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L’Europe, ou tous les points principaux sont placez sur les Observations de Mrs. de L'Academie Royale des Sciences

Stock#: 86779
Map Maker: de Fer / Danet

Date: 1730
Place: Paris
Color: Hand Colored
Condition: VG
Size: 61.5 x 41.5 inches

Price: $ 12,500.00

Description:

Superb Louis XV Wall Map of Europe. With Rare Text Panels.

A detailed and ornate wall map of Europe, surrounded by beautiful vignettes of the continent and its peoples.

This rare survival was published in Paris in 1730, early in the reign of King Louis XV. The map presents eighteenth-century Europe as it stood at the end of the Spanish and Ottoman hegemonies and during a period of growing French, English, and Prussian ambitions. The map acknowledges the power of the French royal family throughout and is dedicated to the Dauphin.

The detail on the map is truly remarkable and reflects the growing French desire to create maps based on reliable scientific sources rather than myth. This has its largest effect in the eastern part of this map, in Russia, which saw many visiting French cartographers during this period. The map extends from Greenland and Iceland in the northwest and encompasses Scandinavia, Russia, Asia Minor, and North Africa, in addition to the bulk of the European continent. Ukraine is labeled "Petite Tartarie."

The map contains toponyms and information about past explorers and current trade routes. In the north, an explanatory note details the possibility of more terra firma, for example. Boats pepper the waters of the Black and Mediterranean Seas, as well as the Atlantic. Toward Greenland, with an imprecise shore, ships chase after whales, a nod to the rich whaling grounds once found in that area.

The map is surrounded by vignettes that depict the peoples and capitals of the continent. They celebrate, starting from the upper left corner, the French, Danes, Dutch, Germans, English, Muscovites, Portuguese,

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Spanish, Ukrainians, Laplanders, Greenlanders, Turks, Hungarians, Poles, and Swedes. Each image is a collection of the well-known - some might say stereotypical - tropes that defined each group from a French perspective. For example, the Spanish are described as serious and grave, not to mention Catholic, with an added depiction of a grand bullfight at Plaza Mayor, Madrid.

The title splits the aforementioned vignettes at the center top and is flanked by man's state in nature on one side and sleepy scholars on the other. All the illustrations on the map seem aimed to communicate the high level of civilization enjoyed by many Europeans, particularly when compared to indigenous peoples. This title references the learned men of the Academie Royale. Founded in 1666, the Academy is one of the oldest learned societies in Europe. It was created to foster and protect French scientific interests, one of which was geography. Headquartered in the Louvre, members would present new ideas and consult each other about experiments. The members had excellent international contacts and frequently were the main conduit for circulating and recording geographic knowledge in map form.

The present map is a fine example of the genre of wall, or parlor, maps that enjoyed an iconic place in seventeenth and eighteenth-century Europe. Large, highly decorative, and expensive productions, they were considered to be the ultimate signs of wealth and intellectual sophistication. In this vein, such wall maps appeared prominently in works of fine art, most notably the paintings of Johannes Vermeer. Displayed in the salons of leading merchants and noblemen, the maps were especially prone to damage, and their survival rate is extremely low. The present map is truly exceptional, for it is preserved in remarkably fine condition.

Publication History

The first edition of this map appeared in 1695, published by Nicolas de Fer, and lacked decorative vignettes. They are present by the time of the 1723 Guillaume Danet edition, the precursor to this 1730 edition. Later editions of this map were issued using different copper plates and were printed as late as the 1770s, with the latest ones published by Louis Charles Desnos.

Detailed Condition:
Copperplate engraving on four sheets of 17th-century laid paper, surrounded on three sides by letterpress on six sheets of 17th-century laid paper. A number of tears expertly and invisibly repaired on verso. Minor loss around old folds, expertly reinstatement with very minor reinstatement of image. Very small area suffering from loss of text due to rubbing in westernmost Africa. Overall, presenting as Very Good.