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GEORGE III STYLE STATUARY MARBLE DORIC ORDER CHIMNEYPIECE

after a design by Sir William Chambers (1723-1796),
the moulded breakfront shelf above central plain plaque, the frieze with triglyphs and plain metopes, with engaged columnar jambs on footblocks. Late nineteenth century in the early George III manner.

DIMENSIONS: 144cm (56^{3⁄4}"") High, 185cm (72^{3⁄4}"") Wide, 30cm (11^{3⁄4}"") Deep, Opening width 114.5 cm x 107 cm high, Outside jamb to jamb width 160 cm. 310 kg.

PRICE: £18,000

STOCK CODE: 78774





HISTORY

Sir William Chambers (1723-96) is one of the most revered of Georgian neo-classical architects. In his early career he was appointed architectural tutor to the Prince of Wales, later George III. In 1766, he became Architect to the King, (this being an unofficial title, rather than an actual salaried post with the Office of Works). He worked for Augusta, Dowager Princess of Wales building exotic garden buildings at Kew (the pagoda is his), and in 1757 he published a book of Chinese designs which had a significant influence on contemporary taste. He developed his Chinese interests further with his *Dissertation on Oriental Gardening* (1772), a fanciful elaboration of contemporary English ideas about the naturalistic style of gardening in China.

His more serious and academic *Treatise on Civil Architecture* published in 1759 proved influential on builders; it went into several editions and was still being republished in 1862. It dealt with the use of the classical orders, and gave suggestions for decorative elements, rather than dealing with construction and planning; for its third edition it was retitled *A Treatise on the Decorative Parts of Civil Architecture*. It included ideas from the works of many 16th- and 17th-century Italian architects then still little known in Britain. His influence was also transmitted through a host of younger architects trained as pupils in his office, including Thomas Hardwick (1752-1825).

His output was prolific – he undertook numerous prestigious architectural projects in London, the Shires, Ireland, Scotland and Sweden, and even designed the Coronation Coach – used by the royal family to this day. His magnum opus was Somerset House on the Strand over-looking the Thames – a vast project that he was involved with from its outset in 1766 – fully taking over the reins of design and construction in 1775.

We are not aware if the design from which this chimneypiece is taken was ever realised. The drawing indicates the use of Sienna marble for the jambs and ingrounds, the use of which would have provided a pleasing contrast to the Statuary marble used for the rest. A similar chimneypiece can be found at Hovingham Hall, North Yorkshire.

Chambers is also remembered as being one of the founder members of the Royal Academy and was the first Treasurer. He is buried at Poet's Corner in Westminster Abbey