Emmett & White
ANTIQUES & INTERIORS

Ashford Black Marble and Specimen-Stone Cross, Circa 1820

£460

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REF: 4106

Description

A beautiful early 19th-century Ashford black marble cross, dating to circa 1820 and inlaid with semi-precious stones in the form of delicate periwinkle flowers. Combining devotional symbolism with Derbyshire's celebrated tradition of decorative hardstone work, this refined object is both a touching expression of faith and an accomplished example of Regency craftsmanship.

The polished black ground provides a dramatic setting for the colourful specimen-stone inlay, whose floral design brings softness and life to the architectural simplicity of the cross. The periwinkle motif is especially appealing, lending the piece a sense of quiet beauty and naturalistic detail. Its use of contrasting stones reflects the skill and patience required to cut, shape, and set the individual elements into the dark polished surface.

Ashford black marble-more accurately a richly polished black Derbyshire limestone-became highly prized in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Workshops around Ashford-in-the-Water produced a remarkable range of decorative objects, frequently embellished with locally sourced and imported ornamental stones. Such pieces were sought after by visitors to the Peak District and remain among the most distinctive expressions of English regional craftsmanship.

This cross has a strong visual presence, equally suited to a collection of religious art, Grand Tour objects, Derbyshire hardstone work, or fine early 19th-century decorative antiques. The piece displays a small area of damage to one corner of the base, as shown and reflected in the price; this does not diminish the overall elegance or rarity of the inlaid design.

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