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**Poli Arctici et terrarum Circumiacentium Descriptio Novissima Par Fredericum De Wit**

**Stock#:** 57158  
**Map Maker:** De Wit  
**Date:** 1676  
**Place:** Amsterdam  
**Color:** Hand Colored  
**Condition:** VG  
**Size:** 19 x 17 inches  
**Price:** SOLD



**Description:**

***Striking North Polar Map Featuring Detailed Vignettes of Whaling***

Fine, old-color example of Hondius' map of the North Polar regions, newly revised by Frederick De Wit (ca. 1676).

The map shows the geography of the globe from 50°N latitude. The seas between Tartary, in Asia, and Baffin Bay, in North America, are left open. However, all of the toponyms in northern Asia, Europe, and North America are named for explorers who hoped to chart just this area—they were in search of a navigable seaway between Europe and China.

Eastern Tartary is labeled as "*incognita*," or unknown. The eastern shore of Nova Zemla is also unfinished, as is that of Spitsbergen. Rivers and lakes are included inland in Europe and Asia, perhaps suggesting a river-bound passage east.

Iceland is well-delineated, with Mount Hekla in mid-explosion. East of Ireland is a tiny island called "Brasil." Hy Brasil was a wandering island thought to appear from time to time to sailors through the mist. The myth dates back to the Medieval period. Its existence was uncertain, but still plausible enough to include here.

Greenland, a huge island, has a snaking shoreline with the eastern and northern sections unfinished.



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Access to Baffin's Bay is through the Davis Straits. A tiny inlet separates Greenland from North America; this area was perpetually iced over when Europeans encountered it in this period, making the geographic relationship between the landmasses unclear.

Farther south is Hudson's Bay; the names of Hudson, James, Button, and other explorers are the defining features of this area. James Bay—named for Thomas James who led an expedition to the area in 1631—has additional place names referenced in a key.

Two cartouches grace the map's surface. One, near the North Pole, includes the title and maker. The other, in Tartary, was empty in early states of the map and later included the publishing information of Frederick de Wit.

The most alluring part of this map is the series of vignettes that surround the circular chart. All four corners show scenes of whaling and sealing. Men in masted ships send out smaller boats to pursue the animals. They harpoon the creatures, tow them ashore, and there process the meat and render the fat. These are meant to celebrate the burgeoning Dutch whaling industry at work on the eastern coast of Labrador; this is the first map to feature Dutch toponyms in that area.

### **History and states of the map**

The map was initially published by Henricus Hondius. He wanted to create an updated map that departed from the four islands of Mercator's conception of the North Pole. The proof state and a second state, both lacking the vignette decorations, appeared in English editions of Hondius' atlas in 1636. In the German edition of the atlas, also published in 1636, the map appeared in a third state with the vignettes included.

Sources for the map included the aforementioned Thomas James. He also drew on Henry Briggs' map of 1625. This foundational map of North America was included in Samuel Purchas' voyage collection, *Hakluytus Posthumus, or Purchas his Pilgrimes*, one of the most well-known travel books ever published in English. It was the first to name Hudson's Strait and Bay.

The plate was later used by Jan Jansson, who added his name to a fourth state. Frederick de Wit next acquired the plate, re-issuing it in ca. 1676. De Wit removed Jansson's imprint (fifth state), added his own name (sixth state), and this was later shortened to "*PER F. DE WIT*" (seventh state).

These later states also featured in the atlases of Nicolaas Visscher and then Adriaan Braakman (1709). Louis Renard also included in an atlas (1715, seventh state) and again by Reiner and Joshua Ottens (1739). The plate thus had a substantial life in print of 103 years.



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- State 1, 1636: Proof state with blank cartouches and no vignettes.
- State 2, 1636. Central cartouche carries the title and Hondius' imprint.
- State 3, 1636. Whaling vignettes added.
- State 4, pre-1664. Hondius' imprint removed and replaced by that of Jansson.
- State 5, ca. 1676. Jansson's imprint removed.
- State 6, ca. 1676. Frederick de Wit's imprint added in the central cartouche. The cartouche in Tartary is now filled in with de Wit's shop address.
- State 7, 1715. De Wit's imprint changed to *PER F.DE WIT*. Cartouche in Tartary is blank again. Fol. 3 is at the top right. Iceland and Nova Zemla are re-engraved and the Prime Meridian is shifted ten degrees east.

**Detailed Condition:**

Old color. Weakness and paper breaks caused by old color, reinforced on verso. Minor toning from a prior matting and framing.