



18th Century Antique

A superb, rare Italian late-18th to early-19th century statuary marble chimneypiece of Piranesian design. The moulded shelf decorated with running pearl has Roman Ionic volutes (carved with the shelf) at the ends which drop down and flank the frieze. The frieze centred with a rectangular tablet after the antique, decorated with a fan shaped anthemion spray flanked by acanthus and half anthemion fans. The side panels 'boat-shaped' with squared edges near the tablet the opposite side with sloping s-shaped edge, pointing to the volutes framed with bead and reel. The arched architrave deeply fluted with dog legged shoulders with circular paterae decorated with acanthus leaves and flowers. The outer edge (out grounds) of the jambs with inverted consoles decorated with scrolling acanthus. The whole raised on foot blocks. *See following page for further details.*

Dimensions

Height 53in (134.6cm) width 62½in (158.8cm)

Internal height 39¼in (99.7cm) width 40in (101.6cm)

Footblock to footblock 62in (157.5cm)

Frame depth 5in (12.7cm)

Reference

G279

Further details

This highly unusual rendering of the Ionic order can be seen in the plates of Piranese's *Diverse Maniere*, 1769¹, see Wilton-Ely².

It is important to note that the key elements of this chimneypiece are executed from solid blocks of statuary, with hand-tooling to the reverse, implying that it is of Italian manufacture for the English market.

While rooted in the Palladian movement of the 18th century rather than the Orientalism of the Regency period, this design is drawn with the exotic fervour and eccentricity of the Nash period extensions at Brighton Pavilion. Highly unusual in scale, this whimsical chimneypiece is a very fine example of the high opulence and luxury of the Neoclassical era.

1. *Diverse maniere d'adornare i camini ed ogni altra parte degli edifizii*, published 1769.
2. *Piranesi as Architect & Designer*, John Wilton-Ely, page 134, plate 128.