



G200

A mid eighteenth century, George II, white statuary and Sicilian Jasper marble chimneypiece by Thomas Carter I (1702-1756). The jambs in the form of full rounded Jasper columns, the frieze with a centre tablet illustrating Aesop's 'Stork and Fox' fable. Circa 1750.

Dimensions

Height 74 $\frac{5}{8}$ in (189.4cm) width 99 $\frac{1}{2}$ in (252.7cm)

Internal height 55 $\frac{5}{8}$ in (141.2cm) width 60 $\frac{1}{4}$ in (153cm)

Provenance

An almost identical centre tablet with matching stalk, vase and fox but with slightly variations to the flanking rocky outcrop and foliage can be found on a chimneypiece in the little drawing room at Uppark, West Sussex. Thomas Carter is well documented as receiving the fantastic sum of almost £1000 between 1746 and 1756 for chimneypieces for Sir Mathew Featherstonehaugh. (Uppark, West Sussex, National Trust, 1999. See also, National Trust photographic archive, image No. 1132, 1989, Uppark, West Sussex.)

Another example with the same centre tablet and Jasper marble columns was illustrated by the antiques dealer, Edwin Jackson of New York in the *Connoisseur* in 1953 (Vol. Lxxviii).

The moulded, breakfront shelf with lambs tongue, egg and dart, symbolic of good and evil, and dentil mouldings. The frieze cantered with a finely sculptured tablet of Aesop's fable the Stork and Fox, the stork with its bill in a tall slender necked vase. The fox licks the side; this is flanked by foliage and a rocky outcrop with a gushing spring. To either side are panels of jasper, which continue around the protruding blocks. The finely coloured and figured full round tapering columns of the jambs with statuary Ionic caps and bases. The opening framed by egg and dart echoing those on the shelf.

Throughout the eighteenth century the proverb, the adage and wise sayings were highly popular especially Aesop's and during the 1740s and 1750s were used by the fashionable craftsmen, architects and designers (Chippendale in his *Directories* used them to decorate 'French chairs' and 'Fire Screens') and were also used by the top chimneypiece makers most noticeable Sir Henry Cheere and the Carters, these designs were mostly taken and adapted from Francis Barlow's *Aesop*, wonderfully illustrated volumes issued in 1666 and 1687.

Thomas Carter, the elder, (1702-1756) founded a major London workshop working in stone and marble specialising in monuments and more importantly by the 1740s elaborate marble chimneypieces which became the core of his business, these were often highly elaborate incorporating polychrome marbles, reliefs of literary and classical subjects and carving of the highest quality. These were marketed in keen competition with the products of his main rival Sir Henry Cheere. He worked closely with his brother Benjamin who had a yard next door. He supplied chimney pieces to Holkam Hall, Norfolk. Blair Castle, Perth, Saltram, Devon and of course Uppark to name but a few. He clearly ran a major and very profitable business providing these elegant focal points for the grand rooms of the fashionable houses of the period.