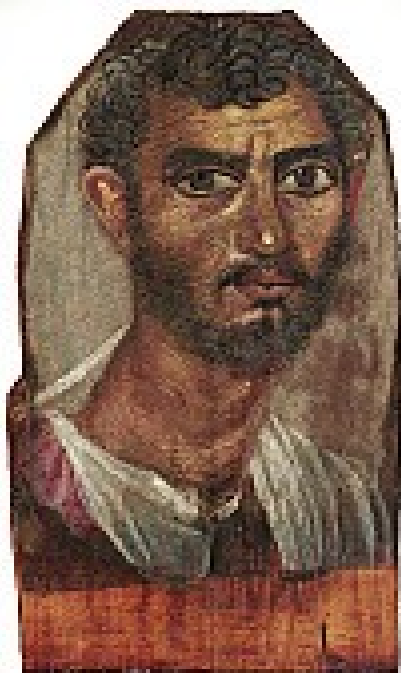
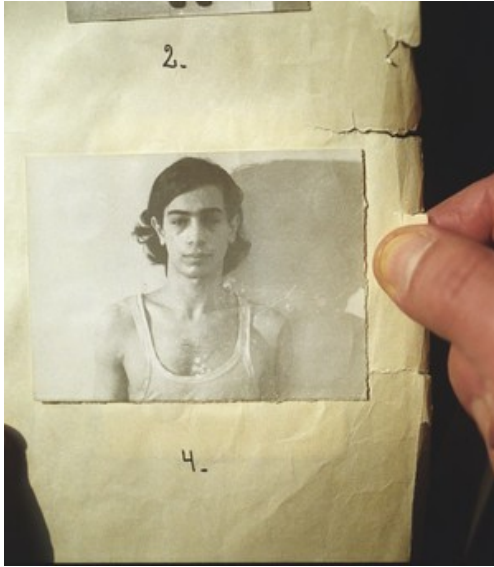


## Thematic Approaches to the Collections: Memory



**Discussion goals:** By placing each work in historical context, and considering its technique and materials, students will be encouraged to relate it to different aspects of memory, including personal and collective memory, nostalgia, and trauma.

Brodsky: Both a personal and a collective memory, Brodsky's photograph shows an archival photograph of his brother, Fernando Brodsky, who was among the many students kidnapped, tortured and killed during the military dictatorship, or Dirty War in Argentina from 1976-1983. The small photograph of Fernando featured in this work was smuggled out of a clandestine detention camp by Victor Bastera, a survivor of the camp, whose hand is shown holding the archival image.

Conversation prompts:

Do you have any particular associations with the medium of black and white photography that you might bring to your reading of this image?

What is the effect of placing a photograph within a photograph?

How can we read this work as social commentary? (How did the work shift in meaning as it moved from archival record, to personal memento, to work of art)?

Moore: Moore's 2009 photograph of the former executive offices of Ford's Model T Headquarters building in Detroit conveys a sense of both death and rebirth, as the metallic walls of the abandoned space have bloomed into rust and the carpet has sprouted moss. Moore pointed out the themes of decay and growth that are present in the work when he noted that, "In an urban setting, you could also have a landscape happening, the forces of nature intersecting with American urbanism, the process of decline also intersecting with the revival of nature."

Conversation prompts:

Photographers have often been interested in capturing architectural or landscape ruins. What are the ethical questions implicit in capturing such scenes and memories and how do these change with works that contain figures?

Consider the use of color photography versus black and white photography and their varied effects on the viewer.

What connections might we draw between materiality and nostalgia?

How have our views of the destruction of buildings and manmade destruction changed post 9/11? How might the ruins captured here reflect a particular state of mind or interpretation of history?

Homer: In 1872, Homer produced four closely related scenes featuring this similarly dressed woman, pensively standing or seated near a window with a view to the landscape outside. Homer chose this painting out of the four to exhibit in 1873 in New York. One of the reviews described the painted figure as "a Salem girl," referring to the Massachusetts seaport, and setting the stage

for the work's possible interpretation as a depiction of the bereaved companion of a sailor lost at sea.

Conversation prompts:

Describe the details of the figure's expression, pose, and dress and relate them to her setting.

What is the relationship between exterior and interior in this painting and why might it be important with regard to the theme of nostalgia?

What kind of mood is suggested through the contrasts in light and shadow and the use of color?

What do you notice about the particular brushstrokes the artist has used, and how do they vary across the surface of the canvas?

### Painted portrait of a young man, from a mummy

The practice of affixing a life-like image of the deceased to a mummy cartonnage or coffin was but one of many venerable Egyptian traditions adopted by the Romans when they added Egypt to their empire. In this painted portrait of a young man, the Roman penchant for realism is melded with traditional Egyptian funerary practice. The wooden board would have been secured over the face by the linen wrappings shrouding the body. In addition to the role that such an image was thought to play in magically preserving the individual character of the soul, such portraits also functioned as memorials, since there is evidence that mummies so equipped were installed for periods in the courtyards of private homes. Often called Faiyum portraits, large numbers have been discovered in cemeteries in the Faiyum, an area on the west bank of the Nile, south of Cairo. They occur as well at sites farther south, such as Antinoöpolis, the city founded in Middle Egypt by Hadrian after his favorite, Antinous, drowned in the Nile and was deified by the grieving emperor. Comparison with sculpted portraits suggest that this image was painted in the mid-second century, soon after the foundation of Antinoöpolis. Although the youth's features have an individual character, this may not be true portrait; the over-sized eyes, for example, occur in most Fayum portraits. The youth's dark skin and curly hair hint at the multi-ethnic composition of Roman Egypt, where in the great metropolis of Alexandria, Roman mixed with Greeks, Jews, and native Egyptians to form a cosmopolitan society with its own distinctive blend of cultural traditions.

Conversation prompts:

Describe the surface texture achieved with the technique of encaustic.

If the image of the bearded youth is a type, and not a true portrait, how is his memory evoked?

What does the intimate connection of the portrait with the actual face of the deceased suggest about Roman and Egyptian funerary beliefs?