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Europa recens descripta a Guilielmo Blaeuw

Stock#: 80437
Map Maker: Blaeu

Date: 1630 circa
Place: Amsterdam
Color: Hand Colored
Condition: VG
Size: 22 x 16 inches

Price: SOLD



Description:

Richly Embellished Map of Europe from the Golden Age of Dutch Cartography

Nice old color example of Willem Janszoon Blaeu's carte-à-figures map of Europe, showcasing the high-quality of Dutch cartography during its Golden Age. This map is a reduced version of his popular wall map of Europe published in 1617.

The map shows the entirety of Europe, as well as Northern Africa, Iceland, and part of Greenland. The European countries are thickly blanketed with city names, some marked by a small town symbol in the shape of a building. Rivers wind across the country, and thick forests cover some regions, especially in Russia.

The title of the map is located in a finely decorated cartouche at upper right. A textual note on Blaeu’s privilege to publish this work is located in Africa at the southern edge of the map frame.

The upper border contains illustrative views of nine prominent European towns: Amsterdam, Prague, Constantinople, Venice, Rome, Paris, London, Toledo and Lisbon. These views are nestled in oval-shaped frames and show the cities in a bird’s eye view, providing an overview of each city’s characteristics, including rivers and the spread of settlements outside the city centers.

The map is framed at its sides by illustrations depicting the costumes of noblemen and women from various European nations: English, French, Dutch, Castilian Spanish, Venetians, Germans, Hungarians, Bohemians, Polish, and Ottoman Greeks.

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The body of this map is as richly embellished as its borders. The seas are decorated throughout with sailing ships and sea monsters, and off the coast of Portugal a mythical Neptune is depicted riding a sea creature. Inland, lions roam across North Africa, and a trio of bears can be seen in Russia. In the Mediterranean, a sea battle is raging between two ships.

The coastlines of Europe, aside from the Mediterranean coasts, were based on charting by the Dutch shipping trade. The Mediterranean coasts likely relied on Ptolemaic maps, leading to the exaggerated east-west extent of the sea. Blaeu is well known for his attention to the accuracy of coastlines, having published a celebrated pilot guide, *Het Licht der Zee-vaert,* in 1608.

Although this map is highly accurate, and clearly represents the great extent to which Europeans understood their own continent, the mythical island of Frisland does appear between Greenland and Iceland. Perhaps originally a misrepresentation of Iceland, Frisland would appear on many prominent maps throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

The Dutch Golden Age and cartography

In the late 1500s, seven Dutch provinces in the northern Netherlands achieved independence from Spain and formed the Dutch Republic. Though the Dutch state was small and ruled by a decentralized system of control, it managed to cultivate a powerful seventeenth-century sea empire based on trade. This era became known as the Dutch Golden Age.

Due in large part to their powerful trade empire, the Dutch became known for cartography in the seventeenth century. Their publishing houses produced the highest quality work in Europe, particularly those maps and charts of foreign lands, and Dutch map-making set the bar for cartographic accuracy and artistry into the early-eighteenth century.

Some of the most well-known cartographers worked in Amsterdam during this period. Perhaps the most famous of these was the Blaeu family. Willem Janszoon Blaeu, who was responsible for this map, set up shop in Amsterdam. His son, Joan, succeeded him upon his death in 1638, continuing in his father’s position as Hydrographer to the Dutch East India Company and selling maps to the public. The Blaeu map presses, located near Amsterdam’s Dam Square, were the largest the world had ever seen to that time. When the printing press warehouse burned in 1672, it signaled the end of the Dutch Golden Age, in cartography at least.

States of this map

There are four states of this map identified by Günter Schilder:

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1: The first state is dated 1617 in the title cartouche, with author noted as *Guiliel: Ianssonio* (Willem Jansz [Blaeu]).

2: In the second state, the year 1617 has been removed from the title.

3: In the third state, the name of the author was changed to *Guilielmo Blaeuw*. This state was featured in Blaue's 1630 *Atlas Appendix.*

3a: A variant of the third state exists without decorative borders, appearing in Blaeu's German edition of Van Meteren's *Warhafftige Beschreibung aller denckwürdigsten Geschicten.*

4: In the fourth state the imaginary island of Frisland was removed from the copperplate, and new hatching appears around embellishments in the sea.

This map is a fine example of the third state. Blaeu's map of Europe is a striking example of Dutch cartography and an excellent representation of the decorative carte-a-figures style.

Detailed Condition:
Minor staining in left margin from tape on verso.