper headline, because the curatorial team worked with a journalist to provide suggestions that would catch and keep the attention of museum visitors.<sup>46</sup> This case tells the story of a 1980's heist in which multiple paintings worth billions of forints were stolen from the Budapest Museum of Fine Arts. Many photographs are framed near the text in order to visualize the story, and to indicate documentation of the theft by forensic experts. Copies of the stolen paintings are presented as pictures in the place of the human victims shown in the other exhibitions, creating a display resembling a mini-exhibition within the broader story of the case. Additional images accommodate the panel's text for visitors to visualize the exterior of the museum and documentation of the trial, which had a large public following. Despite it being “bad publicity” at the time of the crime for museum security, news of the heist brought in more visitors than usual, to witness the missing paintings and to appreciate the artworks that

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<sup>46</sup> Edit Mislai and Gábor Androvicz, Interview with Curator of Photography Collections Edit Mislai and Museologist Gábor Androvicz at the Budapest Police Museum, trans. Katalin Szende, March 28, 2023.

remained.<sup>47</sup> Since then, this case and its corresponding imagery has shifted from the space of the Budapest Museum of Fine Art and the press into the context of the Budapest Police Museum, and the police force's role in the crime's investigation.

In the Budapest Police Museum, this case's exhibition features a combination of visual records to visualize the story: forensic photography (also referred to as crime scene photography) of the crime scene including the tools used to break inside, documentary photography of the found paintings and the trial, and digitized copies of the paintings themselves. Of the large collection of images that were taken pertaining to the crime and the trial, the only records that can be considered evidentiary records are those presented as evidence in court. It is common for both forensic and documentary photography to be presented in court as evidence, in order to identify the perpetrator with a portrait, and with the presentation of forensic findings with forensic photographs taken from the crime scene.

The Budapest Fine Arts Museum and the stolen paintings featured in this case are both examples of heritage in visual art, but the exhibition of this case in the Budapest Police Museum is not a display that evokes heritage. The popularity of this case in the 1980's inserted the story into local collective memory, but the memory of a theft is not an example of an instance that begins a heritage process, such as shaping identity or culture, perpetuating tradition, or building community. Aside from the context of the Budapest Police Museum exhibitions, the stolen paintings and the Budapest Fine Arts museum are examples of heritage in visual art, making this case an interesting one to conceptualize from a heritage perspective. For this reason, they resemble heritage, but the event of the theft, its subsequent investigation, and its exhibition in the Budapest Police Museum are not examples of heritage.

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<sup>47</sup> "Operation Budapest: Documentary on the 1983 Fine Arts Museum Heist - Hungary Today," accessed March 15, 2023, <https://hungarytoday.hu/operation-budapest-documentary-on-the-1983-fine-arts-museum-heist/>.



## 2.4 The Crime Room: Photographs as Forensic Records, Cameras as Forensic Tools

For discretion, a room separated from the main space of the museum by a dividing wall is the “Crime Room.” The panels throughout this room feature case stories of homicide accompanied by relevant mugshots of criminals and crime scene photography. Similar to the forensic science exhibitions in the main exhibition space, the crime room exhibitions serve more than one purpose: to retell disturbing stories of homicides that took place in Hungary, and to educate visitors about the history and relevance of crime scene photography as it pertains to forensic investigations. Only visitors above the age of 18 can enter the room, and photography is not allowed, to honor the deceased victim’s privacy rights, and out of discretion for the disturbing imagery and case information.

Unlike the forensic science and police force exhibitions, the crime room features criminal mugshot photographs. The criminal mugshot was one of the first documentary photographs pertaining to crime in history, making it a significant type of record in regards to the heritage of documentary photography. In the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, United States precincts in San Francisco and New York city began curating rogue’s galleries, which were small spaces in the precincts dedicated to exhibiting the latest photographs of arrested criminals. Similar to the crime investigation content at BPM, and true crime content in the media today, rogue’s galleries were a way for the police to engage with the public, and to warn them about local crime. The galleries were practical for identification purposes, and unintentionally served as entertainment for curious voyeurs.

Today, there are strict data protection policies for the display of both criminals and victims Personally Identifiable Information (PII). For example, a mugshot “tree” on a bulletin board in the Budapest Police museum crime room features several criminal mugshots connected with

red yarn to depict their relations to one another as a team. All but one of the criminals are deceased, indicated by text and the clarity of their mugshots to visitors, but the living criminal has a black bar over their eyes to honor their living privacy rights. If the criminal were still in prison, their rights would be temporarily revoked until their release. On the other hand, victim privacy rights are honored according to the wishes of their families, and their faces are intentionally not shown in throughout the homicide exhibitions.

In the 1880's, French police officer Alphonse Bertillon invented a standardized method for mugshots and criminal identification whose influence is still evident in today's mugshot processes. He called the system *portrait parlé*, or *speaking image*. The Bertillon system included nine physical measurements and a brief description of the criminal to complement and inform their front and side portrait. It was his opinion that photographs document visual content in great detail, but do not include enough information to provide sufficient identification of people, and must be accompanied with text for accuracy. Furthermore, this approach to describing photographs reinforces their authenticity as evidentiary records on behalf of the institution providing the description, which in this case, would be the police force creating and holding the mugshot. Without this institutional endorsement, the description of the image would be less credible.<sup>48</sup> In the example of early mugshots, police officers would record these measurements to give a mugshot its "voice," and a photographer would take the mugshot. This points to the power of the individual, or the institution, that provides additional context to a photograph, and the mystery and versatility of a photograph without it.

The term *speaking image* also refers to a close connection between an image and its description, implying that they inform and influence one another. Similarly, when attending an exhibition, the visual and descriptive content are in such close dialogue with one another that they appear

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<sup>48</sup> Shawn Michelle Smith, "The Mug Shot A Brief History," *Aperture*, no. 230 (2018): 31.

as one unit to visitors, who in turn, attend to “hear” the voice of the museum curatorial team interwoven into the display.



Figure 9: Portrait of Alphonse Bertillon posing for his own portrait parlé.<sup>49</sup>

As a unique mugshot history display, the Budapest Police Museum has a Bertillon mugshot chair in the main exhibition space. The device features a large format camera attached by a lever system to a wooden chair about 3 meters away from the camera. The photographer would take a face-forward portrait of the subject, and pull the lever, which swivels the chair at a 90 degree angle, for a profile portrait of the subject. The consistency of the device allowed for standardized mugshots for studying the photographs for repeat offenders, and for efficiency of an otherwise lengthy darkroom process. The Bertillon system of mugshot creation and classification was used all around the world in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, including in Hungary, until it was replaced by the unmatched accuracy of the fingerprinting identification

<sup>49</sup> “The Bertillon System That Cataloged Criminals by Their Physical Measurements, 1894 - Rare Historical Photos,” <https://Rarehistoricalphotos.Com/> (blog), May 13, 2021, <https://rarehistoricalphotos.com/bertillon-system-rare-photographs/>.

system. The Bertillon mugshot's methodical classification methods remain useful for criminal recordkeeping today.



*Figure 10: Mugshot Chair display at the Budapest Police Museum<sup>50</sup>*

Also included in the Crime Room section is a large, chest-high glass case of forensic tools, notebooks, and film cameras of various formats. This display is unique by paying homage to the importance of forensic teams and photographers in solving crime, in addition to educating the public about forensics in the form of their occupational tools. Multiple film cameras are displayed as forensic tools in an investigation, as devices that create visual records, and an indicator of the forensic photographer's role in documenting a crime scene. The inclusion of

<sup>50</sup> Image taken by the author.

film cameras in the Crime Room and subsequent emphasis to the importance of forensic photography in crime investigation inserts an unexpected parallel to visitors: they, too, are spectators and observers of the cases they read, similar to the observations made by a forensic expert at a crime scene. The display of these items is also an example of the camera as an instrument of memory and documentation as it pertains to the heritage of forensic photography.

However, viewing the information within the spatial context of a museum is clearly much more comfortable than the position of forensic teams on site during an investigation. All cultural heritage institutions are faced with the careful decision of how to balance the re-contextualization of artifacts and narratives within their specific institutions. With this specific content, the de-contextualization of these disturbing cases protects viewers from the horrors of the reality of each story. The Budapest Police Museum re-contextualizes this content by inserting life-sized three-dimensional props and miniature crime scene models to visually inform and engage the visitors with crime scene information without completely immersing them into a potentially traumatizing space. Thus, the curator and the forensic expert are more closely related to one another: both collect photographs and reports before making their selections, which they then describe, arrange, and exhibit; either for analysis in the lab, for trial in court, or for the public in a museum.

## **2.5 Forensic Exhibitions**

### **2.5.1 The Death of László Teleki and the Power of Context**

The first known on-site forensic examination in Hungary was documented using a film camera, and a stereograph of the image from this site is showcased on one of the forensic medicine panels in the Budapest Police Museum, on loan from the Hungarian National Museum collections. A stereograph is a visual record containing two images, almost identical, with the frame of one image slightly shifted to one side. With a stereoscope, the viewer can look into

glass lenses pointed at the stereograph, which appears to bring the two images together to create the illusion of one 3-D image. Stereographs were considered a new photographic technique at the time, and the forensic team chose to implement it to showcase the latest visual processes to document this crime scene. This picture was also taken before the time of color film, and before forensic photography processes were standardized in Hungary,<sup>51</sup> which made for an eerily candid documentary-style sepia tone (brown scaled) image, featuring a chair and a desk between the viewer and the body of politician László Teleki.

With this case, the images were of László Teleki, leader of the liberal Resolution Party at the time, who was found dead the same morning a parliamentary debate was to take place about who was to rule the Austro-Hungarian empire.<sup>52</sup> Originally, the autopsy did not reveal the crime, which was concluded as a suicide. Upon another look at the stereograph decades later, and innovation in forensic science over time, forensic experts have concluded that suicide is unlikely, according to the positions of the weapon, the body, and the wound recorded in the images and autopsy report.

This indicates the importance of forensic analyses, photographic analysis, and the power of context, or the narrative that originally described suicide. Unfortunately, the context that the autopsy report provided was likely misinformation, leading to a discrepancy in the analysis of the photographs. Eventually, additional analysis of the photograph itself revealed a potential truth. The photograph arguably functioned as support for a false narrative, before further analysis revealed its support of the truth.

In the museum, the case of László Teleki is presented on the same panel as a brief history of forensic examination in Hungary. This section explains forensic examination as a practice that

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<sup>51</sup> Mislai and Androvicz, Interview with Curator of Photography Collections Edit Mislai and Museologist Gábor Androvicz at the Budapest Police Museum.

<sup>52</sup> “About: László Teleki,” accessed March 16, 2023, [https://dbpedia.org/page/L%C3%A1szl%C3%B3\\_Teleki](https://dbpedia.org/page/L%C3%A1szl%C3%B3_Teleki).

arose from legislation as early as 1035, with a quote from renowned forensic doctor Balázs Kenyeres: “The father of forensic medicine is law, the mother is medicine.”<sup>53</sup> Likewise, photography resides in the intersection of documentation and interpretation, creating a dialogue between those who take pictures and those who look at them. In exhibitions, the narrative of the curatorial team enters the conversation as a third voice, and whether the narrative guides or persuades is dependent on the curator and their institution.

Similar to the Water Police and *Past and Present* exhibitions, the exhibition of this case is an example of heritage from the perspective of the police force as an institution. The death of László Teleki was an important moment in Hungarian history, but its exhibition from the perspective of the Budapest Police Museum emphasizes focus on the forensic investigation in addition to the significance of the crime as a historic event. In contrast, the Hungarian National Museum exhibited the original of the same image in remembrance of László Teleki as an important political figure in Hungary, from the perspective that Teleki should be more prominent in Hungarian collective memory.<sup>54</sup> This is an example of institutional heritage on behalf of the Hungarian National Museum, up to subjective interpretation of its visitors on an individual level.

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<sup>53</sup> Androvicz, Gábor. *Forensic Medicine*. Budapest Police Museum, Budapest, Hungary.

<sup>54</sup> “Exhibition - László Teleki, The Honorary Deceased of the Parliament - Museum.Hu,” accessed May 28, 2023, [http://www.museum.hu/exhibition/11046/Laszlo\\_Teleki\\_The\\_Honorary\\_Deceased\\_of\\_the\\_Parliament](http://www.museum.hu/exhibition/11046/Laszlo_Teleki_The_Honorary_Deceased_of_the_Parliament).





Figure 11: Forensic Science exhibitions in the main exhibition space, Budapest Police Museum

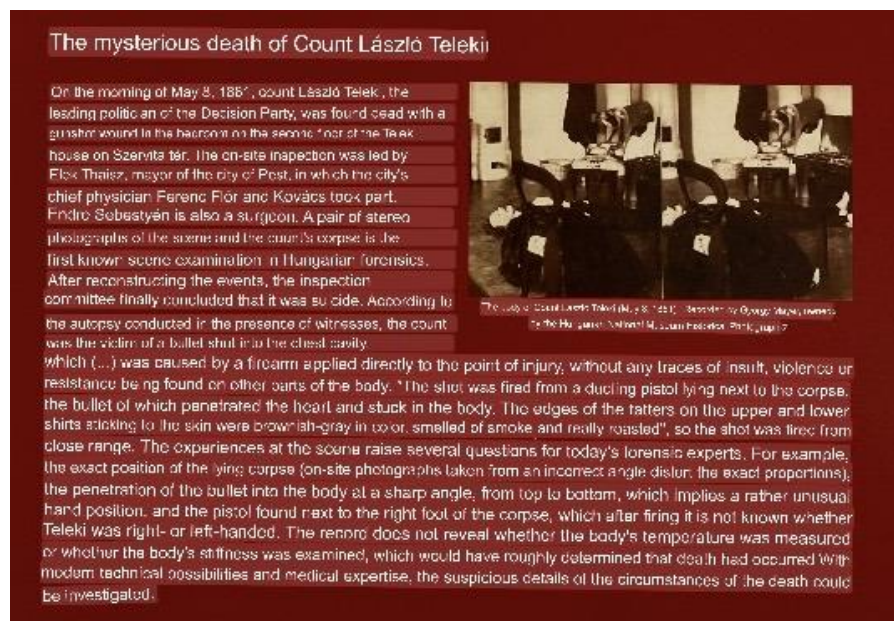


Figure 12: The bottom portion of a forensic medicine panel featuring the case of László Teleki as it appears in BPM<sup>55</sup>

<sup>55</sup> Image taken by the author.





*Figure 13: Half of the stereograph of the László Teleki crime scene, the first criminology photograph taken in Hungary<sup>56</sup>*

## 2.5.2 Traceology, Dactyloscopy, and Witnessing

The remainder of the forensic science exhibitions continue with the pattern of complementing innovation in forensic equipment and processes with selected criminal cases as examples of their contribution and success. The section begins with panels covering the beginnings of dactyloscopy, or fingerprinting identification, in Hungary and in continental Europe. These panels go into depth about the replacement of the Bertillon system of mugshot identification by dactyloscopy due to its accuracy and reliability. They explain the history of the system, beginning with scientists around the world who researched fingerprinting techniques before Sir Edward Henry contributed his research to that of Sir Francis Galton, thus creating the Henry Classification System. The Scotland Yard were the first to implement this system in 1901, which inspired Budapest forensic specialist Ferenc Pekáry during a visit to London in 1902.<sup>57</sup> A specialized dactyloscopy book was published in 1905 by Dr. Béla Gábor and Dr. H. Arányi

<sup>56</sup> “Exhibition - László Teleki, The Honorary Deceased of the Parliament - Museum.Hu.”

<sup>57</sup> “How Fingerprinting Works,” HowStuffWorks, March 24, 2008, <https://science.howstuffworks.com/fingerprinting.htm>.

Taksony, which opened up this new system to be taught and used in Hungarian forensic investigations as early as a robbery-murder in 1907.

An adjacent Traceology panel elaborates on the varieties of traces left behind in a crime scene besides fingerprints, and how French criminologist Edmond Locard described them as “silent witnesses of events that are not confused..evidences that do not forget. They can only lose their value through human error: either if they are not found, or if their examination or interpretation is faulty.”<sup>58</sup> This idea is also known as Locard’s Exchange Principle, and is widely influential in the field of criminology today.<sup>59</sup> Whereas the forensic expert bears witness to a crime in hindsight of the occurrence, with their camera acting as a mechanical mirror; the trace bears witness to the crime itself, reflecting physical acts and clues into the crime scene to later be discovered. The crime scene photograph creates a visual record that allows for thorough trace analyses and tests, and for the presentation of visual records and relevant findings in court, but it also allows for the physical traces to be removed after documentation. The crime scene photograph simultaneously preserves and re-contextualizes a visual fragment of space for memory, not because it claims to be identical to the lived experience of a crime, but because it acts as a sufficient copy for forensic study. The implication of memory and the presence of evidence in both a trace and a photograph speak to the authenticity found in the indexicality of a documentary photograph. By nature as a visual documentary medium, photography has challenged and redefined how society defines the ownership of images and their authenticity.<sup>60</sup>

This traceology panel also features three primary factors of trace creation and analysis: the trace maker (usually a living person), the trace carrier (a window with fingerprints, a trail with

<sup>58</sup> Edmond Locard, “The Analysis of Dust Traces. Part I,” *The American Journal of Police Science* 1, no. 3 (1930): 276–98, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1147154>.

<sup>59</sup> “Locard’s Principle,” Oxford Reference, accessed April 16, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803100111515>.

<sup>60</sup> Allan Sekula, “The Body and the Archive,” *October* 39 (1986): 6, <https://doi.org/10.2307/778312>.

footsteps) and the trace formation process (pressure, puncture). Likewise, when a photograph is taken, there is an image maker (the photographer), the subject of the image in front of the camera (the model), and the process of pressing the shutter to make a light imprint onto film. These similarities between the imbalanced power dynamics of a criminal and their victim, and the photographer and their subject, point at the consistently controversial relationship photography has with consent and ownership of images and image sharing. They also highlight the importance of the interpretation of traces and of evidentiary records in an ongoing investigation, and the subsequent narratives that arise as a result.

Acts of witnessing, the analysis and interpretation of evidence, and the presentation of narratives all come together to comprise a trial in a court of law. By definition, ‘to witness’ means “to see something happen, especially an accident or a crime.”<sup>61</sup> Eyewitness accounts are valuable evidence, but physical evidence is preferred, due to the likelihood of a witnesses’ bias or distorted memory. The strongest narratives, or arguments, contain both types of evidence that closely support one another, and the weakest arguments have no physical evidence whatsoever.<sup>62</sup> So long as they meet strict criterion from record creation to record presentation, photographs are considered “authentic” examples of primary physical evidence.<sup>63</sup> Like a witness, the camera sees and the photograph remembers fragments of memories, but unlike a witness, its memory is mechanical and scientific. The introduction of crime scene photography transformed the presentation and interpretation of physical evidence in court, and continues to be extremely influential in verdict decisions today.

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<sup>61</sup> “Witness,” Cambridge Dictionary, April 12, 2023, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/witness>.

<sup>62</sup> “Physical Evidence Vs. Testimonial Evidence,” January 18, 2022, <https://www.barefootpi.com/physical-evidence-vs-testimonial-evidence>.

<sup>63</sup> Sofia Gouse et al., “Forensic Photography: Prospect through the Lens,” *Journal of Forensic Dental Sciences* 10, no. 1 (2018): 2–4, [https://doi.org/10.4103/jfo.jfds\\_2\\_16](https://doi.org/10.4103/jfo.jfds_2_16).

Likewise, the most engaging and informative museum exhibitions have a careful balance of visual elements and text, with a clear narrative for visitors to reflect on. But, unlike a trial, exhibition visitors walk away with ideas and lessons that could differ from one another, with no pressure to present a majority consensus, like a jury. Curators have creative control to persuade their visitors of particular narratives through their selection and interpretation of collections, but measuring the success of an exhibition is qualitative, and absent of a verdict or a victory. Nonetheless, ideas and opinions are based on the dissemination of information the public witnesses, and interprets, in their everyday lives. Evidentiary records are an attempt to provide grounding and fact amidst the biased narratives that typically inform memory. The interpretation of memory, evidence, and ideas are at the core of storytelling and identity, and therefore, at the core of heritage. The definition of heritage will differ between people, but the vessels and vehicles used to inform and influence it, are comprised of narratives.

## **2.6 Conclusion**

The Budapest Police Museum exhibitions provide information about the history of the Hungarian police force, of crime, and of forensic science in Hungary. The exhibitions act as a portrait of the Hungarian police force for visitors, and as a timeline of Hungarian police work and subsequent forensic science accomplishments from history. The visual records featured in these exhibitions are extensions of the narrative selected by the museum to fulfill a specific purpose. As a result, these exhibitions provide a concise example of the power of narrative in exhibitions and its role in the representation of institutional heritage.

This chapter provided multiple examples of the impact of an institutional narrative on the interpretation of exhibitions and their images, and its pertinence to the identity of a social or political unit being portrayed. It also pointed out the effect of narrative on the interpretation and conceptualization of exhibitions.

This chapter introduced forensic photography as a type of documentary photography. It elaborated on how the versatility of forensic photography is apparent in the variation of content between images, and is relative according to the institutional use of the photograph itself. The ebb and flow of these criterion through Hungarian history were naturally evident throughout the museum's exhibitions, and coincided with the waxing and waning of the presence of heritage processes in the exhibitions outside of the ongoing institutional heritage of the Hungarian Police Force. This selective approach to the presence or absence of heritage processes reflects a critical heritage studies perspective throughout the chapter.

The distinction between documentary and evidentiary photography was also discussed using examples of these types of records seen in the museum's permanent exhibitions. The interpretation of these evidentiary records can be compared with the interpretation of the evidentiary records analyzed in the last chapter for further reflection on the power of context in imagery and of image sharing.

Heritage institutions find themselves in between numerous contradictory positions, such as the public and those in power, or the meticulous preservation of records and responsibility to share them. This places the institutions in a position that can appear to be neutral, when in fact, there are always specific narratives to be gleaned from the interpretation and exhibition of collections.

## Chapter 3: Documentary Photography as Visual Art

### 3.1 Introduction

The following chapter conceptualizes heritage through case studies that exhibit documentary photography as visual art. The case studies were selected based on the varied presence of heritage in the different bodies of work referenced, which can unintentionally arise out of the aesthetic intention to showcase documentary photography as conceptual art. Each case study selection illustrates a different way to exhibit documentary photography, and goes into depth about the significance of exhibiting with participatory engagement in the shaping of heritage processes.

The conceptualization of heritage in this chapter will be from a critical heritage studies perspective in two ways: through identifying the presence and the absence of heritage in the selected case studies, and by naming heritage aspects that allow viewers to formulate their own definitions for heritage in the present that challenge those from heritage discourse in the past. The choice to elaborate on the exhibition of documentary photography as visual art in this chapter illuminates the imaginative meaning-making processes that arise from interpreting conceptual art from a heritage perspective. These aspects cultivate self-exploration on an individual level that for heritage and GLAM experts, reflect outward into community outreach and curatorial work, and for viewers, outward into their communities to deepen connections between people.

### 3.2 Robert Capa Contemporary Photography Center: Storytelling with Documentary Photography

The exhibiting gallery for *Cold Trail: Forensic Aesthetics* is Robert Capa Contemporary Photography Center in Budapest. This gallery gives space for documentary photographers to

showcase their interpretations of storytelling amidst the backdrop of Capa's photojournalist legacy. Despite the priority of realism in documentary photography, uniqueness and subjectivity in the photographer's style and perspective are always apparent. The pattern that arises from the wide variety of exhibitions at the Capa Center lies in documentary photography as a genre – that intrigue and essence can be found and copied from reality with a photograph. The truth-telling in documentary street photography tells stories of the mundane with imaginative style that brings it to life. In photojournalism, which is a specific type of documentary photography, instead of documenting the mundane, the photojournalist documents the unsafe, and its motivation lies in the storytelling of danger, suffering, and bravery.

The Robert Capa Contemporary Photography Center does not put forward a strong narrative comparable to those of the Blinken Open Society Archives or the Budapest Police Museum exhibitions. Barakonyi's *Cold Trail: Forensic Aesthetics* was one of three exhibitions selected to compete for the 2022 Robert Capa Grand Prize annual scholarship, hosted and awarded by the Capa Contemporary Photography Center in Budapest, Hungary. Both are a tribute to the highly esteemed Hungarian-American photojournalist, Robert Capa, famous for his brave documentation of several wars, including the Spanish Civil War and World War II; and was reputedly known as the first civilian photographer on Omaha Beach on D-Day.<sup>64</sup> The Capa Contemporary Photography Center exhibits talented international documentary photographers on a monthly basis, and annually hosts the Capa Grand Prize Award to documentary photographers and photojournalists. Barakonyi was selected with two other artists to compete

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<sup>64</sup> Haley Weiss, "Photographer Robert Capa Risked It All to Capture D-Day—Then Nearly All His Images Were Lost," Artsy, June 6, 2018, <https://www.artsy.net/article/artsy-editorial-photographer-robert-capa-risked-capture-d-day-images-lost>.

for the prize, all three of which had distinct styles and interpretations of documentary photography.

### **3.3 *Cold Trail: Forensic Aesthetics* Exhibition, Subjectivity and Imagination**

Szabolcs Barakonyi is a visual artist and photographer who uses documentary photography as a storytelling tool for his conceptual work. Instead of building a clear narrative with a series of images, he intentionally leaves out contextual information for viewers to interpret them without providing the influence of a description.<sup>65</sup> The visual cues in each documentary-style photograph lead the way for the viewer to speculate their own unique narratives behind each image. By doing so, Barakonyi encourages subjective interpretations of his work through his viewers' shared curiosity. This provides a refreshing experience, because often, an exhibition's purpose is for visitors to take away a specific message. In many exhibitions, the viewer is confronted with a narrative that attempts to level the inconsistency of subjective interpretation, which is aligned with the intentions of the curator or the institution, or the artist themselves. This is less apparent in the contemporary art scene, which has a reputation for showcasing artwork that lacks context needed for the general public to understand it. According to Barakonyi, even the intention of the artist is overpowering throughout a body of work, which keeps viewers from engaging with it in meaningful ways.<sup>66</sup> With *Cold Trail: Forensic Aesthetics*, Barakonyi embraces the subjectivity of his viewer's interpretations by encouraging them to fill in the contextual gaps with their imagination.

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<sup>65</sup> It is important to note that his artwork is not completely devoid of context. An artist statement is typically situated near the work, to give the viewer a brief foundation of information to function from as they begin their experience.

<sup>66</sup> Szabolcs Barakonyi, *Fortepan Masters*, 2nd ed. (György Simó, 2022), 82, <https://fortepanmasters.com/>.



Barakonyi finds authenticity in perception, such as the moment one observes a photograph before drawing conclusions about the content of the image. He had the pleasure of speaking about it with Dutch documentary photographer Hans van der Meer, who recalled memories of being a pedestrian around many cyclists while living in the Netherlands. As he walked around the city, he heard out-of-context statements from cyclists speaking to one another. He compared these “floating sentences” to his visual perspective, apparent in his street photography work, which thoughtfully articulates the realism and the absurdity found in everyday happenings that are disconnected.<sup>67</sup> These moments appear to lack necessary context, but instead, the viewer immediately makes their own conclusions about them in order to rationalize it, thus re-contextualizing the information in the present with their imagination, and engaging with the work on a personal level.

The image below is an example of a particularly mysterious image from *Cold Trail* that has almost no indication of it being a crime scene. Before looking at the image, the viewer will have read Barakonyi’s artist statement that articulates the images are all from crime scenes, or potentially seen another image from this series with stronger visual cues, such as one with a gun or a forensic ruler. But images like the one below encourage the viewer to study the image closely, perhaps at the damaged fence in the center. The less visual cues that are present in the image, the longer the onlooker will study it, opening up a wider period of time between the image and the individual. These moments of uncertainty contain the authenticity of feeling and wonder that Barakonyi encourages from viewers of his work.

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<sup>67</sup> Interview with Artist Szabolcs Barakonyi, Zoom, February 22, 2023.



*Figure 14: Szabolcs Barakonyi. Untitled, from Cold Trail: Forensic Aesthetics<sup>68</sup>*

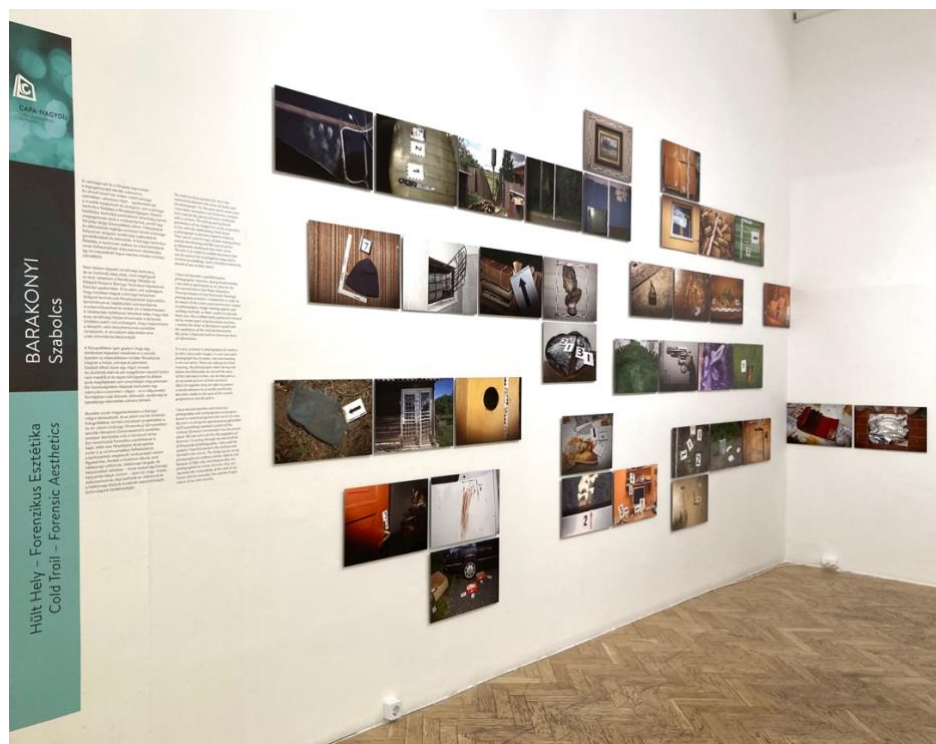


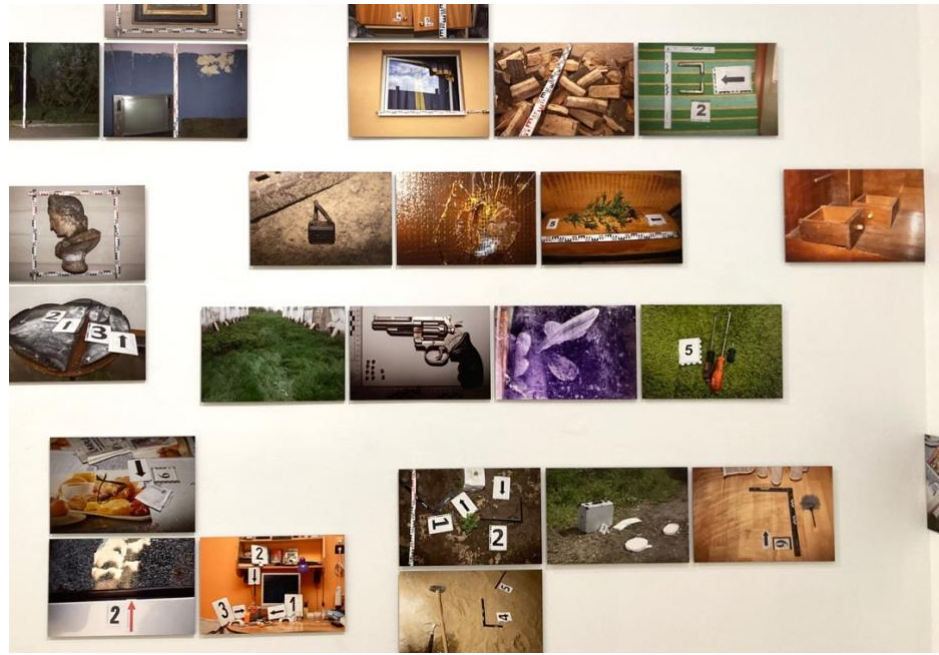
*Figure 15: The above image from Cold Trail: Forensic Aesthetics contains the ruler as a forensic visual cue, hinting to viewers the significance of the car door to the crime scene. The color of the car and the missing trim from the door become points of focus that would otherwise be ordinary.<sup>69</sup>*

<sup>68</sup> “Cold Trail - Forensic Aesthetics,” accessed May 29, 2023, <https://phmuseum.com/sbarakonyi/story/cold-trail-forensic-aesthetics-7379999e3f>.

<sup>69</sup> “Cold Trail - Forensic Aesthetics.”

With *Cold Trail*, Szabolcs Barakonyi has integrated the aesthetics of evidentiary records from the courtroom into his documentary-style imagery, and replaced the jury with those who view this body of work. Similar to surveillance, Barakonyi considers the forensic photograph to be an example of a quintessential evidentiary visual record, due to the rigorous criteria required for the images to be presented as evidence in court. At the center of the images in *Cold Trail* are real crimes documented by Barakonyi while training as a forensic photographer, as a part of his research with forensic photography and visual art. *Cold Trail* are his selections from this training, to appear as fragmented visual interpretations for this conceptual exhibition. Barakonyi has created a smattering of images for his viewers to investigate, like the cold trail left by a perpetrator in the wake of their crime. But without any specific crimes to reference when viewing *Cold Trail*, the narrative is for the viewers to imagine—the images reveal a glimpse of happenings from the past, and with their individual interpretations, provide onlookers with a glimpse of themselves.





*Figure 16: Cold Trail: Forensic Aesthetic exhibition photographs at The Robert Capa Contemporary Photography Center<sup>70</sup>*

At first look, I was interested in the use and arrangement of color in the images; especially the contrast between the secondary colors purple, orange and green. I appreciated the absence of captions for the images, because it allowed for ease of curiosity, and for a closer read of the visual cues in each image. As a photographer who uses similar techniques, I recognized what is referred to as “straight photography”<sup>71</sup> in select images, only to find out later that all of them are examples of this style. The recontextualization of the images in a gallery, and my preconceived notions for what crime scene photography “looks like,” influenced my interpretation of their authenticity.

From the perspective of a foreigner living away from home for the first time, I found comfort and peace in reading and interpreting the images without additional information. Capa also

<sup>70</sup> Image taken by the author.

<sup>71</sup> “Straight photography” is a term for photography referring to content that has not been moved prior to taking a photograph, and an image that has not been manipulated in processing.

found familiarity in photography as a foreigner in the United States, and once described it as “the closest thing to journalism for anyone who finds himself without a language.”<sup>72</sup>

Documentary photographs sometimes rely less on complementary text, because the image is a credible visual record of a story, taken from a moment. This moment is what is referred to as the “decisive moment” by famous documentary photographer Henri Cartier-Bresson, who is also credited with merging photojournalism and art with his photography. The decisive moment is the moment connecting the photographer and their subject when the image is taken, only for the developed photograph to provide proof that the moment took place at a later time.<sup>73</sup> This moment is treasured by many as one of metaphorical closeness between the photographer and their subject, who are often unaware and at a distance. Taking into account the content of the image and the photographer’s intentions, the decisive moment can be one that evokes feelings related to serendipity or sentiment. It can leave subjects feeling powerless amongst the photographer’s gaze, or empower onlookers with inspiration. This is because documentary photography acts a societal mirror for the expansive network of human experience and feeling.

### **3.4.1 *Fortepan Masters*, Documentary Photography, Collective Memory and Heritage**

Documentary photography’s careful balance of authenticity and storytelling provide the foundation for its use as memory work, and thus, for shaping identity. In some cases, the memory and identity of the photographer themselves are at the center of their work, which make up a personal story of their unique perspective and life experiences to share with their viewers. In other cases, the documentary photographer has selected a group of people whose memory and identity will be collected and remembered with their pictures. Both examples are

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<sup>72</sup> “Robert Capa Photography, Bio, Ideas,” The Art Story, accessed May 18, 2023, <https://www.theartstory.org/artist/capa-robert/>.

<sup>73</sup> Henri Cartier-Bresson, *The Decisive Moment*, 12/2014 ed. (Simon and Schuster, 1952), <https://steidl.de/Books/The-Decisive-Moment-0516515559.html>.

illustrations of how documentary photography is an example of heritage: it builds a portrait in the form of a story with visual records that double as narratives and references for documentary information. As an interdisciplinary field, heritage surfaces between many ideas, including at the intersection of culture, expression and identity.

For Barakonyi, his selection of 333 images for the book *Fortepan Masters* showcases the erratic beauty of collective memory through documentary photography.<sup>74</sup> The images are selected from Hungary's extensive open-source archive of documentary photography called Fortepan, named after a Hungarian company FORTE that produced black and white negative film in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The online archive features over 100,000 donated photographs of Budapest and Hungary, all approved to the database by editors, and described by volunteers.<sup>75</sup> Similar to Barakonyi's encouragement of subjectivity as a storytelling tool in *Cold Trail*, the images for *Fortepan Masters* are a subjective selection by Barakonyi representing his intuitive interpretation of aesthetics, with no prominent narrative or descriptions provided for the images. His goal with *Fortepan Masters* was purely aesthetic and emotional – he wanted to share a feeling and an experience with readers through his selections. Despite Barakonyi's intention with his selections, the pool of images creating the Fortepan archive are all examples of collective memory through documentary photography, thus making any selections from it pertinent to conceptualizing collective memory.

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<sup>74</sup> Barakonyi, *Fortepan Masters*.

<sup>75</sup> "Fortepan — #271811," Fortepan, accessed May 4, 2023, <https://fortepan.hu/en/>.





*Figure 17: This selection from Fortepan Masters showcases the careful curatorial selection between disconnected images that are somewhat similar to one another, and their printed range in size.<sup>76</sup>*

Collective memory is defined as a wide scope of memory as it pertains to a social sphere, be it a family unit, a community, or a country. Sociologist Maurice Halbwachs coined this term to illustrate his perspective that memory can only exist within the framework of society.<sup>77</sup> This set the foundation for memory studies scholar Jan Assmann to classify collective memory in more specific ways, such as “cultural memory,” which stretches into the past beyond the limits of oral transmission of information (about three generations) and “communicative memory,” or everyday memory, which includes all that oral history can remember and share.<sup>78</sup> Similarly, documentary photography is inherently social, by only existing within the framework of society. The images themselves in Fortepan Masters represent a mix of cultural and communicative memory, depending on which subjects are still alive, and those who have

<sup>76</sup> Barakonyi, *Fortepan Masters*.

<sup>77</sup> Maurice Halbwachs, Lewis A. Coser, and Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, The Heritage of Sociology (Chicago London: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

<sup>78</sup> Jan Assmann, “Collective Memory and Cultural Identity,” *Duke University Press*, 1995, 126.

passed. The collection itself in the form of a book is an example of communicative memory, because the memory of the book and its stories are alive in the present and the recent past, and exchanges about it are confined to a time period well within the span of three generations. The dynamic blend of these different types of memory featured in the Fortepan Masters collection allows viewers to experience Hungary through the aesthetics of the memories of its people.

### **3.4.2 *Every Past is My Past*, Documentary Photography, Imagination and Heritage**

A different selection than that of *Fortepan Masters* of around 200 images from the Fortepan archive was exhibited in 2019 at the Hungarian National Gallery. The intention for this exhibition was similar to that of the selections for *Fortepan Masters*: to showcase collective memory from the 20<sup>th</sup> century in ways that engage viewers with the past through feeling and perceived experience. The exhibition, titled *Every Past is My Past*, was a traditional walk-through exhibition with very little context to encourage the viewer to experience the images more deeply and to use their imagination, similar to Barakonyi's exhibition style. The title *Every Past is My Past* is taken from Hungarian writer and poet Zsuzsa Rakovsky, whose poetry book titled *Fortepan* features poems inspired by the serendipity of simultaneity in collective memory found in the Fortepan archive online. Her poem *Four Decades* ends with a verse that speaks to a wistful, eager curiosity about life experiences one might never have, but ultimately feels connected with through dreams and other people:

And as in dreams, the excluded third  
principle temporarily loses its validity:  
me and not me here and not-here  
now it reaches me a hundred and ten years ago  
August light, I see what  
could see E.T. from a distant planet,  
cities I've never been to



but I always wanted to go back, because every past is my past.<sup>79</sup>

In this poem, Rakovsky is using a principle from logic referred to as The Excluded Third Principle, which states that for every proposition, either the proposition or its opposite is true.<sup>80</sup> She appropriates this idea to mean that all people (“I and not I”) are connected through experience (“here and not here”), making it possible that all separate pasts can be one past (“every past is my past”). This “invalidated” version of the Excluded Third Principle is an example of Rakovsky using her own imagination to connect herself to all other people.

Likewise, photography blurs the distinction between memory and dreams with its encouragement of nostalgia while gazing at scenes and environments one has never actually seen before. Dreams sometimes depict familiar things or people, but often, recognition and accuracy of information between dreaming and waking life are absent, like a displaced memory. By preserving memory only familiar to a select few, unfamiliar photographs are like fragments of dreams that become familiar with imagination and curiosity. The encouragement of imagination and curiosity with visual art opens people’s minds to understand themselves and others in empathetic ways. By instigating this perceptive experience with the specificity of 20<sup>th</sup> century Hungarian collective memory found in Fortepan, a meaningful identity-shaping heritage process is formed for those with the pleasure of viewing these collections.

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<sup>79</sup> Zsuzsa Rakovszky, “Fortepan Online Database,” Literary Archive, The Digital Literary Academy, accessed May 25, 2023, [https://reader.dia.hu/document/Rakovszky\\_Zsuzsa-Fortepan-18048](https://reader.dia.hu/document/Rakovszky_Zsuzsa-Fortepan-18048).

<sup>80</sup> “Excluded Middle, Principle of the | Encyclopedia.Com,” accessed May 25, 2023, <https://www.encyclopedia.com/religion/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/excluded-middle-principle>.

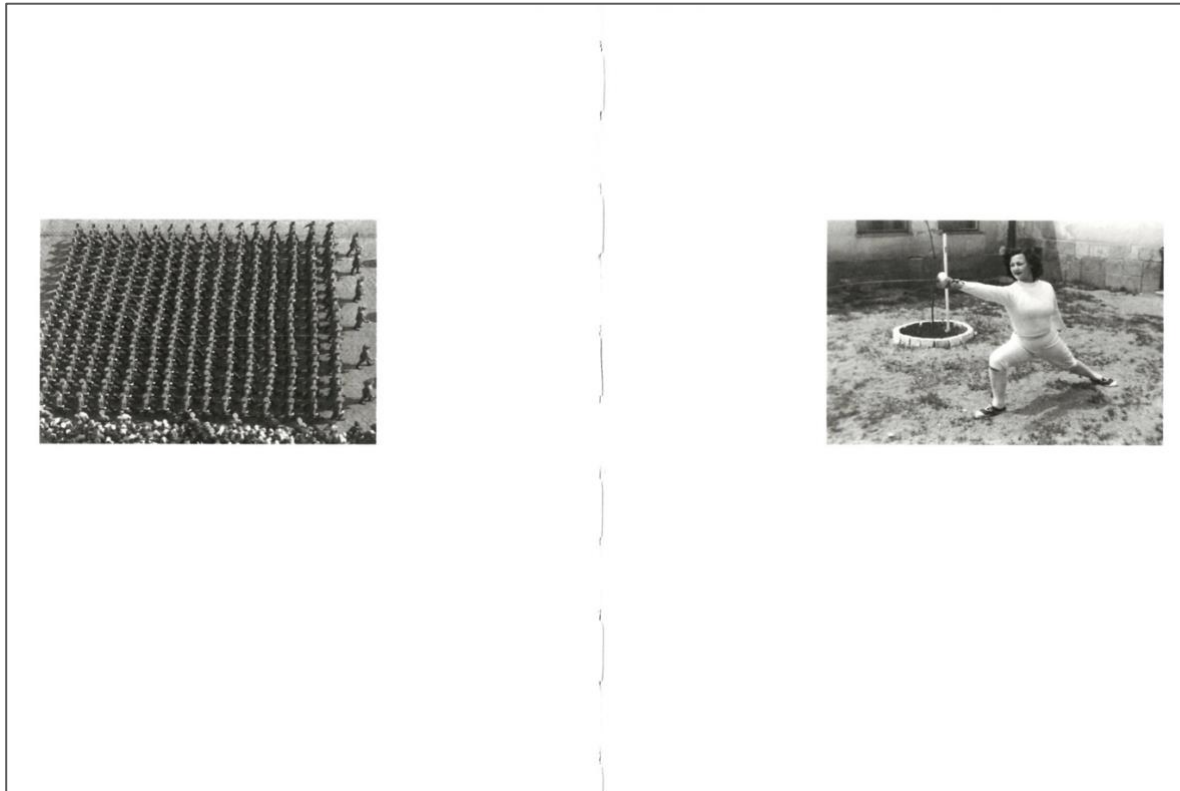


Figure 18: This selection from *Fortepan Masters* is an example of unrelated images where the models have a similar stance, but completely different context. The image on the left also showcases a military parade in Hungary, the one on the right could be a woman practicing fencing as a sport.

### 3.5 Exhibiting Documentary Photography and Collective Memory

To exhibit information means to publicly display it.<sup>81</sup> The enclosure of the book makes the *Fortepan Masters* collection a fixture of form and cohesion, but its design does not completely close it off from the public, because the book can be viewed in a library, and is available for purchase. The book is the exhibition: it is an intentional expression of imagery for the public to observe. The culmination of a body of photographic work is often in the form of a book. Exhibitions can punctuate a final body of work, but they also act as milestones, so the artist can use external feedback to continue to refine it. This was true of *Forensic Aesthetics: Cold Trail*. Barakonyi was exhibiting this body of work as a work-in-progress, whose final form will

<sup>81</sup> "Exhibit," May 24, 2023, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/exhibit>.

be as a book, that Barakonyi described as “a very intimate thing,”<sup>82</sup> which allows viewers to peacefully take their time looking at images.

*Every Past is My Past* was a traditional walk-through exhibition at the Hungarian National Gallery, but an interactive virtual exhibition of its collections is still accessible online.<sup>83</sup> Before any images are visible, the online presentation is organized by age group: Seniors, Adults, Youth, and Children. Upon selecting an age group, images whose content is tailored to that specific group appears, in order to make the content age-appropriate, and to make the images more relatable for users, despite them being historic photographs. For example, the Children section features Fortepan images that contain portraits and street photography of children, and a few descriptive texts about important events in Hungarian history. The Adults section contains some uncensored adult-appropriate content, and primarily images featuring adults. This user-friendly classification of the images combined with the interactive virtual aspect of the exhibition creates a balance for users to comfortably take in new information about Hungarian history and collective memory. Browsing an online exhibition like *Every Past is my Past* can have a similar affect with the portability and size of electronic devices, and with a much wider scope of outreach to the global public. An individual level of engagement is achieved with both a book and a virtual exhibition, although the intention behind physically leafing through a book has obvious benefits pertaining to meaningful reflection and mindfulness.

Comparatively, walking through an exhibition gives viewers a larger experience of scale in relation to the artwork. It requires physical attentiveness that can either be interpreted as thoughtful when gazing at art, or distracting, especially when sharing space with other visitors

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<sup>82</sup> Interview with Artist Szabolcs Barakonyi.

<sup>83</sup> “Every Past is My past - Virtual Fortepan Exhibition,” Magyar Nemzeti Galéria, accessed May 25, 2023, <https://mng.hu/minden-mult-a-multam-fortepan-kiallitas/>.

in a gallery. An exhibition walk-through makes the viewer's position in space significant by design, whereas a book is portable and spatially accommodating. *Fortepan Masters* is a creative exception, but usually, images in a book do not drastically vary in size in order to fit them on the page. *Fortepan Masters* contains multiple-page unfolding spreads in every page of the book, with many large images covering double pages, and others that take up less than a quarter page. The images within a few pages of one another are typically in visual dialogue, with repetition of line, shape, or other visual cues in their content being apparent between them. This creative intention for the image placement in *Fortepan Masters* acknowledges the spatial differences between a book and an exhibition, and attempts to make them more similar to one another, in hopes of introspectively engaging readers with the imagery, and potentially with themselves.

### 3.6 Perception, Feeling and Identity in Visual Art and Heritage

People are largely motivated by how their choices regarding consumption make them feel, such as calm, joyful, or inquisitive. In *Emotional Heritage*, LauraJane Smith classifies different levels of visitor engagement to heritage sites qualitatively, by evaluating their emotional reactions and experiential feedback.<sup>84</sup> This emotion-based research came from a series of visitor interviews revealing that some people don't go to a museum exhibition for education alone; often, the purpose of their visit is to *feel* something upon being told an aesthetic story whose content may have been found easily online.<sup>85</sup> This is aligned with Smith's definition of heritage as a performative act or experience that can include tangible items and artefacts, but it is not confined to them; instead, heritage is what people decide is valuable.<sup>86</sup> Many factors that

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<sup>84</sup> LauraJane Smith, *Emotional Heritage: Visitor Engagement at Museums and Heritage Sites* (Abingdon, Oxon ; New York, NY: Routledge, 2020), 64.

<sup>85</sup> Smith, 4.

<sup>86</sup> Smith, *Uses of Heritage*, 44.

are significant in heritage discourse influence this decision, one of them being how heritage makes people feel. Likewise, lay public who are particularly fascinated with true crime content, or forensic related content, are motivated by how their consumption of the content makes them feel: such as surprise that a crime has happened, relief that the crime did not happen to them, and curiosity about exactly how or why it took place. In heritage studies, feelings from the public that are considered the most engaging are those of nostalgia, reminiscence, melancholy, and guilt, to name a few. It is important to note that the typical feelings reflected between these two fields are indicative of the differences between the content on view. Despite these differences, the choice to engage with specific content is correlated with the association of value to the subsequent feelings that arise from the experience.

In addition to encouraging subjectivity from his viewers, Barakonyi's goal by omitting descriptions from his exhibited work is to evoke a feeling in his audience. When gazing at an image for the first time, and before assumptions about the image become apparent to the onlooker, there is a silent moment of admiration that would be distorted, or absent, if a description were present. This is a feeling of connection with artwork that is familiar to Barakonyi, and he feels compelled to share it with the viewers of his work. In *Fortepan Masters*, he describes this feeling in more detail:

For me, one of the most important goals of art is to look at something with new eyes. I think that you don't always have to understand the pictures, either..If we go beyond the usual search for answers, we can get to a deeper, truer layer of the images. There is less thought in admiration, I am sure. This lends itself to borrowing emotions for admiration from the past.<sup>87</sup>

Here, he is describing a level of engagement deeper than what is referred to as *passive engagement*, where viewers of an exhibit pass through without feeling, or being critical of new ideas. In this quote, Barakonyi is specifically referring to nostalgia, a feeling that engages many

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<sup>87</sup> Barakonyi, *Fortepan Masters*, 81.

people when perceiving and learning about heritage. Nostalgia is associated with authenticity, because it brings about feelings that visitors find validating and safe about the past that they are remembering.<sup>88</sup> With *Fortepan Masters* as an example, this would be referring to twentieth century Hungary. In his editor's note, Barakonyi writes about coming to terms with his selections for *Fortepan Masters*, and what his selections imply about nostalgia as it pertains to this century in Hungary. "The question is, how communist should we be?" He concludes that these eras of Hungary should be present in the collection to reflect the accuracy of the past, to tell a story, and to evoke a feeling.<sup>89</sup>

Barakonyi doesn't want to confine the admiration of nostalgia to remembering. He believes that meaningful engagement emerges organically, when the artist (and the curator, when applicable), create and arrange a body of work to allow the space for an authentic feeling of wonder to arise. In discussion with Barakonyi about his work in an interview, he described this process as "extending an enclosure," referring to the physical and mental space of the viewer's gaze, shared only by the individual and the images.<sup>90</sup> It is in this sense—by entering space, and taking up time—feeling and perception are confronted with identity. This silent enclosure of the gaze created by perception and wonder is intimate, and provides the foundation for something as personal as identity to be revealed, or to be remembered. In addition to lingering between the imagined and the real, heritage is a concept that lingers between the past and the future, constantly being reshaped by the experiences of the present, to form a sense of self. LauraJane Smith articulates the materiality of heritage found in identity in *Uses of Heritage*:

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<sup>88</sup> Smith, *Uses of Heritage*, 139.

<sup>89</sup> Barakonyi, *Fortepan Masters*, 85.

<sup>90</sup> Interview with Artist Szabolcs Barakonyi.

The past is not abstract; it has material reality as heritage, which in turn has material consequences for community identity and belonging. The past cannot simply be reduced to archaeological data or historical texts—it is someone’s heritage.<sup>91</sup>

In this quote, Smith is bringing to light how abstract ideas and concepts take shape: through people and community. The enclosure of the body houses the mind, and the exchange of ideas and feelings between people in a shared space are what build the contours of community. Furthermore, introducing information into a shared space inserts it into collective memory, and contributes to a sense of continuity that is imagined, and has a significant emotional impact in creating a “sense of belonging.”<sup>92</sup> Thus, heritage is found at the intersection of many ideas and experiences, and the only common thread can be found between people, and their subjective interpretations of heritage according to their shared experiences in the form of narratives.

Barakonyi encourages the interpersonal tools of feeling and imagination together with the implication of evidentiary records to guide interpretations of his visual narratives. The interpretation of heritage exists and functions in the same way – in a liminal space between memory, identity, and culture, which temporarily takes shape with the guidance of intuition and information, before it is either recontextualized again, or forgotten. The subjectivity and temporality of heritage is what makes it a process, instead of a finite entity.<sup>93</sup>

### 3.7 Conclusion

Documentary photography exhibited as conceptual art was conceptualized from a critical heritage studies perspective in this chapter through the identification of the presence or the absence of heritage processes in the exhibited imagery. The historic photographs featured in

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<sup>91</sup> Smith, *Uses of Heritage*, 29.

<sup>92</sup> Smith, 64.

<sup>93</sup> Smith, 273.

the Fortepan database are themselves cultural heritage, as tokens of memory that contribute to collective memory from the enclosure of a specific period of time and a specific place. The grouping of photographs that form collections in the form of the virtual *Every Past is My Past* exhibition, or the selections in the book *Fortepan Masters*, are an example of heritage through the social perspectives of the editors and curators of the collections.

*Cold Trail: Forensic Aesthetics* is an exhibition that mimics the processual nature of heritage with its unique storytelling devices and concepts. The viewers' interpretation of this body of work contributes to their individual heritage by shaping their identity with experience. The images themselves are not an example of heritage, instead, they are visual art. More specifically, they are conceptual art appropriating forensic reports to initiate a heritage process for those who view and interpret them. This body of work becomes heritage with the interpretation of the work by the onlooker.

The impact of an exhibition of any sort hinges closely on exactly how information is distributed in space. Exhibition design and the curatorial arrangement of visual information are like added elements of style or taste for the story, or stories, at the center of an exhibition. These elements are pertinent to the varied levels of engagement between the public and an exhibition, which affects the likelihood and the intensity of introspective identity-shaping processes for individual viewers.

The interpretation of conceptual documentary photography can introduce creative and engaging ways to connect heritage and humanities programming to more communities. Heritage experts, GLAM sector professionals, and education specialists can use these concepts to their advantage when building community through sharing space and storytelling.



## Conclusion

In the first chapter, *Srebrenica: Exhumation* provided an example of a creative use of space and interpretation of collections to recall and to honor memory in the context of genocide denial. This exhibition connected with visitors on levels of engagement pertaining to large and small communities, families, and individuals with its community-building content and the use of sensory materials in gallery spaces. The significance of the archivist and recordkeeping is pertinent to all heritage experts who balance the preservation and interpretation of records or artifacts for any organization or institution. This position is one of education and power, and it is of the utmost importance that heritage experts are open to creative ways of interpreting and exhibiting information to their audiences. The case study in this chapter also provided a strong example of the connection between documentary photography and cultural heritage in image

sharing and exhibitions. This chapter builds a solid conceptual framework connecting cultural heritage and documentary photography that the subsequent chapters can be compared to for further analysis.

In the second chapter, the Budapest Police Museum exhibitions provided examples of the impact of narratives on the interpretation and exhibition of documentary and forensic photography. The prominence of narrative in these exhibitions both informed and detracted from the conceptualization of heritage within the context of the museum. The analysis of these exhibitions shows the position of photography between documentation and interpretation from inside a narrative. This chapter sheds light on the versatility of photography, and its ability to adhere to any context that is exhibited alongside it. It also points out to heritage experts how institutional narratives can either bolster exhibited content, or overpower it, making curatorial work a careful balance of priorities and creative communication.

The third chapter conceptualized heritage by drawing from the interpretation of conceptual documentary photography. It revealed the beauty and connection to be gleaned from the subjectivity of interpretation through perception and feeling. Hungarian artist Szabolcs Barakonyi pulls these ideas from his viewers through his work with conceptualizing documentary photography in Budapest. The intimacy and subjectivity of interpretation shouldn't be avoided; instead, it can be used as a tool that heritage experts can use to make deep connections with their audiences, and with themselves.

By addressing multiple levels of engagement with an analysis of the interpretation of visual records, this thesis can be used by heritage experts to creatively engage with photography for their own benefit, and for the benefit of their audiences. As a documentary medium, photography is a window that peers both onto society and within ourselves. A more intimate understanding of photography and its analysis in heritage studies would not only enrich

heritage studies texts with stimulating material, but it would become a vehicle to inspire creativity in storytelling within the field, and in turn, to the people that heritage studies is all about: the global public.

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