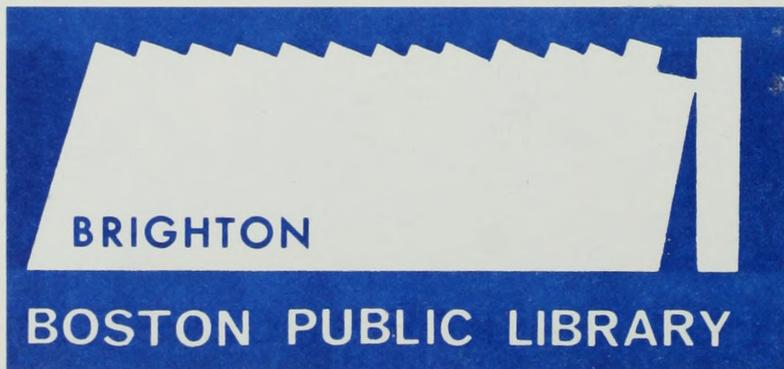


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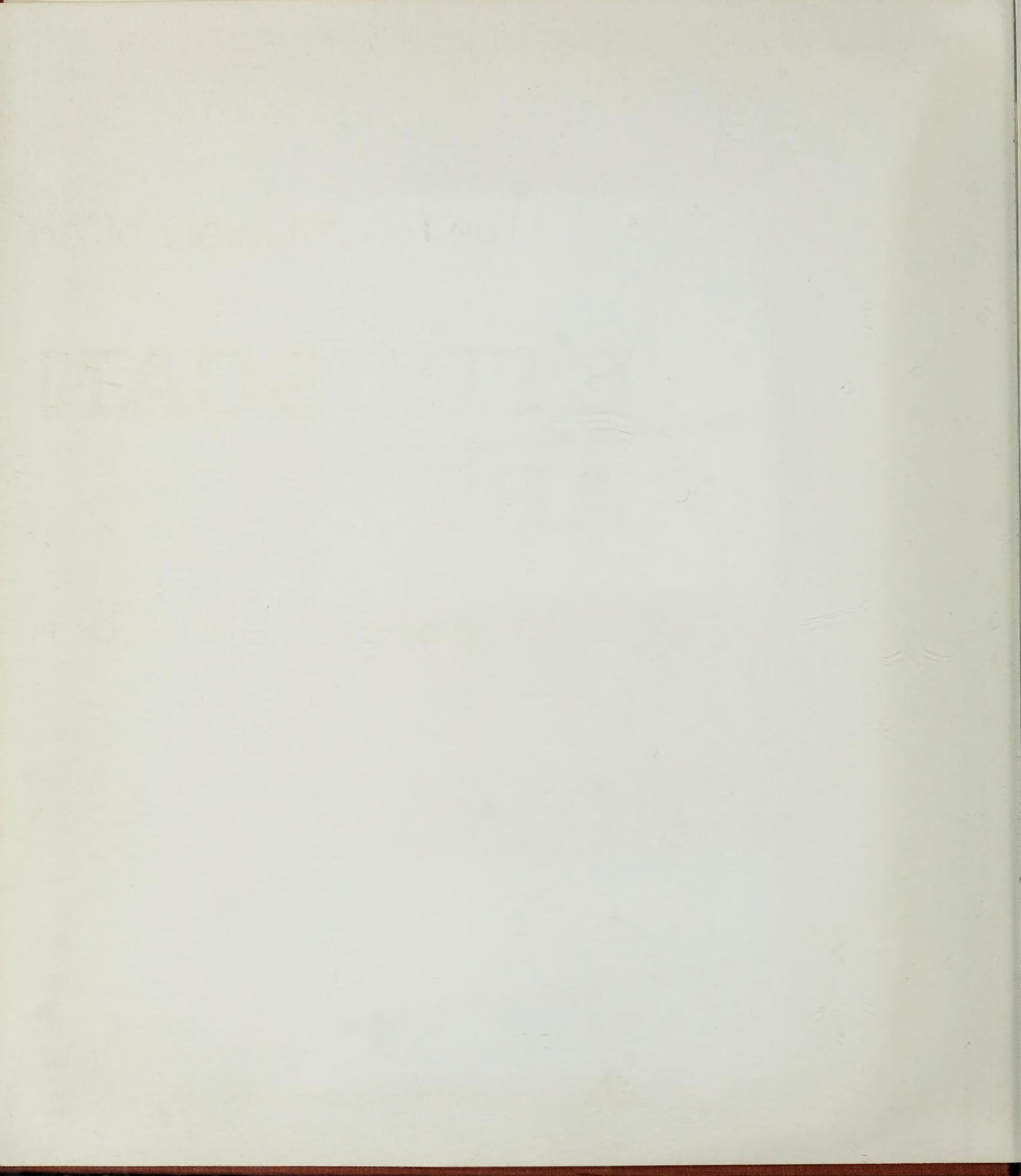
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ETRUSCAN ART

Volume I

Text by RAYMOND BLOCH



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The series of which this is the first volume is in no way dogmatic in its approach; for the time when the history of art was concerned with systems is past. Consequently, this series does not merely offer to the reader a simple succession of illustrations with appropriate explanations. Its purpose is more specific. The educated reader is accustomed to linking the history of the various civilizations of the past to the history of their arts, through which they may suddenly become, so to speak, present to us.

But we must endeavor to observe closely something that is simpler and more mysterious, that makes the history of art more stimulating and sometimes transforms it, namely the manner in which societies are fulfilled through their art. This is obvious enough in the case of architecture, but the various forms of painting or sculpture also play their special parts in helping to define and trace the development of societies. Art varies from age to age and is conditioned as much by use as it is by the implications of style. This means that we ought to pay special attention to patronage as well as to the relations between the artists themselves. In this series we will be guided by the closest scrutiny of these considerations.

For reasons which are plain enough, it has seemed advisable to use color in the full sense of that word. We are too inclined to forget the importance of polychromy in architecture and the other art forms in the past. Finally, our aim is to show the relationship between the various arts and more particularly how the major art of architecture and the figurative arts combine together and compete for attention. Thus, we will be better able to understand the actual impact of art on human life.

Raymond Bloch's well-informed, closely-reasoned and penetrating study deals with Etruscan art, a subject that has lately attracted much attention. He reminds us of the very unusual history of the Etruscans. Their culture, which has in it elements of the pre-Hellenic and Oriental worlds, developed on the fringes of Greek civilization and deliberately conformed with certain broad aspects of archaic styles. This "peripheral" art prevailed for a long time in Italy and eventually was subjected to Roman influence. The development of the Mediterranean world would not be completely understood if the Etruscans' contribution was unknown. In fact, the various attempts of the Roman historians to conceal the part they played, combined with the dispersal of Etruscan remains and the difficulties experienced in deciphering their alphabet, have resulted in our nearly losing sight of their culture altogether.

Here in this book, we find ourselves in the very midst of the latest archaeological and historical studies. The exhibits Raymond Bloch has collected in this little Etruscan museum bring out an essential point. Etruscan painting is about the only one which has preserved the forms of the ancient fresco of the archaic period. Its friezes and its panels of dancers and warriors consequently stir the imagination, sometimes a little too readily lulled by a display in which marble and terra

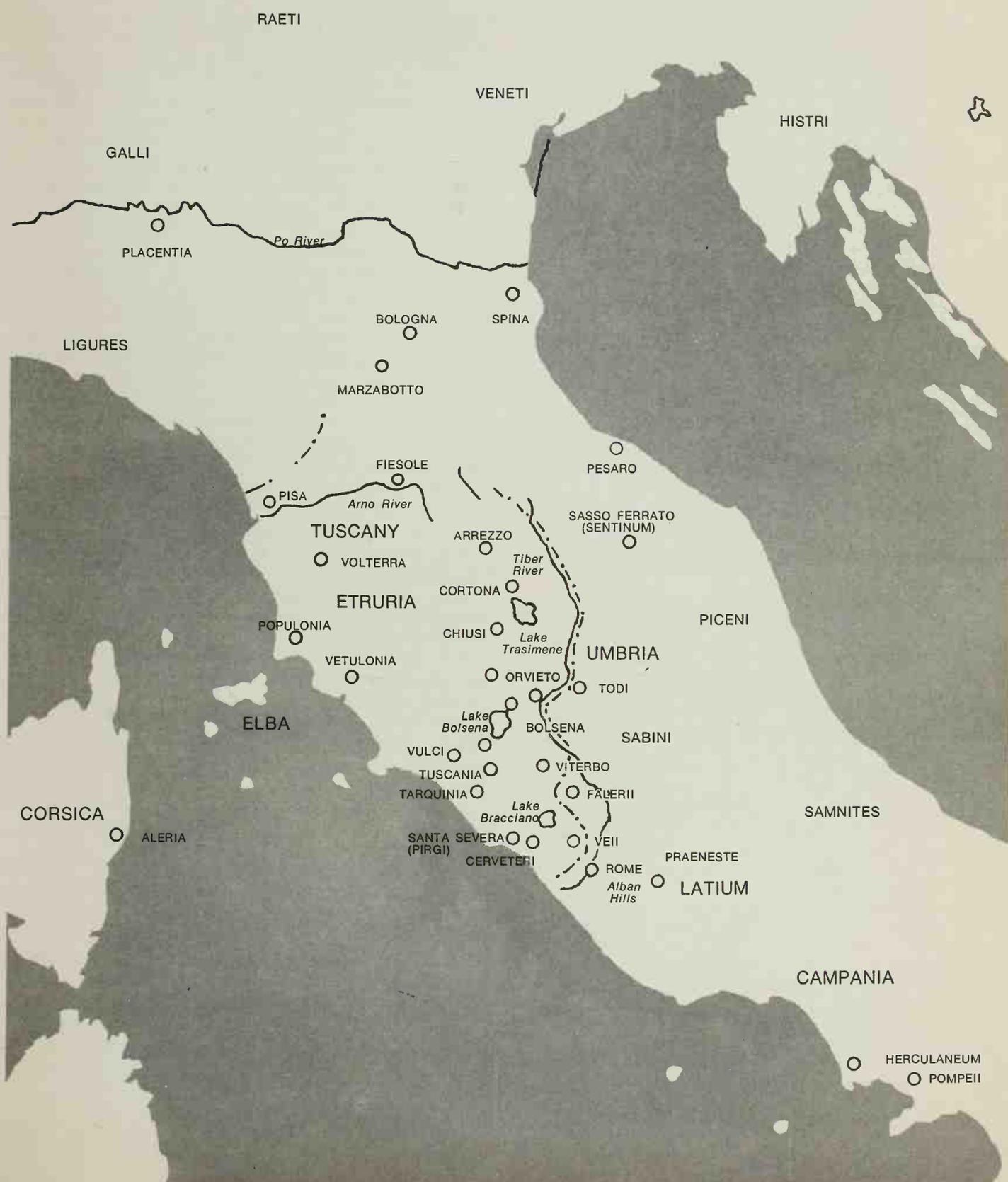
cotta predominate. But here it should at once be pointed out that the ornamental work with which Greece covered her temples and public buildings is used by the Etruscans primarily for their tombs.

The Greek frescos were swept away by the rising tide of history. But those in the hypogea of Latium survived. This somewhat paradoxical fact should be emphasized because of its far-reaching implications, for Etruscan society is revealed completely by its achievements in the plastic arts.

It is true that other civilizations may have reached their highest level of achievement in the mausolea they built for their kings. However, in the case of the Etruscans, art is not linked to the political myth, but relates persistently to the tomb. Archaeologists are unanimous at least on this point: everything durable made by the Etruscans is funerary; stone and sumptuous ornamentation are fitting for sepulchres, more particularly those underground. From this sprang the persistent medieval legend about "Porsena's labyrinth" and about engulfed cities: *immensa albis exausta palatia saxis* (Vergil). Thus from the monumental tomb we learn about the temple and the palace; from the cinerary urn about the plans of houses; and from the necropolis about town planning. In other words, we can understand the Etruscan civilization only from what it provided as a necessary accompaniment for the dead, and what it provided pertained entirely to art.

It would be a waste of time to seek some "explanation", in the nineteenth century tradition, for the beliefs that prevailed, for "In Etruria, where the gods are hidden in human shape (except for those borrowed from Greece) art is hardly ever offered to the god, any more than it is to the citizen. Nor is it intended for the life hereafter. We thus come to an odd conclusion: these wonderful decorations in the tombs are not there to await the resurrection as in Egypt; they do not, as in Greece, commemorate the charm of the life that has been lost; their purpose is to perpetuate the image of the present, as a kind of stubborn challenge to the future." (E. Panofsky). All of those who have visited these underground dwellings have been fascinated by them. We hope that the readers of this work will be fascinated too.

Sections of this book have appeared in ETRUSCAN ART by Raymond Bloch, published by New York Graphic Society in 1959 and now out of print.



Introduction

Never before has Etruscan art enjoyed its present-day popularity. Heretofore the general public, and even some museum curators, had little interest in the vast collections of works of art from ancient Etruria, and many valuable objects were relegated to the dark corners of cabinets or placed in storerooms. Today all this has changed. Etruscan art occupies a place of unquestioned importance among the arts of antiquity. Its astonishing development in Tuscany nearly two thousand years before the Renaissance is no longer known only to scholars, but has fascinated critics and many others interested in art.

There are many reasons for this new trend, but undoubtedly it is due mainly to a change in taste and an awareness of new esthetic values. Classic art with its supreme harmony of line, form and color no longer dominates the critical judgment of the spectator, and he now finds himself intrigued by the exotic or by the violence of primitive art. The strong sympathy with primitive people in remote lands has focused attention on objects whose artistic concepts are far removed from the standards decreed by Greek art in the age of Pericles and Phidias. This does not mean that classic art has been assigned a secondary place through this broadening of interests. Those who are captivated by the ideal proportions and incomparable refinements of classic art continue to admire the beauty of the Parthenon and the marble sculpture of the Acropolis. But today there is a new interest in art: an understanding and appreciation of the artistic expression of diverse cultures — the Far East, Mexico, Africa, primitive nations — as well as that of classical antiquity. In the spring of 1958 Parisians thronged the Petit Palais in Paris to see the first exhibition of jewels, textiles and sculpture of the Inca tribes of Peru. At the same time, the nearby Musée d'Art Moderne had on exhibition a wonderful selection of Japanese art covering various centuries.

Contemporary artistic idioms, stimulated as they are by a variety of sources, have made us familiar with concepts and styles which were completely ignored in the West up to the nineteenth century. Exclusive devotion to nature is



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2 Bucchero amphora showing two Etruscan alphabets on its neck and inscriptions on its side. From Veii. 6th century B.C. Villa Giulia, Rome.

3 Comparative table of the Etruscan alphabet and the Italic alphabets derived therefrom. (After M. Scienze, *Revue de Latin Studies*, 1957).

4 Bronze statuette with elongated, flat body of geometrical design. Round, summarily treated head. Height 30 cm. or 11 3/4 in. Definitely 2nd century B.C. Villa Giulia, Rome.

5 Bronze statuettes from Brolio (Arezzo). Height 10 cm. or 4 in. (male figure), 9 cm. or 3 1/2 in. (female figure). Late 6th century B.C. Archaeological Museum, Florence.

no longer an inviolable rule of art. Compositions of the most fantastic sort are accepted and appreciated; indeed, there is great enthusiasm for those creations in the art of the past which deprecated realism when distortion of objects was inadmissible. Etruscan art, with its inventiveness, its stylization of forms, its vivacity of color, movement and life, corresponds in some measure to contemporary trends. The favor it enjoys today originated, no doubt, when its basic concepts were seen to coincide with the fundamental concepts of, and the quest for, artistic expression by contemporary artists.

Many people interested in Etruscan art are, of course, completely enthralled by the aura of mystery which surrounds the fate of the Etruscans. Although excavations of Etruscan sites have done much to clarify their culture and constantly bring to light new facts, the origin of the Etruscans is still a matter for debate, and their language has not yet been deciphered. These difficulties, at times exaggerated and certainly present in the studies of other ethnic groups — to cite but the Celtic language which is still little known — have stimulated a curiosity and interest in an art which is enigmatic and refuses to unveil its secrets. For a great many people Etruscan art is wrapped in a veil of mystery, and taking pleasure in emphasizing this point, they probe the figures in paintings and sculpture to find the answers to questions which scientific research has yet to clarify.

The fascination which the life and art of the Etruscans hold for certain modern temperaments was expressed freely and with passionate, lyrical feeling by D.H. Lawrence in his book, *Etruscan Places*. Lawrence was impressed, above all, by the extraordinary vitality of a people who could so express themselves in this art. As he visited tomb after tomb in Tarquinia, each one providing additional excitement, he felt he still heard the echo of an unrepressed, vigorous life which pressed its roots into the very heart of the cosmos. Standing before the partly obliterated paintings in these dark, underground tombs, he conveyed his emotions with sincerity and frankness. "Fragments of people at banquets, limbs that dance without dancers, birds that fly into nowhere, lions whose devouring heads are devoured away! Once it was all bright and dancing; the delight of the underworld; honoring the dead with wine, and flutes playing for a dance, and limbs whirling and pressing. And it was deep and sincere honor rendered to the dead and to the mysteries. It is contrary to our ideas; but the ancients had their own philosophy for it. As the pagan old writer says: 'For no part of us nor of our bodies shall be, which doth not feel religion: and let there be no lack of singing for the soul, no lack of leaping and of dancing for the knees and the heart; for all these know the gods.' Which is very evident in the Etruscan dancers. They know the gods in their very finger-tips. The wonderful fragments of limbs and bodies that dance on in a field of obliteration still know the gods, and make it evident to us."

This enthusiasm could not be more sincere. Lawrence really believed he had found in the Etruscan people an ideal of free, natural life, such as he loved. But the critic and scholar must obviously go further. Where precisely does the originality of Etruscan art lie; how can one define the charac-



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teristics of an extremely varied art which is found in an area bounded by the Arno and the Tiber rivers, dating between the seventh and first centuries B.C.? This is truly a difficult problem, one for which the most divergent solutions have been proposed.

Some scholars believe Etruscan art is completely original and autonomous and they tend to minimize the influences of the outside world. The opinions of other scholars tend to be very inflexible. Unwilling to understand the spirit and disposition of Etruscan art, they conclude that it is totally lacking in originality. In their opinion, it is a rather poor, provincial product of no great value — a mere reflection of Greek art which served as its prototype. This attitude is sometimes adopted by specialists in other fields and by devotees of Greek art and of the Greek concept of beauty as a harmony of form. Both attitudes to Etruscan art are subjective and tend to distort the picture. As so often happens, the truth lies in details which are not sharply defined and to understand them requires that one examine the all-important problem of Greek influence on Etruscan territory. One thing is certain: Etruscan art came under this influence continually and the problem cannot be understood without considering the extensive importation into Etruria of Greek objects of all kinds in various periods. Greek colonies existed in many cities — at a very early time in Cerveteri (Caere) and later in Spina. Greek artists had workshops in some cities where local artisans worked side by side with craftsmen from metropolitan Greece or from the Greek cities in Asia Minor. Tradition and archaeological studies agree on this point. According to Pliny the Elder (*Natural History*, Book XXXV, 152, 154), Demaratus, father of Tarquinius Priscus, came to Etruria from Corinth accompanied by the sculptors Euchir, Diopus and Eugrammus who had practiced sculpture in Italy.

The temple in Rome dedicated in 496 B.C. to Ceres, Liber and Libera, shortly after the expulsion of the Tarquins, was decorated by the Greek artists, Damophilos and Gorgasos, at a time when Rome was still preponderantly under Etruscan influences. H. Le Bonniec believes this fact offers proof of early Hellenization in the cult of the earth practiced on the Aventine, a cult which he has studied and published in a recent book, *Le culte de Cérès à Rome, des origines à la fin de la République*, Paris, 1958. Therefore, one must keep in mind the frequent collaboration between Greek and Etruscan artists in the sixth century B.C. That Greek sculptors took part in the decoration of the distinctly Etruscan temple dedicated to Ceres, Liber and Libera is, therefore, perfectly understandable. In fact, Pliny the Elder writes, "The most famous sculptors were Damophilos and Gorgasos who were also painters. They had worked in both techniques on the decoration of the Temple of Ceres in Rome, near the Circus Maximus, stating in an inscription in Greek that the work on the right was by Damophilos, that on the left by Gorgasos."

A series of vases made in Etruria but bearing unmistakable Greek elements has been the subject of long and heated debate, and only now are some aspects of the problem resolved. It seems certain, for example, that the marvelous group of black-figured hydriai from Cerveteri dating in the second half of the sixth century B.C. is the



6 The necropolis of the Crocefisso del Tufo at Orvieto.
7 Minerva brandishing her spear. Bronze statuette of the 5th century B.C. Este Gallery, Modena.



8

8 Fresco of dancing scene from the Tomb of the Triclinium. Circa 470 B.C. Museum of Tarquinia.

9 Head of a bearded deity. Part of the architectural decoration of the temple of the « Mater Matuta » at Satrium. Height 25 cm. or 9 7/8 in. Early 5th century B.C. Villa Giulia, Rome.

work of a master potter from Ionia. Presumably, he and some assistants settled in the lovely, friendly city of Cerveteri shortly before 550 B.C. Colonies of Greek merchants had already come there in the seventh century. It is quite possible that some Greek painters collaborated on the fresco decoration of the tombs from the archaic period in Tarquinia, an idea which cannot be verified but cannot be totally rejected. We have already emphasized the importance of Greek imports to Etruria. In the city of Vulci alone some four thousand black-figured and red-figured Greek vases have been found in the excavation of its large necropolis. Etruscan artists found in these vases an inexhaustible source of subjects and themes which they appropriated without





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always understanding them entirely. From the point of view of technique and composition the Etruscan artist learned a great deal from these imports.

Nevertheless, while these prototypes were influential, they did not overwhelm the native, artistic inventiveness of a people whose temperament differed greatly from that of the Greeks. Certainly the Etruscans' reactions to these influences, in the course of time, depended upon the circumstances and places in which they were located. Drawing widely on the material so generously available, they found various sources of inspiration, not all of them equally suited to their taste. Generally speaking, they did not copy slavishly. To be convinced of this, one need only go from a display of Greek art to one of Etruscan works in any museum. Despite the relationships and similarities the atmosphere seems to change as one goes from one to the other, and two very different worlds come to life. It is well to analyze this important reaction. The "aroma" of Etruscan art retains an individual flavor, a flavor that is immediately sensed and is sometimes very impressive. In the pages that follow, an attempt will be made to trace the reasons for this attraction, to discern the motifs which make up the Etruscan idiom and remain the standard of a vigorous life.

Sculpture, painting and the minor arts will provide us with a highly diversified and extensive documentation. Etruscan art is now generally defined as peripheral. While this is, in fact, one of the fundamental characteristics which we have pointed out, the term calls nonetheless for some additional clarification. Since Etruscan art is peripheral to the centers of Greek art, its relationship should be clearly defined in a brief comparison.

Although these two art forms developed almost simultaneously, they differ widely, even basically in their functions and aims. Greek art, in spite of noticeable oriental influences in its early stage, experienced a continuous, progressive evolution all its own, and each new period is based logically on the traditions and conditions of the preceding one. In comparison with this natural and gradual development, Etruscan art appears infinitely less independent and autonomous, having been subject to continual compromises between its own aspirations and foreign influences, above all Greek, whose tremendous impact it felt at all times. Being, therefore, abrupt and frequently chaotic in character, its different stages, far from following each other in logical sequence, can be understood only when keeping in mind the Greek models to which it reacted at different times without ever extricating itself completely from their spell. Etruscan art even adopted, simultaneously, models of different times and places with the result that this arbitrary amalgamation of heterogeneous elements impeded an intrinsic development identical with that of Greek art. These characteristics of peripheral art must, therefore, be kept in mind when evident breaks, and even considerable lags, in style, and the conflicting aspects of works of the same date seem perplexing. Etruscan art has its originality and essential form of expression in the selection of its models, which it transforms and adapts to the needs of a creative genius in itself very different from that of Greece.

Etruscan architecture, so extremely conservative and yet so responsive to certain changes, is known to us better from

10 Terra-cotta head of a goddess. The figure formed part of the Apollo group decorating the ridge of the Portonaccio temple at Veii. Late 6th century B.C. Villa Giulia, Rome.

11 Bucchero vase with a bull's head with decoration in relief. From Chiusi. 6th century B.C. Archaeological Museum, Florence (color plate opposite).

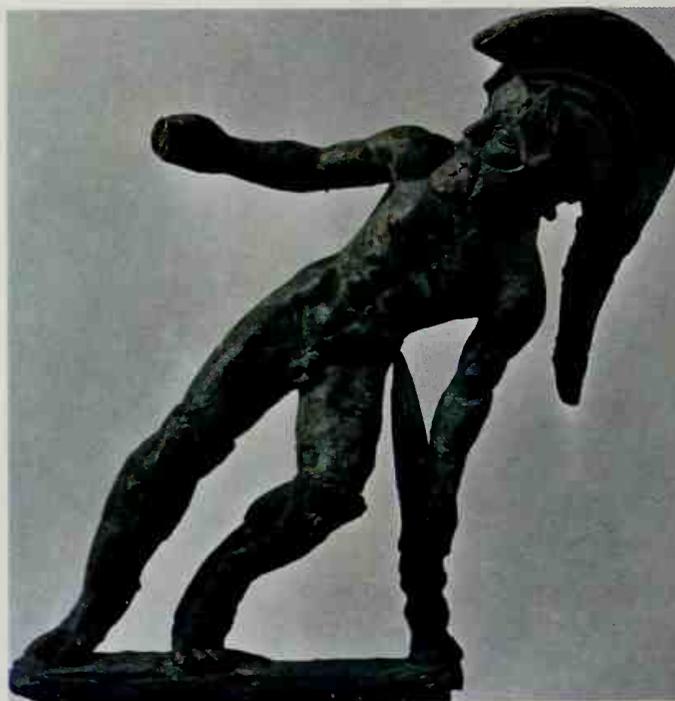








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12 Banquet scene, fresco at the Tomb of the Lionesses. Circa 520 B.C. Tarquinia (color plate preceding pages).

13 Terra-cotta fragment of the decoration of the pinnacle of a temple at Praeneste. Warriors parading in front of deities. Height 44 cm. or 17 1/4 in. Second half of the 6th century B.C.

14 Bronze statuette of Ajax committing suicide. 6th century B.C. From Populonia. Archaeological Museum, Florence.

15 Painted amphora in the so-called Civita-Vecchia style. Height 29 cm. or 11 1/2 in. Early 6th century B.C. Villa Giulia. Rome.



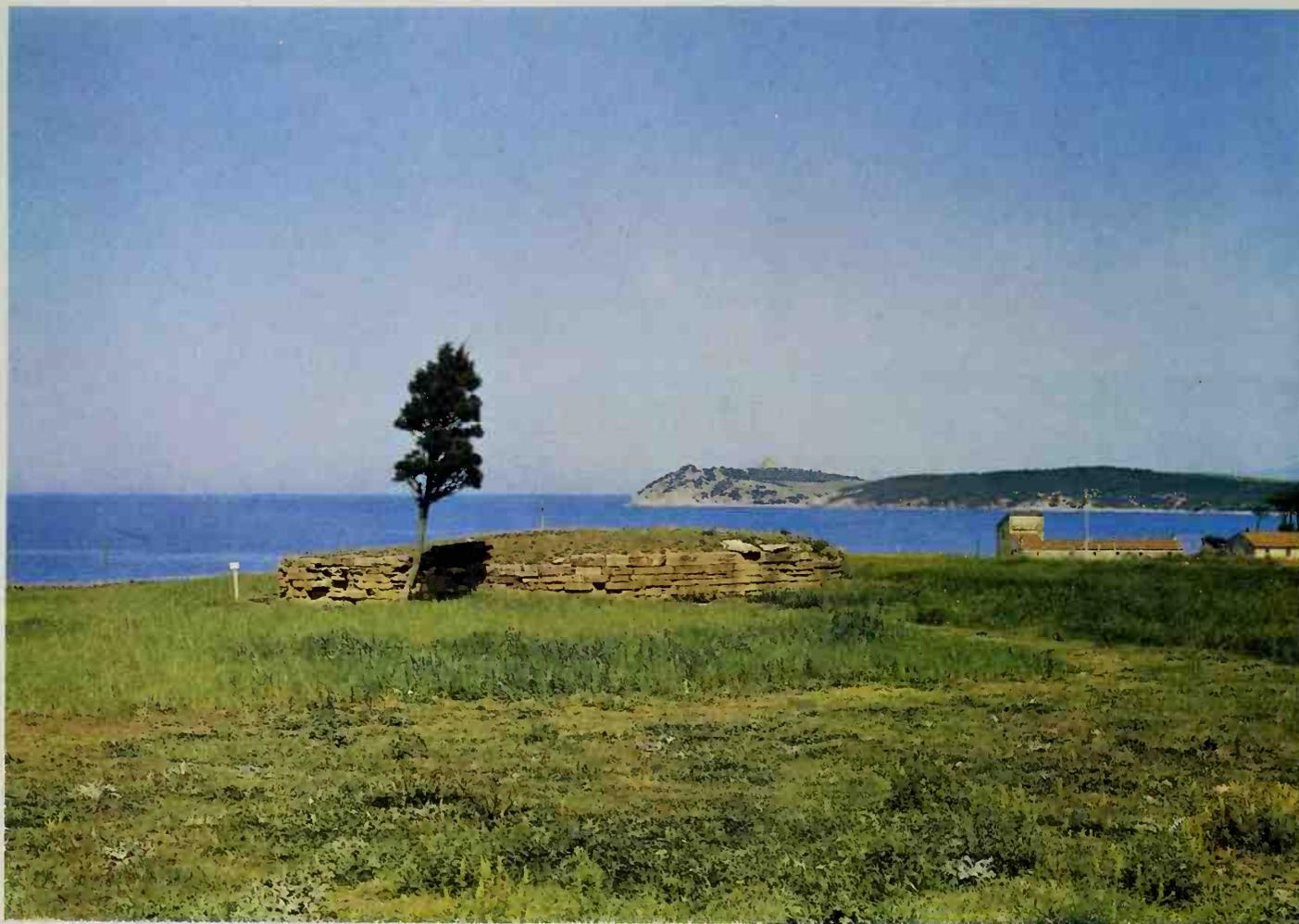


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16 *View of the remnants of the Etruscan necropolis of Marzabotto.*

17 *Cinerary urn of stone from Chiusi. The hollow inside of the statue served as a receptacle for the ashes of the deceased. Height 135 cm. or 53 1/8 in. Circa 530 B.C. National Museum, Palermo (color plate opposite).*





18

the writings of Roman architects like Vitruvius than from the scant remains of temples and dwellings. In his recent study of Roman building techniques (*La tecnica edilizia romana con particolare riguardo a Roma e Lazio*), Giuseppe Lugli has justly dwelt with considerable length on the various forms of the "struttura edilizia" found in Tuscany. However, the important sociological, political and religious aspects of Etruscan art as reflected by temple construction should be considered also. Unlike the Romans, the Etruscans never achieved the progressive development of their working class. This segment of the people had only duties and no rights, and all the power and wealth was held by the ruling families. This social stagnation no doubt contributed to the early decay of Etruscan society, a fact clearly demonstrated by its art, both in its subject matter and its form of expression. Etruscan art strikes us as the image of a refined society marked by certain remnants of barbarism. Still, this art is intimately related to the religious and funeral rites practiced in Etruria.

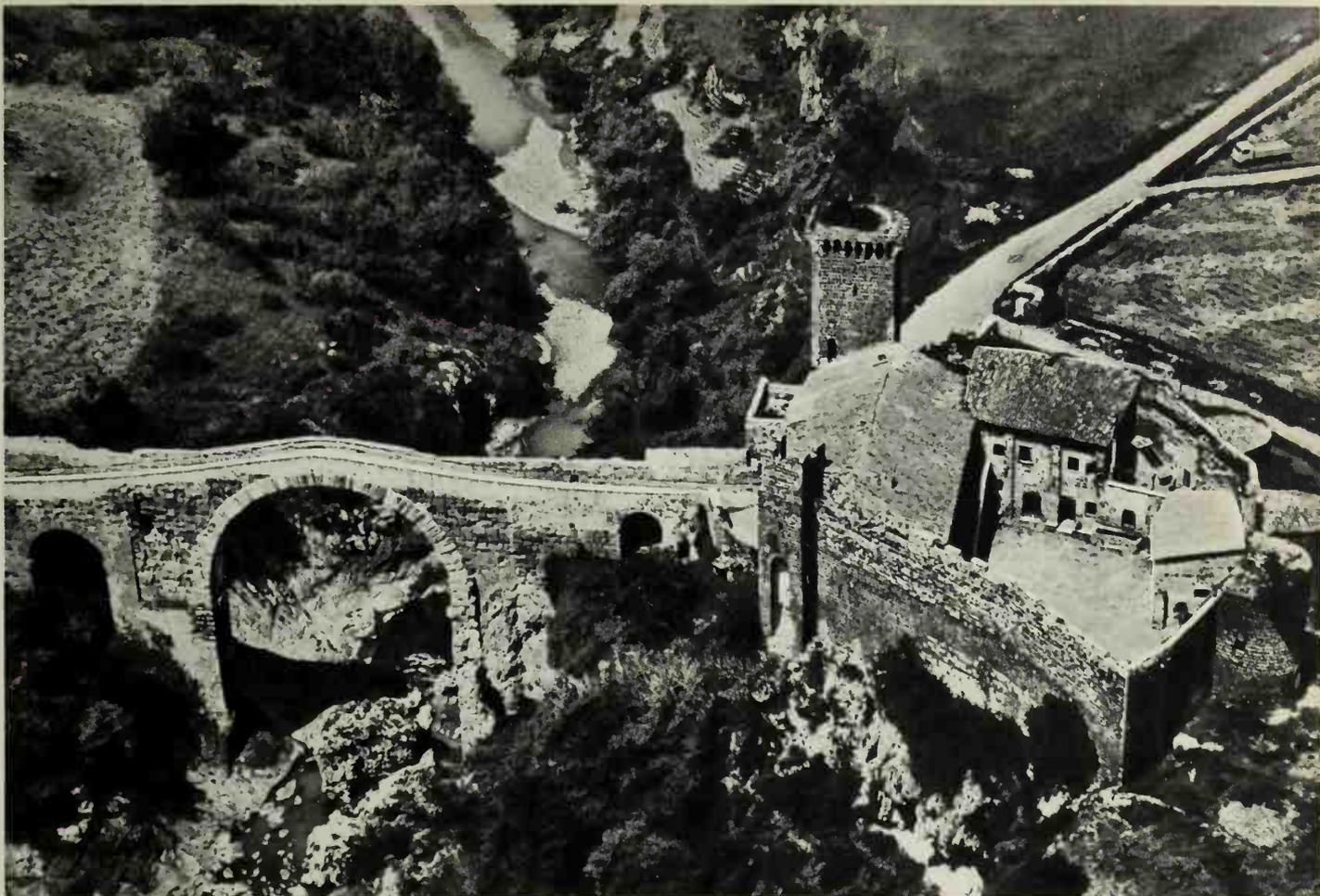
The vastness of Etruscan burial grounds, the architectural design of the tombs, the abundance of the funerary offerings disclose an extreme concern with the afterlife. This all-pervading consciousness of man's mortality gave rise to a predominantly funerary art.

18 View of Populonia.

19 Etruscan bridge at Vulci.

20 Interior of the tomb « della Cornice » at Cerveteri.

21 Etruscan gate at Perugia.



19

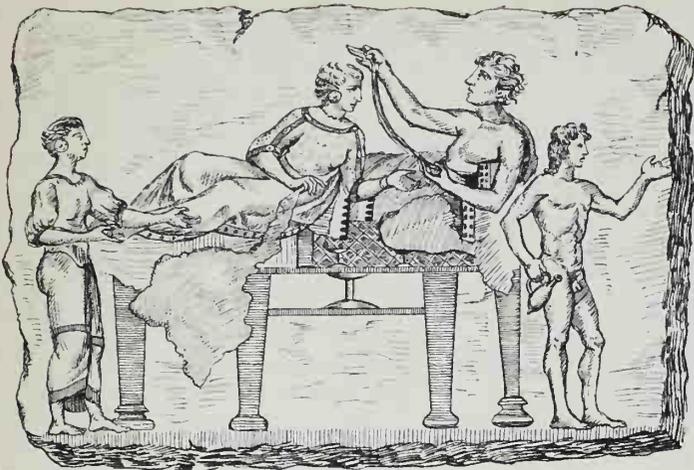


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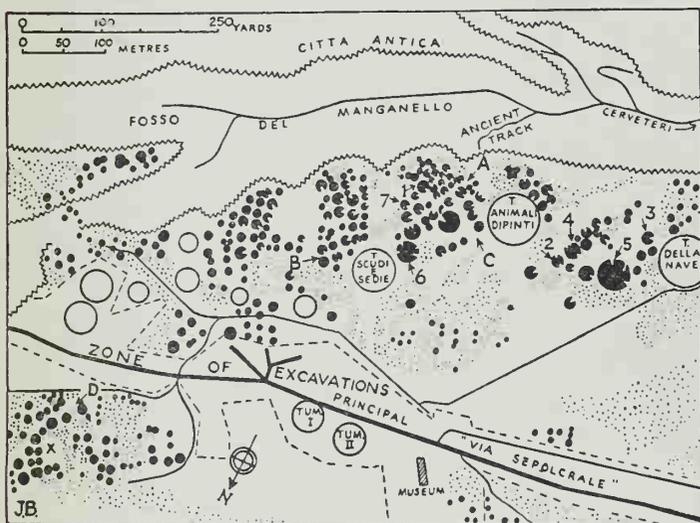
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interior of tomb



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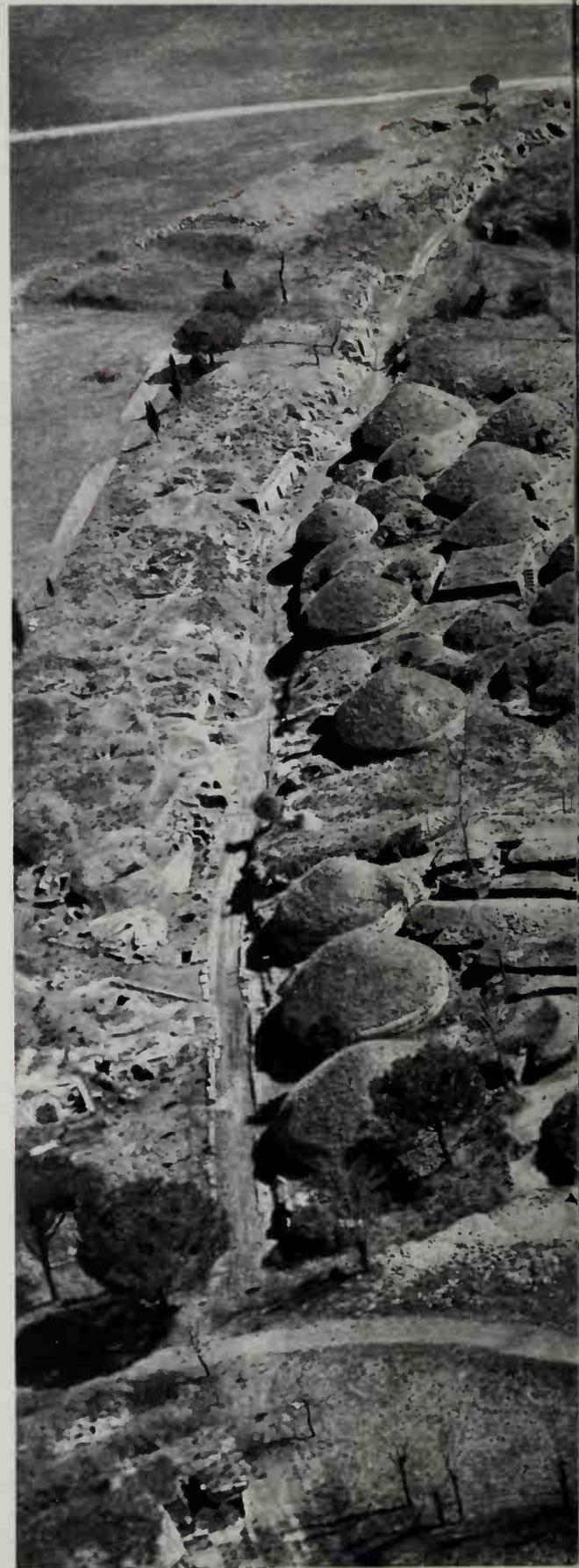


23

22 Fresco from the Tomb of the Cardinal. Byres, Hypogea of Tarquinia. (Drawing by Brenda Bettinson).

23 Necropolis of La Banditaccia at Cerveteri. Aerial map of Etruscan tumuli.

24 The necropolis of Cerveteri. A road between groups of large tumuli.





Etruscan art is both vast in scope and little known. Those who have walked through the numerous rooms of museums in Italy filled with an infinite array of terra-cotta statues, statuettes, antefixes, reliefs and full-round sculptures in stone or bronze, sarcophagi, and domestic utensils may be surprised by such a statement. But the fact remains that the study of this large assortment of material from a richly artistic world is, admittedly, in its initial stage. The greater part of the objects in European and American collections, both public and private, came from chance finds or through excavations carried out during the nineteenth century. Details of the discovery are almost completely lacking. A truly scientific method of excavation has been undertaken only in relatively recent times: previously, the major aim of the archaeologist was to excavate valuable objects. No one thought it necessary to keep an accurate record of the digging. Today, archaeologists keep a meticulous record day by day of the details of excavation, so that scholars now have a precise account of their procedure and of the consequent finds. In the past, once the excavator had uncovered some objects, he considered his task at an end. As a result,



25

25 Discovery of an Etruscan tomb in the 18th century. Byres, Hypogea of Tarquinia (Drawing by Brenda Bettinson).

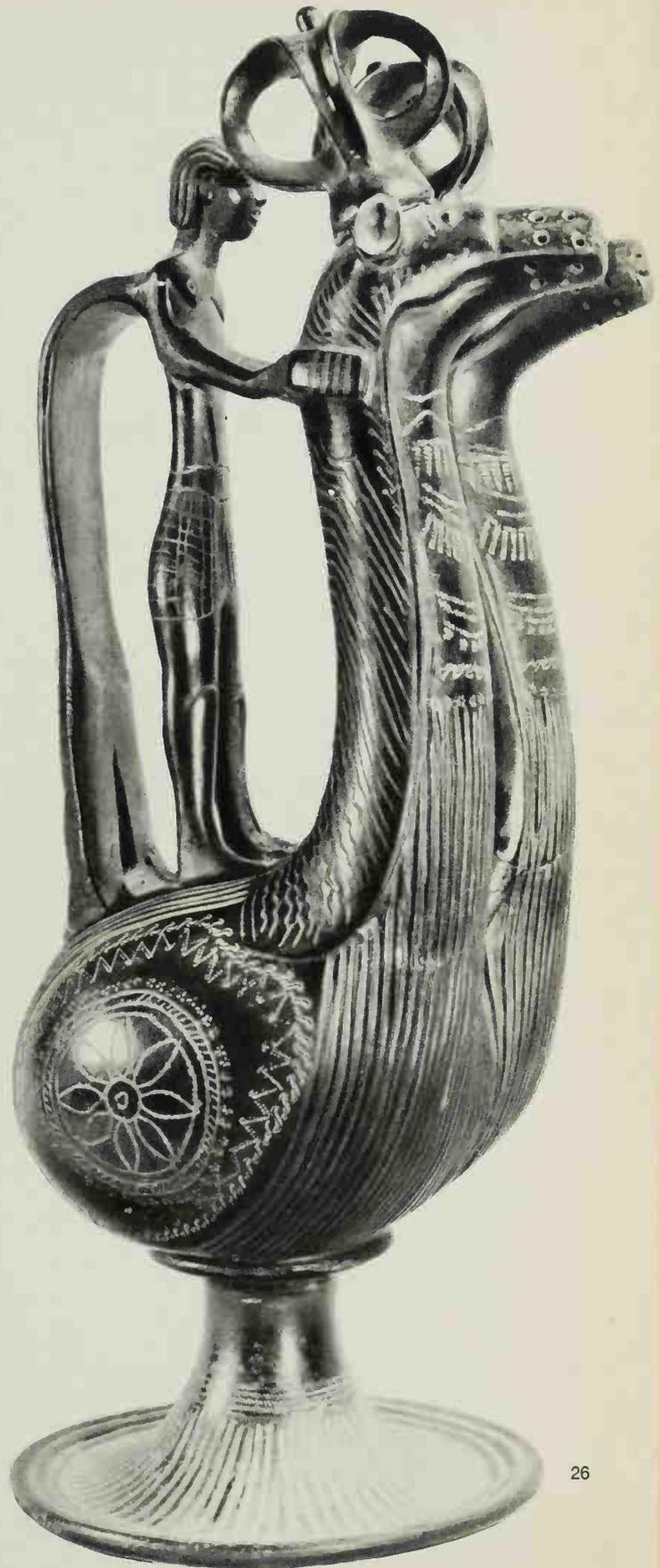
26 Bucchero vase in the shape of a fantastic animal with a double neck, guided by a man standing upright on its back. From the necropolis of Cerveteri. Height 28.5 cm. or 11/4 in. Circa 600 B.C. Gregorian Museum of Etruscan Art, Vatican.

we know nothing about the arrangement of the objects in the tombs nor about the material which accompanied them. A knowledge of these circumstances would greatly facilitate the problem of dating the extant works of art.

As matters now stand, classification and dating must be determined only on criteria of style, an approach which is apt to be subjective and often leads to erroneous opinions. Research in Greek and Roman art in past centuries was accomplished under similar circumstances, but in these fields there exist many more well-established points of reference in history and literature. Studies of Etruscan art are, on the other hand, still beset by many unknown factors, as a result of which research gropes in the dark. Despite these difficulties it is possible to trace a broad chronological picture with a fair degree of clarity and bring together the various points of reference.

A very important prelude to Etruscan art is found in the material produced in the early Iron Age. In the eighth century B.C., a civilization commonly referred to as the Villanova culture (named for a town near modern Bologna where large pre-Etruscan necropolises have been discovered) also extended and developed on a considerable part of Etruscan territory. The earliest objects of art in ceramic, bronze and iron found there in large quantities are decorated with simple, geometric motifs — straight or broken lines, triangles and swastikas. The birth of art on Etruscan soil may be said to have had its origin at this time. The material discovered in tombs — in pits if burial was by cremation, in trenches if by inhumation — consisted mainly of weapons (spears with bronze or iron tips, bronze helmets, iron daggers or swords) in the case of deceased males, and personal ornaments in the tombs of women. In technique and form the women's treasures of fibulae, bone or ivory combs, pins and jewels are remarkably fine. Bronze and ceramic vases used by the deceased during his lifetime were also placed beside the dead. In case of cremation the ashes were placed in conical, terra-cotta vessels, many of them found in the area which extends from the valley of the Po River to southern Tuscany. In the region of Latium, where a civilization flourished which was close to the one in Etruria, the funerary vessel is modeled after the primitive dwelling. Great quantities of hut urns have been discovered in the Alban Hills and in Rome. These are records of a funerary symbolism which prevailed for a long time and developed in complexity, a symbolism which has been studied masterfully by Cumont in his book, *Le symbolisme funéraire chez les Romains*.

The etched or painted decorations which appear on the Villanovan objects display a skilled technique in many cases, one in which the craftsman's style already reveals a certain elegance. The first traces of that Italic interest in sculptured form are perceptible in the figures which stand on the lids of vessels. In one case, arranged in circular formation around the lid, these figures appear to act in a primordial dance as they clash weapons with one another. Reliefs in stone betray a strong sense of composition and, at the same time, reveal an ever-increasing influence from Greece and the eastern Mediterranean areas.







Etruscan art begins in a period which extends from 700-575 B.C. with a style that is termed "Orientalizing." The prosperous life of the Etruscans at this time is documented by the magnificent treasures which have come from the tombs in Cerveteri and Praeneste (Palestrina). These masters of commerce controlled the vital centers of the most important maritime and overland routes for foreign trade. Their tombs are the final resting places of powerful lords to whom the finest and most precious objects which craftsmen could make in bronze, silver and gold were offered for their life beyond the grave. Oriental influences, predominantly Syrian and Cypriote, prevail in the material discovered in the Regolini-Galassi Tomb in Cerveteri and in the Bernardini and Barberini Tombs in Praeneste.

A virtuosity that is decidedly oriental in inspiration is grafted onto an artistic expressiveness which has a propensity for naturalism. This last, based as it is on popular art, is already evident in certain works of this period and never disappears completely from Etruria. Jewelry, vases, ivories and an assortment of minor arts display highly developed techniques. The finest and most precious objects were imported from the Orient into the Italian peninsula. At the same time, there were numerous shops in Etruria whose craftsmen followed the motifs and composition of eastern Mediterranean cultures.

Influences from Greece proper attained supremacy in the period 625-575 B.C., for in this period the objects placed in tombs were products of Greek workshops: perfume vessels of proto-Corinthian style and Corinthian vases. These Greek imports were the basis for the diffusion of Greek motifs in Etruscan products.

The repertory of local artists gave way to a preference for the most varied, fantastic animals — chimerae, sphinxes and winged lions — whose complex forms and sinuous lines appealed to the imagination and taste. The last phase of this period, which suddenly introduced the Italic peoples to the artistic expressions of Asia Minor and Greece at a time when their own culture was still primitive, also witnessed the birth of large sculpture and fresco painting on the Italian peninsula. Greek influences, first Ionian and then Attic, gained ascendancy in the following century. The impact of Greek art is readily apparent in the unbelievable number of Greek vases which have come out of the vast burial grounds in Tarquinia, Cerveteri and Vulci.

Black-figured Attic vases appeared until 500 B.C., and these were succeeded by red-figured vases. The finest works of the Athenian potters were shipped on Greek or Etruscan ships to the Tyrrhenian coast. Prized by their owners, who had been proud to drink from vessels decorated by leading Greek artists, these vessels accompanied the *Lucumones* or prince-magistrates, the warriors and their wives to the dark recesses of the tomb. There were also, in fact, workshops with Greek artists established in the most prosperous cities of Etruria where the aristocratic clientele could purchase the finest objects for the banquet table.

This so-called archaic period witnessed a development of artistic expression which has no parallel in later Etruscan art. The stylized forms of the archaic period in Greece appealed to the Etruscan temperament which had always preferred a personal, novel interpretation of nature to a conception based on realism and harmony of form. In the sixth century, Etruria enjoyed its greatest period of prosperity and power — circumstances which were favorable to artists and resulted in the highest achievements of their



29

27 Gold fibula from the Regolini-Galassi Tomb. A remarkable jewel showing on its disk a relief ornament of lions flanked by two rows of palm leaves. Below is an embossed ornament of rows of lions and griffins. Height 32 cm. or 12 5/8 in. Circa 650 B.C. Etruscan Museum, Vatican. (Preceding pages).

28 Ivory cup from the Barberini Tomb at Praeneste. Height 14 cm. or 5 1/2 in. Decorated with relief ornaments and four caryatids. Middle of the 6th century B.C. Villa Giulia, Rome. (Preceding pages).

29 Bas-relief ornament on a plate forming part of a bronze tripod. The silhouettes of wild beasts, both lifelike and stylized, are derived from archaic Greek art. Etruscan artists preferred at all times to work with bronze and terra cotta rather than with stone. Middle of the 6th century B.C.

30 Gold ornament from the Barberini Tomb at Praeneste. Middle of the 7th century B.C. Villa Giulia, Rome (color plate opposite).





31 Stone sculpture of a seated winged sphinx. Height 83 cm. or 32 3/4 in. Style of the middle of the 6th century B.C. Montefinal Museum of Chiusi.







33

32 Terra-cotta head of the god Hermes from Vei. Circa 500 B.C. Villa Giulia, Rome.

33 Funerary stele from Bologna. Decorated with relief carvings of a struggle between a serpent and a sea horse (top); the ride into the afterlife (center); a duel between an Etruscan and a Celt (bottom). First half of the 4th century B.C. Museum of Bologna.

34 Fragment of a stone column. The relief shows a race of three-horse chariots. From Chiusi. Height 31 cm. or 12 1/4 in. Circa 470 B.C. Casuccini Collection, Palermo.



34



35

art. Later in this study, we shall discuss the marvelous group of terra-cotta statues which adorned the Temple of Apollo in Veii and were excavated since 1916 in the area of Portonaccio. These exceptional pieces of sculpture came from the workshop of Vulca, a master to whom Pliny attributes some of the decoration of the temple on the Capitoline in Rome shortly before 500 B.C. At that time, the fine products of local bronze-casters in Vulci were even being exported to Greece. At Tarquinia, the walls of underground tombs were being adorned with lively and colorful scenes by excellent fresco painters who interpreted Greek painting in their own inimitable Etruscan style. There we see various aspects of the funerary games which took place in honor of public officials and other leading citizens. A great deal of exquisitely wrought jewelry was produced by engravers and goldsmiths who were gifted with a vigorous imagination. Etruscan art, however, was not to continue at this high level; all too soon its vitality and inspired performance began to decline. It felt the serious repercussions of the defeats which destroyed national unity and was no longer refreshed by the beneficial nourishment from Greece. The relative isolation of Etruria in the fifth and early fourth

35 Interior of tomb at Cerveteri. The stucco decoration on the walls and pillars represents the household objects, weapons, and domestic animals of the deceased.

36 A funerary road between groups of large tumuli. Necropolis of Cerveteri.

37 Aerial map of the necropolis of La Banditaccia at Cerveteri.



36



centuries is well known. The forced departure of the Etruscans from Latium and Rome, the menace of the Celts, Greeks and Romans, explain fully how its vitality was eclipsed and its economic and political life declined. Relations with Greece and its provinces were weakened, but nevertheless one cannot believe that they ceased to exist. Greek vases of the fifth and fourth centuries B.C. found in Etruscan tombs are sufficient proof that while the bonds between the two nations were not as strong as they had been, they were never completely severed. Although Etruscan workshops of this period neither welcomed nor imitated Greek art, it was not entirely ignored. Etruscan artists had little interest in the study of anatomy and harmony of forms; they preferred to remain faithful to their own earlier compositions whose expressive forms satisfied their taste completely. This explains why the archaic style survived for a long time in the regions between the Arno and the Tiber rivers.

Such belated adoption of archaic forms is found in various peripheral civilizations of which we shall mention here only Celtic art and the astounding production of small Iberian bronzes.

35



In this period, as in the preceding, diverse techniques and sources of inspiration are evident in certain areas and cities. Artistic activity was no longer confined to the earlier geographical limits of Etruria. The bronze figure of Mars from Todi in the Vatican Museum was executed by a master active in Umbria and under the influence of Etruscan art. North of the Apennines, the workshops of Bologna produced many stone stelae whose reliefs include numerous scenes with authentic funerary symbolism.

The Hellenistic period, beginning in the late fourth century B.C., produced a great many works of art but the quality is not always the best. Lack of information on the excavations which uncovered works of this period makes it more difficult than ever to date them, but for that matter even the Greek sculptures of this period cannot be dated precisely. One of the most famous Greek sculptures of this period — the Venus of Milo — is variously dated by scholars in the third, or second or even in the first century B.C. It was only recently, when J. Charbonneau (*Revue des Arts*, I, 1951) compared the figure of Venus with a bust of Mithridates the Great that it was possible to ascertain the date and attribute the famous sculpture to the first century B.C.

A stylistic analysis of Etruscan art has to be carried out on very unsure foundations because of the lack of indispensable points of reference. The *Orator* in the Museo Archeologico in Florence and the so-called *Brutus* in the Museo dei Conservatori of Rome still pose many problems in dating. Discussions have taken place recently on the frescoes in the François Tomb at Vulci and the Tomb of the Typhon at Tarquinia, two of the most famous examples of Etruscan art. Until now the date ca. 300 B.C. was usually assigned to the frescoes at Vulci, but now it is believed by some scholars that they should be dated at the end of the second century B.C. And the Tarquinian frescoes, generally dated in the second century B.C., are now attributed to a workshop which was active ca. 50 B.C.

The dispersion of art centers continued after the Etruscans were conquered by the Romans, but it was only after the disasters wrought by Sulla's army that Etruria lost her independence and her unique artistic expressiveness. Etruscan objects of this period are frequently inferior in inventiveness and craftsmanship but occasionally one still discovers traces of their creative force. The fundamental principles of Greek-Hellenistic art — a preference for realism, pictorial elements, dramatic action and sensuousness — were eminently suited to the inclinations of the Etruscan temperament. Often the prototypes stimulated interpretations of realistic beauty. On the question of whether Etruria had schools of artists and craftsmen at this time opinion is sharply divided. For the present it is preferable that scholars continue to examine more thoroughly the characteristics of various arts which developed side by side. The different techniques must be carefully scrutinized in order to understand the versatile genius of a people who were ever inquisitive, who expressed themselves as skillfully in the minor arts as in sculpture and painting.



39

38 Head of a terra-cotta statue with polychromatic painting. A work after a Greek model of the second half of the 5th century B.C. From Falerii (Civita Castellana), temple « dello Scasato ». Early 4th century B.C. Villa Giulia, Rome.

39 Terra-cotta antefix in the shape of a Harpy, a half-human monster with the body of a four-winged bird. Height 47 cm. or 18 1/2 in. From the temple of the « Mater Matuta » at Satricum. Circa 480 B.C. Villa Giulia, Rome.

Etruscan Architecture

A study of Etruscan architecture should be based on the remnants of their burial sites rather than those of their towns. One of the most famous of these necropolises is that of Cerveteri, situated about twenty-eight miles northwest of Rome, which provides a fascinating insight into the private life of the Etruscan people.

No other archaeological site is likely to impress the visitor



more deeply than this astounding necropolis with its unending rows of high conical mounds of earth erected on massive stone foundations.

Scattered over the surface of these cones are entrances to the long passageways leading to the tombs. There is nothing accidental or haphazard in the arrangement of these funeral constructions which line the roads carefully hewn out of the volcanic tufa. To no other place can the term necropolis be applied more properly than to this veritable city of tombs which are neatly aligned along both sides of its streets. The inside of the tombs is as fascinating and impressive as the sight of the necropolis as a whole, for they form rooms hewn out of the living rock which faithfully reproduce the homes of the inhabitants.

Twin-sloped ceilings, projections imitating ridgepieces, rafters, pillars, pilasters and columns are re-created to duplicate the Etruscan house of which no trace has been preserved. The vastness of the Etruscan necropolis, the architectural design of their tombs, the preciousness of the funeral offerings, all denote the extreme importance which the Etruscans attributed to the afterlife, a preoccupation which we shall see is reflected also in their plastic art. It is obvious, therefore, why we have learned so much about Etruscan architecture from the tombs. There is, however, a profound difference between the funeral architecture of the north and that of the south of Tuscany because of varying ground conditions in these regions. The substratum of Latium and southern Etruria consists chiefly of soft, easily workable volcanic tufa, but that of the north with its solid, sedimentary rocks cannot, as a rule, be hollowed out easily. Thus, while the tombs of the area from Rome to Cerveteri and Chiusi could be cut out of volcanic rock to produce faithful duplicates of houses, those of the region north of Lake Bolsena and the Amiata and Cetona ranges had to be constructed by means of blocks of sandstone and travertine.

This applies also to the tombs of Populonia and Vetulonia, in which we note elements of construction characteristic of the Aegean region but unknown to the Greeks, such as the vault and the cupola. These are still in an initial stage of development and achieved by the superposition of blocks leaning gradually toward the axis of the tomb rather than by means of the wedge-shaped voussoir. Even so they

40 High relief from Civitalba (Marche). Maenad in the procession of Dionysus uncovering the sleeping Ariadne. 2nd century B.C. Museum of Bologna.

41 Terra-cotta statue of a young man representing a god. Part of a pediment decoration. From the so-called temple of Apollo « dello Scasato » at Falerii (Civita Castellana). Circa 300 B.C. Villa Giulia, Rome.







constitute an advance toward more rational forms of construction, and the appearance of such architectural techniques on Italian soil was of extreme significance for the future. In the Greeks' persistent predilection for buildings of limited dimensions and harmonious and carefully calculated room space, we notice an early, fundamental trend to solve the problems of roof construction for large halls and monuments. Such vast buildings were constructed in ancient Italy continuously.

Though the time-resistant structures of the tombs have lasted through the centuries, nothing has survived of the Etruscan towns themselves. The fragility of the material (wood and bricks) used in the construction of the buildings, frequently on the rocky soil, and the destruction wrought in Roman and modern times, have resulted in their complete obliteration. Hence the foundations of some sanctuaries and the remnants of protective walls are all that is left of the Etruscan towns. Comparing the remains of the towns with the tomb structures, and searching ancient literary sources, above all Vitruvius's essay on architecture, should give us a fairly good idea of the general layout of Etruscan cities. Great city builders they were, and the Etruscans taught the Italic people — then herded together in clustered settlements formed by necessity — the fundamentals of urban design based on religious principles and the concept of the "urbs" itself. Here we have the origin of the Romulus legend of the Etruscan-inspired foundation of Rome. Ancient Etruscan foundation rites were in fact celebrated by the Romans in historical times.

After having consulted the oracle and determined the cardinal points, the Etruscan surveyors marked the ground by two perpendicular axes, one from north to south, the other from west to east. A network of streets running parallel to these basic axes then divided the urban space into a checker-board layout for the erection of uniform blocks of buildings. On the acropolis too, the temples faced in a north-south direction so that the gods from their inner sanctum might extend protection over the city whose fate was entrusted to them. However, excavations at the Etruscan sites of Tarquinia, Cerveteri and Volterra have revealed no traces of such geometrical design. These cities, built at easily defensible places on either sharply declining plateaux or rows of hills, had to be laid out in accordance with the irregular surface features of the area which they occupied. These principles of Etruscan urban design were developed by a civilization greatly concerned with a system based upon the orientation of their buildings to the laws of

42 Alabaster sarcophagus. Length 128 cm. or 50 1/2 in. Found at Litta della Pieve in the Chiusi area. The man is reclining, the woman seated. 4th century B.C.



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celestial harmony discovered in studying the heavens. Such a discipline was best applied to colonial settlements, laid out in wide, open spaces; and much later it was put to use in the Roman world.

This was the case at Marzabotto, a city founded at the end of the 6th century B.C., on a virgin tableland by the Etruscans, who proceeded along the valley of the Reno in the heart of the Apennines on their way to conquering the plain of the Po River. Here excavations have brought to light an astounding network of streets in a regular north-south and east-west pattern whose remarkable main thoroughfares show a width of some fifteen meters. Drainage was provided by an elaborate system of sewers. Much can be expected from further research at this unique site.

There are only scanty remains of Etruscan temples whose walls were made mainly of bricks, their columns of tufa or wood, and the wooden entablatures provided with just a decorative facing of clay. To form an idea of these primitive sanctuaries we have to resort to their ruins, to ancient texts, to occasional ex-voto representations of parts or the whole of these buildings. The Etruscan and, later, also the Roman temple differs from its Greek counterpart both by its lo-

43 Antefix of terra cotta of a maenad head crowned by a diadem. Height 45 cm. or 17 3/4 in. From Vei (Portonaccio). Circa 500 B.C. Villa Giulia, Rome.

44 View of the funerary chamber of the Regolini-Galassi Tomb discovered at Cerveteri in 1836. Middle of the 7th century B.C.

45 Map of the already excavated part of the Etruscan city of Marzabotto on the Reno, founded around 500 B.C.



46

46 Blocks in the city of Marzabotto. The illustration clearly shows the regular, checker-board design of the city. The ditch seen in the illustration was once a drain or sewer.

47 Map of Etruria and its principal cities.

48 Fragment of the head of a woman. « Pietra fetida ». From Chiusi. Middle of the 6th century B.C. Museum of Cortona.



47

cation and way of approach. The Greek sanctuary, with its low sub-foundation, was accessible by a series of steps from any direction; its four sides, whatever their difference in length, were therefore of equal architectural importance. The loftier Etruscan temple, on the other hand, could be reached only by steps leading up to its façade, which consequently was its most important side and introduced an essential shift in perspective. In Greek architecture the building was conceived as a whole with no particular emphasis on any of its components.

In Etruria and later in Rome the over-all structure and its proportions were considered less important than the impression produced on the approaching devotee or visitor by the front part, an essential characteristic of Italic art with its tendency toward an immediate, direct, decorative effect.

However, the Etruscan temples were of a greatly varying design, and the alleged strict rules of construction mentioned by Vitruvius are no more than conclusions drawn by the eminent theoretician of the Augustan epoch. The nearly square, unimaginative design of the Etruscan temple may be explained by the religious belief in a triad of deities each of which had its own cella, or sanctum, in the rear part of the building. The front part of the temple was enhanced by colonnades of varying dimensions and structure. The Etruscan column was inspired by the Doric model, but rested on a pedestal. Most recent research has disclosed that the temple roofs consisted of two or more planes necessitated by the size of the buildings. Decorations of painted terra cotta embellished the entablature, the roof and the pediment. Though enlivened by its decoration, the Etruscan temple presented an archaic, heavy and rather ungraceful over-all aspect. Here the classic harmony of Greece was superseded by expressiveness and color.

Etruscan Sculpture

Although there are close artistic relationships between Etruria and Greece, there are notable differences in their sculpture. Etruscan sculpture is distinctive because of the scarcity of full-round stone sculpture. In contrast to the wonderful marble figures of Greece, Etruria offers only sculptures of rather rude workmanship, largely restricted to a few cities. Curiously enough, Etruscan artists seem to have had an aversion to working in stone. The soft materials which they preferred made it impossible to obtain the effects achieved in marble. As a result, the best quality is found in sculptured relief. Bronze and terra cotta were the preferred materials, and these were worked to perfection and with extraordinary expressiveness.

Sculpture did not serve the function in Etruria that it did in Greece, and the differences in their works distinguish the individual genius of each. This is a factor which needs to be emphasized. A prime distinction of the Greek spirit is its profound sensibility for proportion, its humanism, and its love of life. Homeric poetry had already placed man



at the center of the universe as a measure of all things. In a world which offers pleasure and joy, man uses powers of reason to extract the laws of a complex mechanism and makes use of art to create beauty. Greek gods are conceived in human form, and the omnipotent beings of Mt. Olympus are endowed with all the characteristics of mortals.

In Greece, as in all early cultures, sculpture had its origin in the need to create votive images. Since divinities were conceived in human form, they were honored with the creation of male and female figures having ideal proportions. In this way, Greek sculpture first created images of gods, and then the hero and the individual. Insofar as the Greek artist served religion and society, he devoted all his efforts to the perfection of the human figure. Marble, a hard material, was greatly prized in Greece. It cannot be carved quickly and easily; the sculptor who uses it must be extremely competent in craftsmanship and technique. Greek workshops understood the need for these skills and their sculptures proclaim the perfection of which they were capable. In no other art is there a more noble glorification of man.

The needs and preoccupations of Etruscan artists were entirely different. Humanism had no place in a civilization whose entire history evolved in a troubled atmosphere, and whose life was conducted within a network of regulations and taboos. The tradition of Etruria as a nation which fostered superstitions was still alive in the fourth century when Arnobius wrote his *Disputationes*.

Supernatural forces constantly hovered over a people who felt themselves isolated amidst obscure and threatening forebodings. The gods were endowed with a mysterious, impenetrable nature. Only the gods introduced from Greece were given human form; the others, as with so many divinities from the East, were fearsome, amorphous beings whose anger had to be placated and whose help was constantly implored. An important aspect of Etruscan life was the practice of divination, the need to know the divine will, and prophecy of the future through signs and omens which appeared in the places sacred to the divinities.

Given these circumstances, the human body could not possess that supreme dignity with which it was endowed in Greece. The magic, primitive vision of the universe, so

49 Canopic urn representing the head of the deceased with her earrings. Schematic indication of the breasts and arms on the vessel. From Chiusi. Height 26 cm. or 10 1/4 in. 5th century B.C. Munich Museum.

50 Canopic urn of terra cotta. The head of the deceased surrounded by four standing goddesses. From Cetona near Chiusi. Height 58 cm., or 22 7/8 in. First half of the 6th century B.C. Archaeological Museum, Florence.





characteristic of the Etruscans, engendered an artistic expression which was unique. Surrounded by invisible forces, man feared the fate awaiting him in afterlife and the thought of death never ceased to be a major preoccupation for the living. It is understandable, therefore, that Etruscan art is primarily funerary. The deceased had to be assured of survival in his last resting-place. In a later religious concept, the deceased hoped for survival in the dark realm of Hades where the dead were subjected to unhappiness and misery. The funerary cult purported to achieve this survival with meticulous rules, and the works of art were a means to that end.

We cannot linger here on the remote origins and reasons for the development of Etruscan sculpture. Its modest beginning may be seen in the canopic vases found near Chiusi which are receptacles for the ashes of the dead.

At first a crude mask of the deceased was affixed to the side of the vase, the earliest ones in terracotta and the later ones of bronze. Subsequently, the lid of the vase was modeled in the form of a head, and gradually the vase assumed an anthropomorphic form. A suggestion of the human chest was implied in the body of the vase, and the handles were transformed into arms. This hybrid art, with its primitive, exotic qualities, eventually became more complex in implications. The canopic jar was placed on a high-back ceramic throne, thus representing the deceased in a seated position. In other examples, figures of winged, female divinities are disposed in concentric rings around the head of the effigy, an arrangement which would seem to denote protection of the deceased. Thus, Orientalizing decoration and forms deriving from a proto-Greek sphere were grafted onto the indigenous form of an anthropomorphic, cinerary vase. These hybrid creations reveal, I think, one of the principal traits of Etruscan mentality. Indicative as they are of a daring artistic imagination which does not shy from bold syntheses, these works could not have been created in Greece. The Etruscans' cosmic outlook, their profound belief in the interdependence of the various elements of the universe doubtless prompted them to give to such objects as canopic jars a symbolic meaning by making them a concise and striking image of the deceased.

Alongside these first attempts by local artists which have no counterpart in Western civilization, bronze and terracotta statuettes, vases of bronze with appliqué ornament or handles in figurative form began to appear in the seventh and early sixth centuries B.C. In these we recognize the



51 Terracotta high relief of two winged horses. Decoration of the pediment of a temple at the Ara della Regina, Tarquinia. Height 114 cm. or 45 in. Circa 300 B.C. Museo Archeologico, Tarquinia.



52 Large terra-cotta sarcophagus from Cerveteri. Circa 530-520 B.C. Villa Giulia, Rome.







technical methods and subject matter of oriental arts imported to Etruria from Egypt and Asia. Native style and oriental influences are sometimes intermingled. However, in this period the inventiveness of the Etruscans is proclaimed by the exquisite art of the goldsmith.

Large stone sculpture made its appearance ca. 600 B.C. Only a few examples are extant, but these figures were placed in tombs in order to perpetuate the deceased. The artist concentrated all his attention on the face, giving emphasis to essential features as he saw fit — a common tendency in primitive or provincial art. In Etruria this predilection never disappeared; the body was often reduced to an abstract form which enhanced the characterization of the face. Needless to say, this is not an art of realism, for the heads are not portraits. True portraiture does not appear until the Hellenistic period, but the constant focus on the head at the expense of the body is typical of Etruscan sculpture. These early sculptures show influences from Rhodes and Peloponnesus. Thus, the trend of the archaic period, called the Daedalic style, made its entry on the Etruscan scene, but it was not a servile imitation of the prototype; rather, it was a native process of elaboration which had influences and elements of varying origins as its point of departure. Often, it seems, large sculpture was inspired by small statuettes in bronze, ivory or terra cotta, and even from pottery, for the minor arts always played a considerable role in the artistic life of Etruria. Fabulous and real animals, winged lions and sphinxes entered the Etruscan repertory at this time and never really went out of fashion. The prevalence of these subjects is such as to make Etruscan sculpture one of the least "human" of antiquity. Here we recognize their function in the funerary cult. The roaring lion is an effective protector of the tomb over whose door he stands guard; the sphinx, too, is a vigilant guardian. The Etruscan imagination seems constantly haunted by these fabulous creatures and, in this respect, we recognize a preoccupation which is common to the Orient. Generally speaking, Etruscan art never ceased to favor a zoomorphic art. A few splendid masterpieces in bronze or terra cotta from each century testify to this indigenous propensity. The bronze *She-wolf* dated ca. 500 B.C. in the Museo dei Conservatori in Rome and the *Chimera* from Arezzo now in the Museo Archeologico in Florence, dated in the fourth century B.C., can take their place among the finest sculptures of antiquity.

53 Bronze head. Height 23 cm. or 9 1/8 in. 3rd century B.C. Archaeological Museum, Florence.

54 Biconical ossuary of the Villanova type, but with sculptural ornaments. A figure is seated on the handle, two others appear on the lid. From Montescudaio near Volterra. Height 64 cm. or 25 1/4 in. 7th century B.C. Archaeological Museum, Florence.

55 Bucchero vase in the shape of a fish with a human head. Height 28 cm. or 10 1/2 in. Middle of the 6th century B.C. Paris, Louvre.



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56 Stone centaur. Figure of a young athlete with the body and legs of a horse. Early 6th century B.C. From Vulci. Villa Giulia, Rome.

57 Limestone statue of a young man on a sea horse. From Vulci. Circa 600 B.C. Villa Giulia, Rome.

58 Terra-cotta votive piece, representing the pediment of a temple. From Nemi. Circa 300 B.C. Villa Giulia, Rome.



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The same may be said of the marvelous chariot discovered by Professor Romanelli shortly before the recent war in the excavation of the sacred precinct in Tarquinia.

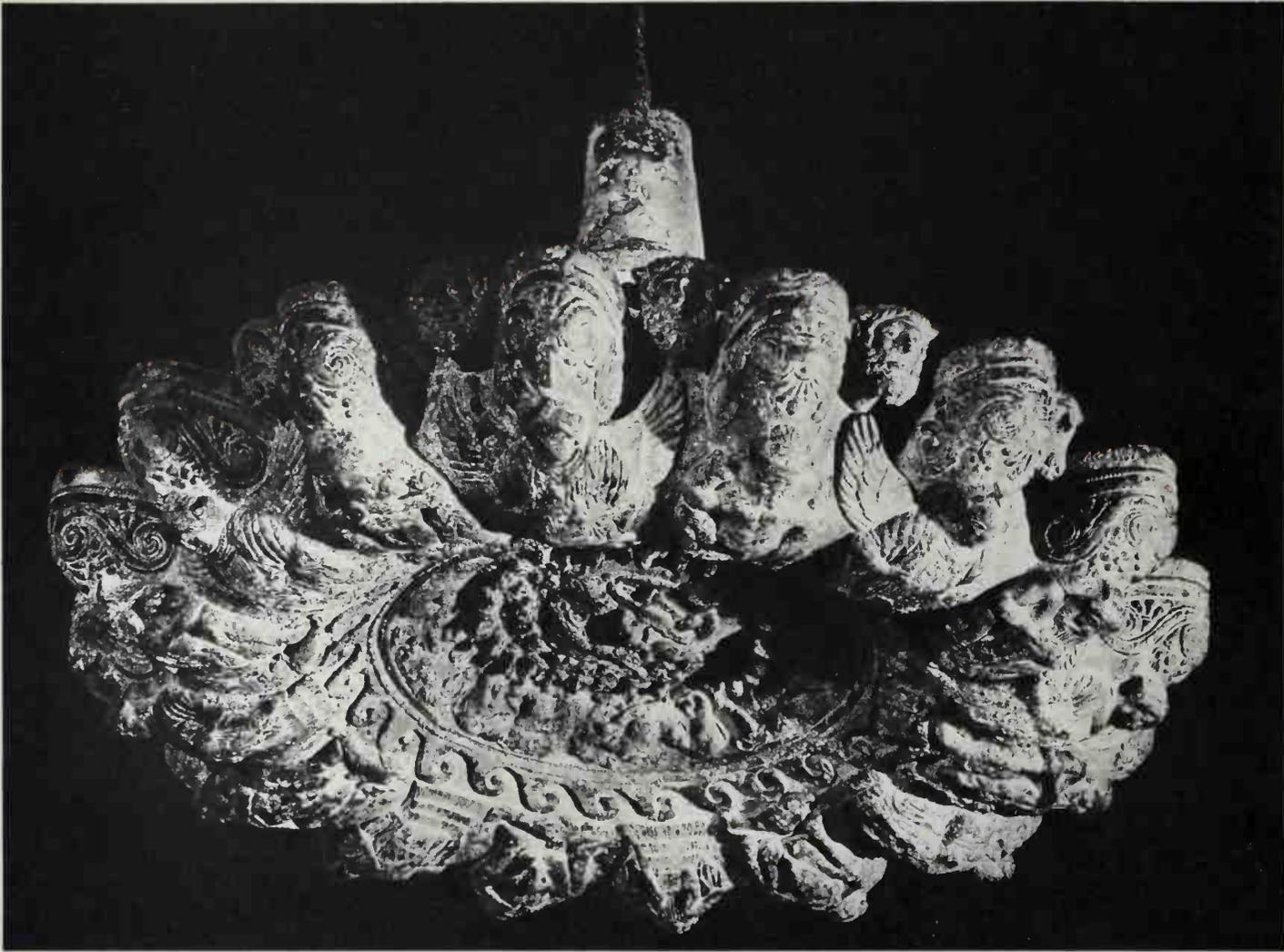
Some of the Etruscan funeral sculptures of the archaic period have won just prominence in the history of art. The most famous among these are the two terra-cotta sarcophagi found at Cerveteri, one of which is now at the Louvre, the other at the Villa Giulia in Rome. Of the same type and nearly equal in artistic value, they may be dated 530-520 B.C. Both feature the images of a deceased couple in a half-reclining position on their deathbeds, much as they might have sat on banquet couches in life. Etruscan aristocracy (whose daring deeds were once heralded throughout the Italian peninsula before fading into almost total oblivion) has been portrayed here in a most touching form. The sumptuousness of bed and clothes, and the noble attitude and gentle gestures of the husband and wife reflect the ways of the ruling class which in its time knew how to enjoy the comforts of life. Heroic in their relaxed attitude, the images of these people indicate funeral practices obviously inspired by a firm belief in a happy survival in the hereafter. Here the plastic and monumental treatment embodies a conception recalling the earlier canopic urns of Chiusi which, however, a lack of artistic skill had frozen into a state of hieratic immobility. The polychromy of these Cerveteri sarcophagi betrays a predilection for rich colors, one of the principal elements of Italic art.

A similar piece shown for a long time at the British Museum revealed upon re-examination, prompted by its strange, unusual characteristics, the hand of a modern artist. In this item the feet of the funeral bed have lost their functional character, the attitude of the man and the woman appear to be somewhat peculiar and their archaizing features unnatural in the elongated form of the heads, the overemphasized

almond shape of the eyes and the sharpness of the profiles. This work, exaggerated in style and hyper-Etruscan in its characteristics, was declared a counterfeit around 1930.

This led to the discovery of many other forgeries in the field of Etruscan art, for instance: the giant terra-cotta warriors exhibited until recently at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York whose falseness was confirmed by laboratory tests and by the authenticated statement of one of their authors whose identity could be established. This man admitted that they were manufactured in a workshop in Orvieto in 1914. The spuriousness of these





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59 Large bronze candelabrum from Cortona. Outstanding work of Etruscan art. Gorgon mask in the center. Decorated with alternating figures of Silens and Sirens, 58 cm. or 22 7/8 in. in diameter. Second half of the 5th century B.C. Museum of Cortona.

60 Giant terra-cotta head of a warrior, exhibited for a long time at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Modern forgery.

61 Giant terra-cotta warrior exhibited until recently at The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. Modern forgery.

62 Terra-cotta sarcophagus once exhibited at the British Museum, London. Modern forgery.

objects, now considered obvious, had, incidentally, been pointed out by Pallottino in 1937. There is no doubt about the existence of numerous other, as yet undiscovered, forgeries of Etruscan art whose frequency may be explained by the increasing interest in this art and by the gullibility of amateur collectors anxious to own precious items at any price. And above all, it is the peripheral arts with their frequently conflicting tendencies of evaluation which the counterfeiters have chosen as their field of operation.

The chariot from Tarquinia was part of the decoration of a sanctuary. The relationship between sculpture and architecture in tombs and in temples is consistently maintained in Etruria. We recognize in this relationship a utilitarian use of art that is characteristic of Etruscan work, one which does not, as does Greek sculpture, become independent of it. Until the Hellenistic period, the Etruscan temple was constructed with a timber framework and roof, a form of building which called for rich decoration of painted terra cotta. Architectural decorations of this sort are found in great quantity on Etruscan sites. Painted in the brightest colors, they gave the temple a most bizarre appearance. During the Ionic period the walls of the temple were de-



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modern
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63 Sculpture high relief from Civitalba (Marche). 2nd century B.C. Museum of Bologna (preceding page).

64 Bronze stand of a candelabrum in the shape of a slender young man. From Vulci. Late 6th century B.C. (preceding page).

65 Incense burner or bronze lamp. A youth wearing bracelets and a necklace stands on a chariot adorned with four small lions. A mushroom-shaped bunch of leaves supports the receptacle. Height 30 cm. or 11 3/4 in. From Vulci. Late 6th century B.C. Louvre, Paris (preceding page).

66 Urn decorated with relief of five dancing figures. Small lion heads of bronze embedded on rim. Lid missing. Height 38 cm. or 15 in. Late 6th century B.C. From Chiusi. Archaeological Museum, Florence.

67 Antefix with the head of a maenad. From the temple of Juno Sospita at Lanuvium. Height 40 cm. or 15 3/4 in. Late 6th century B.C. Villa Giulia, Rome.



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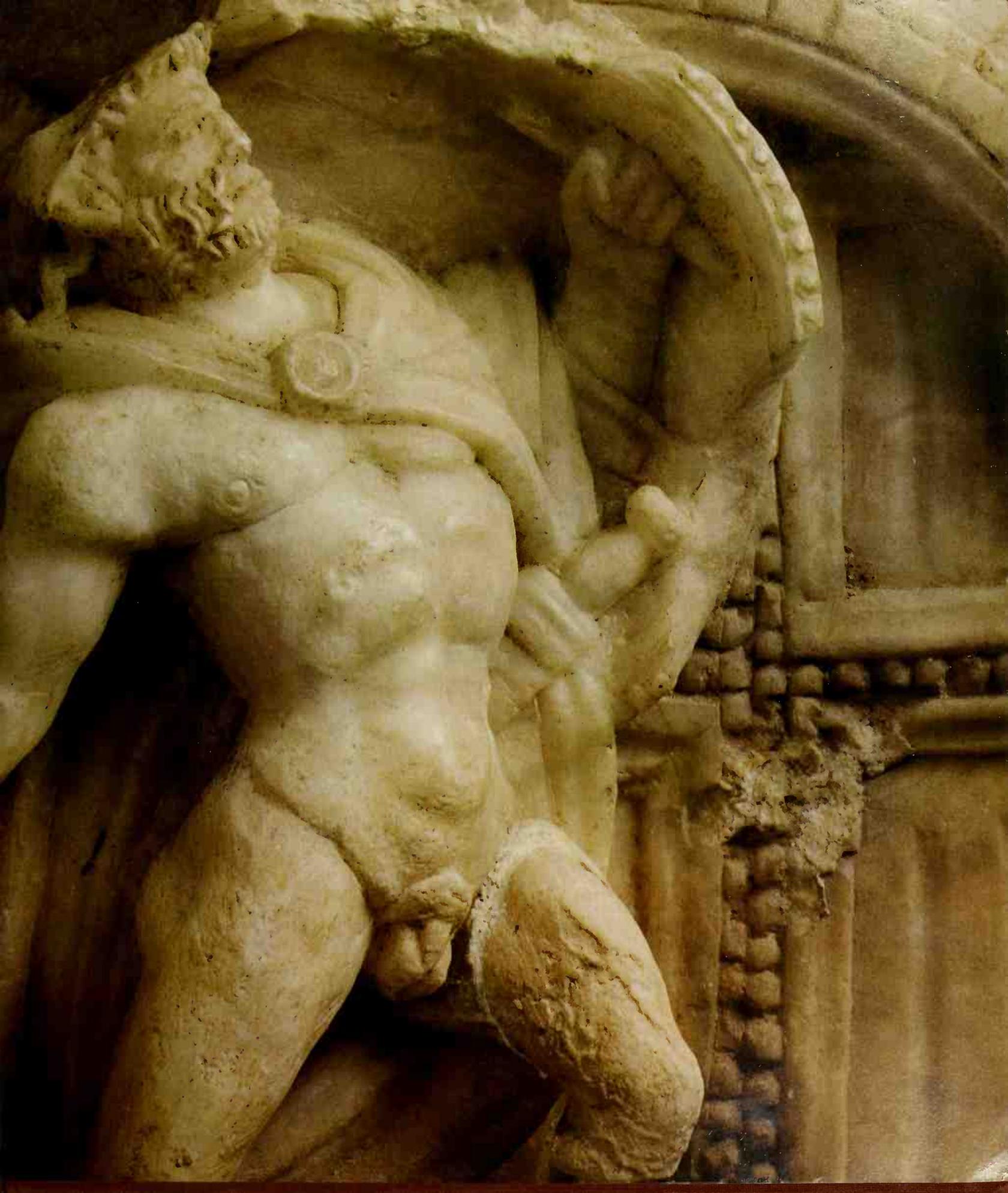
corated with figurative friezes deriving from an Orientalizing repertory — horse races, processions of chariots or warriors. A great many with motifs inspired by the decoration of temples in Ionia have been found in southern Etruria and in Rome. At the end of the sixth century B.C., these figurative friezes disappeared and were replaced by floral and vegetal motifs around the eaves of the roof. Ornament now consisted of antefixes at the eaves and statues standing on the roofs of temples with faces of heroes and divinities. The antefixes must have given the temple an astonishingly vivid ornament. Smiling faces of maenads, grimaces of satyrs, and grinning masks of gorgons were framed by shell motifs. Some of these antefixes like the one from Veii, for instance, are true masterpieces. The simple mask was sometimes replaced by figure groups of drunken satyrs and maenads, a subject which evokes all the spirit of the orgiastic, Bacchic rites. Pieces of this sort, somewhat provincial and naïve in composition and facial expressions, are found in many parts of Latium.

Among these architectural sculptures is a group which stands apart from the rest. These are the nearly life-size statues which adorned the roof of the temple in Veii at Portonaccio. Various excavations carried out since 1916 have brought to light fragments of a sculptural group representing the dispute between Herakles and Apollo for possession of the Arcadian stag. Thus, we see that in the late sixth century B.C., Greek mythology was firmly rooted in Veii. The figure of Apollo from Veii has been almost completely recomposed from the discovered fragments, while the Herakles is slowly being made whole as new pieces are found. The stag is also among the sculptures extant today. Of the figure of Hermes, messenger to the gods, there remains only the head. In the excavation of 1939 a statue of a goddess holding a child was discovered. This group may represent Latona (Leto) and the infant Apollo, but the interpretation has not yet been confirmed. It is now certain that all these statues were placed on the roof of the temple, standing on terra-cotta arches which straddled the ridge-beam. It is difficult for us to imagine the astonishing effect produced by this series of magnificent statues silhouetted against the sky as a strong declaration of the link to ancient legend. Greek architecture also made use of acroteria on the apex of the temple pediment, but the Etruscans used them with equal boldness and originality.

This group of sculptures is all the more interesting for the facts known about its creation, a documentation which is rarely available to the student of ancient art. There are

68 *Detail of the relief decoration of an alabaster urn from Volterra representing the attack on Thebes. Guarnacci Museum, Volterra.*







H O I A S E I A A I I



69 Terra-cotta sarcophagus with the richly adorned figure of the deceased, Larthia Scianti. Length 162 cm. or 63 3/4 in. From Chiusi. 6th century B.C. Archaeological Museum, Florence.

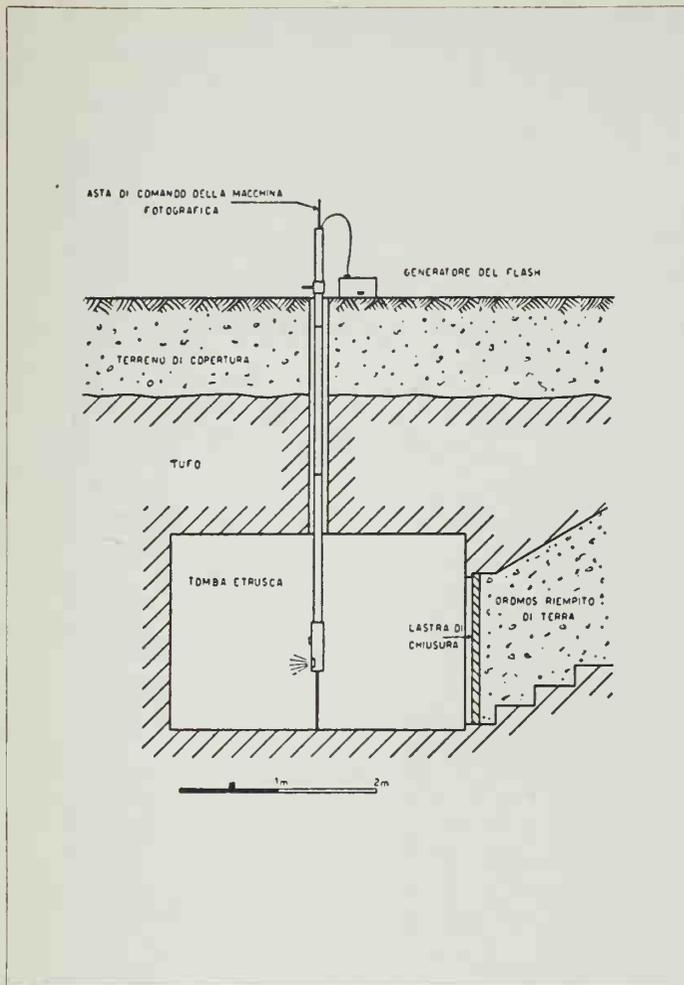




70 Life-size statue of the god Apollo. Found at Vei in 1916. Circa 500 B.C. Villa Giulia, Rome.

71 Head of a bronze statue of a man, damaged, with remnants of a helmet. Height 14 cm. or 5 1/2 in. From Cagli near Pesaro. Middle of the 4th century B.C. Villa Giulia, Rome.





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fine, flat reliefs representing the life beyond the grave with an artistic vocabulary of symbolic connotations.

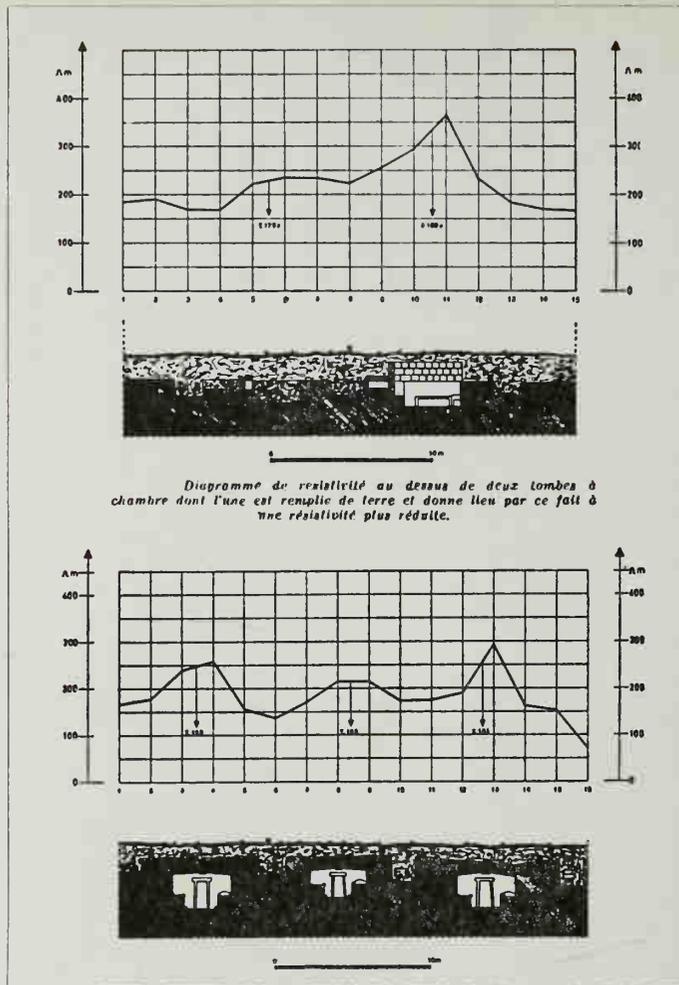
In the Hellenistic period, sculpture is abundant but uneven in quality. Here we find the deep-rooted sensuality of the Etruscans expressed quite freely. With this last phase of Etruscan history, the terra-cotta decorations of temples show a multiplicity of influences, and the figures occasionally have the expression of pathos found in the works of Scopas of the gracefulness of sculptures by Praxiteles. The nat-

74 Sketch illustrating the use of an automatic camera for photographing the inside of an unexplored tomb. Method developed by C.M. Lerici.

75 Diagram showing the variations of electric resistivity of the ground at the sites of Etruscan tombs.

76 Terra-cotta urn from Tuscany. Image of a dying man depicted as Adonis. Circa 100 B.C. Etruscan Museum, Vatican.

77 Aerial photo showing the outline of the Etruscan city of Spina underneath the gridiron pattern of modern canals.



75

uralistic motifs of Hellenistic art from Alexandria and Pergamon are freely and wilfully imitated, for Etruscan taste now adapted itself quite readily to the prevailing tendencies of the Mediterranean world of art.

The only important innovation of this period is the introduction of high-relief sculpture in the pediments of temples. The latest discoveries made by Pallottino in the archaic sanctuary at Pirgi, once the harbor of Cerveteri, show that pedimental sculpture was used at a very early time. But sculpture of this type became more numerous ca. 300 B.C., and the winged horses from Tarquinia are among the finest examples. The sculpture of a young god driving a chariot from the temple popularly called *dello Scasato*, in Civita Castellana, the ancient city of Falerii, has a quality of rare and exquisite beauty. The softness of modeling endows him with a rather feminine, Praxitelian grace. Sculptural decoration in the pediments of temples was frequently of mythological subjects, as witness the one representing the meeting at Naxos of Dionysus and Ariadne.

The growing influence and popularity of the Bacchic mystery cult in Etruria at the time was reflected in Etruscan art. When Bacchic worship finally reached Rome, the Senate was deeply alarmed at the spread of this mystic and individualistic cult considered alien to established Latin concepts of religion, and took stern measures against

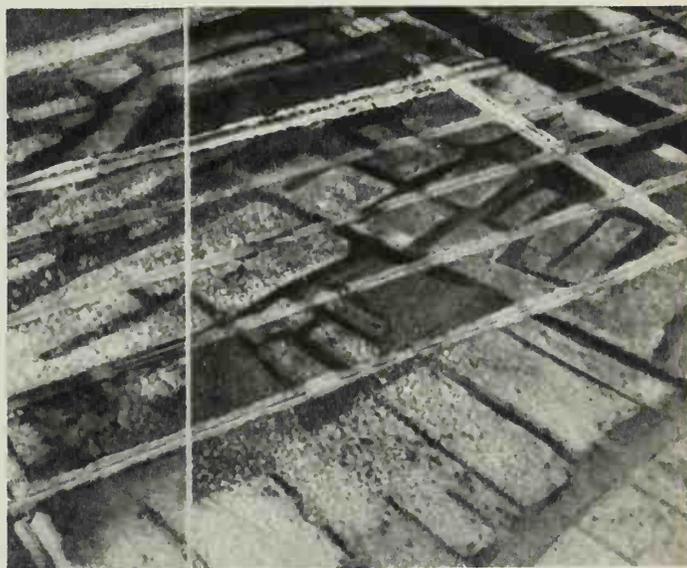


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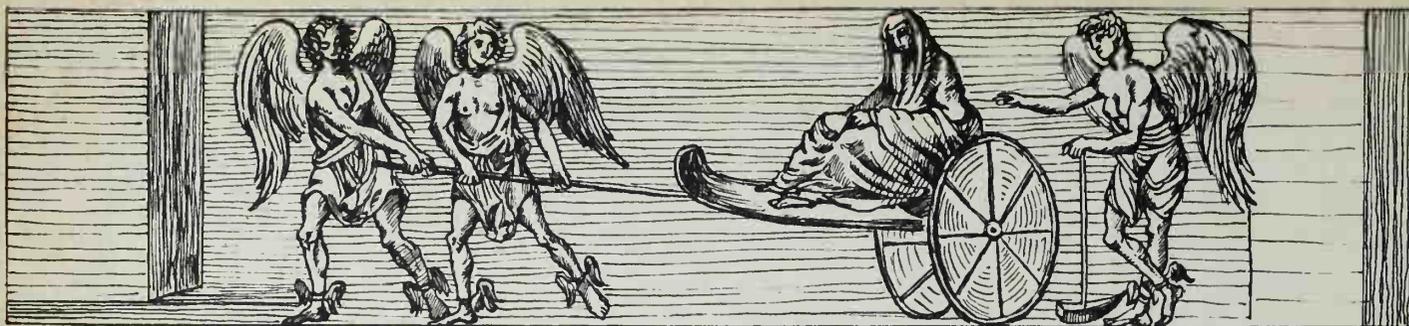
it, as shown by the suppression of the bacchanalian orgies in 186 B.C.

Some of the pieces in the vast collections of urns and sarcophagi which fill many rooms in museums are impressive for their directness of expression and their mood of melancholy. The terra-cotta urn from Tuscany, dated ca. 100 B.C., representing the dying Adonis is delightful for these very qualities, if not for its modernity. With a minimum of means the artist succeeded in creating out of simple clay a powerful emotional expression, one which evokes the last gasp of the young huntsman, his final agony in the throes of death.

There is supreme harmony in the long, supple lines of the youthful body, echoed in the modeling of the dog stretched beside the deathbed and in the heavy folds of drapery covering the bed. Sculpture of this quality shows unmistakably that real schools of artists and craftsmen still existed in Etruria. For that matter, there is ample testimony to the continuity of inspiration and tradition in the portraits in terra cotta and bronze from the later periods. Four centuries or more after the first coarse production of the canopic urns from Chiusi, there still existed the vital imprint of Italic originality. The influence exercised by Greek-Hellenistic portraits from the third century B.C. onward only strengthened a natural inclination and offered



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Etruscan Painting

it more suitable technical means of expression. Given the Etruscan propensity for the concrete form, the individual artist was free to invent. A sculpture which comes to mind is the marvelous third century bronze portrait in Florence of a young man with a dreamy, somewhat sorrowful expression. This work fits quite naturally into a whole series of powerful creations, worthy of comparison with the Florentine bronzes of the Renaissance.

In my opinion, the theory that the Etruscan portrait is merely a peripheral, provincial reflection of the Greek portrait should be discarded. And it is difficult to deny that it did not serve in some way as a preparation and introduction for the Roman portrait. The marked realism of Roman busts of the Republican period appears completely congenial to Roman civilization, and, at least in part, they derive from the Roman patrician custom of making masks of the deceased. Wax masks, modeled directly from heads, were preserved and treasured in the atria of Roman houses. These *imagines*, which reproduced the face precisely, were carried with great solemnity in the processions organized when other funerals were held. Seneca writes in one of his letters that it was a sign of ancient nobility to possess an atrium full of *imagines* blackened by smoke.

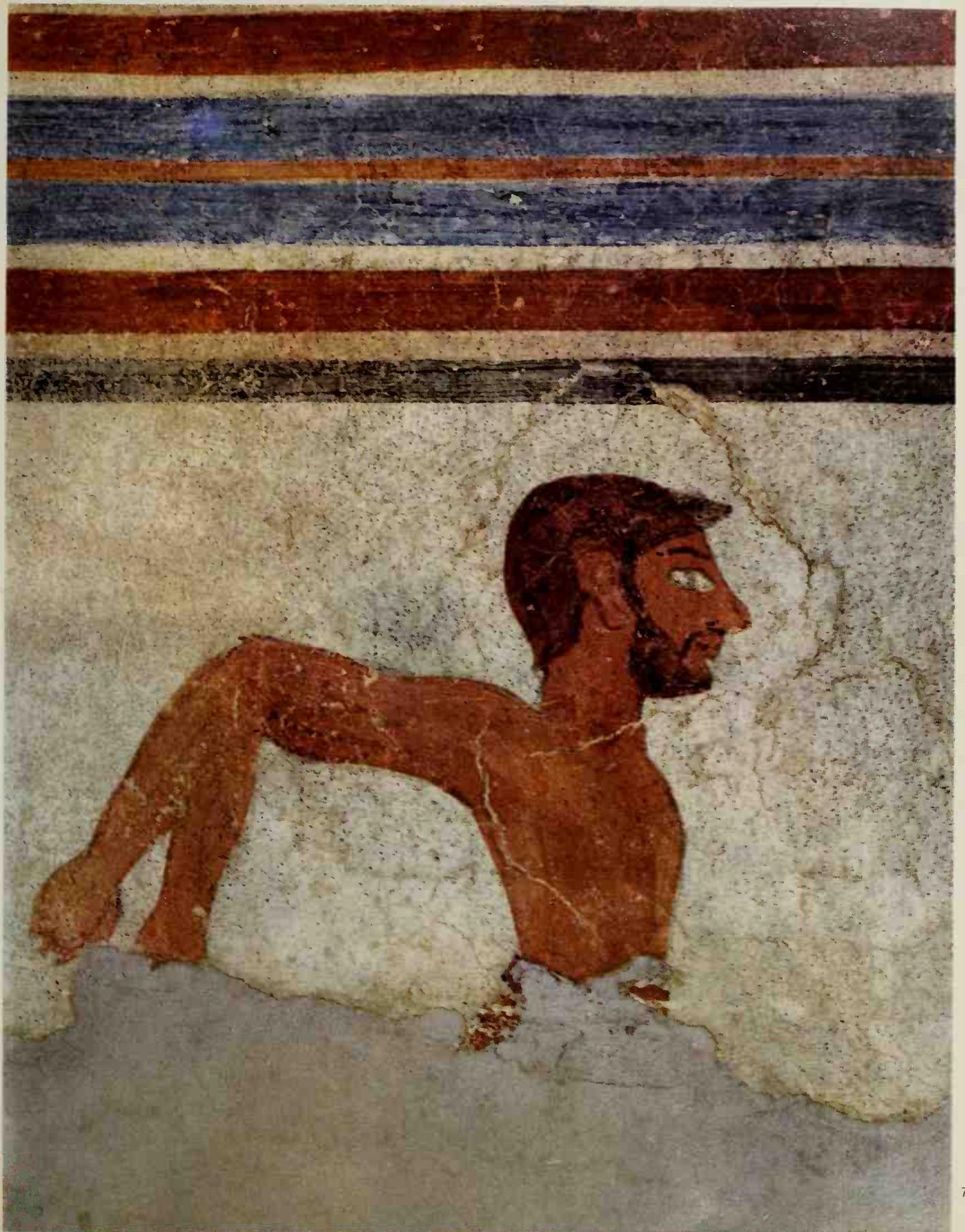
The Roman portrait did not originate, as Professor Bianchi-Bandinelli so rightly says, from an esthetic need, but sprang from a magic-religious practice as a status symbol of Roman society. Contact with Greek portraiture fostered the further development of portraits, but I do not believe one can ignore the influence of the innumerable reclining figures of the deceased on sarcophagi which the Romans could easily have known in Etruscan towns like Tarquinia. These, too, had grown out of religious needs and the funerary cult, and they offer a link with Roman culture whose importance should not be underestimated.

The painted tombs of Tarquinia astonish and fascinate the visitors who find themselves before the colorful, imaginative scenes on damp walls. D. H. Lawrence described his impressions on first entering these halls in the following way: "It seems a dark little hole underground: a dark little hole, after the sun of the upper world! But the guide's lamp begins to flare up, and we find ourselves in a little chamber in the rock, just a small, bare little cell of a room that some anchorite might have lived in. It is so small and bare and familiar, quite unlike the rather splendid spacious tombs at Cerveteri.

"But the lamp flares bright, we get used to the change of light, and see the paintings on the little walls. It is the Tomb of Hunting and Fishing, so called from the pictures on the walls, and is supposed to date from the sixth century B.C. It is very badly damaged, pieces of the wall have fallen away, damp has eaten into the colours, nothing seems to be left. Yet in the dimness we perceive flights of birds flying through the haze, with the draught of life still in their wings. And as we take heart and look closer we see the little room is frescoed all round with hazy sky and sea, with birds flying and fishes leaping, and little men hunting, fishing, rowing in boats. The lower part of the wall is all a blue-green of sea with a silhouette surface that ripples all round the room. From the sea rises a tall rock, off which a naked man, shadowy but still distinct, is beautifully and cleanly diving into the sea, while a companion climbs up the rock after him, and on the water a boat waits with rested oars in it, three men watching the diver, the middle man standing up naked holding out his arms. Meanwhile a great dolphin leaps behind the boat, a flight of birds soars upwards to pass the rock in the clean air. Above all, from the bands of colour that border the wall at the top hang the regular loops of garlands, garlands of flowers and leaves and buds and berries, garlands which belong to maidens and to women, and which represent the flowery circle of the female life and sex. The top border of the wall is formed of horizontal stripes or ribands of colour that go all round the room, red and black and dull gold and blue and primrose, and these are the colours that occur invariably. Men are nearly always painted a darkish red, which is the colour of many Italians when they go naked in the sun, as the Etruscans went. Women are coloured paler, because women did not go naked in the sun.

78 Fresco from the Tomb of the Cardinal. Byres, Hypogea of Tarquinia. (Drawing by Brenda Bettinson).

79 A leaping athlete from a fresco on the right-hand wall of the Tomb of the Olympiad, discovered in 1958. Circa 520 B.C. Tarquinia.



"It is all small and gay and quick with life, spontaneous as only young life can be. If only it were not so much damaged, one would be happy, because here is the real Etruscan liveliness and naturalness. It is not impressive but if you are content with just a sense of the quick ripple of life, then here it is.

"This profound belief in life, acceptance of life, seems characteristic of the Etruscans. It is still vivid in the painted tombs. There is a certain dance and glamour in all the movements, even in those of the naked slavemen." Lawrence's sincere, first-hand account expresses the reactions one experiences when standing before this art, unique in the West. Ancient painting has disappeared almost completely. The materials used were perishable; and it was only due to Egypt's dry, hot climate that the Fayyum portraits were preserved. Indeed, the only frescoes

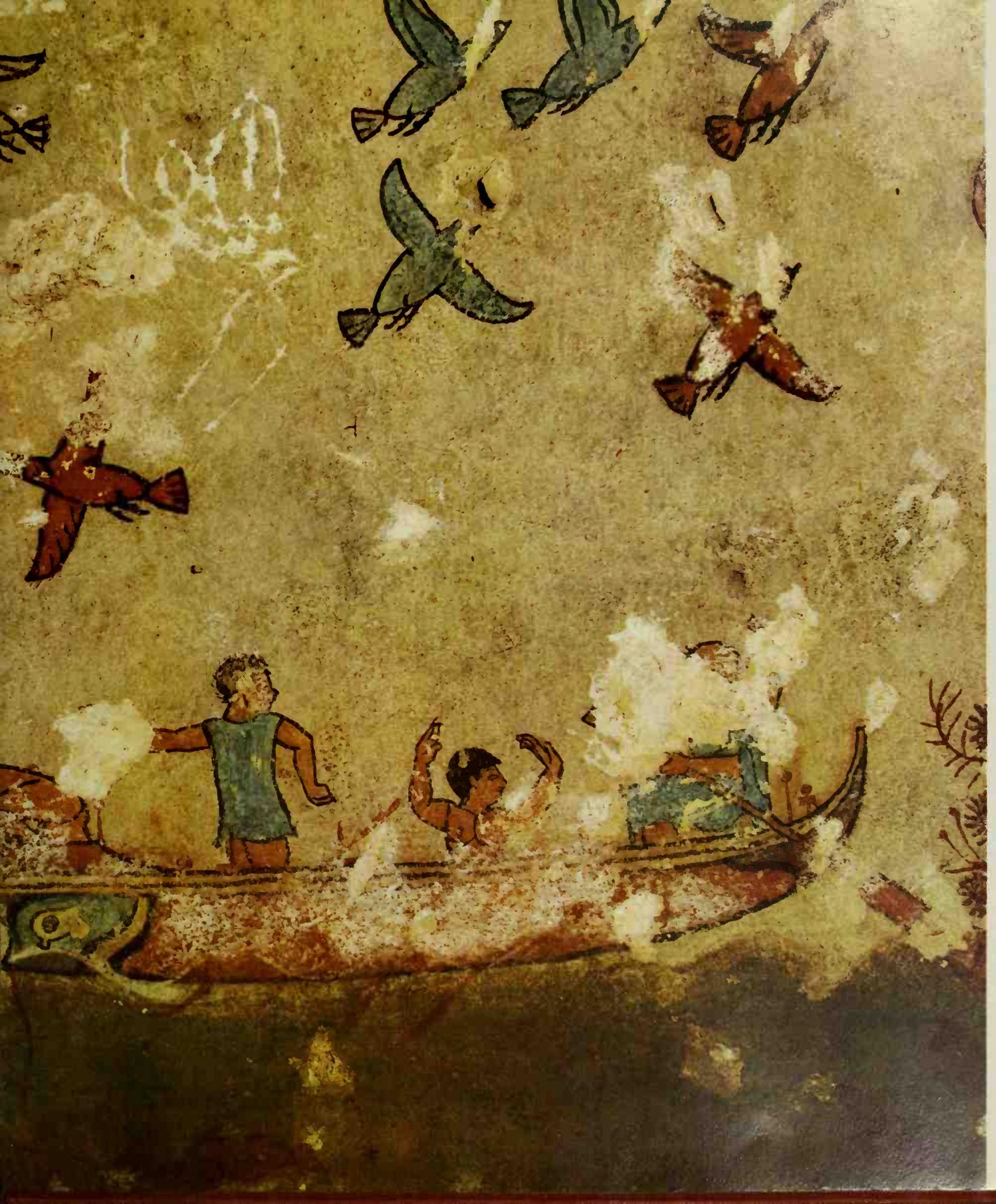


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80 General view of the Tomb of the Olympiad, discovered some years ago by C.M. Lerici.

81 Fishing scene, mural from the Tomb of Hunting and Fishing. Circa 520 B.C. Tarquinia.









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extant which document the pictorial art of antiquity are the Etruscan series and those in Pompeii and Herculaneum. All that remains of Greek painting is limited to a few fragments.

The extant Etruscan frescoes are but a small part of those discovered through the centuries. More than sixty painted tombs are known from Tarquinia through descriptions, water-color sketches and drawings, but of these only about twenty are preserved today. Of the twenty tombs discovered at Chiusi, no more than three are now to be seen. Time and mankind are responsible for this disastrous loss. When a tomb is opened, the lively color of its frescoes appears to have been finished yesterday rather than two thousand years ago. Once damp air strikes the frescoes, deterioration occurs unless provisions are made to close the tomb and attend to its restoration. Frescoes which are found in condition to be saved from further damage are restored by the Istituto del Restauro in Rome. Modern techniques make it possible to carry out the extremely difficult task of transportation, and those frescoes in greater danger of destruction are removed from the walls and placed in museums where deterioration may be stopped completely. The frescoes from the Tomb of the Bighe,

the Tomb of the Funerary Bed and the Tomb of the Triclinium in Tarquinia, as well as the Golini Tombs from Orvieto are now preserved in museums. Careful restoration has brought back to life some of the original vivacity of color. The bulletin published quarterly by the Istituto del Restauro describes in detail the method used in this delicate operation and illustrates the successful achievements.

82 *Wrestlers, fresco from the Tomb of the Augurs. Circa 530 B.C. Tarquinia. (Opposite page).*

83 *Fresco on the rear wall of the « Tomba della Nave » showing a banquet scene. Middle of the 5th century B.C. Tarquinia.*

Meanwhile the systematic application of new methods of archaeological search has led to recent and highly important discoveries. In his continued search at the burial grounds of Cerveteri and Tarquinia, C.M. Lericci resorted to a new, ingenious device of detection: an instrument known as a potentiometer which reveals the exact location of buried brickwork and tombs by registering the variances in the electric conductivity of the ground at such places. After an interval of nearly sixty years of fruitless efforts this has recently brought to light numerous tombs at Tarquinia, including some twenty with mural paintings. These discoveries have notably increased our knowledge of Etruscan painting.

Highly effective research methods derived from recent, rapid advances in science and technology have been applied with spectacular success, especially in the field of Etruscan studies.

The aerial survey of Etruria carried out after the last war by the English scholar Bradford and, more recently, by C.M. Lericci has been of inestimable value in determining the layout of the vast necropolises, extending over hundreds of acres at Cerveteri, and of towns like Spina whose exploration has not even begun. Newly devised technical procedures have been followed with remarkable results in locating the exact sites of the tombs. For example, the recording and evaluation of the varying degrees of the specific ground resistance has enabled Lericci's research teams to locate electrically with great accuracy thousands of new tombs at the burial sites of Cerveteri and Tarquinia. This unprecedented increase in new archaeological sites in that area has in turn led to a perfection of the technical means by which the value of a tomb can be determined before any digging is done. The data obtained from two comprehensive on-the-spot research efforts have revealed, for instance, that 98 % of all the tombs recently discovered by C.M. Lericci had been robbed in the past and that 60 % of them were completely empty.

By drilling a hole of small diameter in the ground at the exact site of the tomb a periscope-like device carrying an automatic camera can be lowered into the tomb to determine its contents, either by direct view or from a photo, before making any effort at excavation.

Once the architectural design of the underground chamber is known and the offerings it might contain plus a plan of approach have been determined, the digging can be carried out much more effectively and economically. These new technical methods of exploration have produced spectacular results in Etruria.

In addition to wall paintings in tombs, a few examples of panel painting are preserved from the decoration of temples. One, dating from the late sixth century B.C., comes from Cerveteri; another, from the early fifth century B.C., was found at Veii. Some sarcophagi and cinerary urns are decorated with paintings rather than in relief. The most famous example of this rare type is, unquestionably, the beautiful *Sarcophagus of the Amazons* from Tarquinia. The colors used on painted vases were largely restricted to black and red, but even this art furnishes evidence for the development of painting and composition.

Etruscan painting is known today largely as a funerary art, but this is due to the fact that civic architecture and temples, constructed of perishable material, have been almost entirely destroyed. If funerary art is the more prevalent in Etruria, we must not forget the archaeological reasons which underly this fact. In contrast to the architecture aboveground, the tombs carved from rock have defied the onslaughts of time.

A great deal of careful research must still be done before Etruscan painting may take its rightful place in the history of antique art. Color photography has rendered an invaluable service to this research insofar as it provides the scholar with direct means of studying the scenes. Furthermore, micro-and macro-photography, X-ray plates, chemical analyses, all provide us with a quantity of data unknown or not used by earlier archaeologists, and they reveal a great deal about the painting techniques.

The preparation of the surface to be painted was of the greatest importance. First, the rock was made fairly smooth, and, in the case of the oldest tombs, the paintings were then executed in colors mixed with an adhesive liquid directly on this surface. The Tomb of the Baron in Tarquinia was decorated in this manner, but in most cases the artist painted on a coat of plaster applied to the wall. Before executing the fresco, the artist often made a preparatory sketch in order to determine the composition, and sometimes he outlined the figures. The fresco was subsequently executed while the plaster was still fresh and moist. In later times the painting was made on dry plaster. During the archaic period only a limited number of colors were used. These were light tones, pleasing to the eye. The entire wall was painted in this manner with subtle contrasts of color that produced the most delightful effects.

The essence of this art lies in its linear rhythms, the boldness of the line and the quality of the composition. Etruscan art displays a predilection for synthesis and stylization of forms, movement and life. Greek painting and ceramics undoubtedly offered a great many models, and in certain cases the inspiration is so direct and vivid that we can assume they are the work of Greek artists working in Etruria. Nevertheless, Etruscan elements are readily seen in the painter's deliberate indifference to correct anatomic detail as well as in the way he takes pleasure in the introduction of details from everyday life. /

From the Orientalizing period only a few vestiges of paintings in bizarre colors and severe line are still *in situ* in the Campana Tomb at Veii. The five Bocanera terra cottas in the British Museum, London, furnish a better idea of the decoration and subject matter adopted from

84 *Sacrifice of a Trojan prisoner. Fresco from the François Tomb. Vulci. 2nd century B.C. Villa Albani, Rome.*

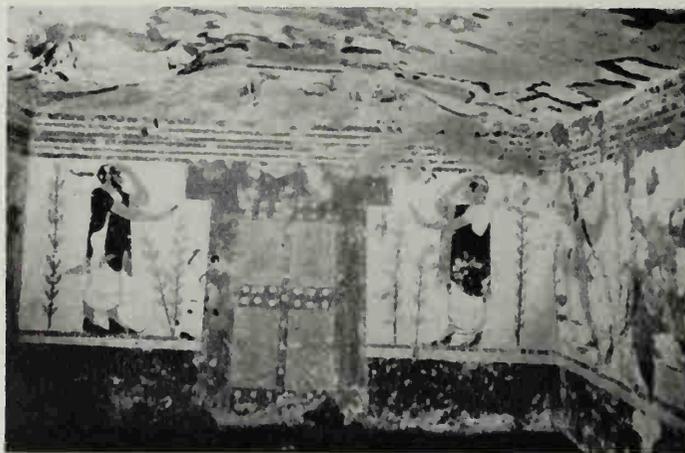


the Orient. Paintings datable in the second half of the sixth century B.C. exhibit strong Ionian influences. The painted plaques in the Louvre and the frescoes in the Tomb of the Bulls, the Tomb of the Augurs, the Tomb of the Lionesses, and the Tomb of Hunting and Fishing are only some of the more famous ones which constitute an invaluable artistic unit. The subjects are rarely taken from Greek mythology; they derive mainly from daily life and have funerary connotations.

The funerary significance of pictorial images was probably as complex as the Etruscans' ideas on the afterlife. The numerous banquet scenes which take place in an atmosphere of joyfulness, to the tunes of musicians playing flutes and lyres, evoked the joys of earthly life. They recall the funerary banquet which brought together the relations of the deceased, a custom whose later celebration in Rome was called *silicernium*. Their main preoccupation was to find a way to provide perpetual nourishment for the dead. To use the expression of Cumont in his book, *Lux Perpetua*, "the ghost of the banqueter was well satisfied with the mere portrayal of eating!" The scenes of games and athletic competitions, hunting and fishing, represent the pastimes enjoyed by the man in his lifetime as well as the ritual games celebrated at his death and the pleasures he hoped to find in the afterlife.

Let us take, for instance, the magnificent frescoes in the Tomb of the Augurs, for there all the atmosphere of the funeral games comes to life before our eyes. The frescoes on the rear wall are worthy of the fame they enjoy. The two lions in the triangular space of the upper wall symbolize the fatal grasp of death, their outstretched claws showing no mercy. Two male figures standing beside a closed door strike their foreheads in expression of grief, a ritual gesture of mourning which was practiced in Greece as well as in Rome. These men do not represent the deceased's relations but are professional mourners, *ploratores*, for the inscription refers to them as *tanasar* and another text uses the word *tanasa-histrion* which may be translated as "actor." On the side walls are depicted the games which must have been held in the surrounding countryside when burial took place. The subject is repeated in other tombs in Tarquinia — in the Tomb of the Bighe, for one — and in the tombs at Chiusi, e.g., the Tomb of the Monkey. On the well-preserved right wall is a scene full of animation and life. Two wrestlers grasp one another's wrists in the presence of two referees, designated as *tevarath*, probably the Etruscan equivalent of the Greek *agonothetai*. The curved rod held by one of the referees resembles the Roman *lituus*, and the men were thought to represent augurs. This interpretation has proved to be incorrect, but the earlier name for the tomb is still retained. Behind the wrestlers, a masked figure, *phersu*, wearing a conical hat, incites a mastiff which he holds on a leash to attack a man who tries in vain to defend himself with a massive cudgel. *Phersu* means the masked-one, and the Latin word, *persona* which originally denoted a theatrical mask, is probably a word borrowed from the Etruscan language. This cruel scene probably anticipates the Roman gladiatorial games, whose origin

should be sought in Etruscan cults and in their funeral rites. On the left wall is a second masked figure or *phersu* but in this case neither the costume nor the action of the earlier one is repeated. Thus, the theory that this *phersu* is the same one depicted on the opposite wall must be discarded. This *phersu* seems to be running a race, perhaps against an athlete whose figure is lost but which must have once appeared in the middle of the same panel. The whole scene on the left as well as the frescoes around the entrance-way are badly damaged. The scene around the entrance may have represented two athletes engaged in a tug of war. The style of the painter who made the frescoes in the Tomb of the Augurs is especially provocative. The line which defines figures and shrubs is fluid, rhythmic and harmonious. In some places it is possible to see the incised lines of the preliminary sketch, lines which show how the artist modified and perfected the composition after he began the scene. The essence of the style lies in the artist's feeling for balance, rhythm, composition, color and life. All the scenes throb with action, particularly the ones where the *phersu* incites the dog and the wrestlers come to grips. Greek influence is obvious, and stylistically these figures are close to the ones on the Ionian hydriai of Cerveteri. Here, however, the spirit of the style is not Greek but definitely Italic. It is inconceivable that a Greek artist could have executed these scenes. Powerful and imaginative, the frescoes in the Tomb of the Augurs rank among the finest of Tarquinian painting. They force us to question the



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85 Inside of the Tomb of the Augurs at Tarquinia. The illustration shows the architectural design of the tomb with its ceiling sloping down on either side. The murals decorating the walls and ceiling are damaged.

86 Detail from the banquet scene depicted on the rear wall of the « Tomba della Nave » discovered by C.M. Lerici. Middle of the 5th century B.C. Tarquinia. (Opposite page).



validity of the opinions voiced by such eminent scholars as Rumpf on the relative excellence of this art.

The archaic frescoes show a wide range of subjects and sources of inspiration. Greater differences cannot be found than those which exist between the Tomb of Hunting and Fishing and the Tomb of the Baron. The frescoes in the Tomb of Hunting and Fishing are essentially large landscape scenes where figures play a secondary role and the colors are extremely imaginative. In the Tomb of the Baron, however, the painter emphasizes the human figure and gives it a monumental, aristocratic elegance. The fresco on the rear wall is particularly arresting. The altar painted in the pediment, seemingly an extension of the ceiling's cross-beam, has a hippocampus and two dolphins on each of its sides. In the frieze below, two men on horseback frame a central scene consisting of a man who extends a kylix as he places his right arm around a young flutist, and a woman dressed in a chyton, wearing a high *tutulus* on her head. Without doubt, the tomb was constructed and decorated in honor of this richly clad woman who raises her hands in a gesture of greeting or gratitude and receives her husband's libation to the sound of the flutist's song.

It should be noted that Etruscan frescoes invariably depict scenes from the life of the ruling classes. Their enjoyable atmosphere shows a certain predilection for an easy, pleasurable and luxurious life which the ancients held to be characteristic of the Etrurian oligarchy. The common people never appear in these frescoes, except as servants and slaves bent on serving their masters and enhancing the charm of their banquets. One of the later murals from the Golini Tomb at Orvieto shows a pastry cook at work. However, he is represented as merely assisting in the preparation of his masters' meal and not as performing his regular functions, as would have been the case on Roman bas-reliefs from Italy and particularly the Roman provinces of Gaul. Concentrating solely on the life of the great families, Etruscan art, like the society which created it, is exclusively aristocratic in character.

The technique used in painting the laurel bushes which separate the figure groups is always one of extreme delicacy and calculated above all to enhance the rhythmic movements of the figures. Laurel played a leading role in Etruscan funerary rites, as later it did in Roman cults. Branches

87 Fresco in the Tomb of the Augurs, showing umpires at a match. The crooks held by the umpires had caused them to be mistaken for augurs; hence the name by which the tomb is known. The figure of the little slave carrying a stool for his master is of a simple and charming liveliness. Circa 530 B.C. Tarquinia.









88 Fresco in the Tomb of the Leopards, showing a banquet scene. 2nd quarter of the 5th century B.C. Tarquinia. (Preceding page).

89 Conversation piece. Fresco from the Tomb of the Baron. Circa 510 B.C. Tarquinia.







of laurel were laid on the tombs together with olive and ivy leaves, for these evergreens seemed to symbolize and promise eternal survival. A series of fifth-century tombs in Tarquinia is decorated with similar compositions, showing a banquet scene on the rear wall and scenes of music and dance on the side walls. Perhaps the best preserved frescoes are found in the Tomb of the Leopards, so called after the two confronted leopards in the pediment of the rear wall. Below are three couples at a banquet, reclining on couches. It is difficult to say whether the black hair of the men and the blondness of the women should be interpreted as a statement of fact, a contemporary fashion, or a pictorial convention. If this painting were preserved in Greece rather than in Etruria, we would not hesitate to say the women accompanying the men are *hetaerae*, but in Etruria the women held an important place in society and accompanied their husbands at banquets.

On the side walls, servants and musicians advance towards the banquet hall. In the scene on the left they walk slowly, while on the right their movements are rhythmic, their gestures in unison, and they dance to the shrill notes of the flute and the sweeter melody of the lyre. Music and dance would seem to have played a considerable part in the life of the Etruscan aristocracy. Wind and string instruments were played at religious ceremonies as well as in many activities of private life. Judging from the statements of Greek authors and the evidence of the paintings themselves, the flute was played on the occasion of whippings, at various sports events, and when bread was being prepared. In one of the tombs at Orvieto, a musician plays his flute beside a baker kneading dough. The flutist, *subulo* in Latin — a name which derives from the Etruscan vocabulary — was believed to wield secret powers over human beings and animals. His fame traveled far beyond the frontiers of his country. In 364 B.C. Etruscan musicians, mimes and dancers were requested to come to Rome in order that their performances might appease the angry gods who had unleashed plagues in the city.

The frescoes in the Tomb of the Leopards are not, however, the work of a great master; merely those of a capable decorator. This is not the case with the nearly contemporary frescoes from the Tomb of the Triclinium now preserved in the Museum at Tarquinia. The banquet scene is damaged, but side walls have well-preserved scenes of dancing figures whose beauty deserves the fame accorded them. Dancers whirl to the sound of flutes and lyres in a garden suggested by a few shrubs and songbirds. The lines

which define these supple, agile bodies are not concealed by the drapery; rather the linear rhythms of the women's chytions and the men's mantles form a single, symphonic rhythm with their movements. The lithesome actions of the curly-haired youth playing the flute combine with the strokes of the fingers to produce an effect of consummate grace and lyricism. With purity of line, delicacy of color and rhythmic postures the painter has captured the atmosphere of a dream world and the painting itself is entirely lyrical in quality.

In the fourth century, B.C., painting in Tarquinia underwent a change through the influence of classical art, but the influence is accepted reluctantly and appears only superficially. Episodes from Greek mythology were used more frequently, but the preference was for events which referred to the underworld, and there were always certain details which referred to the beliefs and customs of the Etruscans themselves. The beautiful frescoes which once adorned the wall of the oldest chamber in the Tomb of the Orcus are now, unfortunately, almost completely destroyed; but the fragments are still very significant. The same may be said of the badly deteriorated murals from two tombs at Orvieto which were recently transferred to the Museo Archeologico in Florence.

A changed attitude in religious beliefs may be noted in both the Tomb of the Orcus and in the Golini Tomb. Death is no longer represented with calm and peaceful features but with a dark, grim countenance. This change in the configuration of funerary art is indicative of a sensitive transformation of the spiritual consciousness. The defeat of the Etruscan armies at the hands of the Greeks, the Romans and the Celts, the waning power of the empire, and the premonition of forthcoming doom were undoubtedly some of the reasons for this darker vision of the nether world. On the other hand, this inquietude may be another manifestation of the deeply-rooted characteristic of a people who had never had an optimistic view of the world.

The frightening features and threatening attitudes of the infernal demons, Charun and Tuchulcha, make the human figures in the scene who are subjected to the authority of these terrifying masters appear all the more touching. Thus, in the Tomb of the Orcus our compassion is aroused for the melancholic Velia, the deceased woman who takes part in the banquet beside her spouse, Larth Velcha. She wears a double strand of pearls and a cluster of golden earrings; her head is adorned with myrtle and some strands of hair fall alongside her cheek. Her finely chiseled profile is sharply etched against a black ground which suggests the dark realm of Hades. A cloud of melancholy overtakes the young woman's features as she remembers the pleasures of the life she has been forced to forsake.

This feeling of apprehension for the afterlife becomes more prevalent in funerary painting of the Hellenistic period. The Tomb of the Shields, belonging to the Velcha family, is decorated with the characteristic banquet scene, but the mood is changed and the calm nonchalance of the archaic period has given way to one of solemn meditation. The tombs are larger and constructed to accommodate several



generations of families. The frescoes include the figures of Larth Velcha, head of the family, and his wife Velia Seitithi, reclining on a richly decorated couch and further on, Velthur Velcha and his wife, Ravnthu Aprnai. All their faces seem to be overcome by a profound sadness, their expressions full of melancholy and regret. A long inscription on the wall above the head of Larth Velcha records his virtues and his titles. With line and color the artist has tried to render a fairly faithful portrait of the figures and has succeeded in catching some of the individual features. These are not, however, realistic portraits such as those we know from Republican Rome. As in the past, the Etruscan artist paints the figures with bold strokes of color and is more concerned with the synthesis of the form than the minor details. The François Tomb at Vulci has a monumental corridor which seems to thrust the visitor deep into the bowels of the earth. The impressive frescoes in this tomb of the Saties family were detached in 1862 and are now in the Museo Torlonia in Rome. The tomb itself was probably constructed in the fifth century B.C., but there is no agreement among scholars as to the date of the frescoes. Some believe they were executed in the fourth century and others attribute them to the late second century B.C.

The subjects of the portions of the preserved frescoes range from mythology to history and legend. One of the most magnificent scenes illustrated a well-known episode from the *Iliad*: Achilles' sacrifice of Trojan prisoners to pacify the manes of Patroclus. In the center of one scene, the Greek hero cuts the throat of a young captive, while on either side two Etruscan genii of death patiently await their prey. On the left is Charon and on the right, Vanth, a lovely, melancholic angel of death who spreads his wings to indicate he has taken possession of his victim. The ghost of Patroclus comes to collect his tribute. The heroes, Agamemnon and the two Ajaxes, help in the sacrifice, each leading a prisoner to the place of execution. A fourth-century Greek painting undoubtedly served as a model for this fresco, but the Etruscan artist modified the scene considerably by introducing figures from local myths. These scenes of cruelty are filled with pathos, as witness the terrible anguish on the face of the young Trojan about to be killed by Achilles. The Etruscans liked the subject of the slaughter of war prisoners and they themselves practiced this cruel custom. Human sacrifice was a part of their religious rites, for the deceased needed human blood in order that his waning strength might be revitalized for a while. In Rome, however, this rite was replaced soon after this period by animal sacrifice.

On another wall in the same chamber is a very different and more complex scene which includes a series of warriors arranged in pairs. One shows Caille Vipinas freed by Macstrna. Then come four pairs of warriors in battle together with their names and their provenance inscribed near the appropriate figure. Among them are Cneve Tarchunies Rumach, that is, Gnaeus Tarquinius of Rome, and Avle Vipinas, i.e., Aulus Vibenna. All these episodes doubtless recall the semi-historical, semi-legendary past of the memorable city of Vulci. In fact, tradition informs us that

the Vibenna brothers were *condottieri* from Vulci who took part in expeditions against the enemy. According to Latin authors, Macstrna was the Etruscan name of the second Etruscan king in Rome, known in the annals as Servius Tullius. Evidently it was a victory over the Tarquins of Rome, here represented by Tarchunies Rumach, which put Macstrna on the throne. In the Roman version of the legend, the episodes and actions differ from those depicted here, but this is explained by the fact that civic pride tended to modify the story and the defeats were not illustrated.

In his famous speech before the Senate, the contents of which are preserved on the bronze tablet in Lyons, the Emperor Claudius recalls the life of Macstrna or Servius Tullius and gives us the Roman version of the Etruscan adventurer's reign. Claudius was despised by his contemporaries, but he was knowledgeable about the Etruscans. These frescoes in the François Tomb are a graphic portrayal of the pages of history and this is a characteristic which is distinctive to the Italic peoples. Republican and imperial Rome had a similar predilection for the narrative and documentary in art. The very history of Rome was to the Roman artist what the myths and adventures of heroes and gods were to the Greek. Indeed, the historical reliefs still extant in Rome show us very clearly the intrinsic expressiveness of Roman art. Thus, the painter from Vulci who decorated the François Tomb inaugurated a type of artistic expression which was to flourish on the Italian peninsula.

However, some further differentiation seems indicated here. As has been shown, Etruscan art, while reflecting the social structure of that people, has hardly any bearing on its military and political activities. Roman art, on the other hand, is instructive and meaningful in this respect. Roman monuments, sculpture and painting are intended to glorify the virtues of the Roman people and, after Caesar, those of the emperor. The column of Trajan reflects the gallantry of the Roman armies, while the Ara Pacis depicts the effects of the Pax Romana, the godliness and the *virtus* of the emperor. To this there is no equivalent in Etruscan art, except, perhaps, for a cursory treatment of the hard defensive struggle against the Romans and Celts from the fourth century B.C. on. This significant lack of emphasis on collective military activities has its reason in the aristocrats' preference for the representation of single encounters between heroes or princes which exalt the valor of the individual in disregard of the community. The single combats shown on the frescoes in the François Tomb are clearly indicative of the instability of Etruscan cities, and the hostility and discord among their rulers. There is no trace here of the civic and national spirit that characterizes the art of Rome.

The style of the painter of the François Tomb is both eclectic and complex. Above the figurative scenes and the doors of the main chamber is a narrow frieze of animals; it, in turn, is surmounted by a Greek fret ornament rendered in perspective. These scenes of the animal world are as cruel and ferocious as the narrative scenes beneath them.

Few paintings from antiquity show this amount of blood flowing freely; few can compare with this presentation of the all-powerful grip of death. There is no question that the blood was to quench the thirst of the dead, once the doors of the tombs closed over them forever.

Etruscan painting reached its final stage with the magnificent compositions which decorate the spacious Tomb of the Cardinal and the Tomb of the Typhon in Tarquinia. In the latter, serpent-footed giants hold the heavens on high. This last is, indeed, a fascinating portrayal of a cosmic conception of the world, one which equates the ceiling of the tomb with the heavens. On the right wall, a wailing crowd is pushed into the entry of Hades by demons carrying torches and cudgels. The eyes of these wretched creatures show the terror they experience at the sight of the threshold which cannot be crossed again. In the opinion of the eminent scholar of Etruscan culture, Massimo Pallottino, these frescoes cannot date before the first century B.C. The total configuration and spatial effects are, in fact, close to the paintings and reliefs of the late Republican period. Assuming this date to be correct, Etruscan painting may be said to have closed in a mood of human sentiment and anguish shortly before the arrival of Christianity. The Rome of the Gracchi, Sulla and Caesar cannot have remained deaf to the echoes of such desperation, and this would partly explain the efforts of Lucretius to persuade mankind that all ends with death. If he succeeded in conquering this terror of the other world, he had every right to proclaim himself a liberator.

91 Fresco in the François Tomb, Vulci, depicting an historical episode. A warrior called Caile Vipinas is liberated by a warrior named Macstrna (the Servius Tullius of the original Roman legend.)



Minor Arts

In addition to the splendid creations of painting and sculpture, the Etruscan genius expressed itself with equal charm and spontaneity in an infinite variety of objects serving a practical and utilitarian purpose as well as one which enriched their daily life. Small bronze objects, engraved mirrors and chests, ivories and jewelry were handled with care and devotion by craftsmen who had mastered a technique that is, in some cases, a lost art today. These small objects which date from the seventh century to the end of the Republic were found in large quantity in the tombs. Today they are numbered among the priceless treasures of the large museums of Etruscan art.

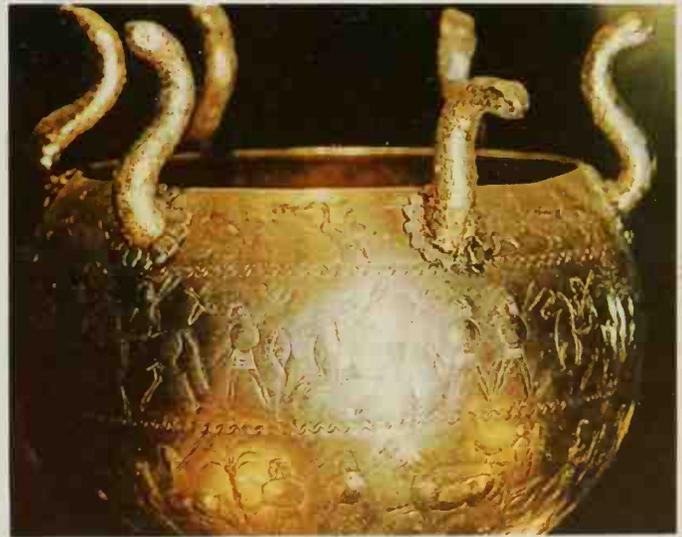
The Etruscan, like many peoples of the East, liked to work these precious materials of ivory and gold which permitted the artist to create extremely original effects. Ivory and gold were imported from Africa and Asia to meet the requirements of a discriminating clientele. The treasures from the seventh and sixth centuries B.C. testify to the luxuries which the aristocratic Etruscan possessed in this period of Etruria's greatest power.

From its beginnings, Etruscan art thus seems to have catered to the taste of a society avid for wealth and luxury drawn from an extensive maritime trade which accounts for a substantial foreign influence. The abundance of ivory, gold and silver found in the tombs known as 'tombe degli ori' reflects the taste of an aristocratic class which with all its refinement was still barbaric enough to be captivated by the shine and sparkle of precious metals. Such primitive and childish indulgence in excessive luxury has always been considered a characteristic of the so-called barbarian civilizations which were little or not at all affected by classical culture. The discovery of the most sumptuous antique objects of gold and jewelry in the Greco-Scythian tombs of the Black Sea area, in some Celtic tombs in Switzerland and Burgundy, dating from the early Iron Age, as well as in Etruria was not accidental. There is no doubt that the jewelry unearthed in the last resting-places of the Scythians or Celts originated from workshops in the Greek world. Still, the impression persists that these objects, admirable but too exuberant to appeal to the moderate Greek taste, were manufactured by the latter especially to satisfy the demands of still primitive tribal people who appreciated quantity as well as quality. This, I think, explains the dimensions of the famous bronze crater and of the golden diadem of Vix. In the same way, rich Etruscans commissioned their own workshops to make jewelry and pieces of goldwork whose sizes and intricate design frequently go beyond the creations of the Greeks.

The earliest pieces of Etruscan goldwork show a highly accomplished craft, one which probably originated in the regions of the Caucasus and the Aegean. The craftsmen's tools were very few and simple, to judge from the relief in the Museo del Vaticano which depicts the shop of the Roman goldsmith, Brattiarus. If the tools were simple, ancient tradition and an extraordinary skill were the means of creating these exquisite objects.



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92 Red-figured crater with a scene derived from Greek mythology: Ajax killing a Trojan prisoner in front of Chamur, the boatman ferrying the dead souls. The names of the persons depicted are inscribed next to them. The subject recalls the Etruscans' barbaric custom of killing their prisoners of war. 4th century B.C. (opposite page).

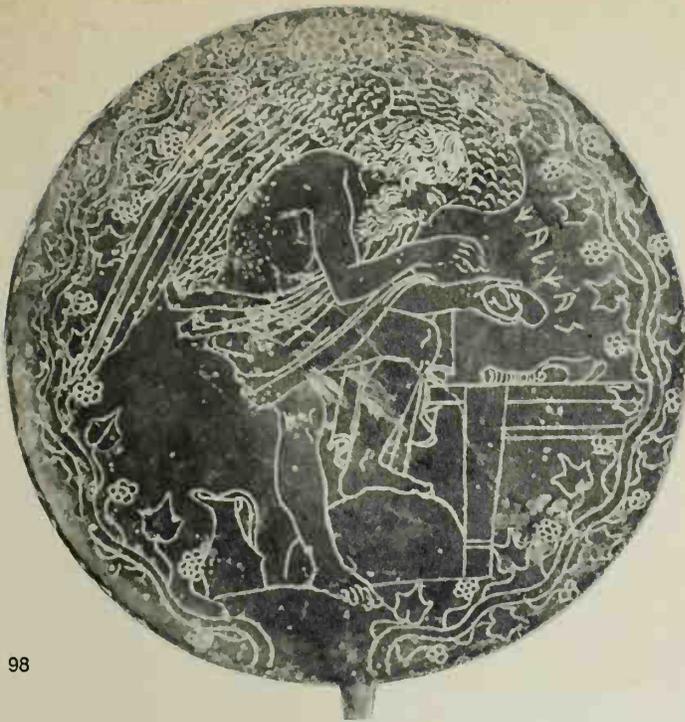
93 Gold fibula evenly ornamented with grains of metal.

94 Gilded silver basin adorned with serpents and series of incised figures arranged in four superimposed areas. Probably of Phoenician origin. From the Bernardini Tomb at Praeneste. Height 19 cm. or 7 1/2 in. 7th century B.C. Pignorini Museum, Rome.









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Hammered gold in the form of wires or thin sheets was the basic material for the creation of jewelry. Embossed sheets of gold shaped in a variety of ways, and the technique of filigree and granulation produced surface effects of unbelievable elegance. Gold wire of incredible thinness was braided, twisted in spiral forms, etched and ultimately shaped into a finely-wrought ornament. Tiny gold granules were applied to the surface when the artist wished to give his original design additional decoration. The most difficult part of the work was the soldering of the wire or granules to the gold sheet. This process, accomplished without modifying the original form in the slightest, demanded a skill of the greatest delicacy. The method used by the Etruscans remains something of a mystery, and although various explanations have been suggested in the past only the further research of scientists will provide the necessary clues.

The technical virtuosity of the Etruscan goldsmiths beginning in the seventh century B.C. is astonishing. Bracelets, buckles, fibulae and plaques are embellished and their original beauty enriched with fine granulation work. On the large fibula from the Regolini-Galassi Tomb at Cerveteri or the one from the Bernardini Tomb at Praeneste, the ornamental motifs range from linear designs, animals and plants in relief to rows of small, full-round animals adorned with granulation. Jewels of this sort are the epitome of skill and art. With all the interest they have aroused, they still defy imitation.

The disk-shaped earrings of the seventh century B.C. are followed in the next by delightful earrings modeled in the shape of tiny kegs covered with unusual arabesque patterns in filigree technique. These artists were able to achieve marvelous effects of plasticity through the combination of

embossing and granulation. A piece of incomparable beauty is the gold pendant in the Louvre representing the face of the river-god, Achelous. The face of this horned divinity stands out with rare intensity from the massive beard and hair worked in granulation technique. Here again the great epoch of Etruscan art fades out with an expression of beauty. In this craft, as in the other arts, the great period of Etruscan art reached a magnificent climax and made a triumphant exit. All too soon the ancient technical skills were on their way to rapid, total decline as living conditions became increasingly difficult. The embossed technique now became the prevalent one, primarily because it was easier to achieve the desired effect. As works of art they are, therefore, less valuable. The vogue was now for more complicated, heavier rings and earrings and for funerary diadems consisting of copious gold leaves applied to cloth or wire. Little by little they became ostentatious and excessively complicated; nevertheless, this rather baroque art has its own charm and appeal and it is not without a certain grandeur.

Aside from the jewelry and goldsmith work, many delicately carved ivories, bowls, pyxes and statuettes have been discovered in tombs of the Orientalizing and archaic periods. Some were probably imported from eastern Mediterranean regions, particularly from Cyprus, but Etruscan workshops specializing in ivory carving were established at a very early date. From the Barberini Tomb in Praeneste have come some curious ivory objects in the shape of the human forearm. These objects, probably supports for fans or mirrors, have relief ornament in superimposed bands of the usual real and fabulous animals of the Orientalizing period. The numerous statuettes of the sixth and early fifth centuries B.C. must have once decorated wood chests. After 450 B.C. the technique of ivory carving was no longer practiced, and even bone carving was rare.

Etruscan vases have long enjoyed a reputation to which they were not entitled. In the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, when archaeology was in its infancy, the beautiful Greek vases found in the excavation of tombs were considered the work of Etruscan potters. This mistake was corrected in the latter half of the nineteenth century, so that today we can evaluate Etruscan ceramics with far

95 Gold fibula from the Bernardini tomb at Praeneste. Length 17 cm. or 6 3/4 in. Late 7th century B.C. Pigorini Museum, Rome (color plate preceding page).

96 Gold pendant in the shape of the head of Achelous, 4 cm. or 1 5/8 in., and gold earrings. Circa 500 B.C. Louvre, Paris (color plate preceding page).

97 Small impasto vase decorated with archaic Etruscan inscription incised inside the body of a serpent. 6th century B.C. Villa Giulia, Rome.

98 Incised bronze mirror representing a winged and bearded diviner (called Chalcas) examining an animal's liver. Late 5th century B.C. From Vulci. Etruscan Museum, Vatican.



more objectivity than heretofore. But it must be said straightaway that this is not an art form in which the Etruscan artist exhibits his true creative powers. Greek vases were imported into Etruria on such a vast scale that it must have discouraged the local potter from creating original works. The difference between the Greek originals and the feeble imitations by the Etruscan potters is enormous. Nevertheless, there is an Etruscan ceramic called *bucchero* which enjoyed some popularity in antiquity. *Bucchero* pottery developed out of an earlier type called *impasto*, a ceramic made of unpurified clay whose color varies according to the locality from which it is obtained and the method of firing. Characteristic of *bucchero* ceramic is its shiny, jet-black color and an extremely smooth surface. The color is either the result of a special method of firing the vase, or depends on a substance having a manganese base which was spread over the vase and blended with the clay during the firing process.

The oldest *bucchero* ware is thin-walled; hence its name, *bucchero sottile*. Its decoration is engraved on the smooth surface and the motifs belong to the Orientalizing style. A later period produced the *bucchero pesante* adorned with stenciled reliefs attached to the vase, and so named because the clay is much thicker. These ceramics imitate the more prized vases in metal, but they are impressive for the beauty of the black surface and the variety of shapes. Etruscan painted vases seldom achieved high, artistic quality. The subjects were taken from Greek mythology, often misunderstood by the potters. The fact that they adopted foreign subjects is in itself characteristic of Etruscan taste and temperament. A rather familiar note is apt to be introduced into the atmosphere of the Greek legends.

Two groups of Etruscan vases stand out from the rest for their excellent quality: a series of *hydriai* from Cerveteri, the work of a master who had come from Ionia, and the so-called Pontic vases, the oldest of which are of completely Ionian inspiration. Numerous black-figured vases were produced by local workshops, but the question of their chronology still requires study. As for red-figured vases, a number of local shops produced them, but the most famous was the one in Falerii. One should note that in many instances the modifications made by the Etruscan artist in the ornamental motifs adopted from classical painting in Greece amount to a greater expressive intensity. The decoration is stylized and the resultant effect is extremely vigorous, and at times thoroughly violent. In style and subject, these red-figured vases are closely related to the contemporary frescoes in tombs.

One form of art which aroused the interest of Etruscan artists in all periods is that of gold, silver and bronze engraving. Objects from the earliest periods show the artists' predilection for engraving gold or silver vessels with intricate compositions which required skill and imagination. Bronze mirrors are the first to show this technique, and later, in the Hellenistic period, it was used on bronze chests. The subject matter is extensive and as new objects are discovered the range increases. Most of the decoration seems inspired by Greek myths, and the engraver probably became familiar with these themes through sketches, models and vases. At times, however, he did not fully understand the precise

meaning of the episodes depicted in his models. Curious misunderstandings resulted from this lack of direct knowledge, and Greek gods and heroes were often given names other than their own.

The scenes engraved on mirrors or chests were often a reduced version of painted compositions which are no longer preserved. One thinks of the marvelous engraving on the Ficoroni chest, a scene which brings to life the legend of the Argonauts. This may be a copy of the painting of the Argonauts by Cydias of Cnidus mentioned by Pliny the Elder. The artist readily converted his prototype into a scene of purely linear lyricism, and it is clear that in this technique which permits neither changes nor the eradication of errors, many priceless, beautiful works of art were produced. These elegant accessories to the women's personal possessions followed the Etruscan noblewoman to the tomb after having been indispensable objects of her life. The number and quality of the mirrors and chests attest to the position enjoyed by women as well as to the requirements of beauty in Etruscan society.

Titus Livius strongly emphasizes the contrast he noticed between the luxurious life enjoyed by the Etruscan princesses and the domestic virtues of Roman women. More than being a mere literary theme, this contrast denotes a known aspect of civilization. It also brought about the famous episode of the rape of Lucretia. Sextus Tarquinius's illicit love for Lucretia arose on the day the young Etruscan princes decided unexpectedly to examine the activities of their womenfolk whose virtues they wished to compare: (Titus Livius, I, 57) "They found Lucretia to be quite different from the king's daughters who were passing away the time at a sumptuous meal with their lady companions. She, however, was still spinning wool, awake with her servants in the house, however late the hour. Thus the comparison favored Lucretia."

Here again Etruscan art is correct in rendering an established social fact: the importance of women in Etruscan life. Not confined to a Greek gynaeceum, the Etruscan woman actively participated in the public and private life of her country. Not only is she shown as seated next to her husband at banquets, a theme impossible in Greek art; she is also shown watching games and theatrical performances. This shocked both the Greeks and the Romans who held such very ancient customs to be immoral. Roman history under the Tarquins shows the important part played in politics by the wives of these Etruscan kings: Tanaquil, the wife of Lucuion, who ascended to the throne under the name of Tarquin the Elder, was the first to urge her husband to occupy the throne. Later, after her husband's assassination, it was she again who proclaimed Servius Tullius king.

99 Incised bronze mirror representing a young couple dancing. Diameter 15 cm. or 5 7/8 in. Early 5th century B.C. Munich Museum.

The scope of Etruscan art is vast, and there are still many details to be clarified. Therefore, one hesitates to repeat the theories of esthetic principles which have been proposed by scholars but which tend to confine Etruscan art within a rigid formula. Etruscan art has often been denied an esthetic consciousness as well as an autonomous stylistic tradition. But this cannot be true of all epochs nor in every field. One should not seek a single line of development in Etruscan art, for the diffusion of workshops and the differences noted in their products at various periods make any such attempt futile. Indeed, it is difficult, if not impossible, to summarize with a few formulae an artistic production developed over seven centuries. In the last analysis, no one would dream of defining in a few words the art of any single European country from, let us say, the Middle Ages to the present. Were one to try, however, the obstacles would be fewer but, in any case, analogous to those confronting us in Etruscan art.

A less rigid judgment has to be formed for an art whose many aspects express a wide variety of social, political and religious activities. This art shows the rise of an aristocratic society both refined and barbaric in taste. Inclined more toward excess and exaggeration than toward an ideal of moderation, this society developed an art after its own image in the heart of Italy; an art that clearly reflects the discord between the cities of Etruria and its constant preoccupation with the afterlife. From a strictly esthetic point of view the development of Etruscan art is complex. This art was never completely autonomous nor passively dependent upon Greece for inspiration, but experienced different kinds of success and inspiration at various times. A personal vision of the world, a constant tendency to stylize lines and forms, and a strong taste for color, movement, and life lend it an original, sometimes curiously modern note.

RAYMOND BLOCH

100 Bronze group. Adornment of a candelabrum. Middle of the 5th century B.C. Civic Museum, Bologna.





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ETRUSCAN SCULPTURE

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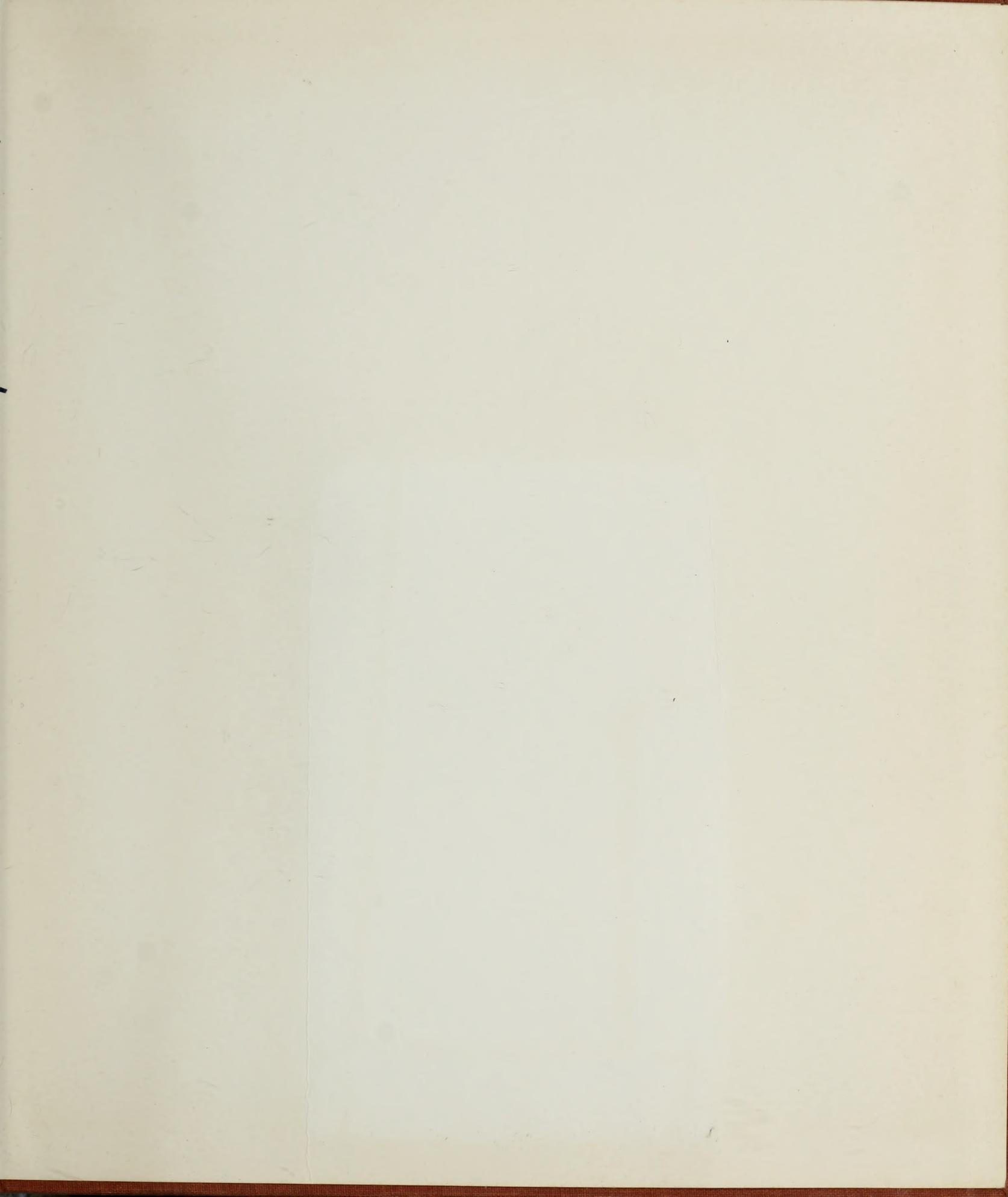
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