



Fragment of a sarcophagus depicting a griffin

Date
c. 2nd century CE

Primary Maker
Unknown artist, Roman (Ancient)

Medium
Marble

Description
This fragment of a sarcophagus, or stone coffin, reflects a period of transition in ancient Mediterranean history. In the second century AD, the Romans adopted coffin burials as an alternative to cremation. The popularity of inhumation resulted in the widespread production of sarcophagi throughout the Roman Empire during the second and third centuries. The most affluent patrons commissioned caskets made of marble, such as this, with intricately carved designs and narrative scenes on their sides. Roman sarcophagi bear strong stylistic resemblances to those produced contemporaneously in neighboring Mediterranean and Middle East regions, most notably in iconography. Similar to those from Greece and Egypt, Roman examples commonly featured mythological scenes and motifs as well as scenes of battles, hunts, and weddings. This fragment features an image of a griffin, an often-depicted mythological beast.

Dimensions
Overall: 13 x 15 1/2 x 4 in. (33 x 39.4 x 10.2 cm)