



19th Century Antique

The chimneypiece currently on show in Jamb's showroom was purchased, sometime in the 1990s from Samuel Roger at Origines by Alexander MacMillan, 2nd Earl of Stockton, grandson of PM Harold MacMillan for the restoration of Hayne Manor, a grade I listed mansion in Devon.

Dimensions

Height 146½in (372.1cm) width 87½in (222.3cm)

Internal height 48½in (123.2cm) width 47¼in (120cm)

Depth 29in (37.3cm)

Reference

I103

Provenance

Dominating the Loire River, the royal castle of Blois is not only one of the most prestigious Renaissance monuments in France but also a brilliant illustration of the evolution of the French architecture from the Middle Ages to the 17th century. The wing built by Francois I is illustrated below.

The Francis I wing was commenced in 1515, which was at the beginning of his reign, and works were completed before 1524, marking the death of Queen Claude de France, whose initials and emblems are associated everywhere with those of the king. Built only 15 years after the Louis XII wing, the Francis I wing is very different. During these 15 years, French art changed radically in contact with Italian art. The Francis I wing is one of the very first masterpieces of French Renaissance.

The emblem of the king, the salamander, is sculptured eleven times in high relief on the Francis I facade. The staircase, which was at the centre of the facade before Gaston d'Orleans began to modify the castle is a masterpiece. When the Italianate straight flights of stairs appeared in the Loire Valley after the Gothic period, the shape of the spiral staircase in a protruding octagonal cage was considered rather ordinary. The staircase, with its three floors of balconies looking on to the Court of Honour, is perfectly suitable for the display of more and more sumptuous ceremonies.

The salamander also adorned the main fireplace of the castle. Only the king was allowed to use this symbol and it was used in each of his palaces. The chimneypiece at Blois is illustrated below.

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