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# Roman Marble Sarcophagus



An ancient Roman marble child's sarcophagus, the central medallion with an unfinished bust framed in a wreath held by two flying erotes each flanked by additional erotes, their quivers and bows below.

Ca. early 3rd century AD.
Length: 47 in. (119.3 cm).

The portrait bust in the central medallion of the front panel was left unfinished in antiquity. While traditionally explained by practical matters – such as the financial insolvency of a patron or time constraints – recent scholarship has embraced the notion that unfinished sarcophagi may have been intentional. These reasons may include a change in Roman attitudes away from public achievement toward private spirituality or philosophical and religious ideas which prompted new ways of looking at the human body and visual images. For a discussion of the phenomenon, see J. Huskinson "'Unfinished Portrait Heads' on Later Roman Sarcophagi: Some New Perspectives," Papers of the British School at Rome, vol. 66, pp. 129-158.

Formerly in a New York private collection; acquired in London.

*inventory number: 8912*

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