

BOOK REVIEW

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Review of: *Forensic Facial Reconstruction*

REFERENCE: Wilkinson C. *Forensic facial reconstruction*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK, 2004, 290 pp.

Facial reconstruction, as defined in this book, refers to the process “whereby the face of an individual is built onto the skull for the purpose of identification.” The volume joins a growing literature on this subject, reflecting advances in artistic techniques and the underlying science, as well as the sustained need to present facial imagery to the public with the goal of obtaining information helpful in identification of unknown remains.

This richly illustrated and well-written volume summarizes many scholarly areas of interest to those engaged or interested in this aspect of forensic science. Topics presented include issues of facial recognition, history, forensic anthropological estimation of individual attributes from the skull, the relationship between the hard and soft facial tissues, the nature of tissue depth data, accuracy assessment, the process applied to juvenile individuals and considerable detail on the particular methods employed by the author and others at her institution.

Although the volume has much strength, the sections on facial recognition, history, accuracy assessment, applications to juveniles and details of the method employed by the author are especially worthwhile. These areas are not well covered in other volumes on the subject and represent welcomed overviews that include much of the recent relevant literature. The history section includes inter-

esting and rarely cited information on methods of “anatomica plastica” and other early European techniques.

Sections on forensic anthropological analysis of the skull review the relevant literature with an emphasis on procedures that enhance the accuracy of facial reproduction. The discussion of race would benefit from more consideration of the important and inherent social dimensions and enhanced discussion of metrical approaches, especially the widely utilized Fordisc system involving custom discriminant functions. T.D. Stewart’s classic 1983 study using museum crania and dissection to assess the anatomical basis for eye positioning (Whitnall tubercles and attachment of the medial palpebral ligaments) is appropriately discussed on p. 110 but then incorrectly cited on p. 113 as including a study of the correlation of eyebrows with underlying skeletal features using death masks.

Discussion of procedures to estimate sex and age at death focuses almost exclusively on cranial features, whereas most skulls submitted for facial reconstruction originate from more complete skeletons where other, frequently more accurate, indicators are present. If available, the entire skeleton should be studied by a qualified forensic anthropologist with the results utilized by the forensic artist working only from the skull.

Overall, the book is quite useful and remarkably free of typographical errors. It provides important new perspective on the complex process of facial reconstruction that continues to be a fascinating combination of art and science.

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