



**Barry Lawrence Ruderman
Antique Maps Inc.**

7407 La Jolla Boulevard
La Jolla, CA 92037

www.raremaps.com

(858) 551-8500
blr@raremaps.com

**[Set of Four Allegorical Mezzotints of the Continents -- With a Mastodon!] America.
Europa. Africa. Asia.**

Stock#: 56726
Map Maker: Ridinger
Date: 1770 circa
Place: Augsburg
Color: Uncolored
Condition: Good
Size: 20.5 x 17 inches
Price: \$ 3,400.00



Description:

An 18th-Century Image of an American Elephant or Mastodon!

Four separately published allegorical mezzotints, showing representations of America, Europe, Africa, and Asia. The mezzotints were made by the famed German artist and printmaker Johann Elias Ridinger, who, along with Stubbs, was the greatest horse and hunt artist of the 18th century.

An intriguing theme runs just below the surface in these prints. Where Europe is shown pursuing and killing a stag with relative ease, the three other continents show violent confrontations with nature in which the people are at least partially overwhelmed and injured by their quarry. This reflects a late 18th-century understanding that Europe had largely conquered and subjugated nature, whereas elsewhere it was very much still in competition with humanity.

A curious element of the America print is its focus on the so-called American Elephant. Although no elephant has lived in the Americas in modern times, this print may have been influenced by the discovery of Mastodon bones in Kentucky in 1739. Those bones were subsequently transported to Paris for scientific study and thus became known in European natural history circles.

The caption below the elephant says:

Barbarus et barrus coeunt certamine diro,



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[The barbarian and the elephant meet in a ferocious battle,]

Natura ac armis saevus uterque furit,

[Each cruelly enraged, one by nature, the other with weapons,]

Est Elephas vastus, quem nutrit America dives,

[The elephant is enormous, as America nourishes him with its richness,]

Hostes conculcat planta, manusque premit.

[He tramples enemies with his foot, and crushes them with his hand.]

A rich set of mezzotints.

Detailed Condition:

Rich impressions. Trimmed to the platemark, or just inside, in some places with loss of imprint. Some minor abrasions; see image.