

# Basic Detail Report

---



## Title

Child's Sarcophagus with Cupids Racing Chariots in Circus

## Date

160-180 CE

## Dimensions

15 3/8 × 53 3/8 × 19 7/8 in. (39.1 × 135.6 × 50.5 cm)

## Medium

Proconnesian marble

## Classifications

Sculpture

## Credit Line

Partial purchase with funds from the Libbey Endowment, Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey, by exchange, and partial gift of Emily Alexander. Installation, conservation, and interpretation made possible by support given by the Anderton L. "Pete" Bentley, Jr., family - his wife Carol, his children Katherine MacPherson, Anderton L. Bentley III, and Pamela Thorne and their spouses, the grandchildren, his many friends, and the Anderton Bentley Fund-- as a memorial for "Pete" and in honor of his love for all things Roman.

## Object number

2008.129

## Published References

Matz, Friedrich, and Friedrich von Duhn, *Antike Bildwerke in Rom: Mit Ausschluss der grösseren Sammlungen*, Leipzig, K.W. Hiersemann, 1881, vol. 2, pp. 231-232, no. 2827.

Belting-Ihm, Christa, "Ein römischer Circus-Sarkophag," *Jahrbuch des Römisch-Germanischen Zentralmuseums Mainz*, vol. 8, 1961, p. 206, no. 9 (an incomplete and inaccurate description based on that in Matz/Duhn 1881).

Schauenburg, Konrad, *Die stadtrömischen Erosen-Sarkophage. Zirkusrennen und verwandte Darstellungen*, ASR 5, 2,3, Berlin, Gebr. Mann Verlag, 1995, p. 73, no. 51.

Dimas, Stephanie, *Untersuchungen zur Themenwahl und Bildgestaltung auf römischen Kindersarkophagen*, Münster, Scriptorium, 1998, p. 261, no. 196.

Toledo Museum of Art, *Toledo Museum of Art Masterworks*, Toledo, 2009, p. 86, repr. (col.).

Reich, Paula, *Toledo Museum of Art: Map and Guide*, London, Scala, 2009, p. 10, repr. (col.) and (det.)  
Oakley, John H., "Roman Sarcophagi in the Toledo Museum of Art," in *Approaching the Ancient Artifact: Representation, Narrative, and Function*, edited by Amalia Avramidou and Denise Demetriou, Berlin, De Gruyter, 2014, pp. 205–208, color figs. 16–18.

## **Comparative References**

See also John H. Humphrey, *Roman Circuses: Arenas for Chariot Racing* (New York and Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986)

See also Guntram Koch and Hans Sichterman, *Römische Sarkophage* (Munich: Beck, 1982).

## **Collections**

Sculpture

### **Label Text**

Installation, conservation, and interpretation made possible by support given by the Anderton L. "Pete" Bentley, Jr., family—his wife Carol, his children Katherine MacPherson, Anderton L. Bentley III, and Pamela Thorne and their spouses, the grandchildren, his many friends, and the Anderton Bentley Fund—as a memorial for "Pete" and in honor of his love for all things Roman. The scene carved on this stone coffin (sarcophagus) shows a chariot race, a sport that was the passion of the ancient Romans. They built racecourses throughout the empire, but the grandest—seating 275,000 spectators—was the Circus Maximus in the city of Rome. From architectural elements shown in the scene we know that this is the racecourse represented on this sarcophagus. Chariot races were fast and dangerous. The winning cupid driver on the right looks back at the unfortunate second driver, whose horses have fallen. The third and fourth drivers continue to run their chariots, urged on by the supporting riders on horseback (the outriders) and the "pit crew" on foot. On the short sides, the winning charioteer and his outrider flourish palm branches as they take a victory lap. No lid or inscription survives, but this small sarcophagus was made for a child. In ancient Rome winged cupids symbolized the soul. It is easy to read this scene as an allegory for the tribulations of a person as he or she moved through life to an eventual triumph after death. The sarcophagus was documented in the Palazzo Barberini in Rome in 1881. By the early 20th century, it was owned by John Long Severance and Elisabeth Huntington DeWitt Severance, displayed in the loggia of their Longwood estate near Cleveland, Ohio.

### **On View**

Toledo Museum of Art (2445 Monroe Street), Gallery, 02, Classic