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[The Monster of Cracow--Dog Heads on body and Torso]

Stock#: 25923
Map Maker: Munster
Date: 1560 circa
Place: Basle
Color: Uncolored
Condition:
Size: 6 x 3 inches
Price: SOLD



Description:

Early depiction of the so-called Monster of Cracow, from and early Latin edition of Munster's Cosmography one of the most influential geographical works of the 16th Century.

This image is based upon an image by Pierre Boaistua in his *Histoires Prodigeuses*, published in 1559.

The Monster of Cracow was a deformed child reportedly born in 1543 or 1547 (as reported by Munster) with barking dogs' heads mounted on its elbows, chest and knees. The legend provides that the child depart the world four hours later crying out 'Watch, the Lord Cometh.' This form of allegory was not unusual for Protestant scholars. In 1523 Martin Luther and Philipp Melanchthon published a pamphlet in



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which they described a deformed 'Monk-Calf' born in Freiburg and another creature, possibly human, that had been fished out of the Tiber, and interpreted both, in vitriolic terms, as symbols of the Roman Church's corruption. Catholics responded by identifying the calf as Luther.

As noted by Wayne Shumaker in *The Occult Sciences in the Renaissance* . . . (1972) in his translation/interpretation of Boaistua's writings,

A portrait of a monster said to have been born in Cracow in either 1543 or 1547 on the day of St. Paul's conversion. The eyes were fiery, the mouth and nose ox-like; there was a horn like and an elaphant's trunk; th eback was hairy; monkeys heads substituted for teats, there were cat eyes above the navel and dog's heads at the elbows and knees; the hands and feet were a monkey's. Since the monster lived only four hours, the picture must have been drawn from a verbal description. It is wrong, Boaistua says, to think such a monster a devil's child, for devils cannot engender on human beings. The cause is rather divine judgment, a "heated and obstinate imagination of the woman" while she conceives, "subperabundance, or defect and corruption, in the seed," or some other such natural circumstance."

Detailed Condition: