



18th Century Antique

A late Baroque, Verde Antico and overlaid white marble chimneypiece. The deep rectangular breakfront shelf above a band of stylised rosettes centred by a high relief-carved tablet of a drapery hung classical female mask, the frieze with overlaid cornucopia to the sides, the aperture surrounded by a cushion moulding, the jambs applied with asymmetrical male and female terminal pilasters headed by scroll-carved busts with laurel leaf and bellflower decoration, on a pair of stepped, moulded plinths, with restorations.

Dimensions

Height 56½in (144cm) width 87½in (223cm)

Depth 18in (46cm)

Reference

G262

Further details

The bold Palladian design of this chimneypiece features elements which relate to William Kent's repertoire of ornament. Examples include a white marble and Porto Venere chimneypiece in the Kent-designed White, originally Green, Drawing Room, at Houghton Hall which has a central mask tablet and is bracketed by similar outward facing figural corbel pilasters. Another chimneypiece in the 'Van Dyke Dressing Room' at Houghton parallels the use of cornucopia flanking the frieze tablet. The cornucopia device is repeated on a giltwood pier table, also in the White Drawing Room at Houghton. This is notably one of the few pieces of furniture for which the original Kent drawing has survived (see John Cornforth, *Georgian Interiors*, 2004, p. 162, pls. 211 and 212).

By contrast there appear to be no documented English chimneypieces dating from the first half of the eighteenth century which combine applied white marble relief ornament with Verde Antico marble as illustrated here. However the combination of white marble set against a dark ground is paralleled on a Kentian chimneypiece in the Green Velvet Bedchamber at Houghton, illustrated in Cornforth, *op. cit.*, p. 163, pl. 213. Another chimneypiece by Pickford which employs similar contrasting marbles, is recorded at Holkham Hall, Norfolk. It features a white marble mask to the frieze, supported by festoons and flanked by white marble drapery tassels to the jambs, all applied onto a dark Port d'Oro marble ground (see Nicholas Hills, *The English Fireplace*, 1983, p. 44).

Aside from the lack of documented English eighteenth century Verde Antico marble chimneypieces, the low, broad proportions and deep shelf featured here, are more consistent with continental chimneypiece of the corresponding period. Other aspects which do not appear to relate to published 'Palladian' English chimneypiece patterns of Kent's circle include the carved white marble rosette banding beneath the frieze, and the cushion moulding surrounding the aperture. A further more subtle variance with the aforementioned printed designs is provided by the subtle asymmetry and modelling to the heads of the terminal pilasters.