

1974

Review of *Reliefs en bronze d'Étrurie*, by Flemming Johansen

Russell Scott

Bryn Mawr College, dscott@brynmawr.edu

[Let us know how access to this document benefits you.](#)

Follow this and additional works at: http://repository.brynmawr.edu/classics_pubs



Part of the [Classics Commons](#)

Custom Citation

Scott, Russell T. Review of *Reliefs en bronze d'Étrurie*, by Flemming Johansen. *American Journal of Archaeology* 78 (1974): 205-206.

This paper is posted at Scholarship, Research, and Creative Work at Bryn Mawr College. http://repository.brynmawr.edu/classics_pubs/26

For more information, please contact repository@brynmawr.edu.

illustrations) devoted to Etruscan cinerary urns dating from the end of the fourth to the first century B.C. (see C. Laviosa, *Sculture tardo-etrusco di Volterra* [Florence 1964] and G. Dareggi, *Urne del Territorio Perugino* [Rome, 1972]—the latter to be added to the *Bibliography* serving the text). Although the urns selected for detailed study by the author are Volterran in manufacture, specimens from Chiusi, Perugia, and other Etruscan centers are frequently cited for their typological, stylistic, and iconographical analogies.

The first chapter deals with some of the earliest (tufa, not alabaster) cinerary urns produced at Volterra which bear relief decoration on their front or principle side—winged or wingless figures heraldically arranged to support a central patera, rosette, or the like; frontal heads (Medusa, “Phrygian”); confronting griffins; vases; etc. Such compositions and motifs give rise to interesting and well-grounded observations on Greek influences emanating from Magna Graecia (Taranto in particular), which point up the important role played by Greek craftsmen (some perhaps migrants to Etruria) in all aspects of Etruscan art (sculpture, painting, vase-painting, etc.), a factor far better recognized and acknowledged by etruscologists today than in the past. For the more neighboring provinces of Latium and Campania, attention is duly called to the rarity and the conspicuous differences in urn types when compared with those normally associated with Volterra.

The second chapter focuses on the cinerary urns in their architectonic forms and the variety of their detailing—cornices, bases, etc., which more often than not are derived from Greek prototypes. The text includes a convenient set of line drawings depicting the fundamentally rectangular or trapezoidal silhouette displayed by the Volterran urns which offer interesting comparison with Chiusine and Perugine forms studied by J. Thimme (in *StEtr* XXIII, 1955 and XXV, 1957 and G. Dareggi, *op. cit.*). Within the third chapter may be found an ambitious yet useful attempt to recognize and establish various “ateliers” responsible for the Volterran urns selected for study. I tend to agree with the author’s opinions that such Etruscan ateliers compare favorably in certain aspects with the present-day alabaster workshops active throughout Volterra in their “scale” and as repositories of tradition (technical, stylistic, and iconographic) preserved by generations of closely knit “families” of craftsmen.

By reason of some fine general observations, interpretations, and discussions of the subjects to be found in the reliefs of the selected Volterran urns, not to mention comments on the presence and use of color for some specimens (cf., O. Von Vacano in *RM* 67, 1960), as well as astute considerations of the compositional makeup, elements of perspective, and the dramatic intent of the reliefs, the fourth and fifth chapters justifiably serve as a prelude to the heart of the study (publication) comprising the sixth and longest chapter. The mythological themes—with their variations—chosen for detailed iconographic and stylistic study by author Pairault in Chapter VI deserve to be listed: Troilos, Philoctetes on Lemnos, Orestes (Death of Agamem-

non and Clytemnestra), Rape of Helen, and Telephos in the Greek Camp.

The remainder of the publication serves as the *Catalogue* of the appropriate Volterran cinerary urns (not limited to specimens presently located in the *Museo Guarnacci* at Volterra) arranged according to the subject represented in their reliefs. Of the fifty-nine urns catalogued, twenty-three are related to the Helen episode. In view of the in-depth discussion of the chief decoration in earlier chapters, the catalogue is mercifully brief and thereby adheres to the normal presentation of proveniences, dimensions, conditions, bibliography, etc. The general *Indices* are especially convenient and workable, and the *Plates* offer a commendable complement to the cinerary urns and a few comparative monuments cited within the text. Extensive and competently compiled as the *Bibliography* (augmented by valuable footnotes throughout the text) may be, I feel I must call attention to an error on p. 266: please correct I. “Del Chiaro” to I. “De Chiara, *La ceramica volsiniese. . .*” On the whole, the publication is a worthy addition to etruscological studies owing to its thorough research, sound interpretations, useful references to analogous and comparative material, etc., and thereby offers a fine account of Etruscan art and culture during its “Hellenistic” phase at Volterra and neighboring cities of northern Etruria.

MARIO A. DEL CHIARO

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SANTA BARBARA

RELIEFS EN BRONZE D'ÉTRURIE, by *Flemming Johansen*, translation from the Danish by *Ghani Merad*. Pp. 167, pls. 67. Permild and Rosengreen. Ny Carlsberg Glyptothek, Copenhagen 1971.

This book consists of a catalogue and detailed discussion of twenty-four fragments of small bronze relief appliqués, apparently Etruscan, presented to the Ny Carlsberg Glyptothek in 1960 by the Carlsberg Foundation. These are thin strips of sheet bronze (0.0004-0.0005 m. thick, 0.06-0.11 m. wide) decorated with engraved and hammered figure and floral designs within running guilloché borders.

Eleven friezes are represented (two by a single fragment each), six disposed horizontally, five vertically. The repertoire of figures includes real and fantastic animals, human hunters and horsemen and a winged woman, apparently a goddess of the Mistress of Animals variety. The various floral ornaments are based chiefly on the lotus; a remarkable ornamental feature introducing one of the vertical appliqués is a sailing ship.

One of the appliqués has drawn curving loops attached at either end that interlock, demonstrating that it decorated a belt in leather or fabric. Others may have revetted more substantial objects in wood: Two of the vertical appliqués (those in which the winged woman appears, standing with arms upraised, holding a long-necked bird in either hand) are double, the two sides meeting at a right angle and so are

corner pieces. Their complete lengths and widths are preserved, 0.59 m. by 0.10 m. One exceptional fragment in the lot, decorated with two parallel running guilloches close together, has no clear relation to the others. All the fragments show a uniform dark green patina and light corrosion.

With his analysis of these raw data the author situates the reliefs in time, place and form. The seven chapters following the catalogue investigate them from a number of points of view, but those on style per force receive the greatest emphasis. Sources and comparanda are adduced for each figure and floral motif. Johansen concludes that the appliqués, in which he sees a confident and imaginative blending of Oriental and Greek (particularly Corinthian) elements, are authentic products of the late Orientalizing period as attested in southern Etruria. More precisely he would date them in the third quarter of the seventh century B.C.

The mixed composition of the lot and the state of preservation of the fragments point to their having come from a tomb and so possibly having decorated a variety of objects, even if, as Johansen argues, they are all from the hand of the same artist. He strays from this point, however, in a natural desire to reduce his material to elegant, complete comprehensibility: he associates the belt with a corpse or funerary statue and the other strips together with a funerary statue or chest.

An enormous amount of effort has gone into this publication and the author has surely succeeded in authenticating the Carlsberg fragments, their quality and artistic milieu.¹ At the same time it may be said to exemplify the dilemma of dating Etruscan works of art on style alone, when, as here, there is no context for the items under study. Given this limitation, Johansen has scrupulously followed up every pertinent clue.

A number of the photographic plates are rather dark and grainy in texture; there are twenty-two full scale reproductions of the fragments. Misprints are few.

RUSSELL T. SCOTT

BRYN MAWR COLLEGE

DIE PORTRÄTS DES SEPTIMIUS SEVERUS, by *Dirk Soechting* (Habelts Dissertationsdrucke, Reihe klassische Archäologie, vol. 4). Pp. 300, pls. 11. Rudolf Habelt, Bonn, 1972.

This doctoral dissertation for the University of Bochum is primarily concerned with an iconographic study of the portraits of the emperor Septimius Severus. The author divides his study of some 142 portraits in the round and in relief into four iconographic groups, based on a typology of individualized features and the images on the coins. He also includes a list of twelve portraits on gems and cameos and a short chapter on the style of the portraits as a whole. Finally,

an attempt is made to divide the sculptures into four workshop groups. In an appendix the date of the arch of Severus at Lepcis Magna is reconsidered. A catalogue of the material is included, divided into types as well as workshop groups. Unacceptable attributions, lost portraits and ones the author considers as modern are also listed.

The potential contribution of this restudy of the portrait types of Severus has unfortunately not been fully realized due to the lack of full use of one of the few complete sources on the subject written by this author in 1968 (*The Portraits of Septimius Severus, A.D. 193-211. MAAR XXX*). Also G.M.A. Richter's basic study of Roman gems published in 1971 has not been used and in his discussion of the historical reliefs I. S. Ryberg's major work on iconography has been cited (*MAAR XXII*, 1955) but not used in discussion. These oversights may have been caused by the time table set for thesis publication under German university requirements. An attempt has been made to include page references to my work in footnotes and to make plate correlations. But it is disappointing that no attempt has been made in the text to discuss the previous study in any detail and it is dismissed in a line in the introduction where the author justifies his publication on the grounds that his results are "remarkably different." His book review attempts to fill this gap (*Gnomon* 1971, 202-207). Indeed, different points of view are always valuable in scholarship but comparative evaluation must be discussed and carefully documented to arrive at new points of understanding.

Furthermore, while Soechting claims to have extensively compared the portraits in the round with those on the coins—a method of approach already widely in use for the study of imperial portraiture and based on the hypothesis that both portraits in the round and on coinage are derived from common sculptural prototypes—references to specific coin images are not always included in his discussion (i.e., p. 17, plate references for the coins from the year 195; p. 22, for the problematic coinage of Severus and Albinus for 194-196; p. 32, for the coins from 193-197). Since no photographs of coins are included in his text and the medallions and provincial coinage of Severus are not used to their fullest extent, it is often difficult to follow the author's evidence for his emphatic conclusions. In order to evaluate fairly another scholar's serious study, both comparative and well-documented evidence is essential. The iconography of imperial portraiture is complicated and difficult and direct study of the coinage and consultation with numismatists is always needed. This writer would make more distinctions among the coin portraits than either Soechting or J. Balty in her studies (see rev. *L'antiquité classique*, XLI, 1972, 623ff.). These distinctions were based on an extensive direct study of the coinage both in the British Museum and in the other major collections in European museums in consultation with numismatists. These distinctions

¹ G. Camporeale expressed some doubts about the authenticity of the lot in *RomMitt* 72 (1965) 4.