



Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps Inc.

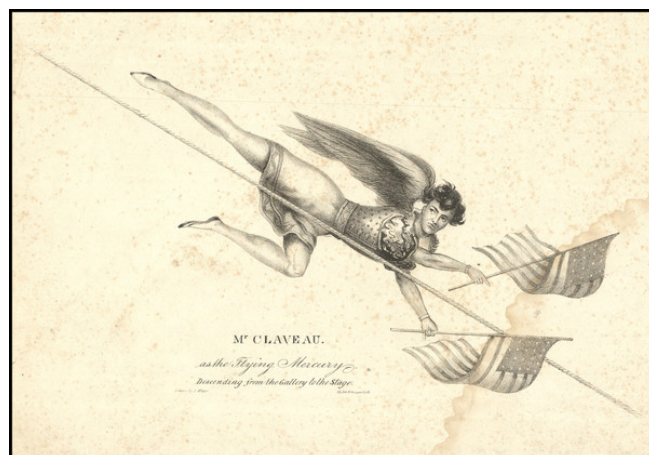
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(American Lithograph - Early Circus Performer) Mr. Claveau. as the Flying Mercury. Descending from the Gallery to the Stage

Stock#: 90049
Map Maker: Childs & Inman - Wiser
Date: 1830 (1833 circa)
Place: Philadelphia
Color: Uncolored
Condition: Good
Size: 10.75 x 8.5 inches (plate size)
Price: \$ 2,400.00



Description:

Early American Lithograph of Circus Performer Joseph Claveau as Flying Mercury

A very rare early American lithograph print depicting Joseph Claveau, a noted early circus performer, here performing as winged Mercury sliding down a tightrope while wielding two American flags. The performance of the Flying Mercury was a standard equestrian balancing act in early American circuses, introduced to America in the 1790s by the circus impresario John B. Ricketts. Traditionally a performer would mount on the shoulders of an equestrian rider and strike the pose or "attitude" associated with Mercury. In the present lithograph the Mercury performance incorporates a bit more dramatic flair, as Claveau is depicted as "flying" along a tightrope, with no horse in view. The lithograph, by the noted American firm of Childs & Inman, is after artwork by John Wiser. Mercury was of course the winged messenger of the gods. Graceful and swift, he was also a cunning thief.

Cephus G. Childs

Childs & Inman, an important early Philadelphia lithographic firm comprising C. G. Childs and Henry Inman, were pioneers in the hand-coloring of lithographs. In particular the firm did a number of early hand-colored lithographs for *The Cabinet of Natural History* (1830-1833). C. G. Childs would go on to produce some of the famous lithographs of Native Americans for McKenney & Hall's *History of the Indian Tribes of North America* (1838-1844). In 1833 Childs & Inman dissolved their partnership and Childs began to work with Lehman, an engraver and lithographer. As Childs & Lehman (43-45 Walnut Street), the new firm focused on lithographs of Philadelphia scenes and landmarks.



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The extant lithographic work produced by Childs and his various partners reflects a varied output - city views, pictorial advertisements, caricatures, maps, sentimental prints, images of ships, dogs and horses, fashion plates, and illustrations...The firm published portraits they believed would be popular, of both the famous and the infamous - Piola, page 5.

In her book on early American lithography, Sally Pierce highlights Childs as a prominent early American lithographer whose work catered to both popular and artistic tastes:

Certainly the lithographs of Kennedy & Lucas were overshadowed by those produced under the direction of Cephas G. Childs (1793-1871), an established engraver... Childs' promotion of the artistic side of the business was commented upon in the United States Gazette for September 9, 1828: "It is the intention of Mr. Childs, and the gentlemen connected with him, to present to the public specimens of lithographic drawing that shall tend to beget a taste for the arts, and introduce some of its pleasing products at a price within the command of almost every person..." - Pierce, p. 15.

Certainly the present delightful and artistic image of an early circus performer in America fits into the overall focus of Childs's oeuvre, which focused on famous personages and popular subjects of the day.

Rarity

OCLC locates only a single example of this rare lithograph, that at the American Antiquarian Society.

Detailed Condition:

Lithograph print. Scattered light foxing on the sheet. Old outline dampstain in lower right quadrant of sheet, affecting the two flags in the image. A good example withal.