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**Machina Coelestis or the Great Orrery made for the Academy in Tower Street, by  
Thomas Wright Mathematical Instrumt. maker to his Majesty in Fleet Street London /  
Machina Coelestis ou le Grand Orrery . . . .**

**Stock#:** 92733  
**Map Maker:** Wright / Lempriere  
**Date:** 1730 circa  
**Place:** London  
**Color:** Uncolored  
**Condition:** VG+  
**Size:** 26 x 19 inches  
**Price:** \$ 2,400.00



**Description:**

A rare depiction of Thomas Wright's Orrery, which is an instrument that represents the revolution of the heavenly bodies through many complicated movements. The orrery takes its name from Charles Boyle, the fourth Earl of Orrery, who was one of the first to own one.

Wright was King George II's instrument maker and designed a new base plate for the orrery in the form of concentric rings, each bearing a planet. The semi-circular arches over the top of the base represent the Tropic of Cancer and the Arctic Circle. Additionally, the engraving shows the 'moveable horizon,' which is hinged to allow for motion.

The engraving shows the orrery in great detail, with each planet represented as a small sphere orbiting the sun at a fixed distance. The orbits are depicted as circles with the planets presumably moving in a counterclockwise direction. The planets are labeled with numbers corresponding to a key at the right.

The orrery is mounted on a base, which is decorated with intricate designs and inscriptions. The base also features a handle (number 14), which can be used to adjust the position of the planets and simulate their movements ("one revolution of which shews a days progress in all the Orbs"). The overall design of the orrery is elegant and sophisticated.

This engraving is significant because it is a rare separately published image of the orrery. It provides a valuable historical record of the device and its design, and it also highlights the technical and artistic skill



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of the engraver and artist involved in its creation.

**A Philosopher Lecturing on the Orrery**

The engraving brings to mind Joseph Wright of Derby's [famous 1766 painting of a group studying an orrery](#), doubly so because of the name shared by our instrument maker and the painter. A quick review of the family tree of the Wrights of Derbyshire and Staffordshire shows no immediate familial connection between the two. However, the likeness between the two orreries is so striking as to be worthy of further inquiry.

**Rarity**

Rare. The Science Museum, London appears to have an example of the engraving.

RBH records an example of the engraving having sold at Christie's in 1975 for 45 GBP.

No copies traced in OCLC.

**Detailed Condition:**