FORENSIC PHOTOGRAPHY

What is it?

- **Forensic Photography is the fair and accurate recording of a scene or object, of legal interest, by a camera.**

- "For the police photographer, photographs are statements of what he or she saw at a scene (Miller, p.9)."

- For Forensic Pathologists: Photos **supplement** the medical forensic history & physical findings. *(A written description & body diagrams of injuries should accompany the photos)*

From Forensic Guru Dr. Henry Lee:

"The purpose of crime scene photography is to provide a **visual record** of the scene and related areas; to **record** the initial appearance of the crime scene and physical evidence; to provide investigators and others with the **permanent record** subsequent (sic) analysis of the scene; and to provide the **permanent record** to the court…crime scene photography is one of the **most important** steps in the entire investigation process. As one of the primary documentation components, systematic, organized **visual record** of an undisturbed crime scene must be achieved (Lee, et. al., pp. 80-81)."
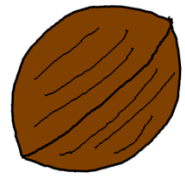
What can this pic tell you?

Where is it on the body?

How big is it?

Who is this?

So… in a nutshell

- Photography is an important part of **documentation in** an autopsy…

- **Photos provide a permanent record of**:

  a) What is there

  b) What is not there (**pertinent negative**)

  c) What physician sees, or does not see

  d) What the photographer sees that the physician does not

M&P of Photography

- Cameras actually used are more advanced than the ones we will be using in class
    - 35mm, "regular" or "digital"

White Balance Settings

This series of images shows the same set of bruises, all photographed under the same lighting conditions: a white fluorescent bulb. The color variant is caused by the changes in the white-balance setting on the camera. The camera settings for each photo, from left to right are: white-fluorescent (correct), standard fluorescent, incandescent/tungsten, and cloudy. Photos courtesy Danny Nichois, NFSTC

A FEW BASIC RULES

- Get a **complete series of images**:
  - **OVERALL**: wide <, entire body (front & back)
  - **ORIENTATION**: specific pts of interest in reference to a "**landmark**"
  - **MACRO**: close up, detailed photos
- **Record all data**: keep some kind of photo narrative. Some investigators keep a written log, others keep an audio log. Digital cameras will sequence images.
- **Do not delete** digital images on camera.

Setting Up to Take the Pics

1. Clean the area
2. Dry the area *(fluids reflect)*
3. Manipulate the body for good camera & flash angles
4. Case # arrangement
5. Correct $< = \perp$ to body or pt of interest
6. Field of view = sufficient
7. Focus: *be in it!*

This is a cathedral in Dessau, Germany

Inside, high up on the ceiling, are these architectural designs

Both pics are of the same thing
WHY DO WE CARE???

What photos to take?

- **"as is" photos**
  - How the body comes to the morgue *(w/clothes, jewelry, other personal effects, etc)*
- **Standard Photos**
  - After clothing removed & body cleaned
  - Full body & face
- **Injury Photos**
  - close-ups depend on the case
  - Use a ruler/scale & color control in each pic

CYA: When in doubt = TAKE A PIC!!

PHOTO DOCUMENATION

1. **OVERALL**: a) front   b) back *(1-3 shots each)*
2. **FACE**: a) front b) profile c) unique features
3. **OLD SCARS**: previous injuries, tattoos
4. **CLOTHES & PERSONAL EFFECTS**
5. **WOUNDS**: a) orientation photos b) macro photos *(include case # & ruler)* c) tool (?)
6. **INTERNAL INJURY**: *pat dry b4 shtng*
7. **PROJECTILES & PATHWAYS**: a) normal, w/out aide b) w/rod thru pathway
8. **GROSS SPECIMEN**: unique pathlgcl fndngs

ALSO DOCUMENT

1. **When** taken (date **and** time)

2. **Sequence** taken in

3. Make sure you'll be able to **orient** them properly at a later date

MOST COMMON ERRORS

- **Identification Problems:** There are no references/documentation to indicate the identity of the image; incorrectly labeled

- **Orientation Problems:** What is right, left, up, and down??? What angle was it taken at? *Include a mid-range orient photo*

- **Confusion Problems:** When were the images taken?

- **Incomplete Documentation:** What was the systematic process, and have all crucial aspects been photographed.

- **"Crappy" Pic:** out of focus, bad lighting, glare, pic not centered, parts of pic cut off

MORE COMMON ERRORS

- **Poor Taste:** blood on table/rags, blood seen in pic

- **Too Bloody**: *a photo of an injury w/o caked, pooled, or smeared blood is more likely to be admitted into evidence & shown to a jury than an excessively bloody one*

- **Minimal Bkgrd & Distractions**: get as close up as possible to reduce the # of non-relevant distractions in the bkgrnd

GOAL of PICTURES

Show the viewer **what** you took a picture of, **NOT what else** you took a picture of