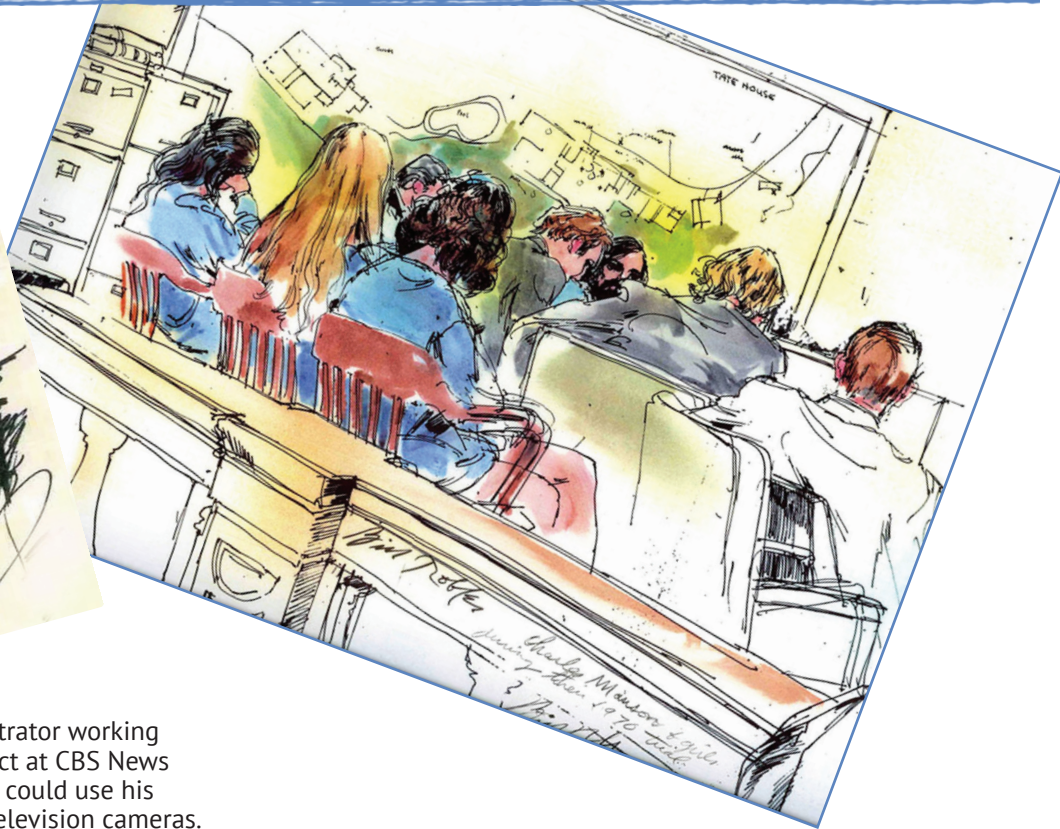
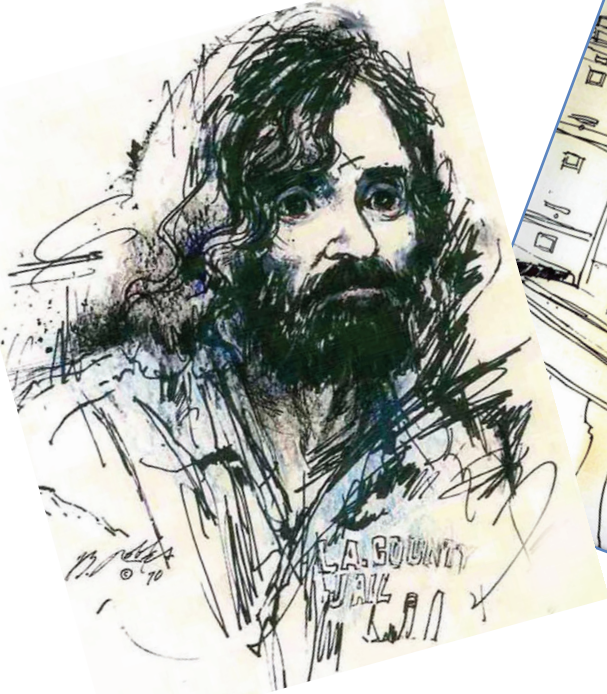


CHARLES MANSON



Bill Robles was a professional illustrator working in advertising when he called a contact at CBS News in June 1970. He thought the network could use his artistic skills on a big trial closed to television cameras. CBS hired Robles for the job.

The assignment was at the Los Angeles County Courthouse. On trial was cult leader Charles Manson and three of his female followers. They were accused of the brutal murders of Sharon Tate, a Hollywood movie star, and six other people.

"Nine and half months, everyday. Charles Manson trial. That was my first trial to cover. I had never set foot in a courtroom and all of the sudden I am thrust into that reality."

Robles sat only a few feet away from Manson, who usually wore a jail jumpsuit and flip-flops to court. During the trial Manson went through different looks. In the beginning he looked like a hippy with scraggly hair and a beard. He had carved an "X" on his forehead. Eventually he shaved his head and carved the "X" into a swastika. The girls shaved their heads too.

Robles remembered that Manson would stare down reporters and jurors with his cold, piercing eyes. The artist had learned to ignore Manson's stares or his co-defendants who sat behind Manson gossiping and giggling.

Most days were full of what Robles called "boring testimony." That is until one day, when Manson was acting more bizarre than usual.

"He became agitated and said something like 'somebody should cut your head off, old man' and then leaped on the table top and took a leap towards the judge. The bailiff tackled him in midair, and I captured that moment."

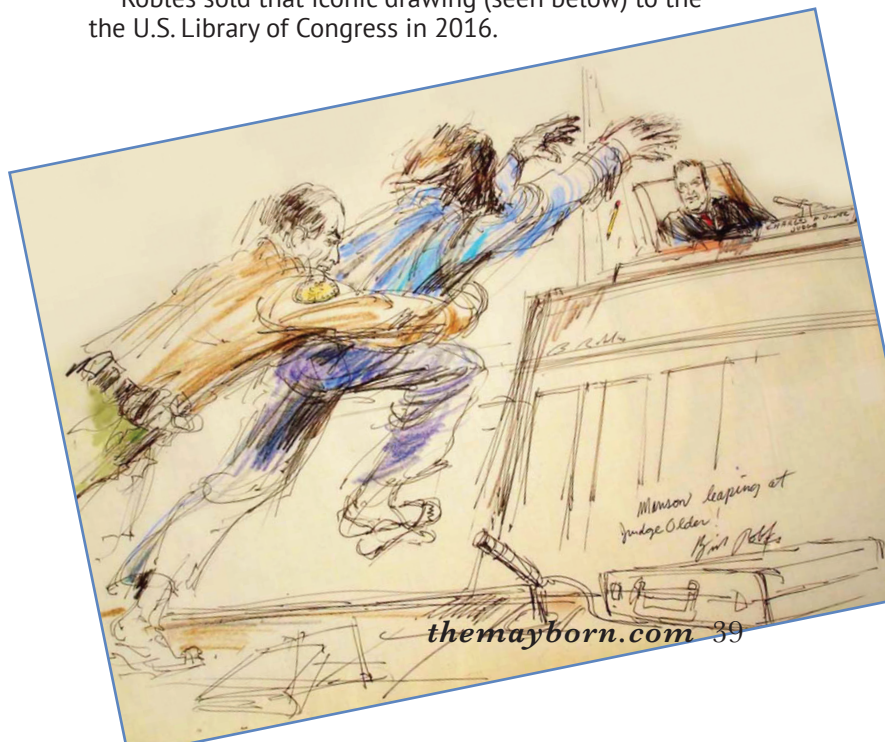
Everything happened in an instant, but Robles could freeze moments in his mind.

"He had a pencil in his hand. He was going to use it as a knife."

The world saw that Manson sketch that night on *the CBS Evening News with Walter Cronkite*.

Manson and his three followers were found guilty, and Manson died in prison in November 2017.

Robles sold that iconic drawing (seen below) to the U.S. Library of Congress in 2016.



RODNEY KING

Rodney King faced four Los Angeles police officers in federal court in 1993. These were the same men who were caught on video beating him with their hands and police batons and found not guilty on police brutality charge in April 1992. The acquittal sparked the Los Angeles riots that spanned several days.

Robles remembered King was like a gentle giant on the witness stand. King was 6-feet-3 inches tall and was kind of soft spoken in court as he described the beating, and the police batons coming down hard on his body.

“He was humble... a gentle soul, kind of shy actually.”

King and Robles chatted for a few seconds one time in the hallway after King realized that it was Robles' sketches that he saw on the evening news.

The jury found two officers guilty of civil rights violations. They were sentenced to 30 months in prison. Two other officers were found not guilty.

King died in 2012 at the age of 47. The medical examiner determined King died of an accidental drowning and drugs and alcohol were also found in his body.



OJ SIMPSON

Robles is not one to keep any details out of his sketches. He knows his job is to make the public feel like they are right there with him in the courtroom.

In 1994, his assignment was the O.J. Simpson murder trial. The former NFL football star had been charged with the murders of Nicole Brown Simpson, his ex-wife, and her friend Ron Goldman. The case generated worldwide media coverage.

Judge Lance Ito was presiding over the case and did not allow television cameras in the courtroom during jury selection. CBS News put Robles on the job, but his accurate artwork got the judge's attention right away.

“I was subpoenaed by Judge Ito, who happened to see a drawing I did of the alternates and the whole jury. He said he was astonished by the accuracy, even though they had no faces.”

The jurors clothing, mannerisms and hairdos were just as good as any colored photograph. The judge was concerned the jurors would be recognized from the drawings.

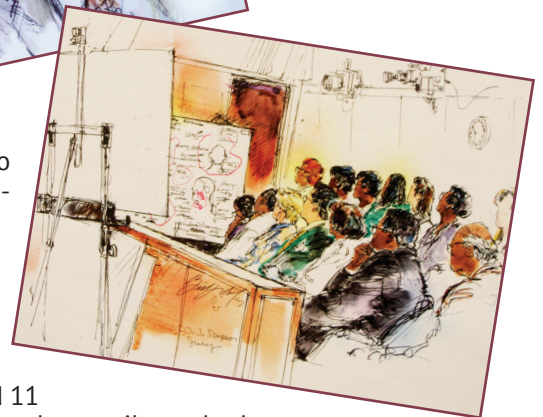
“I said, 'see there are no faces your honor'. So he said, 'Put glasses on somebody, tone down the big hairdo and try to modify it.'”

Robles listened but continued to accurately sketch what he saw, minus any faces. Court officials got Judge Ito a small stamp to use to approve Robles' sketches before they were handed over to reporters.



“The art had to be shown to the public information officer to get the Ito stamp of approval that they were not recognizable as jurors.”

The Simpson murder trial lasted 11 months. He was found not guilty on both counts of first-degree murder. After the trial was over, Robles decided to draw in the faces of the jurors, because he says “People wanted to know what they looked like.”



MICHAEL JACKSON

In 2005, Michael Jackson went on trial. The King of Pop was accused of molesting a 13-year-old boy. This was another trial that got the world's attention.

Robles had an easy time drawing Jackson sitting in the courtroom, because he was motionless, always looking straight ahead at the judge. He liked that Jackson didn't move, but sometimes the singer was hard to see, because he was sitting sandwiched between his two lawyers.

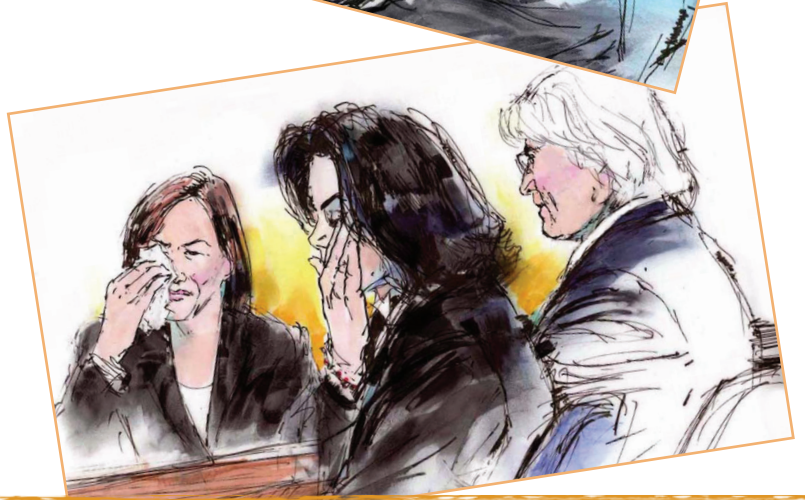
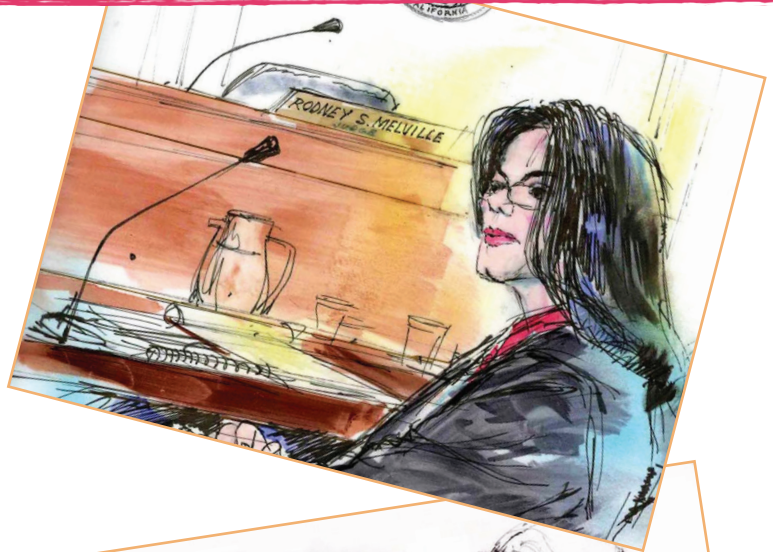
It was one of the most exhausting and difficult trials Robles had ever covered. The judge started at 8:30 in the morning and ended the day at 2:30 in the afternoon. There were only three 15 minute breaks and no breaks for lunch. Eating an energy bar in the courtroom became common, but it was during one of those breaks that Jackson's attorney approached Robles.

"He saw a drawing I did on TV and he asked his lawyer, he wanted to meet me. So during a break, his lawyer came up to me and said Michael wants to see the drawing...I took the drawing over to him, showed it to him and he lit up like a candle."

Jackson loved the drawing. When it was time to get back to work, Robles realized that Jackson had suddenly shifted his body, giving the artist a better view of him.

Robles made the most money on the Jackson case, because press from all over the world used his sketches for their stories. He recalled one day making \$25,000 dollars from one drawing.

After a 14-week trial, Jackson was found not guilty on all charges. Robles caught the moment Jackson wiped his tears away, relieved it was over.



MASS MURDERERS

Robles has always found that mass killers are probably the easiest people to draw in court. They don't move. They show no emotion. They say nothing. Robles noticed the similarities when he covered the court proceedings for the Oklahoma City bombers, Timothy McVeigh and Terry Nichols, Unabomber Ted Kaczynski and Aurora Theater shooter James Holmes.

Robles may spend days hearing the graphic details of the mass

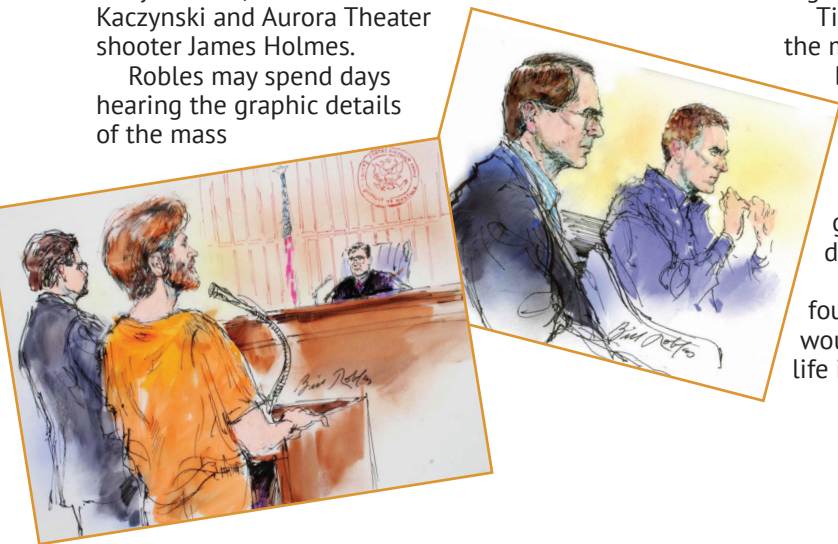
killings, and hear the the victim's family members quietly cry in the courtroom. He does his best to focus on being accurate. He knows his job is not to judge.

"People always ask me...do you try to make them uglier or exaggerated features or anything. I said it's tempting but I usually don't do it."

Timothy McVeigh (at left) was convicted in 1997 for the murders of 168 people in the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing. He was given the death penalty and died by lethal injection in June 2001. Terry Nichols is doing life in federal prison without the possibility of parole.

Unabomber Ted Kaczynski (at far left) pleaded guilty in 1998 to 16 bombings that left three people dead. Today he is also doing life in federal prison.

James Holmes, the Aurora theater shooter was found guilty in the murders of 12 people and the wounding of 70 others. He was sentenced in 2015 to life in prison without a possibility of parole.





CELEBRITIES

When actresses Lindsay Lohan and Winona Ryder (at right) each went on trial for shoplifting, once again the judges in their cases forbade television cameras in the courtroom.

Robles remembers having to walk through a media circus of news reporters, photographers and paparazzi to get inside the court building. That was a common scene especially if a famous actor, actress or entertainer was about to face a judge and jury.

In 2014, he sat for a week in a Los Angeles courtroom in the copyright infringement lawsuit against Led Zeppelin. The rock band's singer Robert Plant and guitarist Jimmy Page (below) were accused of plagiarizing the opening riff to their mega 1971 hit "Stairway to Heaven." After a week of testimony, a jury decided the band did not rip off the opening music from a song by the group Spirit that had toured with Zeppelin in the 1970s.

After the trial, the band invited Robles to a celebration inside the courtroom.

"I've got photos of Page shooting pictures of my artwork that I had set up in the courtroom. It was closed to the public, and it was just for their friends."



MOMENTS IN HISTORY

Not all of Robles' work has been done inside a courtroom. In January 2006, he was asked to cover the execution of murderer Clarence Ray Allen at San Quentin Prison in California (at right). Prison guards only allowed him to take in one pencil and one sheet of paper. He called the experience "very eerie." Allen is the last person California has executed.

There were many lighter moments that Robles was asked to document with his artistic work.

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration hired Robles in 1981 for what would become some of his favorite assignments. It commissioned his work for the first four Space Shuttle missions. Today Robles paintings are on the walls at NASA.

"People tell me they would rather see art than photographs that are like everybody else's."

In 2014, The New York City Police Museum had Robles depict in a sketch the rescue of US Airways flight 1549 on the Hudson River. The drawing was in honor of the NYPD officers who helped save passengers from the icy waters. Robles' drawing marked the 5th anniversary of the "Miracle on the Hudson."

Today the Library of Congress has 36 of Robles' original drawings that were also published in the book *The Illustrated Courtroom 50 Years of Courtroom Art*. He's very proud that the public will now have access to his work.

"It's quite a feather in your cap."

The need for courtroom art may someday go away if judges continue to allow cameras even in federal courtrooms. Robles is glad that important moments in court history were not lost, because he was there to put pen to paper for a purpose.

