



**Barry Lawrence Ruderman  
Antique Maps Inc.**

7407 La Jolla Boulevard  
La Jolla, CA 92037

www.raremaps.com

(858) 551-8500  
blr@raremaps.com

**[Grotto of Tethys -- Versailles] Le Soleil qui se couche dans la mer / Le Globe de la Terre, divise en six parties.**

**Stock#:** 79606  
**Map Maker:** Le Pautre  
**Date:** 1673 circa  
**Place:** Paris  
**Color:** Uncolored  
**Condition:** VG+  
**Size:** 11 x 15.5 inches (including text)  
**Price:** \$ 750.00



**Description:**

**Rare Surviving Images of the Short-lived Grotto of Tethys at Versailles**

Fascinating image of a bas-relief decorating the Grotto of Tethys and representing Apollo on his chariot as the sun sinks into the ocean.

Below the main image are depictions of the six parts of the world, within circles, including both the Arctic and Antarctic.

This image illustrates the spectacular, but short-lived sculpture celebrating the descent of Apollo into the Sea, which was displayed for less than 10 years near Louis XIV's bedroom following its completion in the



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### **[Grotto of Tethys -- Versailles] Le Soleil qui se couche dans la mer / Le Globe de la Terre, divise en six parties.**

1670s.

The present image is one of a set of 20 images engraved by Pierre Le Pautre, of which 9 depict the walls of the Grotto. Le Pautre was a French draughtsman, engraver and architect, known as an ornemaniste, a prolific designer of ornament that presages the coming Rococo style.

#### **The Grotto**

One of the most celebrated works of early Versailles was the Grotto of Tethys (often spelled Thetis), adjacent to the northern side of the palace.

Initially constructed as a water tower, the pavilion was redesigned in 1665 around the theme of Apollo's descent into the sea at the end of his daily procession across the heavens. The Grotto was located close to Louis XIV's bedroom, representing his retreat to Versailles for rest and recreation following a rigorous schedule of work. It also echoed the Apollo Fountain at the opposite end of the gardens, where the god is shown rising out of the sea on his horse-drawn chariot.

The Grotto's under-the-sea interior was decorated with precious stones, shells, mirrors, mosaics, and masks. It was not completed until 1676, when three marble groups were placed in the bays at the back.

Despite its great success, the Grotto was demolished in 1684 to make way for the north wing of the expanding palace. Only its marble sculptures were preserved and transferred to the gardens. Their original setting can be envisioned thanks to a set of twenty detailed engravings published in the 1670s, of which nine are displayed on the walls of this alcove.

#### **Detailed Condition:**