

A PAIR OF REGENCY MAHOGANY ARMCHAIRS
AFTER THOMAS HOPE

Dimensions: H: 35.5 in / 90 cm | W: 23 in / 58 cm | D: 24.5 in / 61 cm

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A Pair of Regency Mahogany Armchairs after Thomas Hope These exceptional armchairs represent one of the most sophisticated expressions of English Regency design. Constructed in richly patinated mahogany, each chair displays the distinctive klismos form that became synonymous with Hope's revolutionary aesthetic vision. The design features a curved panelled tablet back surmounting a pierced X-shaped splat centred by a stylised carved boss. The gently curving arms equally panelled extending from the chair backs and terminating in carved recumbent winged lioness figures. The fluted and dished seat rail, housing drop-in seats, supported on panelled sabre legs that sweep outward in the characteristic Regency manner. English circa 1810 The present armchairs are close iterations of the celebrated pattern illustrated in Thomas Hope's seminal publication Household Furniture and Interior Decoration of 1807. The winged lionesses, couched in the manner of Egyptian sphinxes, reflect Hope's profound engagement with antique sources, specifically modelled on Rome's celebrated Capitoline Egyptian lions. Thomas Hope's revolutionary contribution to English furniture design stemmed from his extensive travels throughout the Mediterranean basin, where he developed a profound appreciation for classical antiquity that would fundamentally transform early

nineteenth-century taste. Having acquired his renowned house on Duchess Street in 1799, Hope embarked upon an ambitious program of remodelling and furnishing that drew inspiration from his Grand Tours of Greece and Egypt. His 1807 publication served not merely as a pattern book but as a comprehensive guide to his own collection, documenting furniture and interiors that represented the apotheosis of archaeological accuracy combined with contemporary sophistication. The present chairs belong to a remarkably small group of surviving examples, with only four recorded versions known to exist, each displaying subtle variations in craftsmanship and detail. The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, houses one example that has tentatively been linked to Hope's own collection by virtue of its superior carving. The design's archaeological foundations reflect Hope's scholarly approach to furniture making, with the klismos form derived directly from chairs depicted on ancient Greek vases. Hope's interpretation, however, transcended mere archaeological copying to create furniture of unprecedented sophistication and comfort. The sphinx-armed configuration particularly demonstrates his engagement with Egyptian Revival themes, a fascination shared by his contemporary Napoleon's architects Charles Percier and Pierre Fontaine, whose influential Recueil de Décorations Intérieures of 1801 illustrated similar sphinx-armed seating. Contemporary documentation provides fascinating insight into these chairs' original context. An 1819 watercolor by R.W. Billings depicting Hope's Flemish Picture Gallery at Duchess Street shows a chair of this exact pattern in situ, offering a rare glimpse into the sophisticated interior arrangements that made Hope's residences legendary throughout Regency London. Both his town house and country estate at Deepdene near Dorking served as showcases for his revolutionary aesthetic vision, attracting visitors who sought to understand and emulate his approach to interior design. The influence of Hope's designs extended well beyond his immediate circle, fundamentally reshaping English furniture throughout the early nineteenth century. His friendship with the poet Samuel Rogers proved particularly significant, with documented evidence that Hope assisted with furniture designs for Rogers' residence at 22 St. James's Place in 1803, specifically creating chairs with griffin supports. This collaboration resulted in furniture that shared the archaeological sophistication of Hope's own collection while adapting his aesthetic vision to different domestic contexts.

Literature:

Comparative Literature:

Thomas Hope, Household Furniture and Interior Decoration, London, 1807, pl. 11, nos. 3 and 4; for the design.

Ed. Watkin. D & Hewat-Jaboor. P., Thomas Hope Regency Designer, Italy, 2008, p. 372 & 373.