

Basic Detail Report



Hero Relief

Date

2nd to 3rd century

Primary Maker

Artist Unknown

Medium

marble

Description

This relief, posthumously honoring a heroized mortal, might be a commemorative plaque, part of a funerary monument, or a panel of a sarcophagus. The composition describes a Roman ritual in which the dedicant, his wife, and children visit the deceased's burial site. The imagery is typically Roman and reveals the influence of the Etruscans, a highly cultured Italian civilization of pre-Roman time. In the lower zone is a formal procession of adults and children. Above right, the hamation-clad hero gesticulates from a couch. He supports himself Etruscan fashion, on his left arm, holding a rhyton in his raised right hand, and is accompanied by his wife, who is seated, traditionally, on the edge of the couch. In this scene the hero is probably banqueting in the after-life, a concept adapted from Etruscan sculpture and painting, which in turn, it is believed derives from Egyptian art. Actual banquets for families formed part of Etruscan and Roman funeral rites, and sarcophagi often imitated domestic furniture: beds or couches for men, chairs for women. The profiled head of a horse, framed within a window grid, might suggest the hero's status as an equestrian, while the braided coiffure of the hero's wife supports the dating of the work. Finally, the crude carving and modeling of the marble reflects its provincial origin.

Dimensions

Overall: 19 x 28 x 3 1/2 in. (48.3 x 71.1 x 8.9 cm)