



18th Century Antique

A magnificent late 18th/early 19th century English neoclassical chimneypiece of statuary marble, carved in Italy. The frieze beautifully drawn and sculpted with ancient Greek and Roman gods walking towards the empty throne of the sun god Apollo. Circa 1800. *See following page for further details.*

Dimensions

Height 53½in (135.9cm) width 70½in (179.1cm)

Internal height 41in (104.2cm) width 41in (104.2cm)

Footblock to footblock 64in (162.6cm)

Reference

G292

Further details

On the left of the frieze is the goddess Artemis (Diana) the virgin huntress holding a bow and reaching for an arrow: the athletic personification of chastity. Next is Hermes (Mercury), Apollo's half-brother, the messenger of the gods, wearing winged sandals and holding his Caduceus. Beside him is Demeter (Ceres) goddess of agriculture holding ears of corn; Hephaestus (Vulcan) god of fire and blacksmith stands next, holding his hammer; next is Aphrodite (Venus) goddess of love, beauty and fertility. Then is seen Zeus (Jupiter) god of the sky and supreme ruler and chief of the twelve Olympians, holding his eagle aloft and a thunder bolt by his side. On the right side of the central tablet is Heracles (Hercules) another half-brother of Apollo, the god of strength and Heroic endeavour. He in turn is followed by Apollo's mother Leto (Latona) who holds an oriental lotus palm; Erato follows next, one of the companions of Apollo she was the muse of lyric and love poetry. After her is seen Athena (Minerva) a goddess of war, wisdom and the arts. Next to her stands Ares (Mars) another God of war. He is followed by Poseidon (Neptune) the God who ruled the seas, carrying his three pronged trident.

The figures are seen walking towards the empty throne of Apollo, which has a rounded curved back formed by the entwined remains of the slain Delphic python. Aside this sits a globe adorned with celestial stars, and is flanked by two winged female figures depicting the goddess of victory Nike and one of her siblings, they holding aloft the victors crown, a laurel wreath. Apollo (so called by both Greeks and Romans) was also the god of prophecy and divination, and was leader of the nine muses: the goddesses of creative inspiration in poetry and other creative arts. He was the embodiment of the classical Greek spirit, representing the rational and civilized side of man's nature. This contrasts greatly with the presentation of Dionysus (Bacchus) who is not of course depicted as he represented man's darker passionate nature. The frieze is upheld by fluted pairs of Ionic pilasters which rest on foot blocks.

A similar frieze can be seen on a chimneypiece at the Royal Society, 6-9 Carlton Terrace, London.