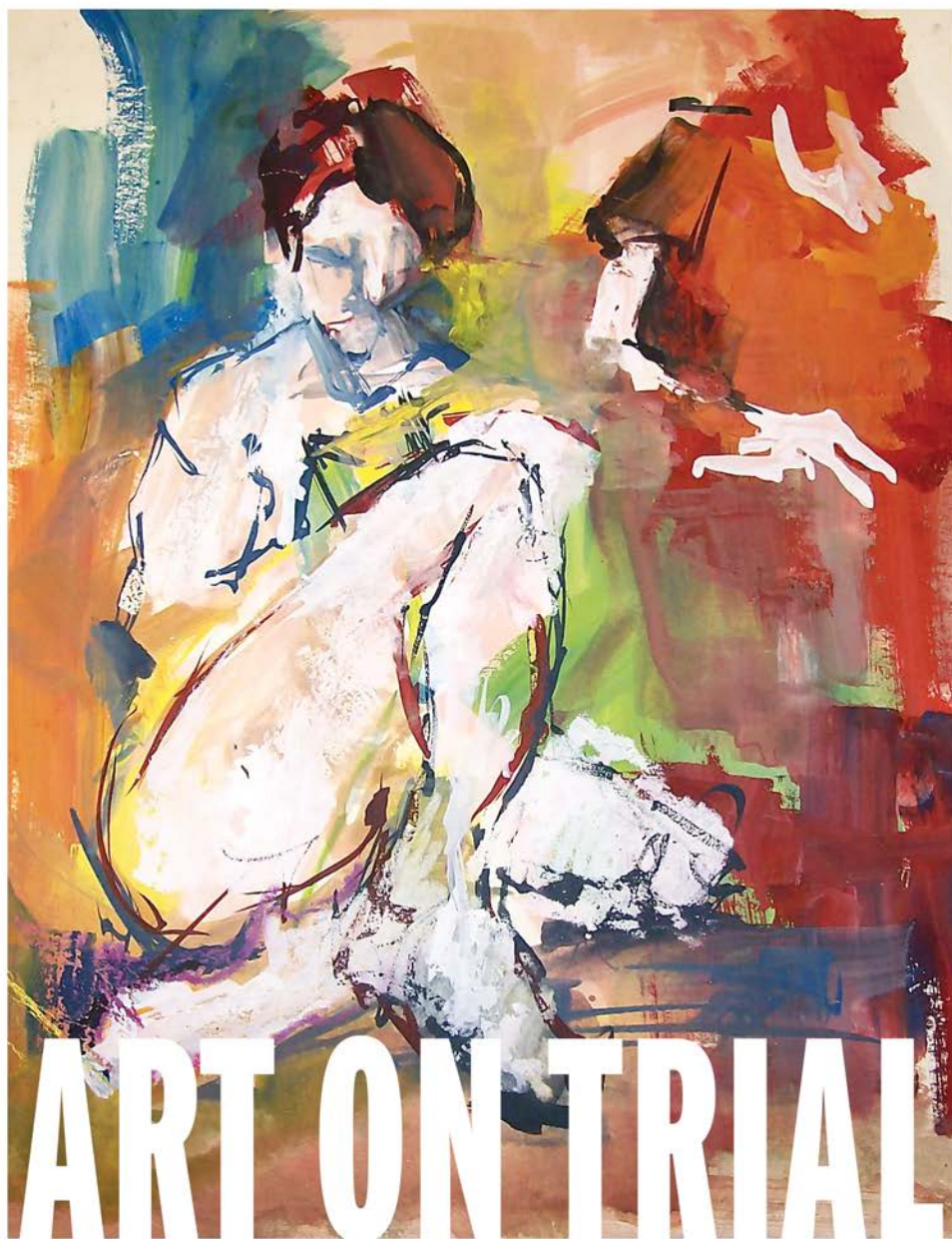


**DAVID E. GUSSAK**



# **ART ON TRIAL**

## **Art Therapy in Capital Murder Cases**

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# PREFACE

**A** *rt on Trial* is about the crossroads of art therapy, criminology, and assessments and the involvement of art therapists in capital murder trials. Until now, there have been a few publications available about forensic art therapy that focus on work with children and families, exclusively in abuse or custodial cases. One area of the field that has never been addressed is the role that an art therapist can serve in criminal and capital murder trials. The impetus for this examination emerged from a professional experience.

## THE IMPETUS

In the fall of 2006, I was contacted by a defense attorney in a state other than the one in which I live. She inquired if I could provide expert witness testimony on art created by a man, Kevin Ward,\* who was going to be tried for murder and attempted murder and for whom the prosecution was seeking the death penalty. I was contracted by the defense to testify that the large amount of art he had produced before, immediately after, and for several years following the crimes supported the claim that he was mentally ill when he committed the murder. The defense intended to use this strategy to prevent the state from putting the defendant to death.

One of the aims of this book is to explore how the defendant's art was used as evidence to help the defense determine if, indeed, he had suffered from mental illness at the time of the crimes. That he had committed

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\*With the exception of the three art therapists whose work is discussed in chapter 7, the names of all those connected with legal cases have been changed throughout this book.