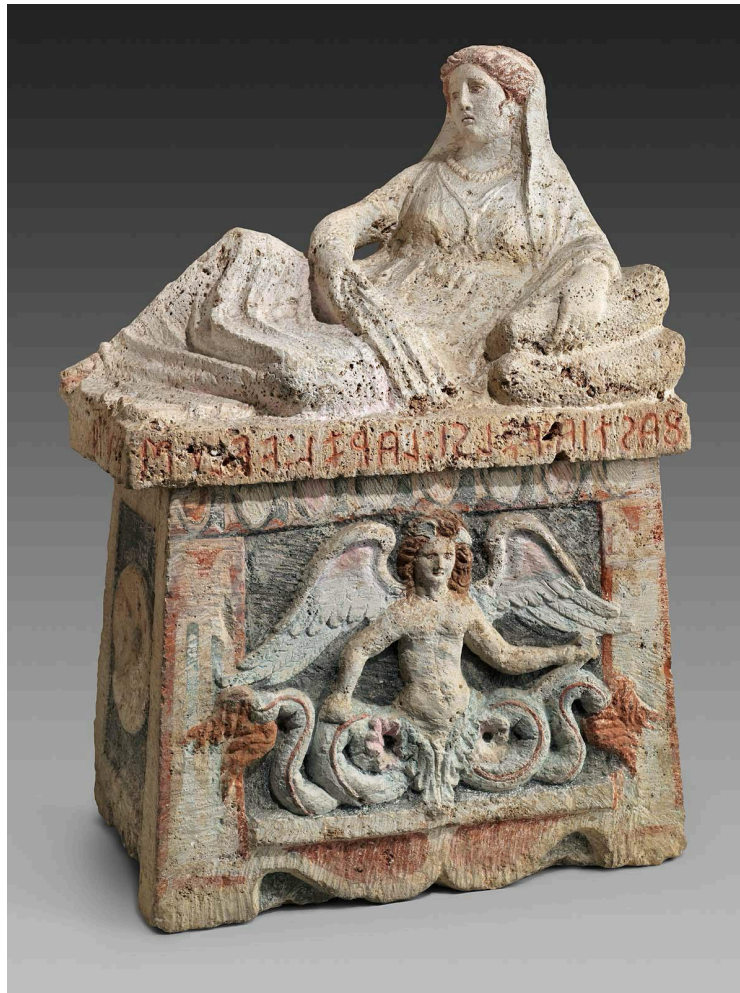


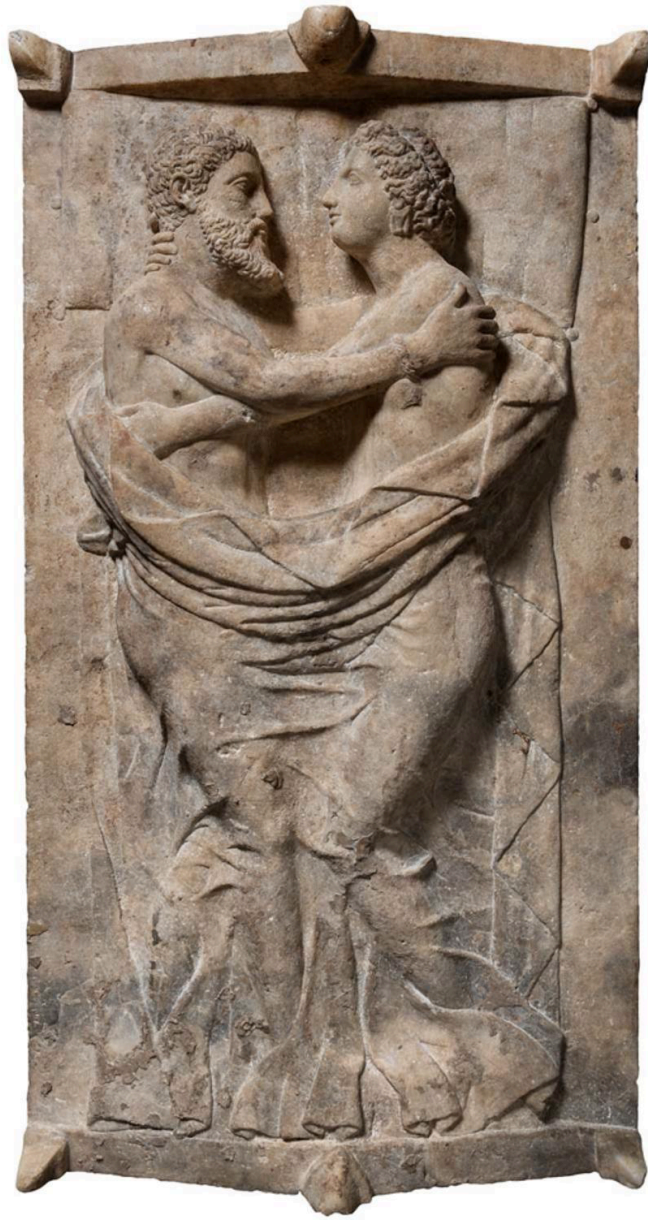
Workshop
Etruscan Gender Through Archaeology
Designed for 50 to 60 minutes

Readings for Workshop:

This workshop engages with Dr. Barbara Voss's article "Sexuality Studies in Archaeology," Jennifer Weigel's article "Spears and Speculation: Deconstructing Gender Assumptions in Etruscan Tombs," and "The Women of Etruria" by Larissa Bonfante Warren.

1. To begin the workshop, observe the following images of Etruscan cinerary urns and sarcophagi. Describe generally what you see. What figures do you see? What positions are the figures in? Are there colors? How are women being depicted? How are men? (15 minutes = 5 minutes per image)







2. Read back over what you wrote. What do you notice about the way you have described the depictions of women? Have you brought any of your own understanding or biases toward gender and heterosexual relationships into your visual analysis? (5-7 minutes)

3. In “Sexuality Studies in Archaeology,” Dr. Barbara Voss introduces the “fallacy of representation;” She defines this fallacy as “the trap of assuming that sexual representations are snap shots of real bodies and lived sexual practices rather than creative interpretations and ideological presentations” (Voss, 321). Consider: how might these representations of women be different from lived experiences in Etruria? These are sepulchral monuments commemorating the lives of people after their deaths. How might people want to be portrayed after they die? Would this be different than how they actually lived? (10 minutes)

4. Theopompus, a 4th century BCE Greek historian, provides an account of Etruscan women. In his writing he presents them as an inversion of proper Greek society and emphasizes their foreignness. He writes:

“Sharing wives is an established Etruscan custom. Etruscan women take particular care of their bodies and exercise often, sometimes along with the men, and sometimes by themselves. It is not a disgrace for them to be seen naked. They do not share their couches with their husbands but with the other men who happen to be present, and they propose toasts to anyone they choose. The Etruscans raise all the children that are born, without knowing who their fathers are. The children live the way their parents live, often attending drinking parties and having sexual relations with all the women. It is no disgrace for them to do anything in the open, or to be seen having it done to them, for they consider it a native custom.” (*Histories* 115 FGrHist F204 =Athenaeus 517d-518a. G)

- a. Why might we not be able to rely on Theopompus? What sort of assumptions might he be making about people foreign to him? (5-7 minutes)
5. In “Women of Etruria,” Larissa Bonfante Warren disputes Theopompus’s literary account of the Etruscans, but does, however, argue that archaeological evidence does not completely contradict his remarks; she cites tomb paintings of women accompanying men at dinner parties, depictions of husbands and wives together, and even writing on bronze mirrors, which she argues suggest women’s literacy, as evidence of equality of experience. In fact, she does argue that while the Etruscans were certainly not a matriarchy, Etruscans lived a luxurious life and women of Etruria enjoyed much more freedom and luxuries than Greek and Roman women. Discuss the following:
- a. Do inscriptions on mirrors prove that women were literate? (5 minutes)
 - b. How can we regard artistic depictions in relation to lived experience? Can art be entirely reflective of reality? How might we account for mythological scenes, even, in this case? (Suggestion: Perhaps think about this in terms of art created today. Would one depiction of a scene of everyday life be representative of your experience?) (10 minutes)