



## 19th Century Antique

A Regency statuary white marble fireplace made in Italy for the British market, circa 1810. The crisply-carved and bold, neoclassical forms of this fireplace are the epitome of fashionable Regency taste. It features a plain shelf above a frieze filled with scrolling vines and bunches of grapes, suggesting it was originally intended for a dining room. In the centre sits a carved 'Gorgoneion': a popular Ancient Greek motif associated with the Olympian gods Athena and Zeus. Rosette paterae flank the frieze, which is supported by a striking pair of caryatids, the lower portions of which are carved in relief with a staff of fennel covered with ivy and topped by a pine cone. This symbol, known as a 'thyrsus', was associated Dionysus, with the Greek god of wine, and is a further allusion to dining and revelry. See following page for provenance.

### Dimensions

Height 51 $\frac{3}{4}$ in (131.7cm) width 58 $\frac{2}{3}$ in (149cm)

Internal height 41 $\frac{3}{4}$ in (105.7cm) width 41 $\frac{1}{3}$ in (104.7cm)

Shelf depth 11in (27.6cm)

### Reference

N217

## Provenance

Like ancient Greek and Roman sculpture and archaeological artefacts, fine chimneypieces were a popular souvenir of the Grand Tour. The skilled workshops of Rome did a lively trade with British patrons during the second half of the eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, often working to designs provided by their clients.

The unequivocal neoclassicism of this fireplace represents the forefront of Regency design, as promoted by such luminaries as the collector and connoisseur Thomas Hope (1769-1831). Hope's *Household Furniture and Interior Decoration* was published in 1807 and was the most important British furniture design book of the early nineteenth century. Inspired by Greek, Roman and Egyptian sources and the influence of the French Directoire and Empire styles, Hope endeavoured to rid British design of 'tameness' and monotonous decoration which 'completely tired the eye and mind', and replace it with 'a delightful significance of shape and embellishment'. Originally from Somerville House in County Meath, Ireland.