



ΙΝΣΤΙΤΟΥΤΟ ΙΣΤΟΡΙΚΩΝ ΕΡΕΥΝΩΝ
ΕΘΝΙΚΟ ΙΔΡΥΜΑ ΕΡΕΥΝΩΝ

Chris Hallett

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Mummies with Painted Portraits from Roman Egypt and Personal Commemoration at the Tomb

28/3/2019

19.00

Εθνικό Ίδρυμα Ερευνών,
Αμφιθέατρο «Λεωνίδα Ζέρβας»,
Λεωφ. Βασιλέως Κωνσταντίνου 48, Αθήνα

National Hellenic Research Foundation,
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Abstract > In the Roman period the tendency to individualize or "personalize" the Egyptian mummy (or its case), which had to some extent always existed in Pharaonic culture, became much more pronounced. The process culminated in the creation of the "portrait mummy", or "portrait shroud" which carried a vividly painted representation of the deceased, and showed him or her in contemporary clothing. Such portraits included considerable personal detail—right down to the rendering of individual hairstyles (and styled beard for mature men), and to fashion jewelry, and extravagantly colored garments for women.

What were the aims or goals of this "personalization" of the mummy? Specialists have repeatedly asked whether these Roman portrait mummies may have been intended to be displayed and viewed differently from earlier mummies. For it has been suspected that Roman mummies were starting to acquire a more distinctly commemorative function—something close to the kind of personal commemoration we find in the funerary monuments of other areas of the Roman empire.

In this paper a number of different interpretations of the Roman portrait mummy will be considered, with the aim of arriving at a fuller and more nuanced understanding of the evidence.

Bio > Chris Hallett is Professor of Roman art at the University of California at Berkeley. He received his education at the University of Bristol in England, at Lincoln College Oxford, and at UC Berkeley. He is primarily known as a specialist in Roman sculpture, being the author of *The Roman Nude: Heroic Portrait Statuary 200 BC–AD 300* (Oxford 2005). He is also a practicing field archaeologist, and since 1991 he has worked at New York University's excavations in Aphrodisias in South-Western Turkey. He is co-author of *Roman Portrait Sculpture of Aphrodisias* (Mainz am Rhein 2006).



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