



# A National View of Forensic Art

Originally presented at the  
**American Academy of Forensic Sciences**

Atlanta, 2012

Law enforcement agencies recognize the information generating value of the hand drawn Forensic Art Composite. Detectives understand that the quality of the facial image going to the public can affect the quality of the response from the public. Staff get formally trained and make the commitment to draw for their agencies. Software may be a tool, but there is always a forensic artist working the computer.

Across the United States, there are currently over 30 full time units with over 50 full time artists. There are approximately a total of 100 part time forensic artists in addition to this. In Canada half of the country has full time forensic artist coverage.

Facial Composite Software programs have a use with low-level crime cases only. The applications take one of two approaches – “the simplistic ” or “convoluted.” Most witnesses find the process unsatisfactory and the employee tasked with the collateral duty, frustrated.

Forensic Artists are trained in the cognitive interview technique while those trained with software usually use an interrogation method, which does not elicit the best drawing. Defense attorneys hope that the inexperienced, with minimal training, is whom they face in court. Professionally trained Forensic Artists are prepared for courtroom testimony.

Agencies understand that getting access to a professionally trained Forensic Artist is affordable. Most professional Forensic Artists who work for a law enforcement agency have another title – detective, deputy sheriff, police officer, crime scene investigator, fingerprint tech, secretary or graphic artist. For smaller agencies, arrangements are made with a neighboring agency or a state agency, which has a professionally trained artist on staff, to extend professional courtesy when needed.

Investigators understand that training for this discipline goes well beyond “just drawing.” There are several teachers in the field that offer regularly scheduled training.

The Forensic Art discipline includes a variety of services. But with each application, whether a composite, facial reconstruction, video image approximation or post mortem drawing, skill and training is key and the quality of the image, crucial.

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