

PATRICK JEFFERSON



- Item** A SET OF FOUR NEOCLASSICAL GILT-BRONZE WALL LIGHTS
- Date** Probably France, second half of the nineteenth-century.
- Dimensions** Height 14" (36cm) Width 17 3/4" (45cm) Depth 8" (20cm)
- Description** *Each cartouche-shaped back-plate depicting the head of Hercules wearing the pelt of the Nemean lion, his beard as garlands of acanthus foliage framed by a shell, with a pair of Greek-key mounted acanthus sconces; variously numbered.*
- The design of these wall lights is an interpretation of Hercules, *Herakles* in Greek mythology, the son of Zeus, who was forced by Eurystheus, king of Mycenae, to perform twelve tasks of superhuman difficulty, beginning by slaying the Nemean lion with his hands. Ever afterwards Hercules wore the lion's skin as his symbol.
- Neoclassical variants of this story are portrayed throughout Europe in the 18th century, including a carved mahogany mask wall light of around 1740 which recalls a design for a clock case in Batty Langley's *Treasury of Designs* published in 1740, which was copied from a pattern book by Johann Friedrich Lauch (*World Furniture*, ed. Hayward, no 472, p. 130). The Palladian flavour is also reminiscent of the work of the 18th century architect and designer William Kent, who used similar devices of shell-backed masks for consoles and looking glasses, such as the oval mirror for the White House at Kew, (*William Kent*, ed. Susan Weber, fig. 11.28, p. 290). The closest comparison however may be made with the sumptuous bronze mounts³ by François-Antoine Vassé, on the marble chimneypiece commissioned by King Louis XV in 1724 for the Salon de Hercules at the Château de Versailles, (Jean-Marie Pérouse de Montclos, *Versailles*, pp. 262-3).
- Price** £12,500

69 PIMLICO ROAD, LONDON. SW1W 8NE

TEL: +44 (0) 207 730 6161

PATRICK@PATRICKJEFFERSON.COM

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Fig. 1



Fig.2



Fig.3