

Roman Sex: 100 B.C. to A.D. 250

By John Clarke

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Roman Sex: 100 B.C. to A.D. 250 By John Clarke

Who could do what—to whom—and why? What were the rules of sexual engagement?

Why did the ancient Romans proudly display their erotic art in public?

When and why did Women's Liberation come to ancient Rome?

What were the rules of homosexual lovemaking?

What was the role of prostitution—both male and female?

Answering these questions and many more, *Roman Sex* provides a fresh and provocative account of ancient Roman sexual practices. Featuring 114 illustrations, including 95 full-color plates, *Roman Sex* explains for the first time a wealth of newly discovered sexual art including many paintings, sculptures, and vases hidden away in the world's "secret museums."


John R. Clarke, one of the world's foremost authorities on ancient Rome, puts these works of art back into their original context—whether in the home, brothel, or banquet table—and reveals ancient Roman attitudes on sex and sexuality.


The first Women's Liberation movement also took place in this period, and Clarke explains how and when it came about. He shows how and why the Roman man was a bisexual creature, alternating his affections between women and men, and how society treated the entrenched homosexual. Lesbian sex, illustrated by startling new discoveries at Pompeii, also gets full treatment.

Romans, both rich and poor, proudly displayed images in their homes that today we would hide away. Clarke takes the reader into a society markedly different from ours in its attitudes toward sex. With all its quirks, it was a sexually tolerant society that encouraged the creation and open display of erotic art. *Roman Sex* will appeal to any reader who wants to understand this culture, which was in many ways the forerunner of our own.

John R. Clarke is Annie Laurie Howard Regents Professor of the History of Art

at the University of Texas at Austin, and a past president of the College Art Association. He is one of the world's foremost authorities on life in ancient Rome and author of *The Houses of Roman Italy: Ritual, Space, and Decoration 100 B.C. to A.D. 250*, as well as *Looking at Lovemaking: Constructions of Sexuality in Roman Art 100 B.C. to A.D. 250*.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

When, in 1968, the men in Clark's Pompeii tour group were ushered into a locked, windowless room in the Naples Archaeological Museum, Clark did not realize that he would eventually become an authority on ancient Rome's sexual iconography. The room, which women were forbidden to enter until the '70s, houses sexually explicit paintings and statues: figures with huge erections; a terra-cotta lamp of a woman making love to a man while swinging iron hand weights; a woman's hand mirror featuring "passionate lovemaking" complete with "her favorite pet." Now an art history professor at the University of Texas at Austin, Clark presents some of the pieces that have inspired his last 30-plus years of study. Colorful frescoes, metal objects or ceramics are shown in 114 illustrations (95 in color), divided among nine chapters explaining ancient societal attitudes toward sex ("Woman on Top: Women's Liberation in the First Century A.D"; "Laughing at Taboo Sex in the Suburban Baths"), while subheadings like "Priapus, Protection, and Penetration" offer scholarly and personal anecdotes. A number of the works are published for the first time here.

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About the Author

John R. Clarke is Annie Laurie Howard Regents Professor of Art History, at the University of Texas at Austin. He is one of the foremost international authorities on ancient Rome.

Users Review

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