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The work of supervisor forensic artists education, methods, special cases and international cooperation

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Forensic Artists are specialists who know how to visualize and actualize the memory of a subject from the specific areas of an individual's brain by using a modified cognitive interview technique. The goal of the forensic artist is to transfer all of what an eyewitness or traumatized victim describes into a perfect image through the use of digital imaging software and/or hand drawings. A composite, however, is not only a portrait of a wanted person. All identifiable and recognizable individual characteristics are useful to investigate and locate unidentified persons. For example, it can be helpful to display the head in profile view to show the specific shape of a nose or ear. A composite of an individual or group identifying a unique shape, appearance or specific clothing can facilitate an investigation. Identifiable objects such as jewelry, paintings, weapons, carry bags, and vehicles as well as the setting and/or specific buildings and landmarks can help identify the person(s) or location associated with the crime scene. A Forensic Artist is able sketch an age progression for longtime missing persons, children and perpetrators and reconstructs disfigured or decaying faces from corpses. Reference materials are critical in Forensic Artistry as the collective vocabulary, based on our individual mental images and schema, vary dramatically for developing detailed descriptions. Wortmann concludes that the optimal way for eyewitnesses to perform their task effectively and efficiently, is to describe what they visualize with the aid of specialized reference tools.

Biography

Rainer Wortmann is the head Forensic Artist for the Department of Biometrics at the State Office of Criminal Investigation headquartered in Stuttgart, Baden-Württemberg, Germany. He has been creating composites for more than 16 years and is the vice-chairman of the Federal Workgroup Composite in Germany. In 2008 he was trained by the FBI-Academy (Quantico, USA) in Forensic Facial Imaging and in 2010 by the NCMEC at USF (Tampa, USA) in Forensic Imaging Techniques. As Forensic Artist Supervisor, Wortmann continually researches the best techniques in creating composites, develops best practices in working with victims and eyewitnesses as well as searches for new scientific findings in how the memory of the brain works to facilitate acquiring detailed information from recall. Additionally, Wortmann organizes seminars, workshops and conferences while collecting and providing the newest reference materials for creating composites. He frequently provides training to Forensic Artists throughout Europe. Together with Dr. Heike Schmidt, Wortmann is writing a book that includes all components necessary in composite sketching which is scheduled for publication in 2014/2015.

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