Unknown Palmyrene artist
Funerary Portrait:
Yarkhai Son of Ogga
and Balya His Daughter
150/200 CE
Unknown Palmyrene artist (Palmyra, Syria)

Funerary Portrait: Yarkhai Son of Ogga and Balya His Daughter, 150/200 CE
Limestone
21 x 32 x 7 inches
Gift of Mr. Aziz E. Atiyeh
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54.3

Discussion and Activities

1. Look closely at the portrait of Yarkhai and Balya. Write down 10 details about the work. What do you notice about this portrait? How do you think the artist wanted to convey their status and identity?

2. Compare this Funerary Portrait from ancient Palmyra to the 1898 studio photograph Portrait of a Couple. Make a list of the differences between these works. Then, make a list of the similarities. What do these works have in common?

3. Imagine that you are having your portrait made with an eye both to the present and to future generations. How would you describe your ideal portrait? Would it be two- or three-dimensional? Formal or casual? Individual or with another person or people?

4. You may often photograph or draw people, but have less experience creating three-dimensional portraits. Create a three-dimensional portrait of yourself or someone else. How does the three-dimensional medium affect your process? What are the different choices you have to consider?

5. We perceive ancient Palmyrene sculptures as white, due to the characteristics of limestone. But when researchers examine these works with the aid of powerful microscopes, they find some evidence that the sculptures may originally have been brightly colored. What colors would you add to this work? Print the image of the Funerary Portrait from the PDF available online and make it colorful with pencils, markers, paint, or other materials. How do the colors change your perception of the sculpture?