



18th Century Antique

An impressive 18th century Palladian style fireplace in statuary and contrasting Jasper marbles with Siena marble column jambs. From the London, Westminster workshops of Sir Henry Cheere (1703-1781) made for the 2nd Earl of Ossory for his seat at Ampthill Park, Bedfordshire, probably during improvements made by Sir William Chambers to the principle rooms and for building the two wings, between 1768 and 1772.

Dimensions

Height 38 $\frac{1}{4}$ in (173.5cm) width 94in (239cm)

Internal height 48in (122cm) width 60 $\frac{1}{4}$ in (153cm)

Footblock to footblock 84 $\frac{3}{4}$ in (215.5cm)

Reference

G339

Further details and provenance

The moulded breakfront shelf stepping forward over the jambs is decorated with lamb's tongue and egg and dart. The frieze centred with a large rectangular tablet which drops into the upper member of the architrave, of choice specimen marble jasper of unusual and rare greenish hues, flanked by yellow coloured Jasper marble panels, the rectangular Jasper end blockings decorated with open sunflower heads with curled petals in statuary, upheld by the three-quarter round, tapering Siena marble columns with Roman Ionic order statuary capitals and bases fronting the statuary pilasters. The whole rests on statuary marble blocks.

A closely related coloured drawing of a columned fireplace, with no sculptural decoration, from the Cheere's workshop can be seen in the Victoria Museum, D715(2)-1887 (one of 28 coloured designs of fireplaces).

In 1769 the young Earl of Upper Ossory bought in the architect Sir William Chambers to extend and modernise the house adding East (kitchen service quarters) and West wings (private quarters for the family), the Georgian facade and the grand formal rooms. This chimneypiece is most likely to have been in one of the Master Bedrooms in the added West Wing. In 1818 the house became home to Lady Holland whose gatherings were the most brilliant of the day. The 20th century was less kind to the house, the park passed to the town and the house requisitioned by the army. After the war the mansion became one of the first Cheshire Homes moving in the 1970s into the town and a few years later a neglected Ampthill Park house finally reverred to private residential use. Since then the restoration of the interior became succession of 'works in progress' this was probably when the fireplace was sold until it was finally converted into three units. See *Country Life*, 1971, and Pevsner, *The Buildings of England*, p. 70, 71.

Provenance: Sold at Christie's, London, 4 July 1991, lot 34 with provenance by repute Ampthill Park. With the London antique dealer, Nigel Bartlett, advertised by him in *Country Life*, back page, 20 February 1997.