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Oil and Canvas Art: Recovery and Analysis of Unidentified Remains Recovered 2004

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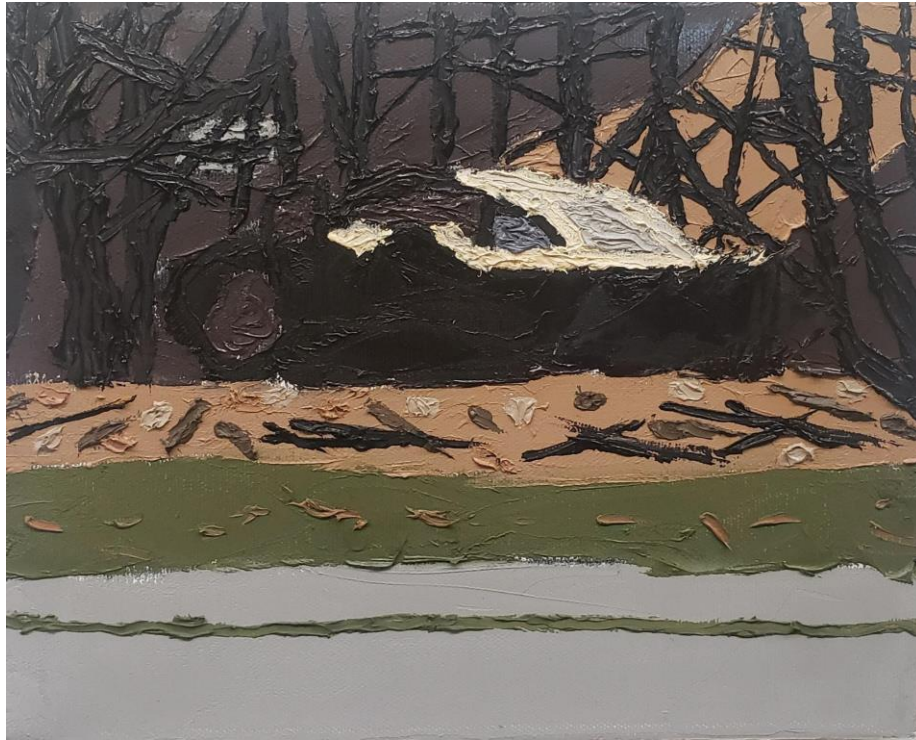
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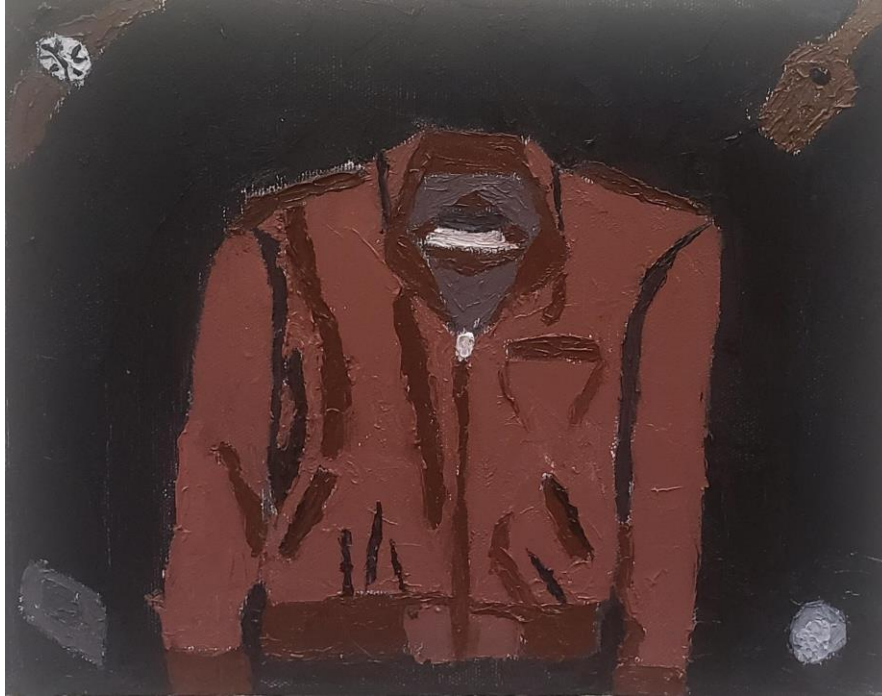
Dan Magelinski – ANTH 550 – Final Cold Case Project



On March 26 2004, a woman and her child were driving down Long Island’s Northern State Parkway when they experienced a car accident after attempting to make an illegal U-turn on a nearby utility road. Their car had veered off the road and had taken them into the surrounding brush (Galucci 2010). After gathering herself, the woman exited her vehicle in order to try to get help. However, when she stepped outside of her car she found that she had stepped right into a set of human skeletal remains. (Winter 2013)



The police were called and soon began both their investigation and their excavation of the area. Their efforts ended up uncovering what appeared to be the remains of a human male who had experienced some kind of high velocity projectile trauma. This individual was found to be both fully clothed but also appeared to have been partially placed inside of a plastic bag (Winter 2013). This combined with the lack of bullet casings or ID found at the scene would appear to indicate that the victim had been dumped there by someone else.



The clothing the remains were found in included a red 1980s Members Only Jacket, a white button up shirt, a pair of bell bottom pants, and a set of tube socks. The investigators also recovered an “afro-pick” comb, a Paragon Oil money clip, a coin minted in 1974, and an expensive Bulova watch (NBC). Using their knowledge of when these items of clothing were in fashion the investigators were able to make a presumptive estimation that the victim had probably died sometime in the 1980s. They were able to further support this by confirming with the factory that had made the jacket that it had been manufactured in 1982, as well as by looking at the other artifacts -such as the coin from 1974- which helped further establish firmer time parameters around the possible window of death. (NBC)



Based on their analysis of the remains, investigators had initially believed the victim to be of caucasian ancestry but over time became less sure. One of the most distinctive features that was observed about the victim's body was its height -being only 5-foot-2. Because of this, as well as the victim's slim build -having a 27 to 28 inch waist, investigators had initially believed that the remains had belonged to a child (Winters 2013). However, upon a dental examination by a forensic anthropologist the victim was actually determined to have been an adult somewhere between 35 to 55 years of age (Winters 2013). Based on the specificity in that estimated age window -which was said to have come just from examining the victim's teeth- it can be inferred that the anthropologists in question had had samples from the remains subjected to some kind of histological test. These tests could have been measuring a variety of things such as attrition, secondary dentin deposition, root transparency, root resorption, level of paradentium irregularity, and cementum apposition. It is likely that they used these characteristics to help in their age estimation for the victim.



To sum up, investigators were able to estimate that the victim was likely 5-foot-2, possibly white or hispanic, born biologically male, was somewhere between 35 to 50 years old when they had died, and had experienced trauma consistent with having been shot. Based on the clothing and the artifacts found with the body, investigators were also able to make a presumptive determination that the victim had likely died sometime in the 1980s and had probably had curly hair or an afro.

Due to the victim's below average height some have speculated that they may have been a jockey. There are several race tracks relatively near where the victim was found -such as Aqueduct or Belmont- which may support this hypothesis. However, because no one at any of the nearby tracks had reported any jockeys missing that too ended up being a dead end (Winter

2013). In addition to this, it has also been speculated that the true location of the crime scene may have been somewhere in Queens due to the history of the watch and money clip as well as its location relative to the scene of discovery. However there has been no solid confirmation of this possibility. (Winter 2013) (Lauinger 2019)

Despite all this information this case did eventually go cold leaving the identity of this victim to continue to remain a mystery. There are several reasons that this case may have gone cold. One thing that it could be attributed to was the lack of reported missing persons who seemed to match the profile of the victim. This combined with a lack of records -such as dental or radiographic- to compare the remains to would have made any kind of positive identification very difficult. Another potential issue may have been the inability or unwillingness to allocate the substantial amounts of people and resources necessary for a prolonged investigation of this case. Finally, the fact that the incident likely happened almost twenty years prior to the remains being discovered and the lack of activity on the case since then has no doubt been discouraging for investigators.

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