



19th Century Antique

An English, Regency period, neoclassical fireplace in statuary marble, carved in Italy, circa 1820. The rectangular moulded, tiered shelf sits above the frieze with a central plaque with a head of Medusa. She is robustly carved with glaring eyes and snakes entwined in her hair and flanked by panels carved with acanthus leaves. The herm jambs with well carved busts of the Vestal Virgins and tapering shafts of inverted obelisk shape, decorated with scrolled hearts and anthemion, capped with blockings of sunflowers. The whole standing on footblocks. See following page for further details and provenance.

Dimensions

Height 52¼in (132.5cm) width 71¾in (182.2cm)

Internal height 41in (104cm) width 52in (132cm)

Footblock to footblock 73¾in (187.5cm)

Shelf depth 11in (28cm)

Reference

N343

Further details and provenance

The jambs feature busts of the Vestal Virgins, the attendants of the temple of Vesta, the Roman goddess of fire in the Roman forum. It was their duty to keep the fires perpetually burning, which is a pleasing connotation for chimneypiece design.

An almost identical fireplace, one of a pair and with slightly different blockings, but almost certainly by the same workshop, was illustrated by the London antique dealers, Pratt & Burgess in *The Connoisseur*, November 1960, with provenance of 83 Portland Place, London.