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[Wall Map of Europe] L'Europe Divisee Selon L'Etendue De Ses Principales Parties, Et Dont Les Points Principaux Sont Placez Observations Des Mesrs. De L'Academie Royale Des Sciences . . . 1770

Stock#: 49438
Map Maker: Desnos
Date: 1772
Place: Paris
Color: Hand Colored
Condition: VG
Size: 37 x 40 inches
Price: SOLD



Description:

Superbly preserved decorative Louis XV period wall map of Europe

This map is a detailed and ornate wall map of Europe. It was published in Paris in 1772 during the reign of King Louis XV. The map consists of a presentation of late eighteenth-century Europe on a large scale, surrounded by vignettes illustrating the most important regions and nations of the period.

The vignettes, starting from the upper left corner, celebrate the French, Danes, Dutch, Germans, English, Muscovites, Portuguese, Spanish, Tartars, Laplanders, Greenlanders, Turks, Hungarians, Poles, and Swedes. Each image is a collection of the well-known, some might say stereotypical, tropes that defined each group from a French perspective. For example, the Spanish are described as serious and grave, not to mention Catholic. Their image is of a grand bull fight in Plaza Mayor, Madrid. The title splits these vignettes at center top, flanked by man in nature on one side and sleepy scholars in the other. All the illustrations seem aimed to communicate the high level of civilization enjoyed by many Europeans, particularly when compared to indigenous peoples.

The map is very detailed with toponyms and information about past explorers and current trade routes. In the north, an explanatory note details the possibility of more terra firma, for example. Boats pepper the waters of the Black and Mediterranean Seas, as well as the Atlantic. Toward Greenland, with an imprecise shore, there are ships chasing after whales, a nod to the rich whaling grounds once found in that area.



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The title references the learned men of the Academie Royale. Founded in 1666, the Academy is one of the oldest learned societies in Europe. It was created in order to foster and protect French scientific interests, one of which was geography. Headquartered in the Louvre, members would present new ideas and consult each other about experiments. The members had excellent international contacts and frequently were the main conduit for the circulation and recording of geographic knowledge in map form.

Louis-Charles Desnos (1725-1805) was a French geographer, globemaker, and instrument seller active in the mid-eighteenth century. He worked under the sign of the Globe in the Rue Saint-Jacques. Prior to work in France he served the King of Denmark, Christian VII, as Royal Globemaker.

An earlier version of the map was made by Nicholas de Fer. The original (1695) did not have the cartouches decorating the edges, but they are present by 1723. Desnos himself sold a version of the map in 1761, as well as later versions in the early 1770s. This one, dated 1772, is dedicated to the Dauphin, who would become the ill-fated Louis XVI.

The present map is a fine example of the genre of wall, or parlor, maps that enjoyed an iconic place in seventeenth and eighteenth-century Europe. Large, highly decorative and expensive productions, they were considered to be the ultimate signs of wealth and intellectual sophistication. In this vein, such wall maps appeared prominently in works of fine art, most notably the paintings of Johannes Vermeer. Displayed in the salons of leading merchants and noblemen, the maps were especially prone to damage and their survival rate is extremely low. The present map is truly exceptional, for it is preserved in remarkably fine condition.

Detailed Condition: