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 Hirsch Library Research Guide



The Indian Triumph of Dionysus
Unknown Roman

Roman, Roman Empire, 180-195 AD
Marble, Overall: 34 1/2 x 85 3/4 x 9 1/2 in.
(87.6 x 217.8 x 24.1 cm)

Museum purchase funded by Lee and Joe Jamail in honor of Caroline Wiess Law

This white marble panel, commissioned by a wealthy Roman follower of the mystery cult of Dionysus, depicts the god's triumphant return after spreading the miracle of wine culture to India and the East. At the composition's center, Dionysus is identified by his headdress of grapes and grape leaves. His languorous pose and relaxed state of undress suggest sensuality.

Around him, graceful female celebrants called maenads dance and play music. Satyrs, male followers with both human and animal characteristics, try to interest the maenads. The old satyr, Silenus, rides a donkey beside Pan, a forest creature who looks back at Dionysus. Young cherubs caress the feet of Dionysus and guide the panthers pulling his cart. Captives taken in India ride on an exotic elephant at the rear of the parade.

A masterpiece of high-relief sculpture, this panel would have formed the front of a sarcophagus, a magnificent place of final rest. It measures about seven feet long and three feet high.

1. Dionysus lounges amid the surrounding revelry.
2. Dionysus reclines on a cart drawn by two panthers. He is often associated with panthers because myth tells how he transformed himself into a panther and punished two women who denied his divinity.
3. Captives from Dionysus' Indian campaign, on the back of the elephant
4. Satyr (male) and maenad (female)
5. Pan, a forest being with human torso and goat legs
6. The old satyr, Silenus, balances a bowl of fruit on his head, an amazing feat since he is usually depicted as inebriated by wine.

Online Resources:

[Hirsch Library Online Catalog](#)

[The Metropolitan Museum of Art Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History](#)

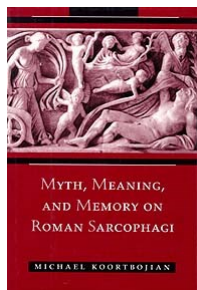
Articles: (full-text access available on-site; off-site access available through your school library or Houston Public Library)

[Bodel, John. "Death on Display: Looking at Roman Funerals." *Studies in the History of Art* 56 \(1999\): 258-281.](#)

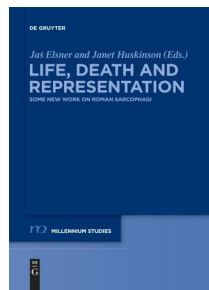
[McCann, Anna M. "Two Fragments of Sarcophagi in the Metropolitan Museum of Art Illustrating the Indian Triumph of Dionysus." *The Journal of the Walters Art Gallery* 36 \(1977\): 123-136.](#)

[Sorabella, Jean. "A Roman Sarcophagus and Its Paton." *Metropolitan Museum Journal* 36 \(2001\): 67-81.](#)

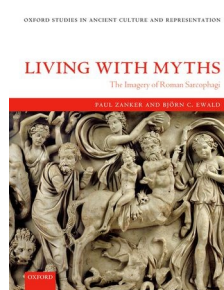
Print Resources:



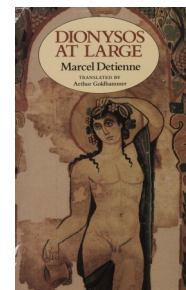
[Myth, Meaning, and Memory on Roman Sarcophagi](#)



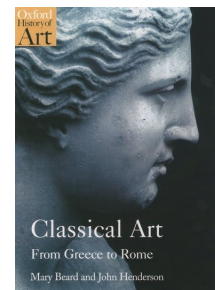
[Life, Death and Representation](#)



[Living with Myths: The Imagery of Roman Sarcophagi](#)



[Dionysos at Large](#)



[Classical Art: From Greece to Rome](#)

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General Surveys of Ancient Egyptian Art

[Gardner, Helen, Fred Kleiner, and Christin J. Mamiya. *Gardner's Art Through the Ages*. 12th ed. Belmont: Thomas/Wadsworth, 2005. N 5300 .G25 2005 Ref.](#)

[Honour, Hugh, and John Fleming. *The Visual Arts: A History*. 5th ed. New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers, 1999. N 5300 .H68 1999](#)

[Janson, H. W., and Penelope Davies. *Janson's History of Art: The Western Tradition*. 7th ed. Upper Saddle River: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2007. N 5300 .J3 2007 Ref.](#)

[Stokstad, Marilyn, and David A. Brinkley. *Art History*. 3rd ed. Upper Saddle River: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2008. N 5300 .S923 2008 Ref.](#)

Roman Stone Sarcophagi

[J. Paul Getty Museum. *Roman Funerary Monuments in the J. Paul Getty Museum*. Malibu: J. Paul Getty Museum, 1990. NB 1810 .J25 1990](#)

[Lehmann, Karl, and Erling C. Olsen. *Dionysiac Sarcophagi in Baltimore*. New York: The Institute of Fine Arts, New York, and the Trustees of the Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore, 1942. NB 1810 .L43 1942](#)

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[Panofsky, Erwin. *Tomb Sculpture: Four Lectures on its Changing Aspects from Ancient Egypt to Bernini*. New York: H. N. Abrams, 1994. NB 1800 .P3 1964 Reserve](#)

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[Bianchi Bandinelli, Ranuccio. *Rome, the Late Empire: Roman Art, A.D. 200-400*. New York: G. Braziller, 1971. N 5763 .B513 1971 Reserve](#)

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[Houser, Caroline. *Dionysos and His Circle: Ancient Through Modern*. Cambridge: Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University, 1979. N 7760 .H68 Reserve](#)

[Otto, Walter F. *Dionysus. Myth and Cult*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1965. BL 820 .B2 O813 1965 Reserve](#)

This reference guide is just the tip of the iceberg on helpful resources in the library's holdings. Many of the suggested resources above have their own bibliographies. Each of these may lead you to other resources that would also be helpful in your research here in the museum or in another library. To find additional resources, use keywords such as "Dionysus" and "Sarcophagi" in the on-line catalog and periodical indexes. Once you find a few relevant titles, pay attention to the subject headings to identify similar materials. Examples of useful subject headings are:

Relief (Sculpture), Roman
Art and society--Rome
Art, Roman

For guidelines about writing it may be helpful to look at Sylvan Barnet's *A Short Guide to Writing about Art*, which includes tips for looking, reading, and writing about art. Ask for it at the reference desk. At every stage of your work, please allow the library staff to help you. We can be reached at 713-639-7325 or hirsch@mfah.org