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Napoleon Le Grand

Stock#: 87145
Map Maker: Desnoyers
Date: 1808
Place: Paris
Color: Uncolored
Condition: VG
Size: 19.5 x 26 inches
Price: \$ 1,600.00



Description:

Famous etched portrait of Napoleon as Emperor in his coronation robes, produced by Auguste Gaspard Louis Boucher Desnoyers (1779-1857) in Paris in 1808.

This print is based on an oil painting by François Gérard (1770-1837), which now hangs in Versailles. Desnoyers's etching was personally commissioned by Napoleon, for the sum of 2000 livres; Desnoyers also gained the right to sell the prints for his own benefit after 600 impressions had been printed.

The etching is a masterwork of intaglio printmaking, including a great variety of complex linework and emergent patterning to render the diversity of materials shown in the scene. The image is full of imperial imagery, including the Napoleonic Eagle and repeated use of his crest.

The British Museum curator's note says of the print:



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In 1804, Napoleon personally chose Desnoyers to engrave Gérard's portrait of himself as Emperor of France. The print and painting were deliberately modelled on a famous portrait of Louis XVI that had been painted by Callet and engraved by Bervic (see 1927,1008.406). The print took four years to complete, and was issued in three states; it was exhibited at the Salon of 1810. The present impression is a proof before the addition of the names of the artists. Desnoyers is said to have been paid 2000 livres, together with the return of the plate to sell to his own profit after 600 impressions had been printed.

Griffith's (*Landmarks of Print Collecting*) analysis of the Slade example at the British Museum states that:

Boucher-Desnoyers was the outstanding French line-engraver of the first half of the nineteenth century. He first came to notice at the Salon of 1799, and in 1804 Napoleon personally chose him to engrave Gerard's portrait of himself as Emperor of France, a position to which he had appointed himself that year. . .

The print and painting were modeled on a famous portrait of Louis XVI that had been painted by Callet and engraved by Bervic. Such imitation was deliberate as Napoleon tried to show himself as the legitimate successor to the Bourbons. At their Restoration in 1814, they did not hold this against Desnoyers, who was made a baron in 1828.

Detailed Condition:

Trimmed inside the platemark but ample from the image on all sides. Professional restoration of a few short edge tears. The back of the image is minorly skinned but not close to really thinning the paper. Overall VG.