

# Adam Calvert Bentley and Ardgowan Antiques

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**Important Pair of George II Bronze Sphinxes in the manner of John Cheere**

**£8,500**

the lions' bodies shown recumbent and loosely draped with saddle-cloths, the female heads decoolleté and with tiaras and frilled head-dresses

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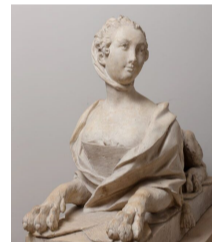
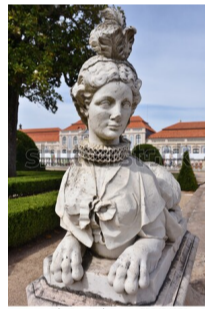
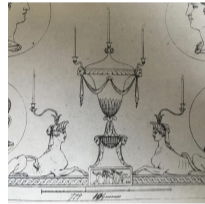
**SKU:** A3256/B3198

**Depth:** 20.5 cm (8 inches)

**Height:** 28 cm (11 inches)

**Length:** 38 cm (15 inches)

**Year:** mid 18th century



Sculptural figures of sphinxes appear in 18th century English engraved designs used as chimney/wall ornaments (see illustration), and it seems likely that the present pair were part of an internal decorative feature of some great demolished house, such as Hamilton Palace, Wanstead or Sutton Scarsdale. John Cheere (1709-1787), part of a family of famous mid 18th century sculptors, had produced large-scale sphinxes of differing designs in marble for the Palace of Queluz, Portugal, in lead for Anglesey Abbey (both here illustrated), as well as in bronzed terracotta for Kedleston, Derbyshire, and various other versions for the bridge in the park at Blenheim Palace, for Somerset House, for the gates of Chiswick House (now on Piccadilly at the entrance to Green Park), for Castle Hill in Devon and at Oakley Park (illustrated), Shropshire, this last pair made for Wanstead. Further examples in Coadestone were produced for Croome Court, Worcestershire (here illustrated) and Gosford House, Scotland.

The faces reputedly based on the near legendary Gunning Sisters, Elizabeth and Maria, presented at Court in December 1750, by 1752 they had married the 6th Duke of Hamilton and 6th Earl of Coventry (of Hamilton Palace and Croome Court, see above) respectively. People stood on chairs at public events and in church to catch glimpses of these famous beauties. Their faces appear in many contemporary engravings, and even reproduced on enamel plaques. The practice of giving sphinxes the faces of living people had occurred in France, where the face of Mme. de Pompadour appears on a pair of stone sphinxes at her brother's house, the château de Menars, and William Kent is reputed to have used the face of his patron's wife, Dorothy Boyle (née Savile), Countess of Burlington, for the sphinxes he designed for the park at Chiswick House.

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