NIGEL SPIVEY *Etruscan Art* (London, Thames and Hudson, 1997); 216, 186 illustrations (37 in colour); ISBN 0500 203040; £6.95.

The output of Nigel Spivey (S) continues to impress. Much like his most recent books, *Greek Sculpture* and *Greek Art*, this introductory work is solid and worthwhile.

It has all the positive hallmarks of Thames and Hudson's 'World of Art' series: an eminent author and instructive narrative combined with a wealth of illustrations. There is also the paper-and-glue binding which comes apart much too quickly. Yet the price is comparatively cheap, so the quality of the binding must be accepted as a trade-off.

After a map showing the principal Etruscan sites (6), an Introduction (7-24) and six chapters follow. For the benefit of beginners, the map really needs to be supplemented by a full-length map of Italy. At the end of the book is a Timeline (200), a Chronology (201-02), a Bibliography and Sources, with brief comments on leading scholarly publications (203-06), a List of Illustrations (207-12), and an Index (213-16), the last quite detailed for a book of this size.

In the Introduction ('Etruria and the Limits of Demystification', 7-24), S tilts against the common idea that the Etruscans are somehow more mysterious and less knowable than other ancient peoples. Their indigenous origin is now generally accepted, and the matter of origins is of limited importance anyway. Their language could certainly be read if more text were available, and their religious and social customs make them no more distinct than other cultures of their period (7-8). In spite of the dearth of historical evidence, S tries hard to relate Etruscan art to its social functions and settings (9). He emphasizes the direction provided by Etruscan aristocrats and opposes the traditional view that Etruscan art was 'inferior' to Greek art. Given that much 'Etruscan art' was produced by Greek artists, this
view 'owes more to anecdotes of modern Western colonialism than to the archaeological record' (11). Rather than stylistic preference or ethnicity, S lays stress upon 'the diffusion of a shared aristocratic ideology' (16). Central to this ideology was the symposium, which served the same basic function in Etruria as it did in Greece: 'to seal a social status, to affirm the existence of a convivial peer-group' (16). 'Etruscan art', therefore, was formed when 'Greek artists both shaped and responded to Etruscan ideology' (20). In some areas of expertise (vase painting, marble sculpture) it could reasonably be said that the output of Etruria lagged behind that of Greece, especially Classical Athens, but in other areas (filigree goldwork, gem cutting, terracotta sculpture) it was ahead (24).

The ensuing chapters, which develop in a roughly chronological way, incorporate and reinforce S's distinctive approach as he sets about providing (what is called on the back cover) 'the first critical survey of this elusive people for more than twenty years'. There can be no question that it helps enormously to think of Etruscan art as a version of an aristocratic ideology which was sweeping the Mediterranean. There was no 'art for art's sake' (9).

These points and related ones are buttressed by the interpretations of objects and structures offered in Chapters 1-3 ('The Emergence of Etruscan Culture', 25-39; 'Etruria and the Orient', 40-52; and 'Etruria Hellenized', 53-80). Bucchero vases are interpreted as belonging to 'dinner services' which were used at symposia. This indicates both cultural influence from the east and an Etruscan élite who were ready by the early seventh century to participate 'not only in drinking, but also in other displays of status, including the purchase and patronage of art' (39). The pursuit of prestige objects is fundamental to an understanding of the orientalizing phenomenon, though 'princely' tombs of the seventh century, such as the Regolini-Galassi Tomb, did not contain homogeneous sets of treasures. An unusual amount of credit is given to the Phoenicians, who are described not merely as
middlemen, transferring glittering prizes from Sidon and the east, but as men who might have shared wine and formed individual guest-friendships with noble Etruscans. S idealizes slightly here, making particular reference to the similarity in shape between early Etruscan wine amphorae and the Phoenician 'Canaanite jar', though Aristotle (Pol. 1280 a-b) and the Pyrgi gold plaques testify to especially close relations at times between Etruscans and Phoenicians (or Carthaginians) (44, 52). The Greeks intruded upon the orientalizing process, and while the Etruscans did not wish to cede territory to them, 'they offered them little cultural resistance' (52). In fact, 'trade' with the Greeks should be defined so as to permit 'some survival of the old patterns of gift exchange and aristocratic "networking"' (55).

Of course, it cannot all have been a matter of aristocratic presentation of power to a Mediterranean world. There were other participants and other concerns. To his credit, S recognizes this and does well to highlight some of the complications which attended the hellenization process. The iconography of Etruscan tomb paintings, plaques and pedimental sculpture, for instance, is neither entirely 'private' nor entirely 'public' (in modern terms). The Minotaur (a figure of myth) can occur with a lituus (a symbol of public office) (61, 96). Uncertainty about the amount of indigenous input into certain Greek myths, or the stories which are generally described thus, is frankly acknowledged (76), though S does not believe that these were copied uncomprehendingly in Etruria. Rather, they were retold and reshaped as in fifth century Athens, and Greek artists played a leading role, not only in the figurative illustration of the stories but also in the didactic side of the process (56, 70). They were responsible for the elaborate narratives enacted by the quartet of large figures on top of the Portonaccio Temple at Veii, which would have required appreciation from the front and the sides (63); and they also produced the famous mirrors which were commonly adorned with depictions of tales in which vanity or individual comeliness gained its rewards (77).
Chapter 4 (‘The Etruscan Cities as Centres of Art’, 81-148) reminds readers that Etruria was never a nation-state. On the contrary, Etruscan disunity was a major reason for the eventual Roman conquest, and such political fragmentation encouraged localization in Etruscan art. This is the flipside or complement to the emphasis laid upon shared aristocratic ideology in the preceding chapters. There were factors which produced similarities and factors which produced differences in the artistic output of the Etruscan cities. S surveys local characteristics in the art of a variety of sites: Cerveteri (82-96), Acquarossa (96), Castel d'Asso and Norchia (97-8), Pyrgi (98-9), Talamone (100), Tarquinia (100-19), Vulci (119-28), Orvieto (128-34), Chiusi (134-37), Murlo (138-40), Volterra (141-45), and Marzabotto (146).

Insights abound. Cities and cemeteries should not be separated in the way that George Dennis did in 1848 because there was ‘a complex rapport between the society of the living and the community of ancestors’ (87). The boundaries of city and cemetery were fluid, continually compromised by negotiations between tradition and innovation. Sometimes the living conducted social rituals in the cemetery, and sometimes the ancestors were incorporated into social rituals in the city. The Cerveteri ‘Sarcophagus of the Married Couple’ in the Villa Giulia is usually interpreted as a symbol of connubial commitment on a marriage bed; S thinks that it affirms an erotic pledge on a piece of symposium furniture (92-3). Banquet scenes in tombs relate in part to a regular commemorative event held by the living, probably a meal (perideipnon in Greek), with sacrifices, toasts, libations, etc. Thus these scenes are images of compound ambiguity. They record both an activity and a projected ideology, and relate to both the living and the dead, and also to issues of status, display and belief (108-09). Pictorial references to games may likewise indicate actual funerary protocols (111). The Murlo ‘court-style building’ or ‘meeting hall’ probably served as the residence or palace of an aristocratic clan or dynasty (139-40). S even indulges in speculation about the symbolic value of some of the painted scenes from tombs at Tarquinia. Figures who plunge into the waves might be plunging into the realm of Aphrodite.
The Belvedere Temple at Orvieto is adorned with a pedimental group of Greek heroes drawing lots to fight Hector. S wonders whether the Greeks might stand for the Etruscans and the Trojans for the Romans (130).

The inevitable appearance of Rome comes in Chapter 5 ('From Etruscan Rome to Roman Etruria', 149-82). Disappointment awaits anyone hoping for direct and detailed engagement with the iconoclastic views of Tim Cornell (The Beginnings of Rome [London, Routledge, 1995], 151-72), who holds that Rome was never dominated by an Etruscan dynasty in the way that the historical tradition depicts. S avoids the issue by asserting that, regardless of whether Etruscans ruled Rome, Etruscan and Greco-Etruscan craftsmen produced the art and architecture of early Rome (152). Of course, this is unexceptional, but it helps to know the identity of the ruling elite, as S himself spent the first three chapters showing us; and this becomes particularly the case when it is learned that the image projected by Etruscan aristocrats of the third and second centuries strongly influenced the veristic mode of presentation favoured by Roman nobles of the Late Republic (171-74).

Finally, in Chapter 6, S examines 'The Etruscan Legacy' (183-99). This kind of chapter, a trademark of S's work, is to be appreciated for the insights it gives into the beginnings and orientation of modern scholarship. There are interesting observations on the visits to, and impressions of, Etruria made by such famous figures as George Dennis (191) and D.H. Lawrence (192-93).

The merits of this survey book are many and varied, but it would be wrong to close without special mention of the illustrations. They are generally sharp and in close proximity to the places where they are mentioned in the text, even if some back-and-forth manipulation of pages is inevitable. It is difficult to contemplate a better introductory text for undergraduate
students. Perhaps S might be persuaded in the near future to turn
his talents to the subject of Roman art.

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Other Books Received


GREGORY CRANE *Thucydides and the Ancient Simplicity: the Limits of Political Realism* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1998); xii plus 348; ISBN 0520 207890; $US45.00/£35.00.

ANDREW FELDHERR *Spectacle and Society in Livy's History* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1998); xxi plus 265; cloth: ISBN 0520 210263; $US45.00/£35.00; paper: ISBN 0520 210271; $US17.95/£11.95.


MARK GOLDEN *Sport and Society in Ancient Greece* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998); xiv plus 216; ISBN 0521 497906; $Aus34.95.