



Source: Steven Erlanger, 'Offensive to continue in Gaza, Israel says', *New York Times* in *International Herald Tribune online*, 10/07/06.

Tags: [art](#), [workplace](#), [nostalgia](#)

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I met a man today who collected snippets of other people's memories and stored them like they were his own. Discarded photographs meaningless or unwanted, seconds from the chosen. Selection is always a curious process. He kept them in a cardboard box collected from the fruit market around the corner. The old lettuce stuck to the bottom ones in a gesture thinly disguised from indifference. He was proud of his collection and would occasionally select one or two to admire. Never the whole set for they were never complete. Sometimes he gave them away to people he didn't know. Sometimes they were appropriate, sometimes not. The image could change everything. He didn't like to remember too much the details of each one, maybe the colours sometimes, maybe the misplacement of the image but generally what wasn't there. It was the lack of a subject which fascinated him, which made them his.

Placed in envelopes recycled from the message table and they were complete—alluding to a participation in life that seemed more complete and more mysterious than the real thing. No one was there to tell him of the details to fill him in on the story, to give the image a context, so its meaning wasn't fixed from viewing to viewing. Any

image could become appropriate to document any event. Ascription of meaning was flexible and surprisingly easy. A blurred head could be the shirt of a loved one or the self in turmoil or the sunlit face of a distant relative that only visited once. Let me show you a picture that could be a favourite apple. Its colour is uncertain but could be red if you look hard enough and remember the summers by the old dam next to the orchard. Shoes off and toes that sink suspiciously into the mud of a hundred tadpoles. Just being inside a skin that tingles with the adventure of it all. A jam jar could be a mirror ball, with twenty shards that speak of diamonds or death—with the promise of the future and a lament for the change and being in a moment which won't last except for a snapshot that is stored that needs no reminder no memento no nostalgia nothing more than a smell.

He ended up losing his box when he changed jobs. He now refuses to wash in the hope that the past will remain in the present for as long as possible. Longer than is decent.

*Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by Sarah Waterson.*