

## Track 1: Introduction

The *Observance and Memorial* exhibition has been designed in six physical sections at the centre of the exhibit space. In honour of the estimated 2 million individuals who perished in Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge, this exhibition presents 104 photographs of men, women and children who were imprisoned and executed at S-21 security prison. These images profoundly express the traumatic losses caused by what is commonly referred to as the “Cambodian Genocide.”

As you move through the exhibition, you will learn about the social, political and cultural framework of Cambodia before and after Khmer Rouge rule. You will be presented with biographies of four victims, personal accounts of survivors who immigrated to Canada shortly after the fall of the regime. Along with these survival accounts, the 104 portraits on display provide visual reference to a historical event that deserves to be observed, remembered, and respected.

From April 17, 1975 to January 7, 1979, Cambodia was under rule of the Khmer Rouge party, who sought to radically transform society into an egalitarian, agrarian utopia. Security office 21, or S21, was one of more than 19,000 execution sites where prisoners accused of treason were interrogated, tortured and killed in an effort to cleanse the country of suspected political enemies. The atrocities that occurred are not well known to most Canadians, as Cambodia was largely sealed off from the rest of the world. During that period, little was reported in Western media.

This is an apt time to recall the Cambodian genocide, as the long-delayed trials of senior Khmer Rouge leaders are finally underway.

Upon entering the exhibit, you encounter text on the right and an enlarged prisoner portrait on the left. The black-and-white photograph shows a young Cambodian girl approximately 13 years of age. She has short bobbed hair, and wears a dark-coloured button-up shirt with two string tags that assemble the number twenty-four. Her silent, vacant gaze makes her appear as if she is in shock. This image, in conjunction with the following introductory text, prefaces the atmosphere and context of the *Observance and Memorial* exhibit.



Prisoner Number 24:

## Track 2: The Rise of the Khmer Rouge

This section of the exhibition introduces the political context that existed in Cambodia before and during the rise of the Khmer Rouge. It is primarily focused around text panels and accompanying images intended to give the background needed to understand the era.

From the 9th to 15th centuries, Cambodia was the centre of the Khmer Empire. Still to today, the grand Khmer temples of Angkor Wat and Angkor Thom are among the most visited archaeological sites in the world. Constructed in the 12th century by King Suryavarman ii, Angkor Wat is the largest monuments built during the Khmer Empire. An image of Angkor Wat reveals a compound comprised of a series of ornate towers characteristic of Khmer architecture. This image also provides a sense of the country's geography and climate, as the temple is set amidst an expansive tropical forest.



Angkor Wat:

During the 16th - 19th centuries, Cambodia suffered many territorial losses to Thailand and Vietnam. In 1863, this led Cambodia's King Norodom Sihanouk to sign an agreement with France to establish a Protectorate. This settlement ushered in an age of French colonial domination which lasted until 1953.

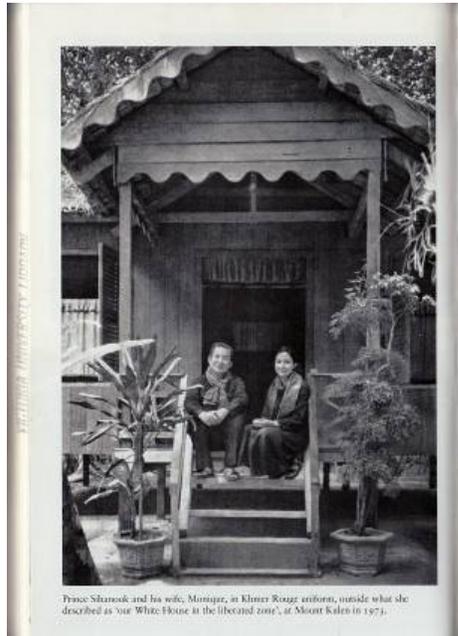
90 years of French colonial rule sparked both Nationalist and Communist movements; the roots of which were the Khmer Rouge's rise to power. Four devastating wars over four decades served as a catalyst for the Khmer Rouge takeover. When Japan occupied Cambodia during World War II, they maintained the French colonial administration until near the end of the war. On March 9, 1945, King Sihanouk, with Japanese support, declared the independence of Cambodia. But with Japan's official surrender in August 1945, the French were able to re-impose colonial administration across Indochina.



King Norodom Sihanouk:

During the First Indochina War, Cambodian Communist groups in neighbouring Vietnam allied with Vietnamese Communists in a struggle against the French. Nationalist students such as Pol Pot and other future Khmer Rouge leaders became Communists while studying abroad and returned to Cambodia with a commitment to grow the fledgling movement. With a small, poorly-armed guerilla army, the Khmer Rouge formed and fought the government during the 1960s. In 1970, the long-serving head of state, Prince Sihanouk, was deposed in a coup d'état led by the American-backed General Lon Nol. The Cambodian Civil War followed shortly thereafter.

Perceived to be corrupt, the Lon Nol government was largely unpopular and spurred many to join the ranks of the Khmer Rouge in an effort to restore Sihanouk to power. (A photograph shows soldiers loyal to the Lon Nol regime fighting Khmer Rouge forces during the Cambodian Civil War.) Another image featuring a smoky battlefield of soldiers entrenched in combat is in sharp contrast to a serene image of Prince Sihanouk and his wife Monineath dressed in Khmer Rouge uniform. The combination of images illustrate the influx of unrest and political upheaval at the time.



Prince Sihanouk and Wife:

When, in 1970, Lon Nol overthrew the Prince, Sihanouk allied with enemy, the Khmer Rouge in an effort to re-establish himself as head of state. Though the Khmer Rouge greatly benefited from Sihanouk's support following their victory in 1975, they kept him under virtual house arrest. In 1993 Sihanouk returned from 13 years of exile to once again become King of Cambodia. He abdicated the throne in 2004 due to ill health.

### Track 3: Pol Pot

Pol Pot, born Saloth Sar and also known as Brother Number One, was the principal leader of the Khmer Rouge. He became a communist while studying in France between 1949 and 1953 then returned to Cambodia where he scaled the ranks of the underground Communist Party from

1976 to 1979. Pol Pot acted as Prime Minister of Democratic Kampuchea, Cambodia's given name during Khmer Rouge rule. Following the overthrow of the Khmer Rouge in 1979, he led an insurgency movement until July 1997. Following a bloody power struggle inside the Khmer Rouge, he was arrested by his former colleagues and charged with treason. A "people's tribunal" sentenced him to life under house arrest. He died on April 15, 1998.

The image of Pol Pot included on this text panel depicts a man of approximately 40 years of age, dressed in clothes that suggest a leadership role. Though looking away from the camera, his collegial smile and the body language appear charismatic and unthreatening; nothing like the ruthless dictator he was later revealed to be.



Pol Pot:

#### **Track 4: The Khmer Rouge Seize Power**

The Second Indochina War, also known as The Vietnam War, spilled into Cambodian territory, creating further political conflict. Heavy U.S. aerial bombing of Viet Cong, Vietnamese troops and supply lines killed hundreds of thousands of Cambodian civilians.

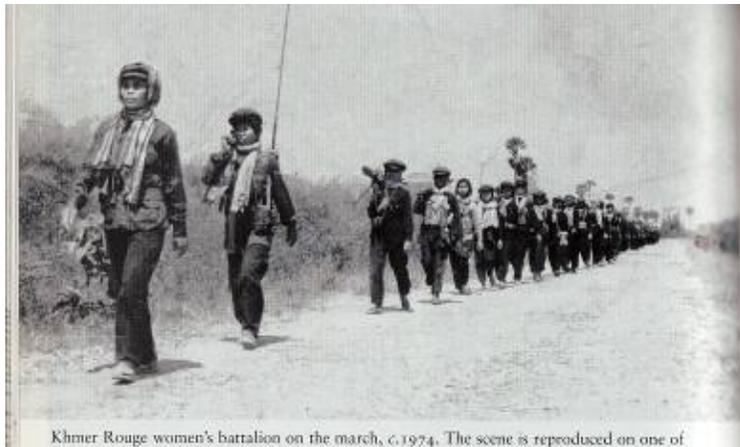
From October, 1965 to August, 1973, the US dropped almost 3 million tons of explosives on eastern Cambodia in over 200,000 air raids on approximately 114,000 sites. This was a greater tonnage of bombs than Allies dropped during the entire Second World War.

A black and white aerial photo in this text panel shows a long path of tightly-clustered bomb craters through a large geographical area of Cambodia near the Viet Nam border.



B52 Bomb Craters:

The devastation caused by these bombardments fueled more anti-government sentiment, inspiring thousands of men and women to join the Khmer Rouge. By 1973, the Khmer Rouge consisted of more than 40,000 soldiers. An image from 1974 depicts a Khmer Rouge battalion of women marching in single file with their heads held high.



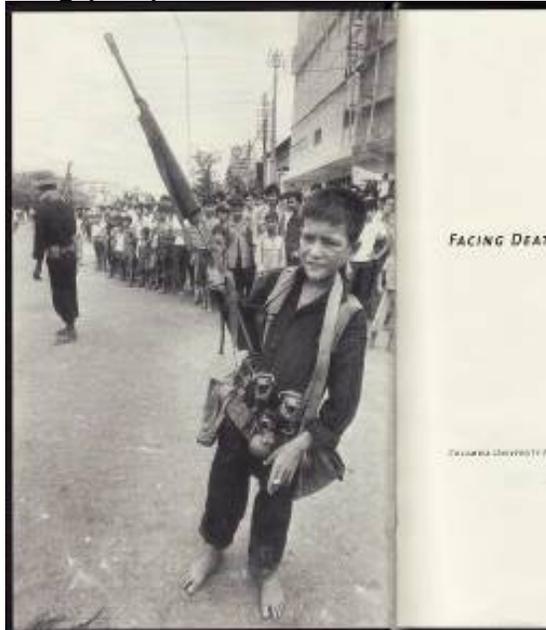
Women Marching:

Khmer Rouge women's battalion on the march, c.1974. The scene is reproduced on one of

Led by Pol Pot and aided by North Vietnam and China, the Khmer Rouge seized power over Cambodia in April 1975. Within hours of entering the capital, Phnom Penh, the Khmer Rouge forcibly evacuated its 2 million inhabitants.

A chilling photograph portrays a young boy of no older than 10, presumably a new recruit, triumphantly wielding a rifle before civilians preparing to leave the city. Soon after evacuation, the Khmer Rouge began a campaign to expunge their political enemies, killing en-masse soldiers, officers and civil servants of the Lon Nol regime. Thus, commenced the four-year reign of terror.

Boy, forcing people to leave their



homes:

A small text panel on your left shows the flag of Democratic Kampuchea. The red background symbolizes the revolutionary movement. The yellow temple in the foreground, reminiscent of Angkor Wat, symbolizes the national traditions of the Kampuchean people, and the imagery of rice symbolized the agricultural focus of the Khmer Rouge.



Flag of Democratic Kampuchea:

Below the flag is an excerpt from The National Anthem of Democratic Kampuchea. It reads: Glittering red blood which blankets the towns and countryside of the Kampuchean motherland! Blood of our splendid workers and peasants! Blood of our revolutionary youth! Blood that was transmuted into fury, anger, and vigorous struggle! On the 17th of April, under the revolutionary flag! Blood that liberated us from slavery!

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### **Track 5: Khmer Rouge Ideology**

The Khmer Rouge sought a complete transformation of society based on a radical interpretation of Maoist and Marxist-Leninist ideologies. The new state was to be an egalitarian, agrarian utopia—a place without rich or poor, exploitation or corruption. The national emblem of Democratic Kampuchea pictured consists of a network of dikes and canals symbolizing modern agriculture, and factories symbolizing industry. It's framed by a garland of rice and bears the inscription “Democratic Kampuchea” at the bottom.



National Emblem:

The economic foundation of Democratic Kampuchea was primarily based on the harvesting of rice. In effect, however, the population became slaves to the state, were offered little food, rudimentary shelter and minimal medical care. A photograph depicts a crew of workers gathering rice and the backbreaking labour inherent to the job. The regime also liquidated the professional class, such as doctors, in its zeal to realize its ideal of a perfect egalitarian society.



Workers Gathering Rice:

A photograph in this text panel shows a large number of workers constructing a simple dam of piled up dirt and materials. It demonstrates the Khmer Rouge's disdain for modern engineering and industrial technology, which they viewed as inconsistent with an agrarian society of equals. Without the guidance of skilled engineers and architects, many of these public works projects failed. As a result, a large number of people were killed.



Workers making a dam:

After assuming power, the Khmer Rouge's first act was to empty the cities and harness a workforce for rural agricultural projects. The Khmer Rouge confiscated all private property, abolished money, schools, hospitals, courts of law, and forbade religious practices. They restricted family life and freedom of movement. Young children routinely separated from their families, were sent to work or recruited into the army. Influenced by Maoist principles of inexperience and ignorance, the Khmer Rouge preferred young people who were "poor and blank" over those corrupted by capitalism and education. A photo presents young Khmer Rouge recruits lined up in black uniform; their somber expressions conveying an innocence marred by uncertainty and conflict.

## Young Khmer Rouge:



Furthermore, individual rights were altogether extinguished. In Democratic Kampuchea, Cambodians were expected to live in absolute obedience to the revolutionary organization, the “Angkar.”. Projected onto the exhibition wall are Khmer Rouge slogans demonstrating these principles of submission. One reads: “Study is not important. What is important is work and revolution.” Another quotes: “To destroy you is no loss, to preserve you is no gain.”

But the revolution did not go as planned. Democratic Kampuchea was just emerging from the devastation of civil war with a badly damaged infrastructure when it began its Four Year Plan of agrarianism. An inexperienced and weakened workforce, coupled with ineffective bureaucracy, led to poor harvests and resulted in millions of Cambodians starving to death.

Senior Khmer Rouge officials believed that the party never made mistakes. Instead of reassessing Khmer Rouge governance and policy, the leadership blamed their failures on internal and external counter-revolutionaries. Traitors were often accused of being in league with foreign powers, namely the United States CIA, the Soviet Union’s KGB or Vietnam.

Previous Military personnel, civil servants, intellectuals, former city residents, and minority groups such as ethnic Vietnamese, Chinese, and Muslim Cham were initially targeted. But eventually all Cambodians were suspected of being enemies of the state. Khmer Rouge leaders even became increasingly suspicious and distrustful of their own party members.

### **Track 6: Security Centre S-21**

The Khmer Rouge developed an elaborate network of 196 prisons, referred to as security offices. Hundreds of thousands of people deemed enemies were sent for interrogation, torture, and execution.

Security Office 21, or S-21, was the largest and most lethal of this network. Located on the outskirts of Phnom Penh, S-21 had once been a high school. Today from the outside, it looks no different from any other public institution and, ironically, S-21 director, Kaing Geuk Eav, better known as Duch, was himself a former high school teacher.

S-21 was staffed by hundreds of guards, interrogators, documentation and office personnel. Prisoners were largely Khmer Rouge members and soldiers who, along with their families, were accused of betraying the revolution. Most were innocent of the serious offenses with which they had been charged.



S-21 Prison:

When in full operation, S-21 held between 1000 and 1500 prisoners at a time. Of the more than 14,000 people imprisoned there between 1976 and 1979, only 23 prisoners, 5 of which were children, emerged alive.

Yet a perplexing staff photograph from 1976 depicts Duch standing among guards and a group of unidentified women and children on the front steps of the school entrance. Each individual is dressed in black or dark clothing and wears a side knotted scarf but no one in the photo appears distressed or afraid. In fact, one woman holding a baby is smiling.



Staff Photograph:



Adult Survivors:



Saved Child Survivors:

During S-21 incarceration, which ranged from days to months, prisoners were repeatedly interrogated and most were subjected to or threatened with severe torture until they confessed to counter-revolutionary crimes.

There were also strict rules to be followed. A projection example of these rules reads: “When asked, answer right away. You are absolutely prohibited from stalling the answer.” Prisoners were expected to name “strings” of enemy collaborators, and “networks of traitors.”

After interrogations were deemed complete, prisoners were taken to the nearby Choeung Ek killing field where they were executed and buried in mass graves. A disturbing photograph from the early 1980s depicts an excavation at the Choeung Ek killing field, revealing row upon row of skeletal remains. Thousands of remains were eventually discovered here.



Choeung Ek killing field:

Choeung Ek, however, was but one of many execution sites under Khmer Rouge rule. A total of 196 security centres existed, in addition to 388 execution locations, comprised of 19,000 grave pits.

### **Track 7: Introduction to the Photographs**

The 104 photos of S-21 prisoners encountered in this exhibition were originally taken for the purposes of identification. Originally, they were passport-size prints that were attached to the prisoner’s file, along with their biographies and forced confessions.

Just before entering the central part of the exhibition, you are presented with a page from the confession file of young Chea Hong, no older than 13, wearing a newsboy cap and a blank expression. Hong would inevitably be executed, as were all of the prisoners portrayed here.

S-21 was the only prison known for keeping extensive photographic records of inmates. All the photographs in this exhibition are 10 x 10" silver gelatin prints created from the negatives found at S-21.

Prisoners of S-21 were photographed upon arrival and typically entered the institution blindfolded and chained or roped together. An identification number was usually pinned to each prisoner and immediately before their portrait was taken the prisoner's blindfold was removed.

Post-mortem photos were also taken of prisoners who died in captivity and of high-ranking Khmer Rouge members who were executed. Then "Completed" dossiers were submitted to senior Khmer Rouge leaders as "proof" that "enemies" had been eliminated.

Upon entering the portrait section you experience a stark change from the traditional approach of presenting images. The 104 framed black and white photos are tightly hung two inches apart and run in a continuous eye level band around the perimeter of the space. The black painted walls create a backdrop highlighting the photos and conveys a memorial type atmosphere.

All but four photos exhibited are without a label or identity. Due to the odd shape and size of the space you are unable to see all the shots in a single glance but as you make your way around, more photos are revealed and more faces are met.

Although most of these portraits feature people from the waist up, there is variation in composition suggesting that they were taken in different rooms at S-21 over an extended period of time. Many prisoners are shown standing before a white wall; others are repeatedly shown in a location featuring a spiraling wall demarcation.

Some portraits depict more than one person. For example, one image features prisoners chained together on a makeshift cot. In another, a prisoner directly facing the camera is cuffed to another prisoner featured slightly behind him in profile. While the young man in the foreground, possibly in his early 30s, appears expressionless, the man in the background gazes downward and out of the frame. This allows us to see how one prisoner was forced to confront the camera alongside someone temporarily off the record, appearing exhausted and defeated.

Upon entering the exhibition, we remember the large image of the 13-year-old prisoner girl whose cropped black hair and dark button-down uniform reflect the Khmer Rouge's attempts to eradicate individuality and personal expression. Her vacant gaze, absent of visible emotion, is perhaps brought upon by shock and helplessness.

As we move from photograph to photograph, it's clear that the range of facial expressions reflect an incomprehensible scenario faced by these people. Every expression imaginable is represented: some visibly angry,- as evident in the photo of an elderly man with a furrowed brow and his hands tied behind his back. Some appear surprised, perhaps a reflection of prisoners who were photographed immediately after having blindfolds removed from their eyes.

Some portraits reveal evidence of prisoners sustaining injuries, such as a young boy of about 10 with a scarred eye who's chained to another blindfolded prisoner just out of frame. Others display widened-eyes, bandaged cheeks and disheveled hair, common traits amongst abused individuals.

Some appear severely malnourished. One prisoner, gaunt with sunken cheeks and an almost skeletal neck, is a testament to the conditions of these security centres and the starvation endured. Another portrait attests to the confusion and disorientation prisoners must have experienced. We encounter a young man smiling awkwardly at the camera, wearing a strange cape-like garment that is unique to his photo.

In another case, a young man, possibly in his mid-20s, wears a t-shirt depicting a cartoon lion, perhaps popular in the 1960s or 70s. We catch a rare glimpse of personal identity within S-21, and we are reminded of contemporary life outside the prison.

Indeed, some expressions remain mysterious, as witnessed in a portrait of a mother and child staring deadpan into the camera. Perhaps the mother is overtaken by shock, whereas her baby girl stares innocently into the lens, not yet old enough to understand what is happening around her.

A consistent detail among the prisoners is their identification numbers. Individuals had no names and were referred to only as “Prisoner #108”, or “Prisoner #61”: a gesture of the Khmer Rouge ideology to strip people of identity and reduce their status as a human being. Most often, these numbers were pinned to their shirts, but in one particular case a photo shows the tag has been pinned directly into the skin of a young boy’s bare chest.



# 17 – pinned number through skin:

Due to the improper preservation of the original negatives, many were damaged. As a result, some portraits are marred with black splotches, blocking out features or faces of prisoners. It’s almost as if the individual has been physically erased: an eerie symbol of what was actually occurring at S-21.

Perhaps one of the most significant factors we encounter in these photos is the range of people of all ages. Presumably from different social and economic backgrounds, men, women, children, and the elderly are featured. They had families, went to school, had careers and aspirations. We are reminded of how this atrocity affected everyone, regardless of whom they were or what they did. Perhaps some of these portraits resonate personally with you, as these are people with whom we stand.

As much as each individual holds powerful significance, it's the installation as a whole that helps us understand the magnitude of this tragedy. Whether your response is emotional, aesthetic or intellectual, it's the impact of these combined portraits that creates a lasting impression.

It is often asked: Who are the people in the S-21 photographs? Unfortunately the answer is: Because the originals made by the Khmer Rouge were separated from the confession files of S-21 inmates immediately after Khmer-Rouge rule, identifying the individuals is difficult and most remain anonymous.

But learning something of the lives extinguished during the Khmer Rouge reign is key to *Observance and Memorial*. With the assistance of the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum and The Documentation centre of Cambodia, the characteristics of these individuals have been recovered— somewhat of an act of resistance against the anonymity of mass murder.

In fact, in the following tracks 9 and 10 are the biographies of Koy Thuon and Hout Bophana.

### **Track 9: Koy Thuon**

Born in 1933, Koy Thuon was a schoolteacher. He is one of the few people in this exhibition pictured sitting on a bench, his shackled ankles conveying the horror of S-21. He joined the Communist Party in 1960 and rose to become the Minister of Commerce in Democratic Kampuchea.

As economic problems mounted, Thuon was blamed. Arrested in January, 1977, he was accused of immorality and of being a CIA agent. His arrest was part of Pol Pot's wider purges of senior Khmer Rouge leaders and hundreds of associated cadres. He was transferred to S-21, interrogated and tortured by chief, Duch. Thuon left more than 600 pages of confessions drawn from 45 interrogation sessions; his last dated April 3, 1977. He was executed shortly thereafter. His wife and all seven of their children were also arrested and killed.



Koy Thuon

### **Track 10: Hout Bophana**

Born in 1952, Bophana grew up in East Baray. Bophana, at one point, worked at an American-run charity and was engaged to Ly Sitha before the two were separated by the Civil War. After the Khmer Rouge takeover, they reunited as husband and wife.

When Sitha was transferred away, the couple began to write each other love letters—expressions of intimacy that were strictly forbidden by the revolution. Then Sitha's boss was accused of treason and sent to S-21. In turn, Sitha was arrested, followed by Bophana.

She arrived at S-21 in October, 1976, where security police read her letters and discovered she had worked for a foreign charity. For five months, Bophana was interrogated and tortured. Comprised of over 1000 pages, her confession file is the largest from S-21. She was executed on March 18, 1977, at the age of 25.

Hout Bophana's life-story is published in the book titled *Bophana*, by Elizabeth Becker, and is the subject of the film *Bophana: A Cambodian Tragedy*, by Rithy Panh. She is commemorated by the Bophana centre in Phnom Penh.



Bophana:

### **Track 11: Memorial Space**

**[Insert chant sound track]**

As you move from the portrait section of the exhibit, you arrive in a space reserved for quiet reflection. Before you stands a sculpture representing a stylized version of a *chedei*, or *stupa*, a traditional Cambodian memorial to the dead. It is constructed from laminated reclaimed plywood beams and stands 17 feet high. Its towering shape is similar to a traditional hand bell and visually communicates a noble presence in this exhibition. Visitors are encouraged to touch the Stupa.

The recordings that you hear are two Cambodian Buddhist chants performed by the late Prum Ut. A native of Kampong Speu province, Prum Ut was often invited to Phnom Penh to perform in funerals and religious ceremonies, including several rituals at the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum in memory of victims of the Khmer Rouge.

The first recording is an excerpt from the Pali-language text *Sattappakaran ābhidhamma*, or “Summary of the Seven Books of the Higher Teaching.” This chant is performed on behalf of the deceased at Buddhist memorial services throughout Southeast Asia.

The second recording is an excerpt from the Khmer text *Preah Trai Leak*, or “The Three Marks.” This chant is performed as a means of aiding the living and their contemplation of death and is dedicated to those who have passed.

Words of the Buddha from the Metta Sutta are also featured on the wall of this space.

They read:

In those who harbour thoughts of blame and vengeance toward others, hatred will never cease.

In those who do not harbour blame and vengeance, hatred will surely cease.

For hatred is never appeased by hatred. Hatred is appeased by love.

Just as a mother would protect her only child, even at the risk of her own life, so let one cultivate a boundless heart toward all beings.

Let one's thoughts of love pervade the whole world—above, below, and across, without any obstruction, without any hatred, without any enmity.

As long as one is awake, one should maintain this very life.

## **Track 12: The Perpetrators**

This portion of the exhibition, mainly comprised of text panels and a timeline, identifies some key perpetrators involved with S-21. The Holocaust, along with the genocides in Cambodia and Rwanda, indicate that in extreme circumstances ordinary people can be harnessed as participants in human extermination.

In Cambodia, revolutionary fervor undermined traditional social norms, moral restraints and legal prohibitions. The radical societal transformation occurred in the aftermath of great socio-economic upheaval following the Vietnam War, extensive bombing of Cambodia, the coup against Prince Sihanouk, and the protracted civil war.

The senior administrators and interrogators at S-21, such as Duch and Mam Nay, who headed the interrogation unit, were ordinary people—mostly men in their thirties who had previously worked as school teachers. The majority of workers at S-21 were young Cambodian primary school students from rural areas, apprentice monks or family farm helpers.



Male Staff of Khmer Rouge:

Common to other genocide perpetrators, workers at S-21 claimed they were “just following orders”. Their participation in torture and executions was out of a basic obedience to the revolutionary organization “Angkar”, and fear of reprisal should they refuse to adhere to commands. One S-21 guard-turned-executioner named Lor stated: “I had to obey the orders of my superiors. If they ordered me to do something, I would do it. If we didn’t obey, we would have been killed.” Additional motivations among perpetrators include conformity, peer pressure and careerism.

S-21 participants in torture and executions generally performed progressively more brutal tasks as they became desensitized to the violence. They were indoctrinated to believe they were serving “Angkar” by eliminating impure, diseased elements of society and “hidden enemies burrowing from within,”— that is, individuals who were a proposed danger to the new revolution. Prisoners at S-21 were thusly perceived as sub-human and legitimate targets of violence whose torture and execution posed no moral dilemma.

### **Track 13: Nhem En**

The S-21 portraits displayed in this exhibition were taken by Nhem En, along with a staff of 5 assistant photographers. En joined the Khmer Rouge at age 10 and five years later was sent to China to study photography. Upon return at age 16, En was named S-21’s chief photographer and oversaw the visual documentation of the more than 14,000 prisoners who passed through the prison.

Nhem En remained with the Khmer Rouge until 1996, at which time he defected under government amnesty. In 2007, he appeared as a witness before Cambodia's Khmer Rouge Tribunal and prosecutors of S-21's former chief, Kaing Guek Eav. En currently works as the deputy governor of Anlong Veng district. At the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum, there is a 2007 colour photo of En on site at the prison holding a medium-format camera.



Nhem En:

### **Track 14: The Fall of the Khmer Rouge**

In late 1978, Vietnamese armed forces and allied Cambodian forces entered Cambodia in response to Khmer Rouge incursions into Vietnam. The Vietnamese army took control of Phnom Penh in January, 1979 and set up new communist government, the People's Republic of Kampuchea.

A 1979 photographic image of liberation depicts armed forces of the Kampuchean United Front for National Salvation, a political party opposed to Pol Pot, entering Phnom Penh on two trucks. People gathered on the roadside watch as they passed. Another photo depicts Phnom Penh just after the overthrow of the Khmer Rouge regime.



Entering Phnom Penh

A third photo shows two children standing among rubble in the streets. The city had been almost completely barren of people since early 1975, and appears like a ghost town. The Khmer Rouge remained as an insurgent movement in regions of the country until the late 1990s, fully disbanding only after the death of Pol Pot in 1998.



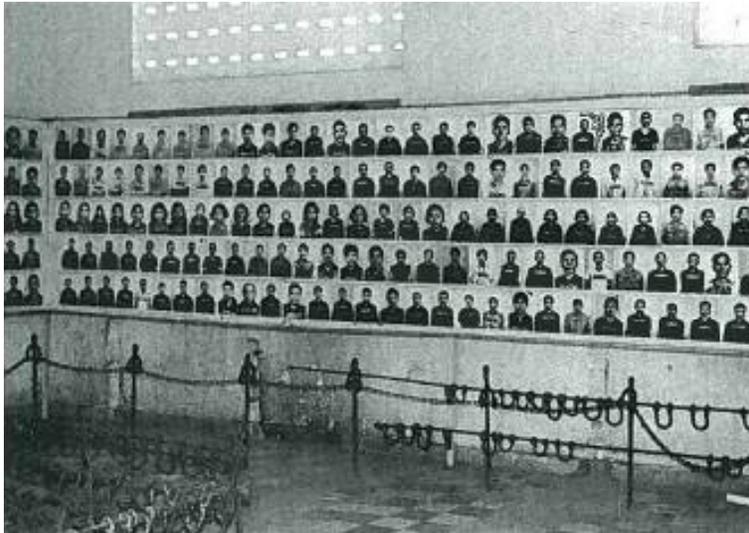
Phnom Penh in 1979 just after the overthrow of the Khmer Rouge regime. Picture courtesy of Marcus Thompson/Oxfam.

Despite evidence of atrocities in Democratic Kampuchea, global powers, including the US and China, continued to support the Khmer Rouge. In fact, the Khmer Rouge occupied Cambodia's seat at the United Nations until 1992. But in the 1991 Paris Conference on Cambodia established an internationally-guaranteed settlement to restore peace to the country. The first national elections were administered by United Nations Transitional Authority for Cambodia in May 1993.

Until commencement of Kaing Guek Eav's trial in 2009, no senior Khmer Rouge leader had ever been brought to trial in an internationally recognized court of law. Soon after the Khmer Rouge fall from power in January 1979, S-21 was converted into a museum by Cambodia's new Vietnamese-controlled government. Thousands of prisoner portraits, instruments of torture, and the site itself were displayed as evidence of the crimes committed by the Khmer Rouge.

Cambodian survivors have visited the museum to examine the display of portraits in search of information on missing friends and relatives. To this day, prisoner portraits remain the central feature of the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum's permanent exhibition.

#### Tuol Sleng Prisoners Portraits



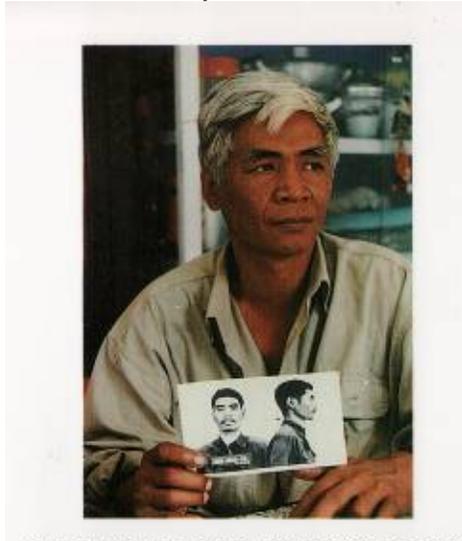
A photo from inside the present-day museum demonstrates this. Five dense rows of prisoner portraits cover an entire wall, and we again get a sense of the overwhelming number of lives lost. Below the photos hangs a display of the heavy shackles worn by prisoners and the museum has also preserved the instruments of torture used by S-21 interrogators.

#### **Track 15: Vann Nath**

You will now be able to hear the stories of individuals who survived the Khmer Rouge regime. First is Vann Nath, one of only seven survivors from S-21. A commercial artist by trade, Nath was ordered to work on a collective farm following the Khmer Rouge's takeover.

He laboured obediently, but in late 1977 was arrested for reasons never explained. Following interrogation and torture, he was transported to S-21, which he survived only due to the discovery that he could paint. His captors put his skills to use painting portraits of Pol Pot but if his work failed to please the leader, he would be executed.

A recent photograph of grey-haired Vann Nath shows him holding two small black and white photos of himself upon entering S-21 at age 32.

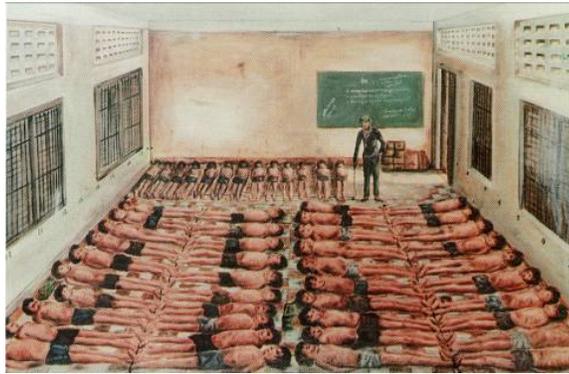


Vann Nath: Vann Nath was born in 1946 in Cambodia's

This is a larger photographic reproduction of one of Vann Nath's paintings. It depicts his own interrogation, which took place in a prison at Kandal Pagoda and not S-21. During questioning, he was subjected to heavy electric shocks, resulting in the blood on the floor before him.



Vann Nath painting:



Vann Nath painting:

Earlier in this exhibition was another frightening work by Vann Nath. Although he painted many scenes that he'd personally witnessed in the prison, he also painted scenarios described to him by other S-21 inmates. This particular painting shows row upon row of prisoners lying face up on the floor, scantily clothed and shackled together. Starving and ill, they are awaiting interrogation.

Today, there are a number of S-21 survivors now living in Canada. After surviving the Khmer Rouge regime, many Cambodians fled their devastated homeland for refugee camps, particularly in Thailand from where they could apply for resettlement in a number of other countries.

Most Cambodians in Canada today arrived in the 1980s, after federal legislation enabled the immigration of Southeast Asian refugees. Twenty thousand Cambodian refugees settled in Canada during this period. Several, who are survivors of the Khmer Rouge regime speak about their lives before, during and after the Cambodian genocide. Most report finding some measure of reconciliation with their difficult pasts.

### **Track 16: Oral Histories and Survivors**

Included in this area is a touch monitor profiling four survival stories of individuals who've immigrated from Cambodia to the Toronto area. Continue listening to this track for two stories by Ny San and Kunthea Thorng.

[Insert both video sound tracks]

## Track 17: Justice & Accountability

The most senior living members of the Khmer Rouge are now on trial for their crimes against humanity, war crimes, and genocide committed in Cambodia between April 1975 and January 1979. The Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia, commonly known as the Khmer Rouge Tribunal, is a hybrid court established in 2003 by the Royal Government of Cambodia and the United Nations. It applies both Cambodian and international laws.

The long delay in bringing Khmer Rouge leaders to justice is due to political instability and interference in Cambodia, complex domestic issues, international political interests, and a lack of funding.

At the very least, the S-21 portraits in this exhibition remind us of the world's failure to protect people from atrocities in so many places, like Bosnia, Rwanda and Darfur. Although these portraits document a historical genocide, the individuals featured should compel us to prevent future mass atrocities.



The Kamping Pouy Reservoir:

As you make your way out of the exhibition, you're presented with a large colour photo of The Kamping Pouy reservoir. This was one of the Khmer Rouge's grandiose agricultural projects where thousands of people perished during its construction. Today, the lake is home to an abundance of lotus farms. This image of vegetation sprawling atop a sky-blue pond evokes a sense of tranquility, and is symbolic of healing and regeneration.

Accompanying the image is a Prayer for Peace which reads

The suffering of Cambodia has been deep.  
From this suffering comes great Compassion.  
Great Compassion makes a Peaceful Heart.  
A Peaceful Heart makes a Peaceful Person.  
A Peaceful Person makes a Peaceful Community.  
A Peaceful Community makes a Peaceful Nation.  
And a Peaceful Nation makes a Peaceful World.  
May all beings live in Happiness and Peace.  
Amen.