



32 woodblock printed cards with original hand-colour.

HEXENSPIEL CARDS

[Hexenspiel cards]

Author

SCHENK, Joh[an]n Heindr[ich]

Publication date

[1760-1770].

Publisher

Joh[an]n Heindr[ich] Schenck,

Publication place

[Nuremberg],

Physical description

32 woodblock printed cards with original hand-colour.

Dimensions

86 by 58mm (3.5 by 2.25 inches).

Notes

The Maker

In the latter half of the eighteenth century, there were three cardmakers active in Nuremberg on whose cards the imprint "I. Schenck" is found: a father and his two sons. The present deck was made by the former, Johann Heinrich, who initially worked as a journeyman in the city from 1742 to

1751, before becoming a master and continuing his career as an independent man. He published a number of decks of playing cards using a range of suit systems and designed for several different games.

The Cards

The game of Hexenspiel, or Vogelspiel, appeared in Germany and Austria in the seventeenth century, descended from the Italian game of Cuccu and thus belonging to a family of games including the Swedish Kille and Danish Gnav. Gameplay involved a round of bidding before players attempt to capture certain cards from their opponents. Suits are not relevant in Hexenspiel, and do not even appear on specialised decks, as here, and instead it is through the rank or value of the card that players either win or lose. In the present deck there are two copies of each card, which fall into three groups: number cards from one to 12, marked with roman numerals; five trumps outranking these; four low cards below zero and a "Joker". The top trump is the Bird which gives the name Vogelspiel to the game, followed by the Sentinel, the Horse, the Cat, and the Tavern, while the Witch, from which the title Hexenspiel comes, is a kind of magic card and defeats all others. Apart from the number cards, each card has a drawing illustrating the creature or object it represents, captioned in a banner above. To show the correct orientation of the numerals on the number cards, a colon is printed after the numeral.

Bibliography

Provenance

Price: £5500

Inventory reference: 20736