



20th Century Antique

A highly accomplished Art Deco period chimneypiece by Basil Ionides in the Neo Egyptian manner circa 1930. This important chimneypiece is a rare example of a brief iconic moment in the transition of architectural language in England, inspired by the contemporary discoveries in Egypt and the spirit of globalism and modern discovery. Carved in luxuriant Belgium black marble contrasted with luxuriously cast bronze lion masks, juxtaposed with original white statuary marble slips. The black marble is reminiscent of Ancient Egyptian basalt sculptures discovered at that time in the excavations of the tombs of the Valley of the Kings. See following page for further details and provenance.

Dimensions

Height 60 $\frac{1}{4}$ in (153cm) width 57 $\frac{1}{2}$ in (146cm)

Internal height 31in (78.7cm) width 26 $\frac{7}{8}$ in (68.2cm)

Footblock to footblock 57 $\frac{1}{4}$ in (145.4cm)

Depth 10 $\frac{5}{8}$ in (27cm)

Reference

G369

Further details

Basil Ionides was a highly accomplished Anglo Greek interior decorator and architect, trained at the Glasgow School of Art. Ionides married the Honourable Nellie Samuel, the widow of Walter Henry Levy, daughter of the 1st Viscount Bearsted, in 1930 after meeting her while he was decorating her residence in Berkeley Square. The Ionides acquired Buxted Park in 1931. With a combination of Basil's discerning eye and Nellie's fortune as the Shell Oil heiress, they restored the Park and became important art collectors. Fire destroyed much of the house in 1940, and the top story was lost entirely, with much of their collection. Ionides scavenged architectural pieces from bombed-out buildings around the country with which to rebuild his stately home (now a hotel). He served as High Sheriff of Sussex for 1944.

Ionides was an important Art Deco designer. He was best known as the architect (with Frank A. Tugwell) for the rebuilding of the Savoy Theatre in London in 1929 and for Claridge's Restaurant. For the Savoy Hotel's restaurant, he famously sculpted Kaspar, the Black Cat, who acts as a good-luck guest at tables if thirteen would otherwise be present. He published the important books *Colour and Interior Decoration* in 1926 and *Colour in Everyday Rooms* in 1934. He also designed the interior of the ticket hall at Hounslow West tube station. Ionides was admitted to the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) in 1931 and was elevated to Fellow in 1938.

Ionides died in Brighton at the age of 66 and is buried in St Margaret's Church in Buxted Park.

Provenance

Strand House, Savoy Hill, London.