



Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps Inc.

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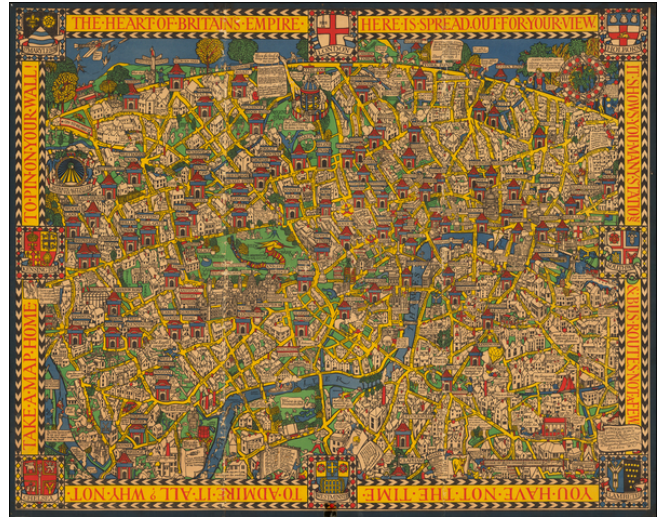
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London The Heart of Britain's Empire Here Is Spread Out For Your View

Stock#: 51474
Map Maker: Gill

Date: 1927
Place: London
Color: Color
Condition: VG
Size: 36.5 x 29 inches

Price: SOLD



Description:

Third State of MacDonald Gill's Iconic Map of London

Originally published in 1914 as an advertising poster for the London Underground, this design proved so popular that it was subsequently published in several different editions.

MacDonald Gill's *Wonderground Map* was commissioned for the underground by Frank Pick, Commercial Manager of the then-Underground Electric Railways Company of London in 1913. As noted by Elisabeth Burdon:

The following year the map, having been widely displayed in Tube stations in poster format, was put on sale in a slightly reduced size. (1) The text on the map's pictorial envelope refers to the folded map within as "The Famous Wonderground Map of London Town," testifying to the poster's immediate success in capturing the popular imagination.

*A useful key to unlocking the whimsical stylistics of Gill's map is contained in the image of an open book pictured in the map's lower left corner. Beneath the cartoon image of a mouse, the text on the book's page reads: "Little mouse that lost in wonder / Flicks his whiskers at the thunder." The rhyme is drawn from Algernon Blackwood's *A Prisoner in Fairyland*, an enormously popular children's book published in 1913, the same year as the poster's creation. In his book Blackwood writes, in a passage capturing the world of wonder and delight that Gill's map graphically evokes: "The Starlight Express is off to Fairyland. Show your tickets. Show your tickets."*



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The concept of being transported to an astonishing new world surely captured the collective imagination of the early twentieth century as Western societies experienced the extraordinary changes associated with the rise of mass production and a rapidly expanding consumer culture. MacDonald Gill's boldly innovative Wonderground Map represents a unique cartographic response to the representation of this "brave new world." Novel in method and message, its success both as a map and as an expression of an era's self-image was apparent in its immediate public reception and, perhaps more significantly, in its influence on pictorial mapmaking in the twentieth century. Not only did Gill's map spawn a clearly identifiable genre that was to appear in the United States, Canada, Latin America and Australia in the 1920s and 1930s, it marked a resurgence of decorative mapmaking that lasted throughout the century and beyond. In honoring Gill's creation of the prototype, it seems appropriate to use the term "wonder map" in discussing this novel genre.

The *Wonderground Map* has been called the map which 'saved' the network, by encouraging off-peak travel, at a time when the underground was almost solely used by commuters in the mornings and evenings. Pick deliberately decided to commission a map which gave the company a 'stronger brand' as part of a simultaneous exercise in improving hygiene, punctuality, and image (if only, it has been suggested, by distracting the commuters from their traveling conditions). As part of the latter, he also commissioned the 'iconic' Johnston typeface for signs and lettering at the same time. MacDonald's younger brother, Eric Gill, worked with Johnston in creating his typeface.

MacDonald was already a renowned decorative map-maker. The *Wonderland map* has been described as a 'mixture of cartoon, fantasy, and topological accuracy' and became 'an instant hit with the traveling public.' Using solely primary colors, London appears as a medieval town in a medieval map, with contemporary aspects interspersed, combined with satirical commentary on accent, and on class and social mobility, which were then major preoccupations for Londoners.

MacDonald also inserted cameos of both his brother and Frank Pick; for the latter, a figure near Victoria is depicted as saying 'my Pick cannot be surpassed.' It has been described as a precursor to TFL's later Art on the Underground campaign and various spin-off tube maps.

The map is known in 3 states, which can easily be differentiated by the contents of a small triangle in the top left of the map.

- First state (1914) only houses in the triangle
- The second state (1924) a British Imperial Lion appears to commemorate the British Empire Exhibition
- Third state (1927) a racing dog replaces the lion



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Detailed Condition:

A few minor pinhole breaks and some abrasions near Royal Albert Hall and Hyde Par.. Several tears at left and right margins.