Title: Frances Glessner Lee – the Truth As Opposed to Photography

Abstract: Photography has been the main medium documenting crime-scenes, and thus it has become a powerful tool in knowledge production processes in legal contexts. Throughout the history of photography in legal processes, such imagery has been used as a source for extraction of information.

Already in the 1870's it was clear that imagery on its own was difficult to analyze. Therefore, Alphonse Bertillon accompanied the portraits depicting detained persons with a series of eleven measurements. These allowed him to establish a classification system, link images with quantifiable information. The identity of a person could thus be proven, it had legal validity. Bertillon's *talking portraits* made individuals identifiable by the state.

Francis Galton's *composite portraits* did not represent an individual. They were meant to predict what the subject may look like by overlaying portraits of persons belonging to a specific group, such as criminals, onto a single photographic plate. The sharp traits of the resulting portrait were representing the average, while the blur in the images measured deviation. However, no criminal has ever been caught using the speculative imagery. Composite photography was using the reputation of photography as medium mirroring reality in order to develop fictional identities.

As a photography enthusiast, the Austrian philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein was experimenting with the medium, which brought him to composite portraiture. He was, however, using it to develop a reflection on the relation between the world and its images. The initial stimulus for Wittgenstein's reflection on models was reading about a trial, where the court arranged a visual reproduction of a car accident, using model cars and pedestrians. The article helped Wittgenstein understand that language works by triggering images in the mind of the listener. According to his theory, however, our transmission of images is not smooth. That explains why the court needed to make recourse to an actual model. Words could be misleading, they could trigger incorrect images. Therefore, the court needed to stage the accident instead of hearing about it or inspecting images. Narration of events, just like photography, includes too many blind spots, areas that are not covered by the words or the frame. There is too much indetermination.

Yet, such representations have become a source for data-extraction. Representation is a tool for knowledge production. It does not merely depict reality. From models we obtain data that had not been put in them. They have become measurers of reality. The way various media create realities and the very realities can be revealed through scrutiny of the work of Wittgenstein's contemporary, Frances Glessner Lee and the philosopher's aesthetic percpective.

Glessner Lee, "the mother of forensic science," was conscious of the bias in photographs taken by police officers documenting their own perspective on the investigated events without any given guidelines regulating their treatment of the crime scene. In order to oppose the deceptions of photography, she started documenting crime scenes in meticulous details through dioramas. The dioramas were meticulously built to match the reality almost perfectly. The resolution of the details, the use of specific materials and craft techniques were meant to reproduce a crime scene and preserve it for further inspection. The dioramas introduced a new approach to observation and reflection on space, individual objects and bodies placed in it, together with their mutual spatial relations.

Glessner Lee did not only conceive of model-making within the investigation process, she did equally develop a specific model of observing the dioramas, one opposing the photographic one, one where framing was not set in advance but could always be reconsidered. In contrast with the lack of

guidelines for investigators inspecting crime-scenes, she established a set of rules for exploring the dioramas. Understanding the importance of focused observation, the crime-scene models were meant to be inspected with hand-held torches for a period of 90 minutes. Glessner Lee's models were conceived as laboratories for the investigator's mind, questioning perception based on photography. The dioramas were a tool enabling the investigator to grasp the world.

This idea is a common ground with her contemporary Ludwig Wittgenstein. The philosopher was equally thinking of the world as models. The legal process which inspired him brought his attention to various kinds of imagery, to various mediums. He acknowledges specific kinds of images and their particularities. He perceives the image as a measure of the world. The analgous organization of elements with the picture and elements within the world constitutes the representative qualities of an image. Glessner Lee's dioramas were reflecting on the particularities of various images through a shift of medium. They were offering an alternative to photograph frames surrounded by obscure voids. These voids were the zone through which bias, stereotypes and prejudice were taking control over crime-investigation.

To prove the efficiency of her method of seeing and thinking, she built 20 dioramas of crimes committed on the underprivileged (such as women, the working class, alcoholics etc.) trying to question the bias which initially tainted police investigation. Her dioramas were used in Harvard's newly established department of legal medicine, the predecessor of forensic science. They are still being used in investigator-training, therefore, the solutions of the crimes depicted in dioramas are still kept secret. Her achievements brought her the title of the first female police captain in the US and a teaching position at Harvard University without any previous university degree.

Although, Glessner Lee's achievements are not a well-known chapter in the history of aesthetic practices in legal processes, media analysis remains a deep concern in the field. It is the basis of practices of experts such as Eyal Weizman, the head of Forensic Architecture. Weizman situates the threshold of the law within the image, within the media reality. Forensic Architecture are scrutinizing the evidentiary problems, traces of erasure in imagery used as evidence in investigation of crimes against humanity.