

New 3-D technology raises hopes for the coldest of cold cases

October 21 2016, by Tamara Lush



Dr. Erin Kimmerle, associate professor in the Department of Anthropology at the University of South Florida, gestures as she speaks to the members of the Art of Forensics conference Friday, Oct. 21, 2016, in Tampa, Fla. Kimmerle, and several forensic artists, have been working with law enforcement officials on cold cases in Florida to help give victims a face in hopes family members may recognize them. (AP Photo/Chris O'Meara)

The faces are haunting. They stare, straight ahead, unblinking and made of malleable clay. There are fourteen total, all busts of the missing, the unidentified, the murdered. The forgotten.

These faces appeared before [law enforcement](#), University of South Florida experts and the public for the first time on Friday. The clay busts were the effort of University of South Florida forensic anthropologists and forensic artists who pulled images of unidentified bodies from cold case files, printed their skulls in 3D plastic, then molded heads and faces that someone might recognize.

They're hoping to solve 20 cases, including 12 from Florida, four from Pennsylvania, two from Kentucky, one from Missouri, and one from Tennessee.

Some are decades old. Investigators hope that updated DNA procedures and chemical isotope testing will help them identify the bodies and ultimately, learn what happened to them.

"Time stands still for these victims," said Cpl. Tom McAndrew of the Pennsylvania State Police.

This is the second year of the Art of Forensics event. It was conceived by Joe Mullins, a forensic artist for the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children.

While most of this year's 20 cold cases are of adults who were found dead, one was a baby. In August 2003, an infant's body was found in a pond in Gainesville. They think the remains are that of a girl. That's all investigators know; it's unclear how the baby died, and the artists did only a computer sketch of the baby.



A clay bust and details surrounding an unidentified victim in a Florida cold case file is shown during the the Art of Forensics conference Friday, Oct. 21, 2016, in Tampa, Fla. University of South Florida associate professor for Anthropology Erin Kimmerle, and several forensic artists, have been working with law enforcement on cold cases in order to help victims have a face in hopes family members may recognize them. (AP Photo/Chris O'Meara)

Alachua County Sheriff Sadie Darnell talked about the case, and said there is a "tsunami" of missing and unidentified cases in Florida, partially because of the state's transient population.

"Every single person represented here today was somebody's baby," she said. "This is the why of what we do in our work."

For Dr. Erin Kimmerle, a USF anthropologist and director of the school's Institute for Forensic Anthropology & Applied Science, it's

about justice for the families, especially in cases of homicides.

"There's a reason there are no statutes of limitations on murder," she said. "Stripping someone of their life is the ultimate crime."

Investigators acknowledge it's a long shot to crack these cases, but say it's worth the effort. After last year's Art of Forensics event, one cold case victim was identified.

This year's event also has raised hopes. Two sisters showed up, and intensely compared one of the clay faces to a picture they carried of their older sister, missing since the late 1970s. They teared up at the resemblance, and a detective whisked them away to collect information, possibly generating a lead.

More information: For details about the cases, go to usf.edu/forensicsevent

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