



19th Century Antique

A Regency period Irish chimneypiece carved in white statuary marble. The frieze decorated with the Greek key motif ends in corbels carved with the mythological horse Pegasus. The central tablet depicts a scene from Lord Byron's poem 'Mazeppa', published in 1819, where Mazeppa is tied to a horse and is pursued by wolves. This illustration is after the painting by Horace Vernet dated 1826. The jambs are carved with the goddesses Flora and Diana standing on plinths decorated with flower garlands.

Dimensions

Height 49 $\frac{5}{8}$ in (126cm) width 76 $\frac{3}{4}$ in (195cm)

Internal height 37 $\frac{3}{4}$ in (96cm) width 43 $\frac{3}{4}$ in (111cm)

Footblock to footblock 69 $\frac{1}{4}$ in (176cm)

Shelf depth 15in (38.5cm)

Reference

N437

Further details

The cornice shelf, carved with egg & dart dentils, is reminiscent of early Renaissance palazzi and hangs above a carved frieze section, centred by a coin carved in low relief. Within the coin is a portrait, in profile, of a young Roman, his helmet pushed back above his face. The coin is upheld by a pair of centaurs which morph into ebullient sprays of acanthus and floral paterae. The helmet the young Roman wears occupies a middle ground between mask and Corinthian helmet. The C-scroll console jambs, carved with heraldic lion heads above concave fluted legs, stand on feathered paw feet.

The jambs carved with lion heads and the feathered claws of an eagle refer to the Griffin, a Greco-Roman mythical creature used widely in the Italian Renaissance as a heraldic emblem. The Griffin denotes military leadership and courage, but also great wealth as they were said to guard great hordes of gold. The lion and eagle were well-established icons in the 15th and 16th Century Renaissance and signify strength for the Medici family.

Notable similar examples can be found at the Palazzo Gondi in Florence, and chimneypieces by Benedetto da Rovezzano and the Palazzo Farnese by Giuliano & Antonio da Sangallo.