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(Blaeu Atlas) *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum, Sive Atlas Novus; in quo Tabulae et Descriptiones omnium Regionum MDC XXXV*

Stock#: 92570
Map Maker: Blaeu
Date: 1635
Place: Amsterdam
Color: Hand Colored
Condition: VG+
Size: 19.75 x 12.5 inches inches
Price: SOLD



Description:

A handsome example, in original hand-color, of one of the foundational atlases of the 17th century, the Blaeu firm's *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum, Sive Atlas Novus*.

This comprehensive world atlas includes the famous Blaeu set of world and continents maps, a strong representation of the firm's American production, and many of the great folding maps that would eventually be included in their *magnum opus*, the *Atlas Maior*.

The Development of the Multivolume Blaeu Atlas

Willem Janszoon Blaeu, the head of the Blaeu publishing family and the official cartographer of the Dutch East India Company (VOC), first published a world atlas in 1630, titled *Atlas Appendix*, with 60 maps. He steadily expanded the atlas in the following years, until in 1635 the book became so large that it would not fit in a single volume. The new atlas was to be known as the *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum* (or *Theatre du Monde* in French). The history of this book, and its eventual development into the greatest atlas ever published -- Blaeu's *Atlas Maior* -- requires an appraisal of the rivalry between the firms Jansson and Blaeu.

In the middle of the 17th century, the firms Jansson and Blaeu were engaged in ongoing one-upmanship in the atlas market. If Blaeu published a two-volume atlas with 210 maps, Jansson would closely follow with a three-volume 300-map atlas. The present set is an early product of that competition.

After the death of Willem Jansz. Blaeu in 1638, the competition sped up; both firms issued larger versions of their multi-volume atlas: the *Atlas novus*. By the end of 1658, Blaeu had published an *Atlas novus* with six-volumes and 400 maps, while Jansson had published a six-volume *Atlas novus* with 450 maps.



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Jansson attempted to solidify his primacy when he issued his 11-volume German-language *Novus Atlas absolutissimus*. The set had a huge compliment of maps, between 500 and 550, and when combined with Cellarius's celestial atlas, and Jansson's eight-volume town book, his firm was the first to realize a complete description of the countries, towns, oceans, and heavens.

Johannes Blaeu was not to be outdone, however. In 1662, Blaeu issued his *Atlas maior* (Major Atlas) in eleven volumes, with approximately 600 maps. He would follow it with French and Dutch editions and attempted to complete a Spanish edition. The Americas volume was the last volume included in the *Atlas maior*. The set was the largest, most impressive, and most expensive publication of the 17th century, and it stands as the pinnacle of printed atlases.

In 1672, a fire broke out in the Blaeu firm workshop, decimating the stock and the business, and bringing an end to the in-progress publication of the Spanish language edition of the Atlas Maior at 10 volumes -- it was originally supposed to run to 12. Johannes Blaeu died the following year, and the family business declined thereafter.

The present two-volume atlas is a wonderful early product of that competition.

Detailed Condition:

Two volumes. Folio (19.5 x 12 inches), 17th-century full calf (possibly English), covers elaborately tooled in blind to a paneled design, spines in eight compartments separated by raised bands, lettering pieces in the second "BLAEU'S ATLAS PARS.I." and "...PARS.II." (Spines expertly rebacked, stabilizing the heads and feet.) Volume I: Engraved title in original hand-color heightened in gold, letterpress text, 104 original hand-colored engraved maps, most double-page, some folding. (Short marginal worm tracks in a few plates, not affecting the images.) Volume II: Engraved title in original hand-color heightened in gold, letterpress text, 101 original hand-colored engraved maps, most double-page, some folding, and a few inset in text. ("Osnabrugensis Episcopatus Auctore Ioanne Gigante" between maps 15 and 16 in Volume II. Faint marginal dampstain, at its greatest extent barely affecting the borders of the maps.)