



Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps Inc.

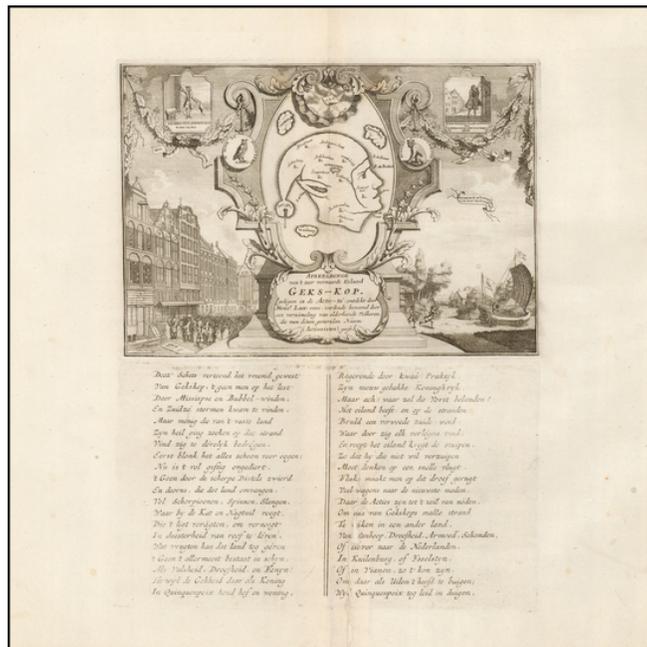
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(Fools Cap) Afbeeldinge van't zeer vermaarde Eiland Geks-Kop.

Stock#: 54994
Map Maker: Anonymous
Date: 1720 circa
Place: Amsterdam
Color: Uncolored
Condition: VG
Size: 6 x 9 inches
Price: SOLD



Description:

The Fools Cap -- An Iconic Satirical Image of the Mississippi Bubble Scheme

A map of the island of Geks-Kop (fools cap) from *Het Groote Tafereel Der Dwaasheid* (The Great Mirror Of Folly).

Iconic satirical image depicting the results of the so-called Mississippi Bubble, one of the most famous cartographic curiosities. The image provides a comic representation of the collapse of the French Compagnie de la Louisiane d'Occident (French Company of the West), founded by the Scottish financier John Law in 1717. The Company was granted control of Louisiana, selling massive amounts of shares to the French public to finance its plan to exploit the resources of the region (the 'Mississippi Scheme'). The scheme resulted in wild speculation and people rushed to invest: share prices opened at 500 livres, but rapidly rose to 18,000 livres. Once speculators began serious profit-taking, the share prices and public confidence collapsed and the company quickly failed, ruining many, not only in France, but throughout Europe and nearly bankrupting the French Government. As a consequence of this failure, confidence in many colonial schemes collapsed, forcing many companies into bankruptcy, including the English South Sea Company and a number in the Netherlands, prompting this satire.

The title translates as 'A representation of the very famous island of Mad-head, lying in the sea of shares,



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discovered by Mr. Law-rens, and inhabited by a collection of all kinds of people, to whom are given the general name shareholders'.

At the center of the image is a map of an island depicted as the head of a fool wearing his traditional cap; the place names include Blind Fort, Bubble River, and Mad House, surrounded by the islets of Poverty, Sorrow, and Despair.

On the left is a scene of a mob storming the offices of John Law's company in a town and on the right is a land-vessel or ship with wheels (symbol of a far-fetched scheme) which has a flag saying "To Viane." Vianen was a "free city" during the Middle Ages and anyone who could pay the toll to enter the city would be granted sanctuary from creditors. Above the two scenes are small vignettes of a man near an empty treasure chest and in the other a man weeps on a street.

Perhaps the most iconic of all images of the Mississippi Bubble.

Detailed Condition:

Some old restoration in the text, affecting the a few letters in the right column.