



18th Century Antique

A most important and magnificent George II Kilkenny fossil marble chimneypiece. Designed and produced by William Colles in 1751 for the drawing room in Castlemorris, County Kilkenny, Ireland. With the exception of the two white rosettes, the entire chimneypiece is carved from three single blocks of Irish Kilkenny marble, richly figured with many fossils of seashells and coral. The two carved white statuary marble rosettes are placed in the centre of Baroque style geometrical patterns in each top corner. These geometrical patterns coordinate with the deeply moulded frieze and pilasters panels. On the outside of the jambs are scroll consoles carved with acanthus motifs. The centre keystone has a scallop shell, a design which features strongly in early to mid 18th century Irish furniture and architecture. Above the keystone is a tall scrolled pediment profusely decorated with laurels.

Dimensions

Height 72in (182.9cm) width 95in (241.3cm)

Internal height 50in (127cm) width 54in (137.2cm)

Total depth 2in (5cm)

Reference

G226

Further details

Francis Morres, the first Viscount Mountmorris and Harvey's eldest son commissioned Castlemorris (also known as Castle Morres) and when complete in 1751, it was one of the largest stately homes in Ireland. It was designed by architect Francis Bindon, who also designed notable houses such as Bessborough House and Woodstock House in Co. Kilkenny. In 1924 the house was sold to the Land Commission. In the early 1930s it was unroofed and a demolition sale took place. Many parts of the house and contents are to be found in houses around the country. The house was finally demolished in 1978.

William Colles was a building contractor, marble mason and entrepreneur from Co. Kilkenny. He was born on the 30th of August 1702 and died on the 8th of March 1770. He was the originator and owner of the marble works at Millmount, Co. Kilkenny. He invented machinery for sawing, boring and polishing marble, tasks which had previously been performed by hand. By 1734 he was selling marble chimneypieces and furniture from his Kilkenny marble warehouse in Batchelor's Lane, Dublin. He was the contractor for Catlemorris, Woodstock and Bessborough, Co. Kilkenny, all designed by Francis Bindon.

A monument erected by his son reads: *By an uncommon genius he discovered and by unwearied application and patience, perfected the art of sawing, boring and polishing marble by water mills, which by lowering the price of that valuable manufacture rendered it more extensive. His whole life was employed in works beneficial to Society. His manner was inoffensive and his conduct always upright.*