

[HOW WE CAN FIND ...]

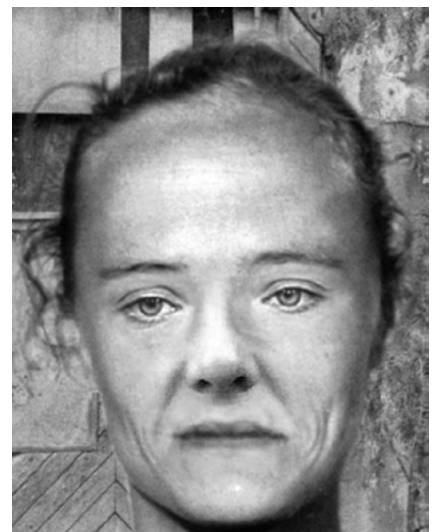
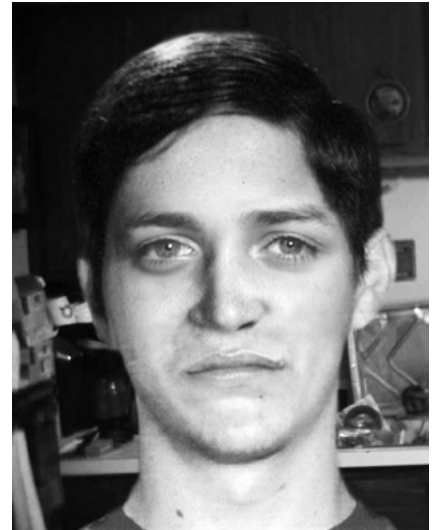
Usage of Composites Within Medicine & Criminal Justice

A historic perspective on the possibilities offered by photographic composites. **By Sir Francis Galton**

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HERE HAVE, so far as I know, been no attempts conducted in creating composite photographs of insanity or criminality. Normal people have, on the contrary, been thoroughly investigated by scholars within a diverse range of interest. It is therefore my desire to provide evidence that, by layering inmates of asylums and prisons on top of each other, one will finally end up looking into the eyes of madness and destruction.

The following composites are made from my own collection of photographs, taken in November of 1887. I begin by collecting photographs of the persons whom I want to investigate. They must be similar in attitude and size, but there does not need to be any exactness. The composite of *démence précoce* is made from the portraits of four patients with this diagnosis. *Démence précoce*, or more commonly called Early Dementia, is a psychotic disorder affecting young adults. It is commonly characterized by irrational, unintelligible, or uncontrolled behavior, which in some cases leads to a form of "split personality." Patients with this diagnosis furnish an unusually good field for this study since it will aid the greater good as it is a violent disorder, both for patients, and people in their immediate surrounding. This research could therefore be used so that disabled people might be caught at an earlier stage. The patients used for this composite were all in their second



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stage of the disease, when it was beginning to destroy their connection to reality in a more fundamental way. Comparability between the composite of *démence précoce* with that of *melancholia* will show how the characteristics differ between the two diseases. The eyes of the composite of *démence précoce* are uncontrolled but still present, showing a declining of intelligence, while the expression of the other composite is sad and thoughtful, but at the same time more distant. There is no lack of intelligence here, but there is less communication.

Mental diseases offer an exceptional field for the study of generic types, but I have also realized that this form of work could serve great good in the preventive work of the police force. After my work with mentally ill patients I turned my attention toward inmates at a well renowned, high security prison. I layered here four similarly sized and scaled portraits of women convicted of manslaughter. After I made two pinholes in each one of them, they were aligned and hung on one side of a specially built apparatus. In this way the eyes of each portrait became as close to superimposed as I could ever reach. Each individual was thereafter exposed to one photographic plate with a total exposure of eighty seconds. Features that are sharp and dark are shared by the largest number of inmates, while purely individual attributes leave little or no visible imprint. It is important to note that the resulting composite represents no one in particular, but portrays an imaginary figure possessing the average features of any given group of men or women. My hopes are that these composites will serve a preventive purpose by generalizing the facial appearance of certain types of criminals. The composites will be instructive as showing the type of face that is apt to accompany criminal tendencies *before* the features have become brutalized by crime.

The faces I have so far been able to reconstruct can be seen as nothing other than a great success. With a goal clearly defined and, later on reached, I find that these portraits reveal the most elaborate of secrets. But I have still not found an answer to the greatest mystery of them all, and I am afraid that I will not feel satisfied until I do. What I realized is that these generalized composites are faces of a crowd—always to be fleeting, gone before you blink, always calm; someone you think you can recognize, but will never be able to recall. How then will these photographs offer any help in finding out who the next criminal will be?

In an effort to make my research more exact and futuristic I have lately changed my focus and will from now on aim at finding a way to teach the human race how to breed in order to improve mankind and consequentially eliminate its worst stock. I have learned that even in this regard the photographic composite will be of great

help. My research will encourage a new sort of family exclusiveness as it will teach us what are the most useful human qualities and what exterior marks these will leave on our bodies. This will lead people, who would normally not be successful, to be able to study their family history and in this way discover inherited valuable qualities. With each new quality discovered, their ranks will prosper and the ones ranking highest will be unwilling to contaminate their stock by marrying into a family much lower on the scale. This is something that will be very appreciated. Marriages will become less blind and civilization will progress faster. This research is at its beginning and has so much practical significance. In the end I can do nothing more than hope that the best parents will produce the best children.

Sir Francis Galton (1822—1911) was an English Victorian polymath and a half-cousin of Charles Darwin. He was knighted in 1909.

