

Death of Marat, An Autopsy

Charles Tumosa, a lecturer who teaches the course Forensics and Art at UB, shares an analytical explanation of what's revealed in Jacques-Louis David's painting *Death of Marat*, which adorns a wall in one of the University's forensic labs.

head wrap and bathtub: Marat was already ill when he was killed and apparently suffered from headaches.

triangular stab wound and vertical blood flow: Marat was killed in the bathtub; his body hasn't been moved from a different murder site.

death warrants under Marat's hand: This is where a little bit of history comes in. Tumosa explains that Marat was a revolutionary in the French Revolution, and he was having anyone who displayed anti-Revolution sentiments killed by the authorities. The quill in his hand shows that he'd been signing those very death warrants.

note of introduction from Charlotte Corday: Some more history from Tumosa: Corday, Marat's killer, was caught at the scene, but given the note of introduction, Corday and Marat had never met before; it's dated July 13, the day before Bastille Day. According to History.com, "she had planned to kill Marat at the Bastille Day parade on July 14 but was forced to seek him out in his home when the festivities were canceled."

box: It says "For Marat" and is signed by the painter, David. Tumosa indicates its gravestone-like shape and points out that it says "L'An Deux," or Year Two, and is dated 1793. Tumosa says that revolutionaries considered the radicalization of the Revolution in 1792 as Year One, "restarting the world," he explains. He also says that this painting portrays Marat favorably, given the man's peaceful, almost pleasing appearance, as a "man who died happily for the Revolution."

assignat, or French paper money during the Revolution: The funds have been made out to widows and orphans of the Revolution; Tumosa says this is to make Marat look like a humanitarian despite the many people he had ordered killed.

kitchen knife with bloody, triangular blade: Given that the shape of the blade matches that of the stab wound, it's reasonable to deduce that this is the murder weapon.

