

morgue

morgue: a photographic series by paul hockett.

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23/02/01 09:02



20/03/02 15:20



23/03/01 13:23

PRESS BUTTON





12/02/02 09:38

PRIVATE
AMBULANCE

Y416 JBB

14/02/02 10:50



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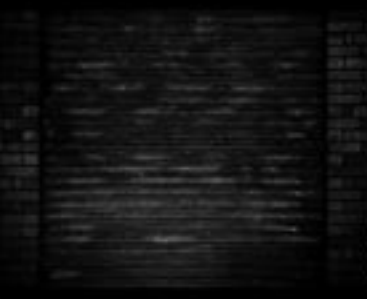
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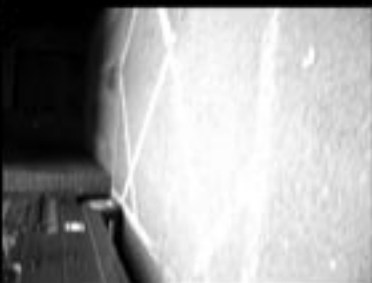
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epitaph

When I was at university I used to walk past the morgue on the way to my lectures. I didn't notice it at first, it was just another entrance way to the back of the hospital - next to the linen store and around the corner from the goods entrance - why should it be anything different? But this is a hospital, its daily deliveries involve more than food and bed-sheets and chemicals. And soon I start to notice that sometimes there is an ambulance, or a hearse, backed up to the imposing metal shutter.

I become more and more interested in this place. Interested in the people who work there, those who deal with death on a daily basis. Something so far removed from my daily life that I can't even begin to imagine what it would be like. Interested in the people who walk past, students and contractors and doctors and nurses and lost patients. Professionals excepted, I suspect most people walk past without a second thought, unaware of what goes on behind the shutter; or perhaps aware but unseeing, not wanting to be forced into thought by a piece of their daily scenery. And the families and friends of those that are bought in by private ambulance, do they ever come here?

I begin to take pictures, clandestine shots of this strange place. I do not want to be overt, it does not feel right to be seen snapping this place. Who dares break the death-taboo? I snap a couple of pictures as I walk past each day, dates and time reflecting the university calendar. Dates and times become increasingly

important, a memory shared with those inside - a different body, different weather, different lunch - all these things forgotten except for the date stamp on my pictures. And what of those not here? Those who's loved ones have just been delivered like so much meat? What do they remember of these dates and times?

For 3 years I walked past the morgue, and seldom did I see anything more. Sometimes a staff member (pathologist, porter?) out for a cigarette break, the shutter half open; sometimes a glimpse of a gurney being extracted from the back of a van. I imagine all the interiors I've seen on TV, these places well-known from crime dramas but never visited in real life. Baudrillard's Hyperreality strikes again. Looking at the pictures I become more and more obsessed with the little details; the door bell, the light streaks on the metal shutter, the glow of the strip light. And the time, always the time: a time in my life, a time in everyone's life. A time that will never be again, a unique conjunction of all of the particles in the universe. A time when people are living, others dying, others lying dead already. The enormity of it all swoops down on me, at once hopeful and hopeless. The time stamp stares at me, so suggestive of loss and nostalgia, but merely reflecting history. Merely a globally accepted number, a human contrivance with which we try to impose order and meaning on this universe.

And the entrance remains couched in darkness whatever the weather.

