



## Jurisprudence Section - 2016

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### F18 Progressive Forensic Exhibit Techniques for Court

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After attending this presentation, attendees will better understand how contemporary methods of forensic art and animation technologies are employed in court and how these methods can advance the clarity and absorption of case information.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by providing examples of the techniques used in modern courtroom exhibits and the variety of types of models and images that go beyond the expected and beyond what has been used in the past. This presentation will introduce attendees to the possibilities of what can be accomplished in the courtroom when it comes to visual exhibits. The Maricopa County Attorney's Office of Phoenix, AZ, was forward thinking in the creation of a full-time civilian forensic exhibit specialist position in 1998. Because of an increased caseload and a desire to address client needs, this role expanded to three full-time forensic exhibit specialists in 2014. These individuals are available to all of the Maricopa County Attorney's Office attorneys for any of their exhibit needs.

A majority (60%-65%) of the human population are visual-spatial learners, by what is referred to as visual processing.<sup>1</sup> Research has demonstrated that juries have difficulty absorbing complex information delivered only in a verbal narrative fashion; however, information presented visually is much more easily understood and retained, with an even more significant increase in retention occurring when information is communicated both visually and orally.<sup>2</sup> Thus, having clear and effective visual exhibits are critical to making a persuasive argument.

Quality visual exhibits assist attorneys in understanding the complexity of their own cases, increase the power of pre-trial negotiations, help explain complex behaviors and facts to a jury, and provide anchor-point exhibits for the jury to reference during the course of a trial. Finally, exhibits can be compiled into a "jury book" that can be used by individual jurors to make notes during trial and to reference later during deliberations.

Attorney's offices are often limited to the use of Microsoft® PowerPoint® to create presentations for court. More often than not, attorneys or paralegals with little to no experience with visual design are left to create important visual support for courtroom arguments, resulting in presentations that are not as effective as possible. Utilizing skilled professionals can lead to the creation of outstanding assets: compelling 3D illustrations, animations, and high-quality graphics.

Examples of the types of scenarios that Forensic Exhibit Specialists contribute to courtroom procedures in Maricopa County include digital image clarification and enhancement, examining video imagery, and selecting appropriate stills for use in identifying suspects. Specialists use all available software including the Adobe® Creative Suite, SketchUp®, Blender™, Cinema 4D, and others to create 2D and 3D crime scene presentations from crime scene drawings and Google® Earth imagery. The 3D animations of crime scenes can virtually take the jury through the crime scene without entering potentially pejorative imagery into court.

This study will demonstrate, via examples using commercially available software as well as proprietary technologies, how forensic artists contribute on a daily basis to the prosecution of criminal behavior in Maricopa County and how this skillset can be used elsewhere to create stronger courtroom presentations.

#### Reference(s):

1. Sahyoun B., Soulières, Schwartz, and Mody. Neuroimaging of the Functional and Structural Networks Underlying Visuospatial versus Linguistic Reasoning in High-Functioning Autism. *Neuropsychology*. 2010 January; 48(1): 86-95.
2. Ferguson D. (The Hon Mr. Justice). 2004. The use of technology in the trial courts. *The Litigator*; Fall: 37-43.

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#### Courtroom Exhibits, Animation, Forensic Art